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Mundane Self-Legitimizations of Power: Distribution of the Sensible in the Israeli Settlements in the West Bank

Doctoral Thesis

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Abstrakt:

V předkládané dizertační práci se zabývám mechanismy, praktikami a politickými technologiemi, které depolitizují sporné a potenciálně znepokojivé fenomény a procesy. Konceptuálně a teoreticky vycházím z díla Michela Foucaulta a Jacquese Rancièra a dalších prací, které tito myslitelé inspirovali. Depolitizaci uchopuji skrze Rancièrův koncept "distribuce vnímatelného", tj. specifické nastavení toho, co je zachytitelné smysly, a tudíž učiněno srozumitelným, "očividným" a "přirozeným". Tato nastavení následně chápu jako určitý governmentalistický program, přičemž se zaměřuji především na materiální a vizuální prvky dispozitivu, který tuto depolitizační racionalitu realizuje.

Empiricky se zaměřuji na příklad izraelských tzv. neideologických osad na Západním břehu. Navzdory řadě rozšířených omylů tyto osady lákají Izraelce dostupnými cenami bydlení a vysokou kvalitou veřejných služeb, nikoliv kvůli jejich náboženskému a nacionalistickému významu. Osady tohoto typu tak představují všední komunity vyhledávané především mladými rodinami, které ze socio-ekonomických důvodů nechtějí žít ve městech ve vlastním Izraeli. Tato každodenní zkušenost osadníků je nicméně v ostrém kontrastu s geopolitickou pozicí osad, které jsou pevnou součástí izraelského okupačního režimu, stejně jako s násilím, kterého se tento režim dopouští na okupovaném palestinském obyvatelstvu. Na základě dlouhodobého terénního výzkumu v regionu, během něhož jsem provedl řadu rozhovorů a pozorování, argumentuji, že tento potenciálně znepokojivý charakter osad je zastřen řadou materiálních a vizuálních praktik, které

mají za efekt aestetizaci okupace a jejích projevů, což zapadá do středostavovského étosu osadníků.

Ačkoliv se práce zaměřuje na konkrétní případ izraelských osad, její závěry se vyjadřují k širším diskuzím v oboru mezinárodních vztahů, především k tzv. estetickému obratu skrze detailní debatu toho, jak je moc legitimizována za pomoci určitých reprezentaci a vizuálních a materiálních konfigurací. Nicméně oproti pracím, které se zabývají konstrukcí Jinakosti a spektakulárních manifestací moci, v dizertaci ukazuji, že dominance často operuje a je umožněna i zdánlivě banálními a každodenními praktikami.

Klíčová slova: Izrael, Palestina, depolitizace, estetika, vizualita, materialita, governmentalita, dispozitiv

Počet slov: 89,123

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Abstract:

In this doctoral thesis I am looking into mechanisms, practices and political technologies that work to depoliticize contested and potentially disturbing realities. To make sense of these processes, I am utilizing the theoretical and conceptual apparatus derived from Foucault's and Rancière's respective works. Following Rancière, I conceptualize depolitization as a "distribution of the sensible", a particular ordering of what is presented to the senses and thus made intelligible, "obvious" and "natural". Understanding such arrangements in terms of a governmental programme, I focus mostly on material and visual elements of the dispositif that promotes this depoliticizing rationality.

Empirically, I am investigating the case of the Israeli so-called non-ideological settlements in the West Bank. Despite some popular misconceptions, these communities attract Israelis by offering cheap public services and housing rather than for their religious-nationalistic appeal, effectively posing as family-friendly suburbs. Nonetheless, such benign experience of the settlers is in a stark contrast to the contested (geo)political status of their communities and violence that underpins the Israeli occupational regime that the settlements are a part of. Drawing on a long-term fieldwork in Israel/Palestine which entailed mostly interviews and participant observation, I argue that the contentious nature of the settlement is erased on the part of the settlers through specific material and visual practices that feed into the middle-class ethos by aesthetization of the occupation's manifestations and practices.

By closely examining the particular case of the Israeli settlements, the thesis thus contributes to the aesthetic turn in IR by looking into ways in which power legitimizes itself through certain representations and visual and material configurations. Nonetheless, as opposed to works which focus on the constructions of difference between the Self and the Other, or spectacular manifestations of power, I argue that dominance can operate in and be facilitated by much more mundane and unremarkable registers of the everyday.

Key words: Israel, Palestine, depolitization , aesthetics, visuality, materiality, governmentality, dispositif

Number of words: 89,123

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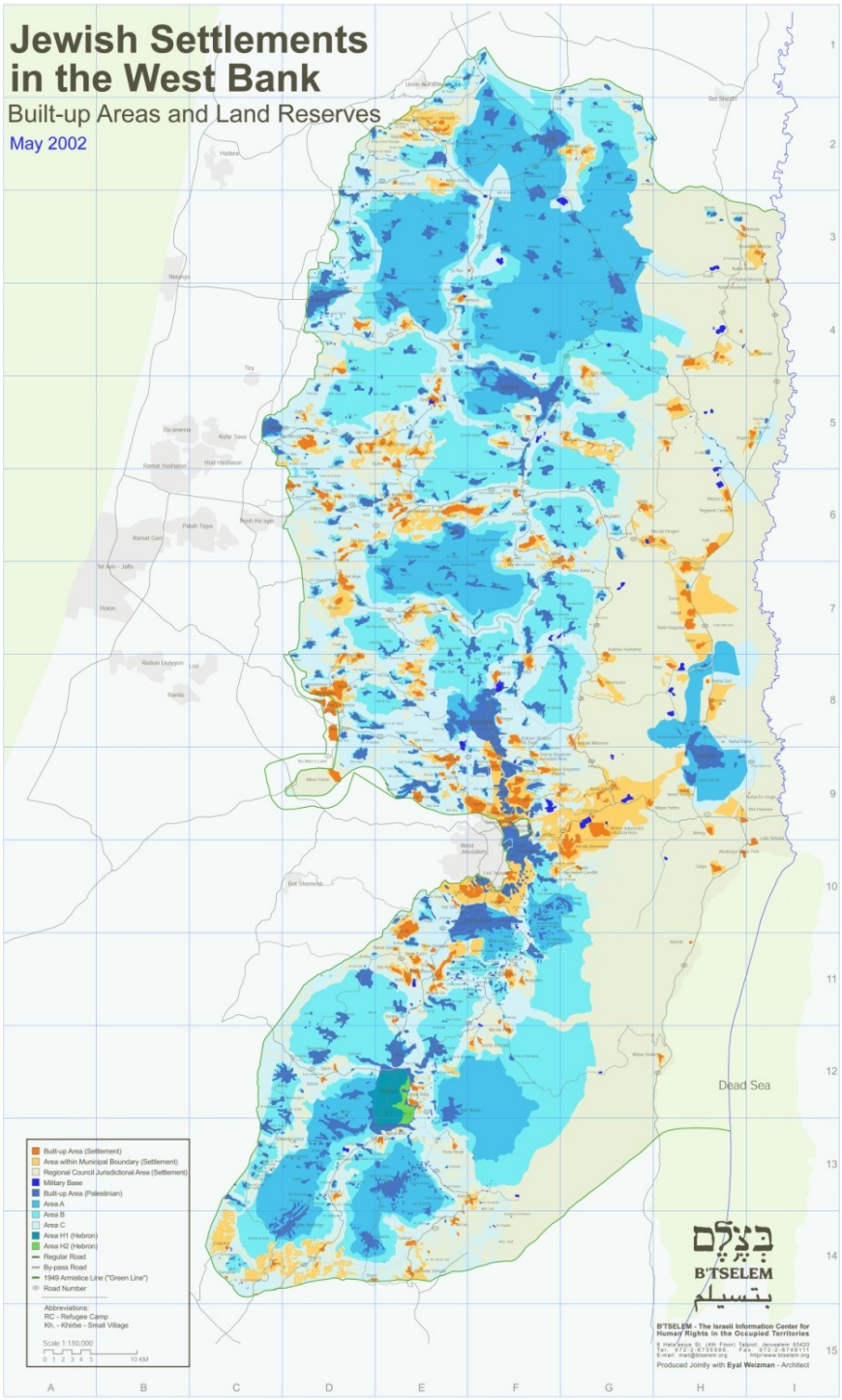

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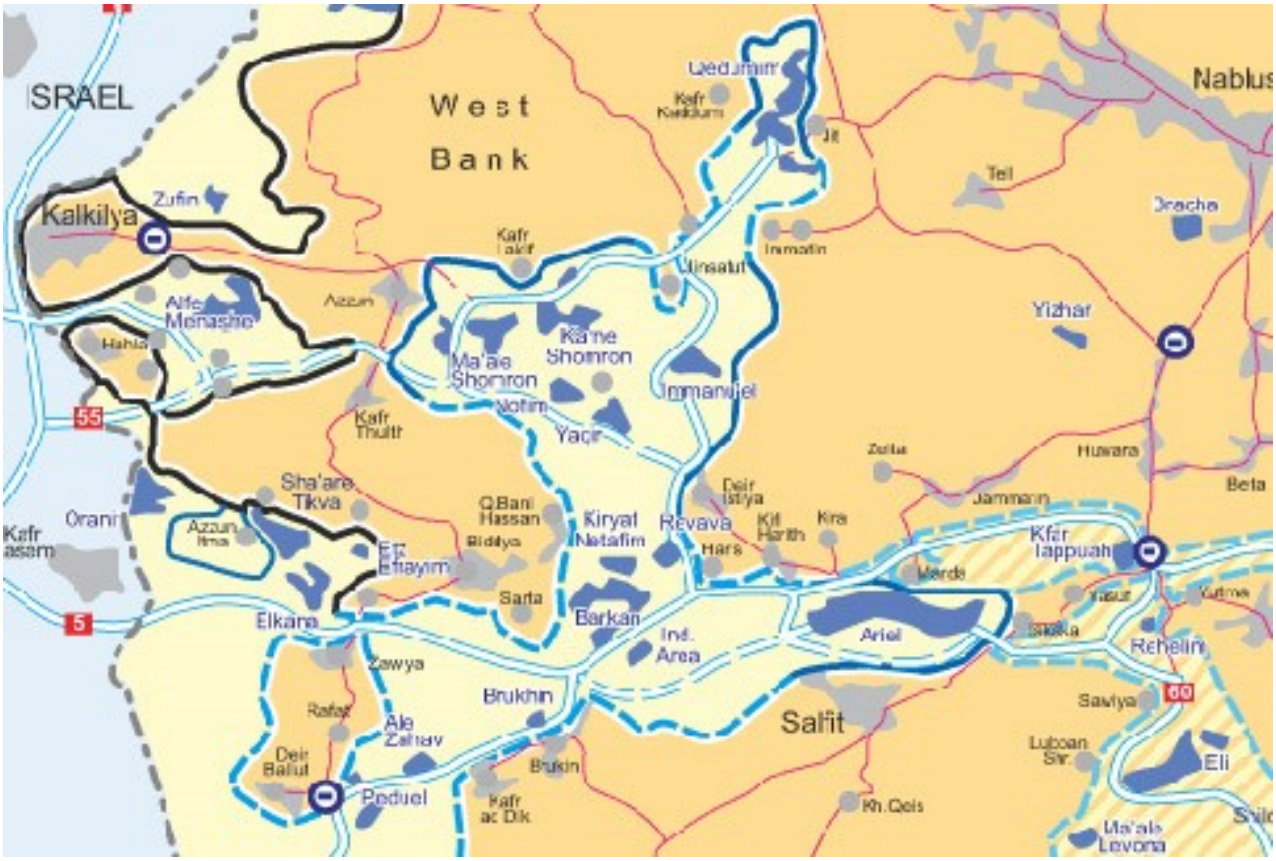

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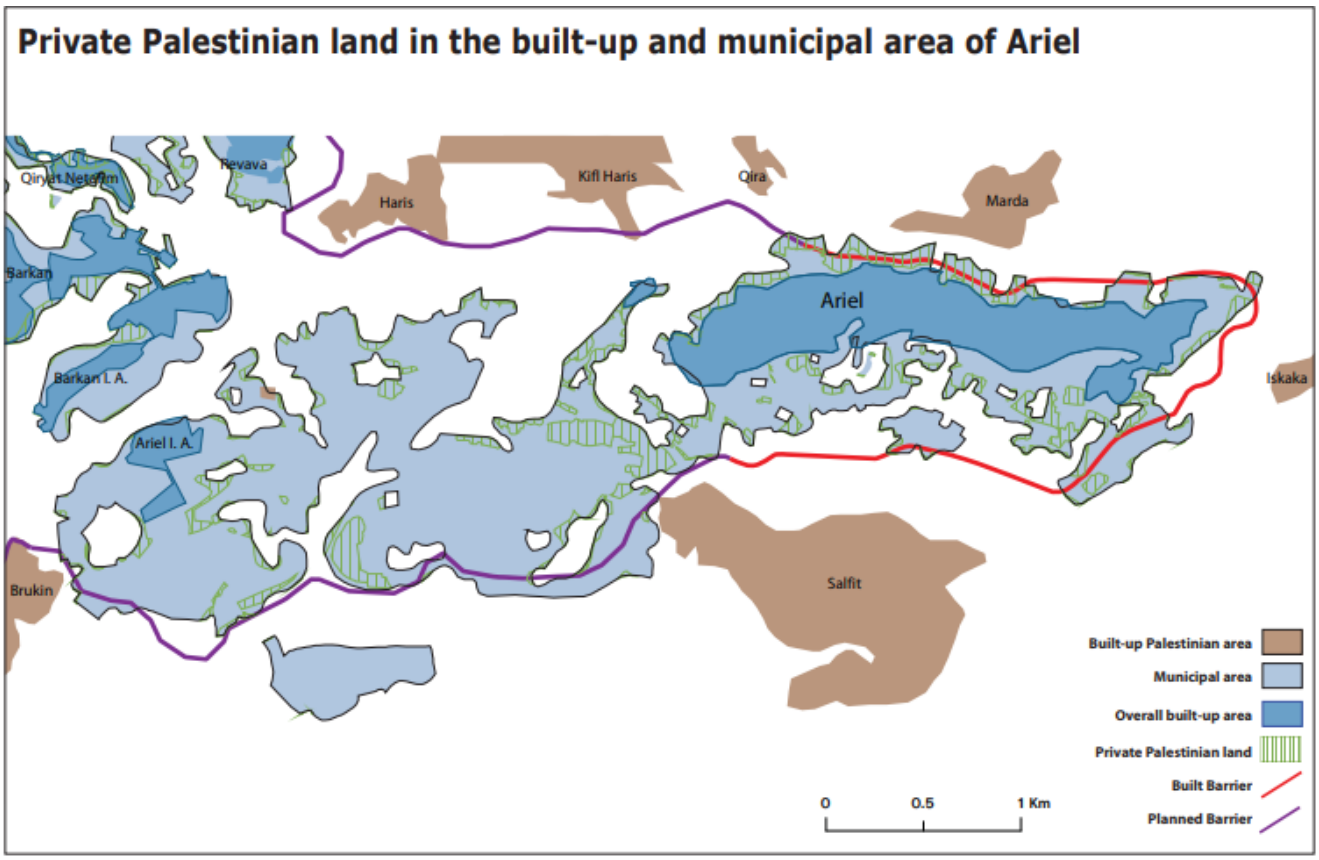

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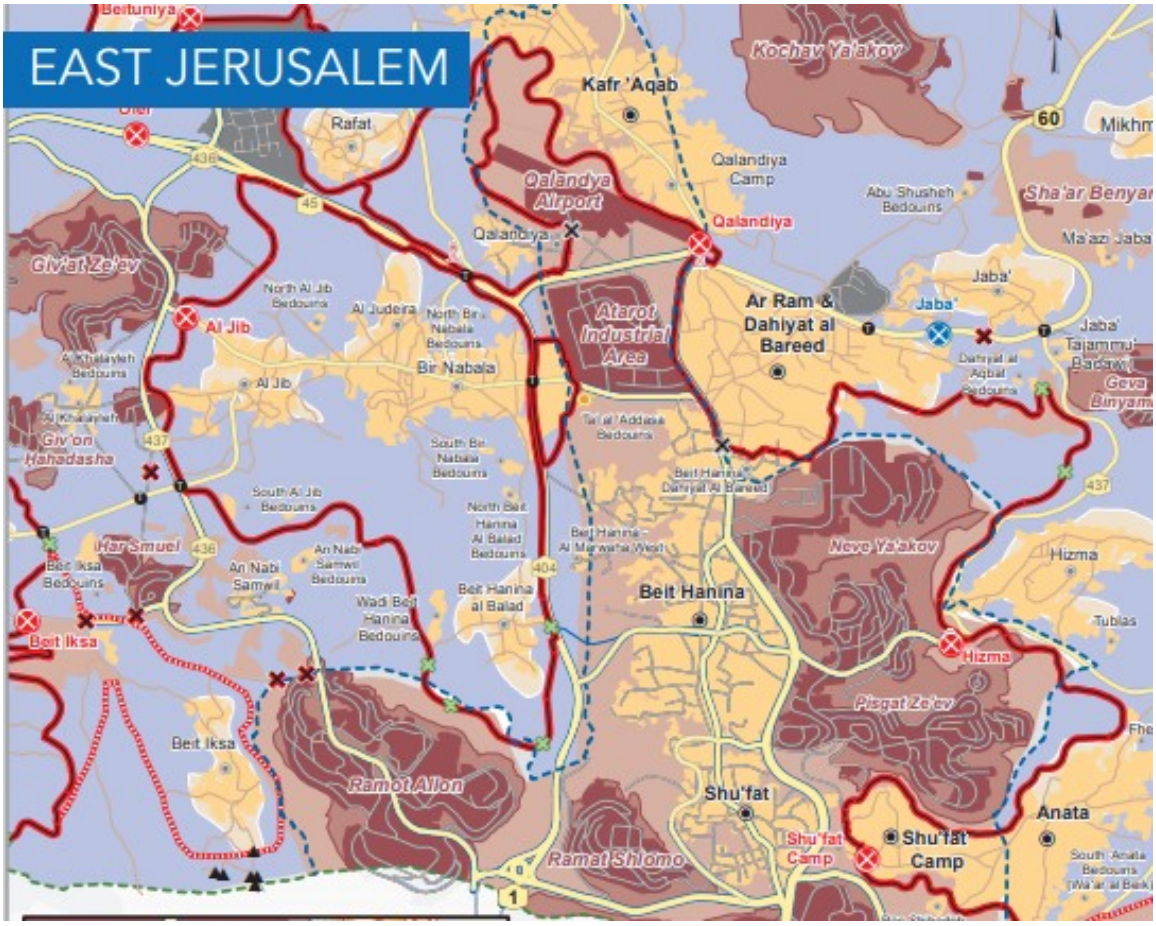

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As with all similar projects, while all faults and shortcomings of what follows are solely my own, its strengths are a result of often collective efforts and support from a number of people and institutions. I deem it appropriate to start with expression of gratitude to all people in Israel/Palestine who were willing to share with me their life stories, opinions and ideas. I am quite sure that most of them would not be pleased with how I captured their experience; I can only hope that my argument that them, me and you are not that different would somewhat placate their anger and the sense of betrayal.

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Introduction

Me and Sarah were sitting in the living room of her house and alternating between watching TV and engaging in small talk. While I was sipping coke and feeding on cookies Sarah kept supplying me with, she shared her take on the plight of Syrian refugees who were trying to reach Europe and too often fell victims to the conditions at the Mediterranean, expressing her compassion for their ordeal. A couple months after that, during another of my visits at her home, Sarah expressed her sorrow about the recent terrorist attack in Manchester. She also appreciated that after the attack, representatives of different religious communities came together to honor those murdered and stand up against hatred.

All of this would not be a particularly interesting set of events if it was not for one thing. On both occasions we were sitting in an Israeli settlement in the West Bank, mere hundred meters from Palestinian villages whose inhabitants had been living under the Israeli military occupation for the last half a century. Sarah has been living in the settlement for almost 25 years and she never made a reference to the hardships that the presence of the settlements had imposed on the Palestinians in the area. And when it comes to Jewish Israelis, she is far from unique.

At the time of writing this thesis, the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories has entered its fifty-fist year. Half a century after the Israeli army conquered the West Bank and Gaza Strip, it is hard to imagine a significant shift in the power relations that would alleviate the current "status quo". Despite two Intifadas, Palestinian uprisings against the Israeli rule, a so-called Oslo peace process, and numerous diplomatic initiatives of major world powers, the oppressive occupational regime is thriving, and if anything, the dispossession of the Palestinians is accelerating.

Nonetheless, these realities are at odds with experiences of not only many tourists and visitors who come to appreciate the historical sites, but most Jewish Israelis as well. Indeed, it is a common trope among journalists and commentators to talk about the "Tel Aviv bubble" detached from the rest of country, a place where Israelis sunbath, smoke weeds on a beach and work in start-ups. Most critical accounts would then juxtapose this bohemian lifestyle with the Israeli military rule over the Palestinians mere kilometers away. But the virtual non-existence of

the Palestinians' subjugation is a rather common feature of a majority of Israeli Jews' lives. As argued by two prominent Israeli scholars, "Most Israeli citizens […] usually enjoy the privilege of suspending the Occupation's violent presence, distancing it from sight and heart and forgetting that it exists" (Azoulay and Ophir 2013, 17). Arguably, a crucial part of why the Israeli occupation is such a successful political project is exactly this detachment from the violent and disturbing practices that maintain it on the part of large portion of the Israeli Jewish public (see also a poignant video clip by an Israeli comedian Assaf Harel, Haaretz 2017).

This is remarkable not only because of the longevity of the Israeli rule and the sheer volume of human loss and tragedy that it has brought to the people who live in the region. When approached from the global perspective, it is safe to argue that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the most prominent issues on the international stage. Although there are different takes on the legal, political and humanitarian aspects of various aspect of the conflict which often ensue in heated debates, perhaps a sort of consensus might be found in the notion that it remains closely followed by a large portion of the international community including state representatives, NGOs, INGOs, journalists, scholars, and publicly engaged individuals.

Given this, the lack of interest of the Israeli public might come as a shock. Indeed, in a recent public opinion poll, 62 percent of Israeli Jewish respondents said that they think or are sure that "Israel's control of Judea and Samaria" is not an occupation (The Israel Democracy Institute and Tel Aviv University 2017, 6). Some might possibly argue that this result is a matter of semantics and that a majority of Israelis would not deny the Palestinians' suffering. Nonetheless, when combined with other sources (as well as just a couple cursory talks with Israelis), one quickly realizes how embedded and unnoticed the occupation of the Palestinian Territories, and violence it entails, became for most Israelis.

As I show in a more detailed manner below, these sentiments are prevalent in the "non-ideological", "quality of life" Israeli settlements in the West Bank as well. By these terms I understand those settlements that attract Israeli Jewish citizens who seek betterment of their socio-economic status through various material benefits and subsidies, as opposed to those driven by the ideological, nationalistic and/or religious motivation. Since these communities are

located in the Occupied Territories, one would assume that the physical proximity to the people living under the military rule and the everyday violence imposed on them would disturb the normalcy that characterizes the lives of most Israelis. Moreover, the settlements themselves are a firm part of the occupational regime. As exemplified by the anecdote I opened this thesis with, however, none of these facts imprint themselves on settlers' everyday life, or on their political deliberations regarding their own position in the oppressive system. It is this bifurcated reality of Israel/Palestine, the coexistence of violence and comfort, that makes this particular context pertinent to the questions I am interested in this work: the case of Sarah and her seeming indifference towards the realities of the Israeli occupational regime is representative of much larger phenomenon.

The questions then would be, how come that Sarah seemed genuinely concerned about people suffering from political violence and oppression while not paying attention to the regime that was very much implicated in a similar set of practices? And did she ever interrogate her own position within this regime? The tension between the empathy for victims of one conflict in a rather distant context, and a nearly complete disregard for the oppressive conditions one is a part of, is at the heart of what I am after in this thesis.

I assume a lot of people would see the episode I just recounted as a mere manifestation of Sarah's ignorance. Alternatively, I have also encountered opinions which sought to explain similar Israeli attitudes by pointing at Israelis' racism which leads them to disregard the Palestinians' experience. Nonetheless, to write off Sarah's and other Israelis' political positions as merely ignorant and/or racist runs a series of political and analytical risks.

First, such opinions ignore the political processes which go into facilitating, channeling and maintaining indifference as well as chauvinism. In other words, it focuses on these emotions as something personal and disconnected from larger power-laden structures and processes. As noted by two prominent Israeli scholars, "it is systematic feature of this [occupational] regime that so many individuals and groups are capable of bracketing off their participation in it, in effect, denying its presence in their lives" (Azoulay and Ophir 2013, 17). Building on this insight, I propose that we need to understand indifference and ignorance as political phenomena and

situate them within power relationships and webs of various political practices and technologies. Second, the straightforward condemnation would somewhat exceptionalize Sarah's experience. Obviously, racism defines societal and political conditions in many settings beyond Israel/Palestine. Furthermore, I want to propose we need to look into how can the xenophobic attitudes coexist with the comfortable and mundane everyday life which is not interrupted by constant political and ethical deliberations on one's engagement with others. Indeed, a vast majority of us like to think about ourselves as decent human beings, and we prefer not to question this too often. In this regard, Sarah's case is far from unique when compared not only to most of Israelis, but much more broadly.

This matrix of thinking constitutes the core of what I am after in this thesis. It concerns mechanisms, objects and technologies which work to depoliticize contested and potentially disturbing political and social realities. I seek to explore some of the practices, rationalities and technologies that condition and facilitate this depolitization. In empirical terms, I am drawing on a long-term ethnographic fieldwork in Israel/Palestine during which I conducted a series of interviews with "ordinary" settlers, representatives of the settler communities, NGO experts, and a couple governmental officials. But while in the empirical terms it draws on a particular case of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, the thesis makes a larger argument about how these mechanisms operate beyond the context of Israel/Palestine. As I elaborate on below, I argue that this specific context poses as a venue in which more general processes are especially strongly articulated. I propose that in the course of my research, I realized that the Israeli settlements enabled me to get insight into processes and power structures which are familiar from other contexts as well.

How can we then academically and politically come to terms with the discrepancy between, on the one hand, everyday experience of Israelis in general and settlers in particular, and the longevity and the international prominence of the Israeli occupation and its disturbing practices? In what follows, I discuss some of the possible approaches, and then I introduce the framework that I employ throughout the thesis. I end this chapter by discussing some political issues related to my research.

Accounting For the Occupation

When it comes to approaches towards indiffernece, one strand of explanations comes from the field of psychology. Perhaps most prominently, issues of ignorance and denial have been extensively engaged by Stanley Cohen. In his 2001 book, Cohen (Cohen 2001) looks into psychological mechanisms through which people detach themselves from disturbing reality. He discusses a wide range of often chilling instances in which people deny, among other issues, suffering and pain of the others.

Cohen's arguments and insights pose as important (and in many regards disturbing) intervention into the debate on suffering and its social acceptance. Nonetheless, I still find this way of thinking about the issues I am concerned in this thesis somewhat inadequate. As Banu Bargu notes in her book on the politics of self-killing, the problem with the psychological investigation of the political is that "it tends to lose sight of the political context in which these actions take place, the conditions that give rise to them, and the ideological dispositions, motivations and demands of the political groups and organizations that coordinate them" (Bargu 2016, 22).

Thus, rather than drawing on Cohen's work, my analytical approach roughly aligns closer to that employed by Tugba Basaran in her research on indifference towards drownings of refugees in the Mediterranean. In a vein similar to Bargu she notes "Thousands of deaths at sea cannot be explained solely by reference to individual characteristics and psychology. Rather than focusing on individual traits, my primary interest is in understanding the socio-legal context of human conduct and, more specifically, the governing of human conduct" (Basaran 2015, 206). Basaran thus highlights the necessity to attend to governmental and political rationalities and programmes that underpin and inform individual conduct, somewhat that focus on personal psychological traits can easily end up obscuring.

In this regard, many people critical of the Israeli policies would, I suspect, point at the role of nationalistic propaganda, media and education that align Israeli Jewish subjectivities with the racialized oppressive policies employed towards various segments of populations deemed as

hostile. In other words, one could argue that it is settlers' nationalist ideology which obscures the Palestinian presence and the political subjectivity. Taking seriously Basaran's analytical attention to wider power structures in which individual indifference takes place means that one should also acknowledge that these structures have undoubtedly also discursive forms and elements which are indispensable for their maintenance; it is these discursive meaning-making structures that (also) make the occupation possible.

It is true that during my whole time in Ariel, I have not met a settler who could be called a leftist. In general, I would describe a majority of people as benevolent racists, a world-view which undoubtedly facilitated their disregard for their own position within the system which they did not perceive problematic in the first place. Indeed, one of my interviewees, he underwent a profound political change, reflected on the importance of these meaning-making structures in the following way: "So to say that I didn't have an opportunity to meet a Palestinian is understatement. It means that the whole structure of society prevents you, the whole mindset, the whole paradigm through which you see the world blocks out the reality of the existence of the other."[1]

But while I recognize the political salience of these discourses, or paradigms as my interviewee put it, I am still interested in practices and technologies of power that operate at least partially outside the registers of language. To some extent this focus stems from the fact that the ideological and discursive underpinnings and legitimizations of the Israeli control over the Palestinians, and the Jewish dominance in Israel/Palestine in general, has been investigated by a number of scholars by now. But it also relates to the fact that, as I elaborate in later chapters, I am convinced that the meaning-making processes take place in different registers. In that regard, I believe that the material and visual elements are especially pertinent to the mechanisms which facilitate the current status quo.

When it comes to material and spatial arrangements, the regime of separation elaborated on by Neve Gordon surely supplies a productive take on the political detachment of the Israeli public

[1] Interview, July 22nd, 2016, Alon Shvut.

from the military control over the Palestinian population. In his structral analysis of the Israeli occupation, Gordon argues that when looking at the underlying logic of the Israeli rule over the Palestinians, one can observe a shift from the "principle of colonialism" to the "principle of separation" over the last several decades (Gordon 2008a, 2007, 2008b). Soon after the victory in the 1967 War, the Israeli authorities started "attempts to manage the lives of the colonised inhabitants while exploiting the captured territory's resources" (Gordon 2008a, 28). Utilizing Foucauldian framework, Gordon proposes that in the first two decades, the Israeli rule was underpinned by disciplinary mechanisms that sought to quell and pacify nationalistic tendencies in the Territories, and biopolitical concerns regarding the Palestinian population at large. Although the occupational forces did not shy away from unleashing violence against the subjugated population when necessary, they were largely invested in promoting (relative) wellbeing of the Palestinians and their exploatibility. A significant proportion of Palestinian workforce was employed in Israel proper, performing mostly menial jobs, and Israeli Jews often came to the West Bank or Gaza for cheaper groceries and merchandise. The Palestinian subjugation was thus assured by a combination of providing means of subsistence, disciplinary measures and occassional violence.

This arrangement started to crumble with the onset of the First Intifada as "Israel realised that the colonisation principle could no longer be used as the basic logic informing its control of the West Bank and Gaza Strip" (Gordon 2008a, 34). Due to a number of contradictions that arose in the course of the Israeli rule (Gordon 2007, 472–76), a new form of dominance was required. The answer to the tensions laid bare by the Palestinian popular uprising was the policy of separating Israeli Jewish and Palestinian population, the main principle anchored in the Oslo accords from the 1990s. The newly established Palestinian Authority (PA) was charged with managing most of the Palestinian population, thus ostensibly getting rid of the Israeli control. Nonetheless, as Gordon warns, these steps need to be understood as "*reorganization of power rather than its withdrawal*" (Gordon 2008, 35; emphasis in original) – effectively, Israel retains control over the Territories despite outsourcing some of the costs related to the occupation to private actors (Havkin 2015, 2011) as well as the PA (Gordon 2002). The separation principle manifested itself in the restrictions on the Palestinian mobility, a sharp decrease of number of Palestinian workers

employed in Israel proper, and physical segmentization of the Territories. As opposed to the period before the First Intifada, the Israeli state also started relying on sovereign violence as the main means to tackle the Palestinian resistance.

As I show in the next chapters, Gordon's framework does shed light on dynamics that underpin and inform settlers' everyday lives. Indeed, my interviewees repeatedly made clear that their contacts with the Palestinians decreased sharply during and in the wake of the First Intifada, changes which were cemented by the outbreak of the Second Intifada. Despite the physical proximity, the differentiated and racialized infrastructures of mobility and its control led to a situation in which interactions between the Israelis and the Palestinians are minimal in both the Occupied Territories and Israel proper, with considerable political implications. As noticed by Bojana Blagojevic with regards to the context of ethnically divided socities, "a lack of direct contact and relationship with 'the others' can further deepen dehumanization and fear of the 'others'" (Blagojevic 2007, 556), and Israel/Palestine in the last two decades can serve as a prime example of this constellation. It is not uncommon among commentators to observe that both Israelis and Palestinians of younger generation have very particular and limited images when it comes to the other group: whereas for youngsters in the OPT an Israeli equals a soldier or a settler, for their Israeli counterparts a Palestinian stands for a terrorist. Given this, results of a recent opinion poll among Israeli middle school pupils which discovered a worrying trend of growing racism among its young respondents should come as no surprise. Among other things, the poll found that 48% of the pupils said that the Palestinian citizens of Israel should not have parliamentary representation (quoted in Baruch 2016). An Israeli journalist, commenting on its results, argued that such attitudes are due to the fact that "unlike their parents and grandparents, they can't remember the 1980s, when ordinary Israelis and Palestinians had far more frequent contact" (Sales 2016). I would perhaps add that the detachment had impact on older generations as well, albeit to a lesser extent.

Nonetheless, drawing on her long-term fieldwork in Israel/Palestine, Katherine Natanel notes that "Jewish Israeli and Palestinian lives remain actively woven together" (Natanel 2016, 53), challenging work of Gordon and other scholars who looked at the practices of separation enacted

by the Israeli state (Weizman 2012; Yiftachel 2006). Although it is hard to deny there has been a serious decrease in the frequency Israeli-Palestinian contacts, I side with Natanel in arguing that the Palestinians still remanin a part of the fabric of Israelis' everyday life (see also Löwenheim 2014; Ochs 2011). However, as I show throughout this thesis, it is crucial to note the conditions and frames through which these contacts occur have shifted, with the overall effect of depoliticizing the Israelis' experience of life in the shared space. This is indeed an argument that Natanel herself makes. In her book she attends to the gendered practices which together produce indifference towards the political developments in Israel/Palestine even on the part of the Israeli Jewish leftists.

In this project I somewhat follow Natanel's investigations in the sense that, as outlined above, I am interested in conditions and constellations which work to preserve political opression and inquality generally, and maintain the Israeli occupation specifically. However, contra Natanel's focus on the gendered production of indifference among people who are already politically aware of the situation, my focus is on mechanisms and technologies which work to render the contested practices and conditions non-problematic and seemingly natural in the first place. In short, I employ the notion of depolitization.

The concept of depolitization has been engaged by a number of scholars (Crouch 2004; Wilson and Swyngedouw 2014; Pettit 2004; Flinders and Buller 2006). As per usual, there are quite significant difference between how various authors understand the concept and the processes it entails. For example, Flinders and Buller define it as "the range of tools, mechanisms and institutions through which politicians can attempt to move to an indirect governing relationship and/or seek to persuade the demos that they can no longer be reasonably held responsible for a certain issue, policy field or specific decision" (Flinders and Buller 2006, 295–96). Understandings that locate the onus of depolitization in the sphere of relationships between elected representatives and public are adopted by most other scholars as well.

What I find problematic about this definition is that these authors, writing from the perspective of mainstream political science, restrict their scope to the realm of formal, "high" politics. To the contrary, the work of Jacques Rancière (Ranciere 1999, 2004) provides a venue for looking into

depoliticizing processes which go beyond narrowly defined venues of power and politic like parliaments and elected offices. In the following section I discuss Rancière's work and suggest it can be productively employed to address some present concerns in the critical IR.

Aesthetics and/of Power: IR and Depolitization

I situate this thesis within the fields of broadly understood critical International Relations (IR) and International Political Sociology (IPS) to which I relate and contribute in several distinctive ways. First, I investigate the everyday as an important venue of the (international) politics. In this regard, I build on mostly feminist and post-colonial authors who have, contra the mainstream conceptualizations, argued that it is the seemingly mundane and quotidian where the political (also) occurs (see e.g. Moon 1997; Wibben 2016; Enloe 1993, 2000). Relatedly, my methodological approach, i.e. use of ethnography, still poses as somewhat novel but by now quite established methodology in IR (see e.g. Vrasti 2008, 2010, 2016; Wilkinson 2013; Gusterson 2008). My project, based empirically on a long-term fieldwork, seeks to further demonstrate the insights that ethnographic sensibility can generate. Second, I engage the politics of visuality and materiality, both of them burgeoning research agendas in the field of critical investigations of the international (see e.g. Guillaume and Bilgin 2016). Nonetheless, the main disciplinary contribution that this thesis seeks to offer relates to the importance of the aesthetics and its relationship to power and (international) politics.

Arguably, this relationship has been engaged with most explicitly and conceptually by Roland Bleiker (Bleiker 2001, 2009). In his 2001 article, he called for a more thorough engagement of aesthetics by IR scholars, and he further elaborated on his take on aesthetics several years later in a book. Broadly speaking, Bleiker's project aims to "reclaim the political value of the aesthetic" (Bleiker 2001, 510), not an easy task given the fact that "the modern triumph of technological reason has by and large eclipsed the aesthetic from our political purview" (Bleiker 2001, 510). As put by one of the book's reviewers, Bleiker's concerns are underpinned by the notion that "the

gap between representation and what is represented serves as the very location of politics" (Ingber 2010, 91). It is this gap that Bleiker seeks to interrogate.

More specifically, Bleiker defines his goals twofold. First, he seeks to "explain why aesthetic approaches offer important new ways of understanding world politics" and "highlight how we represent political events and what consequences this has for our understanding – and political engagement – with them" (Bleiker 2009, 3). Second, Bleiker wants to "move beyond conceptual arguments" and "systematically demonstrate how, in different cultural and historical settings, aesthetic insight can give us new perspectives on key political dilemma" (Bleiker 2009, 3). He discusses a range of artistic endeavors, genres and works to substantiate his arguments. Other scholars have engaged in aesthetic inquiries as well. Michael Shapiro (Shapiro 2012), whose previous works already rather significantly departed from the IR orthodoxy (Shapiro 1988, 1989, 2008), engaged thinking on aesthetic and its methodological repercussions in his recent book. A number of authors, many of them working before Bleiker's work was published, also set out to look into the different modes of engagement with the political realities with the help of art (see e.g. Campbell 2002b, 2002a; Sylvester 2009, 1996, 2000; Weber 2005; Edkins 2003; Derian 2009; Dauphinee 2013; Lisle 2007; Danchev and Lisle 2009). Together, the prism enacted in these works "engenders a significant shift away from a model of thought that equates knowledge with the mimetic recognition of external appearances towards an approach that generates a more diverse but also more direct encounter with the political" (Bleiker 2001, 511).

In this thesis, I am inspired by Bleiker's call to interrogate the political in the aesthetical, and vice versa. Nonetheless, I depart from this body of literature as I do not provide a close reading and the political salience of cultural artefacts like films, novels, photographs or poems. Instead, I take up Bleiker's notion of "the political value of the aesthetic" (Bleiker 2001, 510) to investigate how does the aesthetic intersect with politics, and how it is instrumental in upholding the existing political relationships and hierarchies. In doing so I concur with Ingber in proposing that "aesthetic insight enables us to consider other aspects of politics that are otherwise relegated to the periphery or which remain hidden from sight"(Ingber 2010, 91).

In the case of this research, I look at the role of aesthethics in the setting(s) of the everyday and seemingly mundane, and how its operations in these spaces relate to power. For my purposes in this text, I follow Joyce and Bennet in their conceptualization of power as follows: "the view of power adopted here involves conceiving of it as omnipresent, and as constantly ebbing and flowing, collecting and dispersing, in changing combinations and arrangements. Rather than a thing or property, it is more like a condition of action that is made manifest in the practices through which it is performed and exercised" (Joyce and Bennett 2010, 2). As acknowledge by the authors (Joyce and Bennett 2010, 2–3), this conceptualization of power is deeply indebted to the work of Michel Foucault on which I draw substiantially here as well.

Interrogating intersections of power and aesthetics, my main concern in this thesis is how disturbing manifestations of power become non-problematic, non-contentious and non-remarkable; in short, how are matters pertaining to power dynamic and hieararchies depoliticized. I argue that it is a particular sort of aesthetics that works to naturalize the effects, practices and mechanisms of power by rendering them "natural", "obvious" and even desirable. Further elaborating on these notions, I propose that this aesthetization of politics occurs through interplay of discourse, materiality and visuality.

As already suggested, in order to make sense of this relationship I draw on work of Jacques Rancière, especially his notion of "distribution of the sensible" which he understands as "the system of *a priori* forms determining what presents itself to sense experience. It is a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience" (Ranciere 2004, 13). I further utilize the Foucauldian concepts of governmentality and dispositif to propose that the division of the sensible should be understood as a particular mentality of power which is put into practice through various heterogenous means which are nonetheless aligned according to the overall pursed goal.

I illustrate these arguments by closely looking at the case of the Israeli settlements. Nonetheless, before I proceed to the more thorough discussion of conceptual and methodological notions and substantive material in the chapters that follow, I want to address several political concerns

which pertains to the approach I adopted in this project. That is to say, I feel I should engage some of the theoretical, methodological and representational choices and dilemmas that I made and faced during my PhD studies.

The Politics of Research

In this project I adopted essentially anthropological approach, broadly understood as effort to understand and de-exoticize meaning-making and intersubjective worlds of certain groups. What is important here is to note how import of anthropological prism, notions and methods informed some strands of scholarly investigations of (international) politics that were formative for my project as well. I am not seeking to discuss all the venues in which anthropology proved to be productive and enriching for the study of politics, something that has been done by others (Schatz 2009b; Wedeen 2010). I rather want to point to the analytical purchases that are relevant for the present thesis.

One of the crucial analytical moves introduced by political scientists inspired by anthropological mode of inquiry was focus on the everyday as a site of political struggle (Wedeen 2015, 2009b; Ismail 2006; Simpson 2014; Singerman 1996). That is to say, rejecting the notion that power is distributed only through elections and votes, political anthropologists and ethnographers set out to investigate how does the political happen at seemingly quotidian avenues like division of labor at home, disputes with the authorities over provision of the basic services, or national holiday celebration. In the same vein, ethnographic approaches utilized first by feminist, and then also other critical scholars working in IR re-focused their attention from the high politics and interactions between states towards the everyday lives of people “on the ground”. For example, rather than looking into the diplomatic negotiations between South Korea and the US, Katharine Moon (Moon 1997) conducted research on the female sex workers who worked in the vicinity of the American military bases in South Korea. Through close rapport with her informants, Moon showed that the Korean dependency on the US support made local authorities much more

forthcoming to the foreign troops, including provision of sexual services to them, with disastrous consequences for the concerned women.

Following this scholarship, I thus sought to politicize the everyday and the mundane in the particular context I investigated. Rather than assuming a priori that these registers are located outside of political contestations, I aimed to demonstrate that a close attention to the quotidian can yield important insights into how power operates and further prove the analytical and political salience of this approach. As I discuss in the conclusion, this perspective can also provide a more nuanced take on the matters of high politics.

Adopting the anthropological approach further underpinned how I dealt with the relationship between the empirical, the general, and the theoretical. Basically, following a certain anthropological tradition, I approach the empirical as something that tell us things about working of larger structures and mechanisms (cf. Pachirat 2018, 29–33). By investigating a specific context in depth, I hoped to discern dynamics which go beyond its confines: the specific provides insights into the general. Hence, as I have argued above, since the specific case of the Israeli settlements poses as a space in which the processes of depolitization are especially strongly articulated, I believe that closely looking into this particular case can be analytically and politically productive with regards to other settings as well.

In such conceptualization of the relation between the specific and the general, I understand the role of the theoretical as twofold. First, to quote Vrasti, theoretical notions work to „[make] the world around us intelligible and malleable“ (Vrasti 2013, 19). Theoretical notions have enabled me to comprehend reality in novel ways and drew my attention to features I would have otherwise overlooked; in short, they showed me how to *see* in a certain way. Second, and related to what I just stated, employment of theoretical concept and apparatus provided venue to draw parallels between Israel/Palestine and other contexts, something that I discuss more extensively in the conclusion of the thesis.

The understanding of the settlement project as representative of phenomena existing elsewhere then led me to adopt particular theoretical and conceptual apparatus pertaining to depolitization that I discuss in more details in the next chapters. At this point, however, I feel I need to address

one aspect of my theoretical choices. The reoccurring remark (or perhaps criticism) that I faced when I introduced my project at various forums was that I refrained from adopting post-colonial lenses, not attending to the colonial nature of the Israeli occupational policies and the very nature of the Israeli state.[2] I do not seek to dispute this understanding of the conditions in Israel/Palestine. But as I have repeatedly argued, I also believe that the Israeli settlers' everyday lives can tell us things which go beyond the confines of the colonial conditions.

To put it somewhat differently, I am not dismissing or arguing against those authors who conceive the situation in Israel/Palestine in colonial terms. What I rather want to engage in this project is a certain segment of this reality, that is the erasure of the contentious and potentially disturbing nature of the everyday life under these circumstances. It is safe to assume that this kind of erasure characterized lives of many colonizers amidst subjugated populations in the Global South. Nonetheless, practices and mechanisms which enable, underpin and inform this erasure can be found, I believe, in non-colonial settings as well. In this regard, I want to suggest that the case of Israeli control over the Palestinians, and how it fades into the nearly non-noticeable background for so many Israeli Jewish citizens, can shed light on disturbing realities which are not underpinned by colonial or postcolonial conditions and relations.

My theoretical and conceptual framework was closely related to my methodological choices. In general terms, I focused on the lives and experience of the privileged rather than the subaltern, subjugated and oppressed; in Rancière's terms, I was then interested in people who "move on" when told by the police. This is meant to say that I was interested in those who find themselves in the position of privilege, as opposed to those who seek to challenge the current status quo, or those whose political subjectivity is being denied and suppressed. At the same time, I was not interested in people whom some would label as "perpetrators", or agents in the position of power, people who could be described as "petty sovereigns" whom Judith Butler (Butler 2004) talked about. My focus was really on the privileged who are nonetheless shielded from the

[2] For a discussion on the colonial nature of the Israeli state and/or its current policies, see Aaronsohn 1996; Bareli 2001; Penslar 2001; Lloyd 2012; Veracini 2006.

nastier aspects of the power constellations and do not contribute to their preservation in a direct, obvious manner.

In the context of my research specifically, that meant working with the "ordinary" non-ideological settlers. Rather than looking into experiences and life-worlds of the extremist settlers, or planners and other low-ranking officials, or Israeli activists and experts who seek to fight the growth of the settlements, I worked with people who moved to the settlements because of socio-economic benefits rather than allures of the ethnonationalist and religious ideology. It goes without saying that all methodological choices are sort of trade-offs: we are bound to lose a bit understanding of the examined reality by seeking to understand its other parts. Inescapably, my decision to focus on the everyday experience of these settlers came with a price. Perhaps most obviously and importantly, I did not do research among Palestinians. Although I met a number of Palestinians during my stay in Israel/Palestine, and the issue of the settlements repeatedly came up, with one exception I did not conduct "official" interviews in which I would try to elucidate what does the settlement project mean for the Palestinians.

My focus on non-ideological settlers, and omission of the Palestinians' experience, was driven by several considerations. In very pragmatic terms, it was a practical choice – the limited time, resource and the absence of Arabic language skills dictated the scope and focus of my project. Nonetheless, what further propelled me to investigate the settlers' everyday lives, as opposed to Palestinians' ones, was the aspiration to better understand the privileged as opposed to oppressed. To some extent, this decision constitutes a departure from a fair share of the scholarly literature that inspired my project. Given the anthropology's long subservience to colonialism, many anthropologists are now wary of their complicity with power and seek to giving the voice to those who suffer from its excesses. In a similar vein, the critical studies of (international) politics usually seek to destabilize the existing hierarchies by disclosing the mechanisms which maintain them and showing their impact on the lives of the subaltern and subjugated; one rarely finds studies which approach the inequal conditions from the perspective of those who benefit from them.

To be clear, I am sympathetic to the political aims which underpin this body of scholarship and I am not criticizing the focus that many authors adopted. Nonetheless, I believe that it is also politically indispensable to seek to understand those whom we might disagree with or even despise if we want to come to terms with the oppressive conditions. In other words, although scholars should use their privileged position to give voice to those whose who have been silenced, I am convinced that in order to account for the marginalization, we also need to attend to the experiences of those who silenced them, as well as those who did not pay attention when that was happening. This, of course, does not mean we should embrace these experiences. But as I argue in the conclusion, if approached with at least some humility and perhaps even sympathy, they can provide instructive insights.

These concerns bring me to the last set of issues I want to discuss here: the matter of representation, an issue which in the field of IR was raised forcefully by Wanda Vrasti (Vrasti 2008) in her scathing article on the use of ethnography in studies on global politics. Vrasti argues that IR has adopted a highly restrictive understanding of the methodology which does not reflect the major debates surrounding it which took place in the 1980s in anthropology, its "maternal" discipline. The critical reevaluation of the ethnographic approach at the time led a number of leading anthropologists to more carefully reflect on their role in constructing the described reality by particular representations (Marcus and Fischer 1986; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Clifford 1983). Vrasti proposes that by disregarding these works, IR scholars too often conceive ethnography as just another data-collecting methodology, ignoring the politics of representation that it necessarily entails. A full acknowledgment of the complex relationship between the researcher (the representing), the informant (the represented) and writing, Vrasti argues, would go against a number of IR disciplinary tenants.

In the case of my project, like many others, one of the crucial issues when it came to the representation of my experience and the findings of my research was how to destabilize the position of "all-knowing" researcher. Indeed, when I presented a segment of my research at a workshop, the discussant observed that I seem to come across "seeing better" – in the paper as well as in this thesis, I often juxtapose the settlers' accounts with the violence of the Israeli

occupation, thus effectively (although, I must say, inadvertently) invoking the trope of the foreigner who comes from afar and knows better. But while I am aware I might sometimes come across as such, I would like to propose that this relates rather to different positionalities and subjectivities and how they play out; I would describe the differences vis-à-vis the plane of the researched and lived reality as horizontal rather than vertical.

I discuss my positionality and its impact on the research process in the field in the methodological chapter. Here I just want to briefly engage some aspects which pertain to the matter of representation but also knowledge production more generally. Most obviously, me not being Israeli meant that I was not exposed to the educational system and media discourse which form not only political inclinations and subjectivities of the settlers but even their ways of seeing.[3] Furthermore, in the course of my academic studies, apart from acquiring some empirical knowledge on the history and the current situation in Israel/Palestine, I was guided into a specific way of approaching the reality around me, essentially taught how to discern the political in various phenomena and processes. This particular way of approaching (indeed, seeing) the world then put me apart from not only settlers but, I suppose, many other people as well. Lastly, but quite crucially, as a foreigner I enjoyed the privilege of movement throughout the Occupied Territories and Israel proper which is unavailable not only to the Palestinians but to Israelis either. This meant that I was exposed to realities physically inaccessible to the settlers, and literally made the realm of seeable on my part quite different from the settlers' field of vision. My training, exposure to various discourses, and even realities, thus, in other words, effectively meant that compared to settlers, I saw *differently* rather than *better*.

Closely related to the issue of my position vis-à-vis what I set out to research was the question how to represent the settlers themselves. My broad goal in this project was to understand the settlers and the phenomena which condition their everyday lives. Although I leave the judgement regarding to which extent I succeeded to the reader, as I try to show throughout this thesis, I came to the conclusion that the system that works to make their lives so non-contentious is highly effective. While recognizing how mundane settlers' everyday lives are, I started to wonder if I

[3] I discuss this notion in the next chapters.

actually bought into the Israeli efforts to turn the settlements into normal Israeli suburban communities.

Similar problems have been tackled by editors of a recent innovative volume dealing with the normalization of the settlement project, a volume I am hugely indebted to. After discussing the background to the project, Allegra, Handel and Maggor acknowledge its political stakes: "the risk is that by discussing the settlements' normalization, we ourselves turn to be agents of normalization" (Allegra, Handel, and Maggor 2017, 12). Their response to this challenge was to "stress that the process of normalization aims not to legitimize it, but rather expose its underlying mechanisms and dynamics" (Allegra, Handel, and Maggor 2017, 12). My own way to approach this conundrum was essentially the same as I sought to attend to structures and rationalities which enable particular forms of political life and disengagement. In this regard, combining Rancière's scholarship with the Foucauldian framework proved to be productive academically as well as politically because it provided space to sketch out structures which channel and underpin settlers' conduct, situating it within larger power-laden conditions.

Conclusion: Academic Is Political Is Personal

In the course of this project, I gradually found out that I am unable to disentangle myself from the matters I set out to study. Although I somewhat familiarized myself with some literature which highlighted the personal impact of fieldwork, I was still not prepared for its taxing nature. Furthermore, as I was gradually reflecting on the insights that I acquired in the course of the project, I found myself being challenged, destabilized and questioned by what I found out.

Thus, for me, all the choices that I discussed in the previous section (the specific case I investigated, methodology I adopted, theoretical notions I utilized) were driven not only by academic considerations but they were also inherently political and personal for me. In this regard, reasons that led me not to engage the postcolonial scholarship despite its pertinency could be summed up as efforts to de-exceptionalize the case of Israel/Palestine in general, and the settlement project in particular. Going beyond the prisms of both "the only democracy in the

Middle East" and "the new Apartheid", I simply wanted to understand how can ordinary people have mundane lives among violence and dispossession of others. And again, I believe that it would be a mistake to single out Israelis, or settlers, as being especially culpable of doing that.

Last but definitely not least, adopting non-colonial prism had and continues to have personal dimension for me. Conceptualizing the situation in Israel/Palestine dominantly in colonial terms, I felt, would enable me too easily to distance myself from the mechanisms of dominance and its erasure that I set out to study. At this point, it might be worthwhile to mention that after couple months into my fieldwork, I started using "Arabs" instead of Palestinian, following the settlers' use of the terms. Perhaps this shows the pervasive nature of language in general. But what concerns me more now is that it also highlights the fact that I was somewhat susceptible to the lures of the settlers' discourse, and it remains a question what kind of political conviction would I have if I had been born in the settlement.

I hope this approach somewhat alleviates one concern which started haunting me quite late: my relationship with my informants, the settlers. In a recent open letter to Alice Goffman, the author *On the Run* (Goffman 2014) in which she sought to capture the impact of policing, incarceration and surveillance of young African American in Philadelphia, students of a seminar at New School (Students of Ethnographic & Qualitative Methods 2018) asked her a series of following questions:

> "Did you conduct any additional research *outside* of your fieldwork to enhance your understanding of the historical and political contexts of Philadelphia and the carceral state? Did you establish lines of communication and accountability to 6th Street community members before and after the publication of your book? While living in the neighborhood, how did you position yourself? Who did community members think you were? What you tell them you were doing? How did you obtain and *maintain* their consent? What measures did you take to mitigate your position of power and privilege? How did you demonstrate a commitment to the community?"

Now, the community in which I conducted my research was rather different in terms of affluence and social, economic and political status from the one in which Goffman embedded herself. Given the settlers' position vis-à-vis the Israeli oppression of the Palestinians, I imagine that many

commentators might easily write off my discomfort because of their complicity in these structures. Nonetheless, as far as I am concerned, this does not dispel the accusations that I took advantage of the trust, time and hospitality of the people in Ariel and elsewhere who shared their lives with me.

In this regard, my attendance to larger social and political forces, rather than adopting the postcolonial framework, enabled me to avoid one representational trap I was wary of: depicting settlers in moralizing and condemning manner, something that I repeatedly found myself tending to do. Departing from the notion of personal responsibility and focusing rather on overarching political dynamic at play, I sought to situate the individuals' actions, ideas and inclinations within larger power relations which can help us to understand the lives of those find themselves in them. What I want to say, essentially, is that in this thesis I do not aim to point at moral and political failings of individual settlers but rather highlight conditions which make these failings possible, easy and most importantly, non-present for the settlers themselves. Again, this is not to say that I would disavow the notion of personal agency and hence responsibility. But I find it more productive, analytically, politically and personally, to draw attention to larger structures which exist beyond the confines of Israel/Palestine.

Indeed, as I argue in the conclusion, seeing the parallels between Israel/Palestine and other contexts, including the one I call home, is one of the main political lessons I take away from the whole project. And I would propose that many of us might have more in common with the settlers than we would be willing to easily admit. I can only hope that me trying to de-exceptionalize their experience and relating it to my own would mitigate some of the antipathies that my account would generate among people I lived with if I was to share it with them. But I am afraid it would not.

Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is structured as follows. In the next, first chapter, I discuss the empirical case of the Israeli settlements. I draw especially on new literature which first, shows that the Israeli

occupation cannot be divorced from dynamics in Israel proper, and second, highlights the banality of the settlement project. I specifically focus on the processes of neoliberalization, suburbanization and normalization of large settlements.

In the second chapter, I discuss the conceptual apparatus of the project. I first briefly introduce Foucauldian scholarship, and then zoom in on the notion of dispositif, attending to its analytical characteristics and strengths. I subsequently relate this apparatus to the dynamics of depolitization informed by Rancière's work. In the next part of the chapter I fully discuss how visual and material elements, integral to a given dispositif, work to depoliticize contested issues.

In the third chapter, I introduce my methodological approach. I start by reviewing some crucial elements of interpretative social sciences that inform my project. Next, I discuss ethnographical approach and its peculiarities, specific methods I employed, and the issues of ethics and representation.

The second part of thesis then consists of empirical chapters. In the fourth chapter, I discuss how the interplay of visual and material elements establish a sense of normalcy in the settlements, and how this developed over time.

In the fifth chapter, I attend to the mechanisms and technologies which connect the settlement(s) with "outer world". I specifically investigate roads, means of transport and checkpoints, and how they effectively erase the contentious nature of the settlement.

In the sixth chapter, I address the question of the Palestinian presence in West Bank and how it plays out on the part of the settlers. I show that although the settlers do encounter the Palestinians, the particular material and visual setting in which these encounters occur renders the Palestinians' presence non-political and almost aesthetic feature of everyday life.

The conclusion relates issues pursued in the thesis to larger academic and political questions. It discusses the relevance of the project for better comprehension of the current conditions in Israel/Palestine, its uniqueness vis-à-vis other contexts, political stakes of depolitization , and how the insights derived from this project can enrich and further critical IR research on aesthetics and power.

1. The Settlement Enterprise Revisited

The purpose of this chapter is to provide more background information on the settlement enterprise before I proceed to discuss the insights I gathered in the course of my fieldwork. In order to do so, I first review the existing literature on the subject. I pay special attention to new, critical scholarship which discern the in many regards mundane nature of the Israeli settlement project. In doing so, I attend to several interlocked processes: the impossibility to politically and hence analytically distinguish between Israel proper and the Occupied Territories; the role of the Israeli state; neoliberal momentum; and suburbanization. I then proceed to introduce the particular case of Ariel in more details.

Israeli Settlements: Colonialism Meets Middle Class

Given the importance of the settlements within the matrix of the Israeli occupational regime, it comes as no surprise that there is a considerable body of literature which examines the settler movement. However, as has been argued eloquently by Ariel Handel and Marco Allegra (see especially Handel, Rand, and Allegra 2015; Allegra, Handel, and Maggor 2017; Allegra 2013), this literature suffers from several important shortcomings, the result of which is a somewhat distorted image of the settlement movement and its protagonists. Most importantly, majority of the concerned authors tended to deal with the most visible and vocal segments of the settler population – the national religious camp which deems the settlement project a divine mission to recreate the Jewish biblical kingdom (see e.g. Haklai 2007; Feige 2009; Taub 2010; Zertal and Eldar 2014; Friedman 1992). This narrow focus then severely restricts analytical breadth as well as political utility of this scholarship.

This is not to argue that this literature has not yielded important insights into the workings of the national religious camp and its political and ideological foundations. For example, Michael Feige (Feige 2009) has offered a critical yet also sensitive portrayal of the Gush Emunim movement which helps to understand how could Gush Emunim enter mainstream of the Israeli society.

However, despite the merits of this scholarship, the excessive attention paid to this particular demographic group "has the effect of ascribing disproportionate agency to a nationalist theology", as put by Hadas Weiss (Weiss 2009: 757). As a result, the Gush Emunim and the alike groups become in the scholarly literature (as well as many journalistic accounts) identical with the settler population in general. Although the very origins of the settler movement lie in the religious-nationalist commitment to the Great Israel, the heavy emphasis in both academic and popular discourse on this rationale obscures the diversity of settler population at large.[4] Indeed, as I discuss more below, since the 1980s settlers' demographic characteristics and motivations have expanded way beyond the national religious segment of Israeli Jewish public.

Although there have been some works which deviated from this pattern and dealt with other aspects of the settlement enterprise, only quite recently there have been more sustained academic efforts to fully engage diverse aspects of the settlement project. These scholarly developments closely relate to efforts to better comprehend practices and rationalities that underpin and maintain the Israeli occupation. I am drawing on these works in the following sections. Understandably, I do not seek to provide a historical overview of the Israeli rule over the Palestinians, nor to scrutinize comprehensively its current dynamic or future prospects. What I am engaging here are certain developments and facets of the Occupation in general, and the settlement project in particular, that inform and impact aspects of everyday life in the settlements that I am interested in this work.

Israel Proper and the Palestinian Occupied Territories: Separated yet Inseparable

Much of the recent critical scholarship on settlements derives from a broader notion that, contra to opinions that seek to conceive them separate in political terms, one cannot actually distinguish between Israel proper and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. One can find two broad

[4] As noted by Dalsheim and Harel (Dalsheim and Harel 2009), what gets lost in most studies on the Israeli settlements is that even among religious settlers there are significant differences (see e.g.Harel 2017; Cahaner 2017) which complicates the monolithic image that a lot of the literature offers. Nonetheless, in this piece Dalsheim and Harel themselves largely ignore settlers' non-religious motivations.

arguments in this regard: historical comparison between Zionist immigration to Palestine in the pre-state period and Israeli policies vis-à-vis the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the effective merge of the Occupied Territories and Israel proper over the last fifty years.

Several authors have proposed that the growth of the Israeli settlements in the West Bank (as well as the now "evacuated" settlements in Gaza Strip and Sinai) constitutes a historical continuation of Zionist colonization of the pre-1948 Palestine. In this perspective, Israeli policies vis-à-vis the Occupied Territories simply follows "the pattern of colonial settlement that served as the basis of state building in the Yishuv" (Shafir and Peled 2002, 182; see also Lloyd 2012; Salamanca et al. 2012; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2015, 5–7). This line of argument thus directly builds on the critical scholarship which was concerned with the relationship between Zionism and the territory (Kimmerling 1983; Kellerman 1993, 1996; Hasson and Gosenfield 1980; Yiftachel 2006).

Focusing more on the post-1967 period, other scholars have pointed out that over the last five decades, it has become virtually impossible to distinguish between the Occupied Territories and Israel proper. Although some accounts have proposed that Israeli policies towards the West Bank and Gaza should be conceptualized as contested processes through which the boundaries of the Israeli body politic are to be established (Lustick 1993; Jones 2009), other authors have retorted by pointing at the already existing arrangements that inextricably link Palestinian Territories to Israel proper. In their influential book, Ariella Azoulay and Adi Ophir set out to investigate the ways in which "Israelis and Palestinians have been governed since 1967 by the same ruling power, within the bounds of the same regime" (Azoulay and Ophir 2013, 12). Looking at various mechanisms which govern various categories of people in Israel/Palestine, they conclude "that the occupation of the Territories is integral to the Israeli regime, not external to it" (Azoulay and Ophir 2013, 18). Making the same broad arguments, other authors have pointed at economic interlinkages (Hever 2010), patterns of violence (Ron 2003), planning practices (Yacobi and Tzfadia 2017; Yiftachel 2006), infrastructural development (Handel 2014, 2015), legal features (Benvenisti 1990) and others institutional and physical arrangements (Gordon 2008b) which effectively (and often literally, as I elaborate below) erase the Green Line.

Importantly for the present thesis, much of this literature highlights the importance of the state and its authorities in promoting and maintaining the settlement project. This, yet again, goes against much of the scholarship focusing on religious-nationalist settlers which portrays this population as essentially hijacking state for their political goals. Arguably, one could argue that the state involvement testifies to the success of the ideological settlers in shifting the societal and political values at large (Newman 2005; Feige 2009) and to their penetration of the state apparatus (Haklai 2007). It is indeed impossible to deny the general shift to the right in Israeli politics in the last three decades and the growing political salience of religion in Israeli public life and state institutions. Nonetheless, it is questionable to which extent this happened mostly because of the settler movement. In this regard it is worth noting, as meticulously documented by Gershom Gorenberg (Gorenberg 2006), that the supposedly leftist government headed by the Labor party supported the settlement project from the very beginning, that is before the rise of Gush Emunim and its ideological heirs.

But what I want to mostly emphasize here is that in spite of popular images of Jewish settlers sporting knitted kippas, the settlement project was from the beginning an effort which would have failed without support and active participation by the Israeli state (Gordon 2008b; Hareuveni 2010). Since the establishment of the very first settlements right after the Israeli conquest in 1967, the Israeli state has provided security for the new Jewish communities amidst the Palestinian population. This support had been soon extended to the provision of basic infrastructure, support that was crucial for maintaining livable conditions in the settlements and that was often extended even to those settlements deemed "illegal" by the Israeli legal system.[5] Indeed, Shafir's and Peled's observation that "colonization had remained the 'constant' in a changing state of Israel" (Shafir and Peled 2002, 178) points at the importance of the state element in the settlement project.

As a result, then, the more recent scholarship forcefully challenges the notion that one can draw a clear line between the democratic, modern and progressive Israel and the authoritarian, despotic and oppressive rule over the Palestinians (see especially Azoulay and Ophir 2013). What

[5] Put simply, these are settlements which have not been approved by the Israeli authorities.

rather emerges is a complex picture in which it is impossible to disentangle political, social and economic forces operating in Israel in its pre-1967 borders and the nature and practices of the Israeli rule in the Occupied Territories.

Indeed, analysis along these lines has profoundly political effects. Joyce Dalsheim (Dalsheim 2011), investigating the Gaza settlers in the period leading to the evacuation of the Jewish communities in the coastal strip, persuasively argued that in fact, despite apparent stark contrast, settlers' ideological pedigree and beliefs are much more akin to the mainstream Zionist ethos than the secular, leftist Israelis would admit. This "Othering" of the religious settlers by secular Israelis thus effectively works to sanitize and erase the historical and political parallels between the pre-state Zionist movement and the expansion of Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories after 1967. In a review piece Dalsheim co-authored with Assaf Harel, they argue that in much of the academic literature penned by left-leaning authors, "the settler has come to represent unbridgeable difference from secular, liberal humanists of the West" (Dalsheim and Harel 2009, 231), thus discursively constructing "historical discontinuities between old and new settlers and settlement practices" (Dalsheim and Harel 2009, 227). In the same vein, while discussing Gershom Gorenberg's book on the first decade following the Israeli victory in the 1967 war, Diana Buttu has argued that Gorenberg fails "to acknowledge Israel's settler-colonial nature, ignoring both the colonial actions leading up to Israel's creation and the rampant dissatisfaction among Israeli civilian and military leadership with the 1949 armistice lines" (Buttu 2007, 98).[6]

Neoliberalism

As have several authors argued, neoliberal logic is far from mutually exclusive with colonial and racialized political rationalities (see e.g. Preston 2013; Venn 2009). In the case of Israel/Palestine, "the political-economic aspects of settler colonial regimes that combine ethnic exclusion, racial capitalism and territorial control that stem from a neoliberal agenda" (Yacobi and Tzfadia 2017, 2) manifest themselves in several ways, ranging from depolitization of civil engagement (Merz

[6] I should point out that this representational pitfall is avoided by most authors on whose work I draw here.

2012), to cooptation of Palestinian national institutions (Khalidi and Samour 2011; Clarno 2017b, 158–93), to planning practices (Yacobi and Tzfadia 2017), to making workforce disposable along racial lines (Clarno 2017a; Algazi 2009). With regards to the settlements specifically, neoliberalism constitutes conditions which induce Israelis to move to the Occupied Territories.

Neoliberal measures were introduced in Israel as a governmental reaction to the prolonged Israeli economic crisis of the 70s and 80s characterized by inflation which became sky-rocketing in the wake of the 1983 bank crisis. The newly formed national unity government headed by Shimon Peres set out to solve the crisis by a forceful intervention which was to restructure political-economic relations in the country. The result of these efforts was the so-called Economic Stabilization Plan in 1985 (Arlosoroff 2015; Bahar 2016). Essentially, the plan introduced "the greatly reduced government subsidies, devaluation of the currency, restrictions on wage growth, opening the economy to foreign capital, and privatization" (Hanieh 2003, 12). Very much along the lines of similar developments elsewhere, the neoliberal turn entailed cuts in the welfare programs, wave of privatization and emphasis on "the individual" taking "responsibility" for their socio-economic situations (Harvey 2005; Galnoor 2011). Unlike elsewhere, however, the Israeli government retained pockets of welfare state for Israeli Jewish citizens – in the Territories.

Gadi Algazi notes that "accelerated privatization went hand in hand with a colonial project heavily subsidized by the same state that shrank from public investment in social services within its pre-1967 borders" (Algazi 2009, 520). In this regard, Israeli sociologist Daniel Gutwein (Gutwein 2017) talks about settlements as the "compensatory mechanism" for the struggling Israeli Jewish middle class. As I mentioned above, the Israeli state was involved in supporting the settlements from the very beginning through providing of security and other basic means. Nonetheless, since the 1980s, the successive Israeli governments started to dedicate substantial financial support for the Israeli communities in the West Bank.

These incentives were and continue to be as considerable as they are diverse. The government has proclaimed all settlements as National Priority Areas which would entail benefit in itself but the Israeli municipalities receive even more state resources in relative terms than National Priority Areas in Israel proper. The Israeli state covered a significant part of building costs,

charged building companies much lesser percentage of the value of the land, and provided inspiring settlers with access to government-subsidized mortgages (for a more in-depth analysis see Swirski 2008, 53–58; Hareuveni 2010, 39–47). Overall, a report published by Israeli newspapers Haaretz estimated that between 1967 and 2003 "government surplus funding of the settlements – that is, the funds allocated above and beyond what the government would have invested were the settlements erected on the Israeli side of the Green Line – came to NIS 45 billion" (quoted in Swirski 2008, 53). All these benefits result in significantly cheaper housing in the Territories vis-a-vis Israel proper, with average cost of an apartment in a settlement as low as half compared with prices in Tel Aviv (see Slemrod 2015).

Furthermore, the local municipalities have much higher budgets per capita than those west of the Green Line. In the 1980s and 1990s, the state grants for regional councils in the West Bank were in some cases as much as three times higher than those allocated to councils in Israel proper (quoted in Shafir and Peled 2002, 174–75). A recent study by Macro Center for Political Economics, quoted in a Haaretz report (Dattel 2016), show that till nowadays the settlement municipalities obtain significantly more money from the state compared to not only central areas but also peripheries in Israel proper like Galilee and Negev.

As laconically summed up by David Newman, all of this "was considerable incentive for people who were not opposed to relocating beyond the Green Line in order to exchange cramped apartments for spacious villas" (Newman 2006, 115). Thus, in the case of Israeli settlements in particular, the neoliberal rationality promotes the Israeli colonial project through inciting "rational subjects" to maximize their market-oriented calculations. It is through these processes underpinned by neoliberalism which make settlers, as argued by Hadas Weiss, "become political agents despite themselves" (Weiss 2011, 114).

Suburbanization

Following a number of Western countries, since the 1970s has Israel witnessed the phenomenon of suburbanization which entailed (mostly) middle class families moving from urban centers to

better-off neighborhoods (see e.g. Jackson 1985). In Israel, this mostly constituted "the movement of people from the aging Tel Aviv metropolitan area to smaller townships, and from two- or three-room condominium apartments to private homes with gardens", as put by two Israeli political scientists (Shafir and Peled 2002, 173). As elsewhere, Israelis who could afford this option sought to escape unpleasant aspects of life in inner cities and improve their quality of life (Allegra 2017; Gonen 1995).

It was this process of "urban sprawl" (Shafir and Peled 2002, 173) that was politically utilized by the Likud government in the 1980s by directing population movement to the Occupied Territories through the incentives I discussed above. By subsidizing the prices of land, providing cheap loans and allocating significant budget to local municipalities in the settlements, the state succeeded in motivating a large numbers of Israelis to move to the West Bank, a significant portion of whom would otherwise not consider it (Allegra 2013; Newman 1996). This strategy has remained essentially a constant repertoire of Israeli governments since then.

What is particular about the suburbanization in Israel/Palestine is what Shalom Reichman called "the line of price discontinuity" (quoted in Newman 2017, 40–41). Usually, the prices of land and houses decline in linear fashion with the distance from metropolitan areas. But in the case of Israel/Palestine, "the crossing of the old Green Line boundary causes a sudden discontinuity in the land market, characterized by an extremely sharp (rather than gradual) fall in land prices" (Newman 1996, 65) because of the contested status of Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories. Thus, when combined with governmental subsidies, moving to settlements makes even more sense socio-economically.

Moreover, the relocation to the West Bank was significantly facilitated by the settlements' proximity to Israel proper. As noted by Newman, unlike in other colonial contexts in which colonists would have to move overseas, in case of Israel/Palestine "the territory in question was physically adjacent to the mother country, requiring families to move no more than a few kilometers from their previous homes" (Newman 2017, 113–14). This means that settlers can move to new, more affordable communities without undergoing inconveniences like looking for new jobs or disruptions of existing social relations (Newman 1996, 64). Because of that, the

state also did not have to spend resources for creating job opportunities in the area in order to attract new settlers (Newman 1996, 64, 2006, 115). In this regard, Newman talks about settlements' "double centrality" which stands for "central location with the economic benefits of the periphery" (Newman 2006, 116).

As a result of the interplay of the diminishing welfare state underpinned by neoliberal logic, governmental subsidies, and overall suburbanization process, the settlement project took quite a unique form. As argued by Newman, "While the primary objectives of colonization are political and territorial - in the West Bank and Gaza as elsewhere - Israeli settlers and the successive governments that implanted them have succeeded in transforming much of the settlement enterprise into a socioeconomic and geographical process of metropolitan suburbanization" (Newman 2006, 119). This is not to say that religious, nationalist and socio-economic motivations to move to a settlement are mutually exclusive. Nonetheless, drawing on the literature reviewed here (and contra much of the literature dealing with settlers) as well as my own fieldwork whose findings I discuss below, I want to emphasize that the socio-economic considerations are integral and crucial part of the settlers' everyday reality. Their omission has significant analytical and political consequences when it comes to comprehension of the settlement project at large.

Elsewhere, Newman notes that "colonization through suburbanization is the essential banalization of the settlement project" (Newman 2017, 46). This "banalization", or "normalization", a term used by Allegra, Handel and Maggor (Allegra, Handel, and Maggor 2017), constitutes a major success for the settlement project which became gradually embraced by a large portion of the Israeli Jewish society via turning into a matter of mundane socio-economic calculation.

Everyday Life in Ariel

In mid-May 2016, I was sitting in a community center in Ariel, listening to a training session for the local residents who decided to volunteer in what I came to understand as a neighborhood

watch. I first heard about the group from a settler I met at a bus stop several weeks before. He mentioned that he participated in a "sereth horim", a term I was not familiar with. When I conducted an interview with him a couple days after we met, I was trying to figure out what exactly this activity entailed, a task I mostly failed at due to Andrew's propensity to steer the talk away from my questions to his personal and family history. My overall yet shallow impression was that it was essentially a sort of neighborhood watch.

I later brought up the issue when I met Yossi, an American Israeli who worked essentially as the Ariel PR person. He was familiar with the person who organized the group and put us in touch. When I talked to Shira, I became even more unsure about the nature of the whole project since from what she was telling me, I understood that the whole initiative was much more concerned with excessive drinking among local Israel teenagers, rather than a prospect of a Palestinian terrorist attack. Such priorities did not really correspond to my image of a "neighborhood watch", and I was thus happy when Shira invited me to the organizational meeting which were the prospective volunteers supposed to attend as a sort of training to prepare them for the task at hand.

The community center was some 10 minutes by walk from my apartment. When I entered the room on the ground level, there were already several people chatting over food and coffee. I introduced myself, shared a basic outline of my research, and said that I came to find out more about the initiative. After I stuffed myself with some free sandwiches and fruits and engaged in more explanation of what I was actually doing in Ariel, the lecturer, a woman in mid-40s, started her talk. There was roughly ten of us, seated in a couple rows in front of a screen on which she was projecting her PowerPoint slides.

Although I did not get the chance to talk to the lecturer after the talk, my guess was that she was a school counselor or social worker. In the introductory part of her presentation, she made the audience acquainted with the basic overview of child biology, transcendence to puberty and adulthood, and the accompanying changes in behavior. After that she moved to practical issues and advice of how to handle and engage youth in a reasonable and educative conversation which was to be crux of volunteers' activities. Based on the lecture and talking to the participants before

and after the talk, I understood that members of the "neighborhood watch" go around the settlement on weekend nights, making sure that the local teenagers are not wreaking havoc and drinking too much in the municipal parks. When the talk finished, I talked to a couple participants whom I ultimately asked for phone numbers in order to set up an interview at a later date. I was then essentially forced to take home a considerable amount of food of which I lived for the next few days.

More than a security briefing, the whole event resembled a Teenager Psychology 101 class combined with a neighbors' social gathering. Although I could not see that clearly at the time, this particular episode to a large extent epitomized the many aspects of the settlement project that I am concerned in this thesis – instead of security issues, as one would expect in the case of a politically contested and precarious community, it was the quotidian concerns and quality of life in the settlement that made people come to the meeting and volunteer for the group. The episode thus hints at several processes which underpin and inform settlers' everyday lives, and which are closely entangled with the depolitization dynamic I am concerned here.

"The Capital of Samaria"

Ariel was established in August 1978 by forty Israeli Jewish families. The idea to set up a settlement in the area was spearheaded by a group of Israelis largely associated with the state weapons manufacturing industry who became known as "gari'in", a nucleus. Having already suggested this particular location to the Israeli government a few years ago, the would-be settlers were given permission by the Likud-led Israeli government formed as a result of the 1977 elections. The new government changed the overall settlement policy and gave green light to a number of settlement throughout the West Bank, effectively abandoning the so-called Allon Plan which sought to settle mostly Jordan Valley and leave out the inner parts of the Territories (Levin 1990).

Ariel, first called Heres, was one of these settlements. Its location was far from random. Although the specific site was chosen by the aspiring settlers themselves, it was the government which

decided to build Ariel in this area for strategic and military reasons. The new settlement was supposed to oversee the Trans-Samaria road connecting the coastal plain with the Jordan Valley (see Maps 1 and 2). Envisaged to become a major city from the very beginning, it was designed to establish a strongpoint of the Israeli control over the northern part of the West Bank (Lein and Weizman 2002, 120).

With the generous support by the state, Ariel quickly grew and in 1981, it was officially declared a local council which entailed political autonomy. Ariel gradually obtained a prominent position among the settlements in the area. Partially this was due to its size. Nonetheless, it was also a result of a long, sustained political campaign by Ron Nachman, the leader of "gari'in" and later a mayor of Ariel. Nachman's political and PR savviness and his connections to the highest echelons of the Israeli politics were crucial for Ariel's development and earned him a nearly legendary status among Arielites as I soon found out.

Ariel was significantly marked by the massive aliyah from the former USSR which started in the late 1980s as the Soviet empire crumbled and which ultimately brought around one million new immigrants to the region in the course of early 1990s. Called in general "Russians" ("Russim") by most Israelis regardless of the actual country of origin, the new immigrants significantly shifted the demographic conditions in the country. Unlike in the case of immigration waves in the 1950s when the state institutions authoritatively dispersed newcomers in country's peripheries with the aim to balance out the Jewish-Arab demography in the outlying regions, with regards to "olim" from the USSR the Israeli state adopted the policy of "direct absorption". The new immigrants were given a sum of money to support them during the transition period while adjusting to the new country. Often not fully attuned to the delicacies and politics of the region, when offered more benefits in the case they moved to the Occupied Territories, many of them did.

In Ariel, the influx of "Russians" was welcome by the settlement's leadership. Apparently, Ron Nachman quickly comprehended the potential for growth it provided and launched sustained efforts to lure new immigrants to the settlement, according to some stories going as far as organizing welcome groups at the airport waiting for flights from the former USSR. Having

succeeded in the first years of Russian Aliyah, the process took on its independent dynamics as a number of people moved to Ariel right after immigrating to Israel because of connections and ties with friends and family already residing there.[7] Nowadays, roughly 40 percent of Ariel are Russian speakers (Ariel Municipality 2017).

Ariel was declared a city level in October 1998 by the Prime Minister Netanyahu. Although Ariel did not officially qualify as a city since it did not have enough inhabitants, its status was elevated due to "security reasons". It thus acquired more political leverage, further planning rights and could raise demands for more services and infrastructure. By the time I visited Ariel for the first time in late 2015, the settlement boasted almost 20 thousand inhabitants, a number of schools and kindergartens, a cultural center, a shopping mall to be opened soon, and a university. It is now widely known as "the capital of Samaria".

"Affordable and Safe"

My interviews confirmed analyses that see the success of the settlement project as a result of the interplay between governmental incentives for Israelis to move to the West Bank (creating the suburban environment in the settlements) and the socio-economic pressures. At this point I should note that there was nonetheless a distinction between the "veterans" ("vatikim") of Ariel who have been living in the settlement since its early years, and the Israelis who moved to the Territories since the late 1980s on. Whereas the interviewees who belonged to the former group did talk about their ideological motivation,[8] those who came to the settlement more recently made clear that their reasons for doing so were much more pragmatic.

Perhaps most importantly, most settlers I interviewed were quite vocal about their fiscal motivation behind moving to the settlement. A common story runs like this: for the money that would get them an apartment in the central, metropolitan areas of the country, they could get a

[7] Personal interviews, 1st June, 2016.

[8] It should be noted that the settlers who founded Ariel were all secular – their motivation was purely nationalistic/ethnic, not religious.

whole house in Ariel. Indeed, in 2015 an average price for an apartment in Ariel was $280,000, that is $150,000 and $320,000 less than in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, respectively (quoted in Slemrod 2015). And it is worth noting that the relative differences in prices were even bigger back in the late 1980s and 1990s.

Another thing about Ariel which featured prominently in the interviews was the appreciation of the "quiet, relaxed"[9] nature of the settlement. Settlers often compared Ariel with the hectic nature of cities (usually Tel Aviv) in Israel proper, and emphasized that its calm nature was one of the main reasons which drew them to the settlement. In this regard, my interviewees seemed to be especially happy about abundance of free space and parks.

Park in Ariel. Source: author's pictures.

[9] Interview, 1st June 2016.

First permanent houses in Ariel. Source: author's pictures.

Commercial center of Ariel. Source: author's pictures

Given that a large number of my interviewees were either young parents, or were ones when they moved to the settlement, it comes as no surprise that they emphasized the family-friendly nature of the settlement. People were especially praising the quality of schools and a low number of students in a class (which is indeed a result of state investments in educational sector in the settlements). Further, they appreciated that unlike in big cities, Ariel was a safe environment for kids. In a nutshell, Ariel is "a good place for raising children."[10] Indeed, both affordability and the quiet it provided motivated Israelis to move to other settlements as well (Allegra 2017).

Although I did not conduct that many interviews with the Russian speaking settlers as I had less points of entry to that community, those I talked to did present the same kind of motivation for moving to a settlement. In this regard, story of David, one of the civilian security guard I met during my time in Ariel, is fairly representative. While we were sitting on a veranda of a rather luxurious duplex he and his wife owned and were sipping on cans of beer that David offered, he recalled his family's journey from Ukraine to Ariel. Early in the 1990s, he followed the demographic trend and as an eligible person of Jewish background made Aliyah with his wife and a young son. Upon immigrating, they found an apartment in the Tel Aviv metropolitan area and David started working two jobs, struggling to provide for his family. One day, during his shift in a restaurant, he got talking to a couple other Russian-speaking customers to whom he casually complained about the humid weather at the coastal area. After he finished with a sight that there is not much to be done as it is the same everywhere in the country, he was quickly corrected and told to visit Ariel which was said to have a much milder weather. David and his wife came to see Ariel a couple days later and immediately liked the local climate and scenery, an attitude which was even enhanced by the low estate prices. They purchased the apartment and moved in soon after.

This story hints at several dynamics important for Ariel's growth. David was first directed to Ariel by a personal acquittance, hinting at the importance of personal connection, essentially a "snow ball effect" that was quite important with regards to the Russian immigration to Ariel. Furthermore, it was the aesthetic appeal of the settlement which attracted him and his wife to

[10] Interview, June 1, 2016.

move there. Lastly, again, the affordability made the choice much easier for the young, struggling family.

The last aspect of a life in the settlement which most settlers seemed to appreciate was the safety it provided. Indeed, the subjective feelings of safety, together with the looming boredom, was something that I did not really expected before I actually started my fieldwork. The following episode fleshes out my surprise. When I first visited the campus of the Ariel University with Nili, a family friend of my ex-classmate, the security guard in a booth by the entrance asked us for our student cards and briefly peeked into our backpacks. After we entered the campus grounds, Nili remarked that the campus security must have been tipped off that there is a chance of some violent incident because usually they would let the students pass without the check. Hearing this was almost shocking to me – having already spend several months at Israel/Palestine at that point, I grew accustomed and largely indifferent to the routine security checks involving one's ID and belongings that took place before entering almost any public building or grounds, including universities. Perhaps my surprise talks to the extent to which I internalized the constant insecuritizing practices (see e.g. Bigo and Tsoukala 2008) as a firm part of the everyday life in Israel/Palestine. In any case, for the students of Ariel University, it appeared, this was not the case and security concerns were not part of their daily experiences.

In general, I quickly understood that most settlers feel secure in Ariel. In many instances, my inquiries regarding security were simply met by a swift affirmation of that. In some, the interviewees said that the whole country (that is, Israel) is under threat permanently, and hence it does not really matter where one lives. Still, the manifestations of security concerns were much more absent in Ariel when compared to many cities in Israel proper. In fact, according to a recent public opinion poll conducted by the Israeli Ministry of Public Security, Ariel is subjectively the safest of thirteen cities surveyed: full 92 percent of Ariel residents feel safe in the settlement (quoted in Israel Hayom 2013).

Uncontested Settlement?

But in spite of all the statements that seek to render Ariel "yet another Israeli city" which is "so peaceful", it is impossible to overlook its position in the Israeli occupational regime even upon a brief scrutiny. What follows is thus a sort of antidote to the depoliticizing language and practices enacted by Israeli settlers and state apparatus alike. In highlighting the actually contested nature of the settlement, I want to draw attention to the contrast between its political status and settlers' everyday lives.

To start with, a significant part of the land that Ariel was built on actually belongs to the Palestinians and it was expropriated by the Israeli state for the purpose of establishing the settlement (see Map 3). Although it is hard to precisely reconstruct ownership of the land in question, Ariel is partially located on land which had been previously farmed by local Palestinians (B'Tselem 2012). According to a research report by Peace Now, a prominent Israeli NGO, as much as 35,1% land on which Ariel is built is in fact owned by Palestinians (Etkes and Ofran 2006, 4). Additional Palestinian land was later confiscated by orders of IDF military commander in order to build roads that would connect Ariel with surrounding settlement and Israel proper, a process which also entailed extensive uprooting of Palestinian olive groves (Lein and Weizman 2002, 119, 130).

This is in stark contrast to the narrative put forward by the settlers. All of the veterans who have been living in the settlement since its inception or its early years emphasized in interviews that Ariel was built "legally", that is with the approval of the state, and that it did not infringe on lives of Palestinians from the surrounding villages. What was repeatedly brought up was that the Palestinians apparently called the area on which Ariel was built "a mountain of death", at which nothing could be grown.[11] This, in my understanding, on the part of settlers stood for Palestinians' tacit approval with the settlement's establishment in Israelis' eyes, and by extension contributed to the legitimacy of Ariel's existence.

[11] I engage this narrative in more details in the next chapter.

Nonetheless, it is clear that the establishment of Ariel and its continuing growth, and later erecting the fence around it, imposes significant hardships on the Palestinian population in the area. As shown on the accompanying map, Ariel and its boundaries marked by the fence run deep into the West Bank, thus separating Palestinian villages and cities from one another. Most notably, the settlement enclave creates a wedge separating Palestinian town of Salfit, the district seat with 10,000 inhabitants, from a cluster of villages north of Ariel which are together home to around 25,000 Palestinians (B'Tselem 2012; Peace Now 2005). In an interview with Human Rights Watch team, a Palestinian from Marda (one of the villages north of Ariel) said that due to restrictions on travel imposed by the Israeli closures, he needs to take 20-kilomertres bypass to reach a neighboring village located just about one kilometer away. Another Palestinian said that until recently when IDF re-opened a former major road from Salfit, a trip from Marda to the town would take 27 kilometers instead of four as used to be the case (Human Rights Watch 2016, 58).[12] All these stories directly echoes Susan Star's remark that "One person's infrastructure is another's topic, or difficulty" (Star 1999a, 380).

Understandably, the presence and ongoing expansion of Ariel also prevents Palestinian dwellings to grow. This is most pronounced with regards to Salfit. The topographical conditions significantly determine the potential for town's growth since it is located on a hill with steep slopes in the south, southeast and southwest. When combined with the fact that part of the land in vicinity of the town is used by Palestinians for agricultural purposes, the only possible direction for new urban development would be to the north. This is nonetheless not possible due to the presence of Ariel.

Nonetheless, hardships for Palestinians do not stem only from spatial limitations imposed by the settlement and infrastructure of the occupation at large. Most pressingly, the settlers cause water pollution in Salfit. Most of the sewage originating at Ariel flows from the western access to the settlement via riverbed to the southwest – towards Salfit. It then passes just meters from a pumping station which supplies most of Palestinian inhabitants with water. The water engineer

[12] When I conducted an interview with a Palestinian from Salfit, the movement restriction imposed by the settlement and occupational infrastructure was the first thing she talked about when I asked her what was her opinion about the settlers. Interview, 12th June, 2017, Ramallah.

of Salfit told B'Tselem researchers that he must occasionally order the municipality to stop pumping after routine inspections reveal particularly high levels of pollution" (Lein and Weizman 2002, 129).[13] In fact, in June 2016 Salfit, as well as a number of other Palestinians municipalities in the West Bank, did not have access to running water for a couple weeks (Hass 2016). I found out about this only months after I moved out from the settlement.

Lastly, the discursive construction of Ariel as a family-friendly community ignores its crucial geopolitical location that I touched upon above. Curiously enough, that is something that the members of "gari'in", the first group of settlers who established Ariel, were quite vocal about when I interviewed them. "We set up the settlement ['yishuv'] in this area because it was half way between the Green Line and Jordan", I was told by Daniela who back at the day was a member of local council at the just-established settlement.[14] Nonetheless, the importance of the strategic location was mentioned only by people who, like Daniela, had been living in the settlement from the beginning.

There is a wide agreement that due to its location (as seen on the map, it takes a long and narrow shape), Ariel severely complicates the prospects of a continuous Palestinian state. As summed up by Lein and Weizman in their report for B'Tselem, "one of these considerations [regarding Ariel's location] was to create as long a barrier as possible separating the Palestinian communities on either side of the Trans-Samaria Highway and disrupting the territorial contiguity of this area"(Lein and Weizman 2002, 120). According to Shirit, a senior Israeli expert working on settlements, the existence of Ariel "destroys the whole area of the [potential] Palestinian state"[15] as it disrupts the necessary infrastructural networks in the northern West Bank.

[13] These issues have not been addressed since the report's publication (see Ashly 2017).
[14] Interview, 19th April 2016, Ariel.
[15] Interview, 14th June, 2017, Jerusalem.

Conclusion

This chapter sought to introduce the Israeli settlement project in order to provide the reader with background that can be helpful to better contextualize the empirical part of the thesis. Apart from discussing the specific case of Ariel where I conducted the main bulk of my fieldwork, I sought to introduce the existing scholarship and the insights which orient my project. As I argued, the new critical literature departs from the too narrow focus of the older scholarship which was dominantly focused on the religious-nationalist segments of the settler population. The new direction in research, by contrast, has focused on the normalization of the settlement enterprise and its in many regards quotidian nature.

I specifically identified three broad notions that are important for my present concerns: the impossibility to truly distinguish between the Occupied Territories and Israel proper, neoliberal policies and their implications for the settlement process, and lastly the process of suburbanization in Israeli/Palestine. Together, these insights enable us to situate the settlement project in a broader context of social and political developments in the region. Rather than see it solely in terms of the Zionist colonization of Palestine, this literature demonstrates that the settlement project operates through and is enhanced by more mundane processes of general mobility patterns, increased costs of living, seeking higher quality of life, and pragmatic considerations.

Nonetheless, if we take seriously the claim that the settlement enterprise has merged into the Israeli political and societal mainstream during the last three decades, there still remains the question of how are the settlements normalized in everyday context. Indeed, “normalizing” the everyday live in settlements is a necessary prerequisite for a success of the settlements as family-friendly haven for struggling middle class. In other words, what I would like to argue is that it is one thing to discursively depict settlements as mere suburban communities; to render the settlements safe, non-eventful, suburban and “normal” on the part of their inhabitants, despite their precarious geopolitical position and the resistance they generate, is a rather different matter.

So what I want to engage in this thesis is the matter of what accounts for this discrepancy between the everyday life in Ariel and other similar settlements on the one hand, and the nature of these sites which are not only politically contested but are also a firm part of the oppressive rule over the civilian population on the other. In other words, I inquiry into issues like how is the everyday normalcy in the settlements achieved? And through what specific practices, technologies and arrangements are the precarious conditions depoliticized on the part of settlers? In order to address these questions, I first discuss the conceptual and methodological framework that helped me to make sense of the reality in Israel/Palestine, and then discuss my empirical findings.

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Foucauldian Analytics of Power

This chapter seeks to familiarize the reader with conceptual approach and tools that inform this thesis. It is divided into two main parts. The first one discusses Foucauldian analytics of power, starting with a few general remarks on the overall characteristics of this scholarship and its foundations. I then engage the notion of governmental programme, a coherent set of practices following given aims, and introduce a concept of dispositif, a heterogenous yet strategically oriented set of various elements. I conclude the first section by discussing how can Foucauldian apparatus benefit from engagement with Rancière's work.

The second part engages specific practices and elements which constitute parts of the depoliticizing dispositif. For reasons that I discuss below, I focus on materiality and visuality as fields that are crucial for effective working of the dispositif. In doing so, I am thus providing an account that enables to grasp the distribution of the sensible in specific settings. Essentially, then, the notions introduced in this chapter help me to make sense of how "macro" political processes play out on "micro" everyday level through particular material and visual constellations. I first discuss the notion of visuality, attending especially to the scholarship which deals with "embodied" ways of seeing. After arguing that this way of seeing is conditioned by material and spatial arrangements, I then engage large-scale project that sought to reconfigure material environments with political goals. This is followed by a discussion on the intersections and connections between these two bodies of literature. I first offer an overview of some works which have explicitly engaged both materiality and visuality within one analytical framework. Building on this, I then argue more broadly that material and visual elements are inextricably related. In the following section, I highlight how do the material-visual complexes co-constitute, and are in turn shaped by, power relations. Lastly, going back to the central concern of this thesis, I show how these complexes, while configurated in certain ways, can have depoliticizing effects. Utilizing the notion of dispositif, I highlight the importance of visual and material elements that operate within it.

Foucault and Power

One prominent line of Foucault's work was to attend to the ways in which power circulates in modern societies, and genealogically traces its shifts, ruptures, and continuities. Famously, Foucault argued that we need to decenter our attention from the narrowly defined centers of power like parliaments, elected offices and alike. Although they remain in many regards decisive sites, Foucauldian perspective seeks to unsettle this orthodox understanding of the political and its distinction from the social, an argument that was encapsulated in his widely quoted aphorism calling for "cutting off the head of the king" in the study of politics (Foucault 1980, 121). This is not to say that Foucault denies tangibility of power: to the contrary, his thinking provides venues for identifying various, yet specific "multiple, relational, heterogeneous and pervasive" (Walters 2012, 14) power relations. These relations are "both intentional and nonsubjective" (Foucault 1978, 94): they are underpinned by certain rationality and they seek certain goals, yet it is impossible to identify actors who willfully pursue them. In Foucault's own words, "the logic [of power] is perfectly clear, the aims decipherable, and yet it is often the case that no one is there to have invented them, and few who can be said to have formulated them" (Foucault 1978, 95).

What is crucial to emphasize is that, as Michael Dillon and Luis Lobo-Guerrero (Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero 2008, 270) remind us, "Foucault never offered, or claimed to offer, a general theory of power"; all his analyses were strictly historically and spatially situated. Thus, although Foucauldian scholars are concerned with power, they do not seek to identify some kind of essential, transcendental notion of "the power". Indeed, such an approach goes against the crux of Foucault's thinking, at least in its original articulations. As several authors propose, Foucault's writings together constitute rather than anything a perspective, an "analytics of power" (Walters 2012; Dean 2010; Brass 2000). In this understanding of social and political reality, one does not look for clear-cut positions of the dominated and dominating but rather for pervasive, often seemingly mundane, in many cases hardly noticeable "dispositions, manoeuvres, tactics, techniques, functionings" (Foucault 1995, 26) that establish power relations. Building on this

overall prespective, the present section introduces two aspects of Foucauldian apparatus: the notion of governmental programmes and the concept of dispositif.

Governmental Programmes

One of the most prominent concepts introduced by Foucault that has been taken up widely in a number of academic fields is the notion of "governmentality", succinctly defined by Foucault as "conduct of conduct" (Foucault 1982, 789–90, 2007, 193). According to Gordon, this stands for "a form of activity aiming to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons" (Foucault 1991, 2), including oneself. Foucault's starting point in this regard is the proliferation of governance from the 18th century onwards as it was employed by "the head of a family, the superior of a covenant, the teacher or a tutor of a child or a pupil" (Foucault 1991, 91), further expanding "from management of company employees to […] daily practices in public spaces to governing trans-national institutions such as the European Union and the United Nations" (Bröckling, Krasmann, and Lemke 2011, 11). According to Foucault, governmentality is a specific mode of power relations at whose heart is exactly this abundance of governing, that is "conducting conduct", within and across different spheres of social and political life (Lemke 2007, 45).

Since Foucault's lecture on governmentality has become accessible to the English-speaking audience, the governmentality approach has inspired a remarkable body of scholarship. Nonetheless, importantly for the present project, much of this literature suffers from a somewhat narrow understanding of what governmentality constitutes. Although Foucault offers understanding of governmentality that can travel across different contexts, his work looked by far most closely at the emergence and working of liberal forms of governance, and later at its neoliberal transformation (Foucault 2008; Lemke 2001). This line of thought has been followed by a number of authors who have conflated governmentality as an analytical tool with its (neo)liberal incarnations. Nonetheless, I side with Walters in arguing that "a focus on the history of governmentality is more useful and productive than conflating governmentality and

liberalism" (Walters 2012, 10). Essentially, then, Walters seeks to promote a broader understanding of the concept which would enable to capture various rationalities and practices. In other words, for analytical purposes governmentality can be decoupled from investigations of these particular constellations of rule and political rationality. The excessive focus on (neo)liberal modes of governance has often diverted attention from rationalities and programmes that are decisively illiberal. In a similar manner, until quite recently the existing studies heavily tended to investigate Western context, thus subscribing to the Eurocentric bias of Foucault's own work (see e.g. Browne 2015, 31–62; Shani 2010; Legg 2007; Stoler 1995).

Incorporating critiques raised against these limitations of much of the governmentality scholarship, in this thesis I subscribe to a broad understanding of the concept and the scope of its analytical potential. That is to say, I conceive of governmentality as a general framework which enables us to capture goals and practices of government which are not linked to specific rationalities (e.g. neoliberalism). In this reading adopted in this thesis, governance is dispersed throughout the social and political body in various forms and given governmentality can follow a whole variety of objectives; there is a whole plethora of possible "mentalities of government" (Dean 2010, 24–25; N. Rose and Miller 1992).

What I want to introduce here is the notion of *governmental programmes*. By this term I understand particular, relatively large scale projects which follow certain rationality and seek to achieve certain goals. Although in their discussion of governmentality Miller and Rose emphasize the significance of language with regards to its claim to represent the nature of the issue at question, as well as making it thinkable in terms of "political deliberation" (Miller and Rose 1990, 6), here I want to argue that governmental programmes are not necessarily dependent on explicitly formulated, coherent discourse that would objectify reality in a fashion amenable for interventions. While it is true that particular governmentalities are underpinned by particular epistemes (like political economy in the case of Foucault's understanding of modern liberal governmentality), what I would like to propose here is that one identify governmental programmes without explicitly identifying their underlying assumptions and epistemological

frameworks. I rather argue that a crucial feature of such programmes is that they are underpinned and oriented by "a general line of force" (Foucault 1978, 94).

In his foundational lecture on governmentality, Foucault notes that "[g]overnment is the right disposition of things" (Foucault 1991, 93). He then immediately makes clear that it is "[n]ot a matter of opposing things to men, but rather […] a sort of complex composed of men and things" (Foucault 1991, 93). Finally, he notes that "the finality of government resides in the things it manages and in the pursuit of the perfection and intensification of the processes which it directs" (Foucault 1991, 95). Unlike sovereignty whose end is sovereignty itself, governmentality thus works to promote phenomena which are external to it. But as I outlined above, what is important here is that Foucault's framework allows for a variety of underlying mentalities of government. So whereas neoliberal projects in general seek to replace the existing social and political relations with those that govern markets (Lemke 2001), colonial projects aimed to render the ruled population subjugated according to certain civilizational hierarchy (D. Scott 1995).

Governmental programmes are often composed of a number of rationalities which can at times seemingly clash with each other. Thus, the supposedly liberal European institutions can employ a mixture of democratic decision-making and authoritative measures if they are deemed appropriate for maintaining security. Investigating a very different context, Tania Li (Li 2007) shows that development activities in Indonesia can be productively seen as a part of overall effort underpinned by the "will to improve". This rationality was then translated into myriads of practices, policies and initiatives that sought to advance the developmental programmes. In a similar manner, Timothy Mitchell (T. Mitchell 2002) showed how Egypt witnessed a series of processes that together sought to achieve modernization of the country through various means.

To be clear, I do not claim that governmental programmes which follow roughly the same rationality are essentially of the same kind. That is to say, for example, that the set of projects seeking to improve social conditions in Egypt and Indonesia should not be seen as mere variations of "the developmental programmes". Rather, as examples of Li's and Mitchell's work show, although there might be traits that are shared across similar development projects (like relying on the figure of the expert and bureaucratization), their differences cannot be overlooked. Again,

such understanding of governmental programmes also subscribes to Foucault's attention to the specifics and context of the investigated power relations. In a nutshell, what I propose here is that it is worthwhile to understand these set of initiatives, policies, discourses and measures as a part of individual governmental programmes underpinned by certain rationality.

In this thesis I consider various depoliticizing efforts in terms of such governmental programmes. There are clearly defined objectives (although not necessarily explicitly formulated) – rendering contested social and political conditions and hierarchies seemingly "natural" and "obvious" (see the discussion of *Rancière*'s work above). Depolitization programmes can thus be found in different form in various settings. These broad goals are then supported by a variety of practices, actions, subjectivitization processes, and way beyond. These leads me to the notion of dispositif that is crucial for conceptualization of these various elements.

Dispositif

The notion of dispositif has provoked quite intense debate pertaining to its proper translation, its relationship to other concepts, and its genealogy (see e.g. Deleuze 1992; Agamben 2009; Legg 2011; Pasquinelli 2015; Bussolini 2010). Foucault himself (Foucault 1980, 194) defines dispositif as a "thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid", among which "the system of relations" exists. Following his general outlook on history, Foucault looks into how were particular dispositifs "deployed for specific purposes at a particular historical conjuncture" (Rabinow 2003, 50), like management of sexuality (Foucault 1978), penal system (Foucault 1995), or even matters like scarcity of grain (Foucault 2007, 31–33) or prevention of diseases' spread in a city (Foucault 2007, 57–63). Nonetheless, in the present thesis, I employ this notion as a general tool to capture the various elements that work together to promote given governmental objectives. As such, it has been used to analyze a number of issues pertaining to international politics, for example

terrorism (Ditrych 2013) or a catastrophe (Aradau and Munster 2011). There are several characteristics of dispositif which are important for the present research.

First, what defines a dispositif is the heterogeneity of elements which together constitute respective entities and different social and political plains on which it operates. Rabinow (Rabinow 2003, 51) notes that Foucault's utilization of dispositif marks his departure from exclusive focus on discourse that characterized his *Archeology of Knowledge* (Foucault 1976). Although power-knowledge nexus is clearly at the heart of diagnostics that this concept provides, unlike some other analytical tools that Foucault introduced, dispositifs are firmly composed of material as well non-material elements; they are "forms composed of heterogeneous elements that have been […] set to work in multiple domains" (Rabinow 2003, 55). It is this heterogenous nature which provides it with a substantial analytical strength.

Second, in contrast to assemblage, a somewhat related concept that has become a fashionable tool in critical IR recently, dispositif is not necessarily less prone to transformation and change[16], but its overall positioning within "the perpetually dynamic social field" (Bussolini 2010, 90) is more stable. This is not to say that its working forecloses the possibility of transformation; there are "changes in the position of its elements" (Rabinow 2003, 52), flexibility and "elaboration" of the overall structure which utilizes new phenomena which it incorporates into the set of strategic relationships, rivalries and dominations (Foucault 1980, 195–96).

One can take insurance as an example in this regard. Emerging in the context of maritime trade as means to offset risks inherently associated with this endeavor, it has gradually spread into multiple realms. Since its introduction, the way insurance is employed, its beneficiaries, the institutions that participate in it, the legalistic framework it exists in, they all have undergone changes. Nonetheless, insurance still works, in Ewald's words (Ewald 1991, 205) as "the compensation of effects of chance through mutuality organised according to the laws of statistics". Thus, although dispositif is "subject to transformation and modification, depending

[16]Bargu argues that one of the assemblage's characteristic features is the "continuous rupture and flight [of the constitutive elements] away from that structure" (Bargu 2016, 53). In the same vein, Acuto and Curtis argue that what defines this perspective on social reality is the "insistence on the provisional nature of all assemblages as historically contingent entities" (Acuto and Curtis 2014a, 4).

on the knowledgeable representations of the problems and objects to be governed and on the available technologies" (Aradau and Munster 2008, 26), it still follows the same overall objectives.

Third, the most important defining characteristic of dispositif is its general orientation as it is oriented towards specific goals: as Bussolini argued, what is crucial about dispositif is not necessarily the list of its constitutive elements but "the particular arrangement and relations between them" (Bussolini 2010, 92). In this regard, it is important to note, as several commentators pointed out, that Foucault uses dispositif in close relation to "oikonomia" (Dean 2016, 87; Bussolini 2010, 87; Agamben 2009, 8–12), a Greek term that could be translated to economy, to the extent that he sometimes seems to treat them interchangeably. In Foucault's understanding, dispositif is firmly tied to, indeed its founding basis consists of a particular distribution and calculation of available means and their effects. In this regard, Rabinow talks about "tactical economy of domination operating against a background of discursive formations" (Rabinow 2003, 52).

What is thus the most important property of a dispositif is its situatedness in and relationship to the existing power conditions. As I mentioned above, Foucault firmly maintained that although power has intentionality, it lacks subject as such; it is "strategy without strategist" (Foucault 1978, 94–95) whose "logic is perfectly clear, the aims decipherable, and yet it is often the case that no one is there to have invented them, and few who can be said to have formulated them" (Foucault 1978, 95). In this regard, it is worthwhile to highlight Foucault's distinction between tactics and strategy. The former stand for specific, tangible and identifiable acts which follow seemingly unrelated aims that nonetheless, working together, follow and promote the latter, that is an overall strategic project. In this perspective, one needs to investigate various power-laden actions "on the two levels of their tactical productivity (what reciprocal effects of power and knowledge they ensure) and their strategical integration (what conjunction and what force relationship make their utilization necessary in a given episode of the various confrontations that occur)" (Foucault 1978, 102). What then emerges is that

> "the rationality of power is characterized by tactics that are often quite explicit at the restricted level where they are inscribed (the local cynicism of power), tactics which, becoming connected to one another, attracting and propagating one another, but finding their base of support and their condition elsewhere, end by forming comprehensive systems: […] an implicit characteristic of the great anonymous, almost unspoken strategies which coordinate the loquacious tactics whose 'inventors' or decisionmakers are often without hypocrisy." (Foucault 1978, 95)

A dispositif is essentially composed of these myriads of tactics, yet it is embedded in and organized by strategic considerations: it subscribes to Foucault's "double conditioning of a strategy by the specificity of possible tactics, and of tactics by the strategic envelope that makes them work" (Foucault 1978, 100). As such, a dispositif has "a dominant strategic function" (Foucault 1980, 195), there is "an overall articulated strategic intent" (Rabinow 2003, 52). Through "certain manipulation of relation of forces, either developing them in a particular direction, blocking them, stabilizing them, utilizing them, etc." (Foucault 1980, 195), it operates within power fields in order to accomplish certain objectives. Dispositif is oriented in accordance with, subscribes to and in turn promotes "a general line of force" (Foucault 1978, 94). In other words, as hinted above, I understand dispositif as a set of heterogeneous elements organized in a way that promotes given governmental programmes. Given the Foucauldian perspective, the distinction between the programme and the dispositif is indeed somewhat tenuous and blurred since the underlying rationalities are hard to distinguish from the practices that enact them. Nonetheless, for heuristic reasons, in this thesis I employ dispositif in the sense that renders it more "operational" entity, i.e. means, practices, artefacts and relations which work to achieve objectives set up by governmental programmes.

Governmentality of Depolitization and Its Dispositif

How does this debate relate to the core concerns of this thesis, i.e. how are contentious issues and practices rendered "natural" and non-problematic for certain segments of population? As I

briefly discussed in the introduction, most of the existing academic works approach the concept of depolitization in too formalistic terms, focusing on the matters of high politics. To the contrary, the work of Jacques Rancière (Ranciere 1999, 2004) provides a venue for looking into depoliticizing processes which go beyond narrowly defined venues of power and politic like parliaments and elected offices, a line of thought he shares with Foucault. In the remainder of this chapter I provide outline of how can be the two bodies of work productively combined.

The point of departure of Rancière's political project is Aristotle's distinction between voice and speech – whereas the former stands for capacity to express basic emotions, something that humans share with animals, the latter marks its bearer as a true member of the political society. It is one's occupation (and hence social and political position) which determines if (s)he is able to participate in public discourse.

Rancière adopts a peculiar understanding of two concepts that are pivotal in his thinking on these matters: police and (meta)politics. Rancière borrows the former term from Foucault, although as noted by Tonny Bennet (T. Bennett 2013, 135), without his meticulous attention to historical circumstances in which "police" emerged in Foucault's reading. For Rancière, police operates as 'the set of procedures whereby the aggregation and consent of collectivities is achieved, the organization of powers, the distribution of places and roles, and the systems for legitimizing this distribution' (Ranciere 1999, 28). It is the police that determines who is able to "speak" and participate fully in the polity. Usually, this definition would be understood as referring to politics. But for Rancière, politics is the emancipatory movement which seeks to do away with the distinctions between occupations, positions, and voice and speech; it is based on "the presupposition of the equality of anyone and everyone" (Ranciere 1999, 18). In other words, politics is the essential interruption of the police order and the refusal the "distribution of the sensible".

This latest concept is what I consider as especially productive aspect of Rancière's work for my project. He defines it as "the system of *a priori* forms determining what presents itself to sense experience. It is a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience'

(Ranciere 2004, 13). Conceptualized in this way, the police that sustains the existing power hierarchies operates to a large extent by rendering them "natural", uncontestable and obvious. Whose task is what, who is able to speak and who not, are taken out of public deliberation. As noted by Bleiker (Bleiker 2018, 20), these distinctions and "boundaries between what can be seen and not, felt and not, thought and not, and, as a result, between what is politically possible and not" are "arbitrary but often accepted self-evidently as common sense." Distribution of the sensible thus poses as a profound and constantly ongoing act of depolitization exactly through its naturalization.

In this regard, Rancière's work shows some affinity with Foucault's thinking on the ways in which power asserts itself through its concealment. In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault proposes that "power is tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself" (Foucault 1978, 86) and that "its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms" (Foucault 1978, 86). These arguments are then fleshed out in his respective works on sexuality, surveillance and biopolitics which demonstrate how the subtle mechanisms of power often become unnoticeable, non-prominent, operating under the threshold of the detectable. Rancière's notions provide inspiration with regards to some of the practices and rationalities that further serve to naturalize the existing power relations.

Although the notion of "distribution of the sensible" complements Foucauldian scholarship in a rather productive way, what Rancière leaves open is how are these particular depoliticizing moves achieved, and how they are employed in specific contexts. The fact that Rancière does not attend extensively to specific practices through which is depolitization achieved comes as no surprise given his craft as a philosopher. On a similar note, most of the authors concerned with these issues focus on discursive, bureaucratic or procedural mechanisms which work to "remov[e] conflicting issues from the political field" (Profant 2017, 1).

Reading Rancière's work through Foucauldian apparatus can provide us with a way how to address this (relative) lacuna of attention to the specific mechanisms through which is the perceivable established. Building on the ideas and analytical apparatus discussed here, I conceptualize "distribution of the sensible" as a governmental programme whose goal is to

structure reality in the way which renders it non-contentious and "obvious" despite its precarious nature. That is to say, depolitization is the goal of the programme which seeks to achieve this through various means.

I further propose that one can comprehend better the processes pertaining to the what is perceivable and what not if they are understood as a part of dispositif. In this perspective, building on the discussion above, various, seemingly disparate practices, mechanisms and technologies are oriented according to the overall depoliticizing rationality. As such, the given dispositif channels the individual elements with the purpose of structuring the perceivable in a way that will render it non-contestable, natural and obvious.

Methodologically, exploring (any) dispositif can be a rather daunting task. Given its complexity and multi-faceted nature, it might be nearly impossible to capture all of its relevant parts and their relationships. The methodological choice I made in this project was to, after outlining the overall constitution of forces in play, to narrow the analytical scope to particular aspects which stood up the most in the course of my research. Therefore, although I attend to other elements that constitute the investigated *dispositif of depolitization*, in this project I focus dominantly on material and visual arrangements, arrangements to which I turn in the following chapter.

Materiality and Visuality

Visuality

Seeing the International

In the field of (critical) IR and IPS, seeing has received a fair deal of attention in the last two decades. One of the first works which engaged this issue, although rather briefly, was Michael William's 2003 article. In his critical assesment of the Copenhagen School and its sole focus on speech acts as securitizing practices, Michael Williams noted that „political communication is increasingly bound with images" (Williams 2003, 524). Since the William's article came out, we have witnessed a growing interests of IR and CSS scholars in how images shape, inform and are

co-constituted by/co-constitutive of the international politics and security. Broadly understood as a part of the "aesthetic turn" in IR (Bleiker 2001, 2009), this focus stems from the fact that "[t]he ways people come to know, think about, and respond to developments in the world are deeply entrenched in the ways this information is made visible to them" (Shim and Nabers 2013, 292). Campbell echoes these remarks when he notes that "[v]isual imagery […] is one of the principal ways in which news from distant places is brought home" (Campbell 2007, 358; see also Lisle 2009). These concerns underpin a burgeoning research agenda in critical geopolitics and IR.

One prominent topic in this literature is how particular visualizations of conflicts and human suffering influences policies and attitudes on the global scale, on occasions pushing governments to take actions and publics to become involved, while other contexts are rendered invisible and some elements are excluded from the (visual) frame (Bleiker et al. 2013; Campbell 2007; Hozić 2011; Hutchison 2014). IR scholars have further looked into how is "the international" embodied and (re)created in visual artefacts like movies, photography and art (Hansen 2015; Weldes 2003; Kiersey and Neumann 2014; Lisle 2007; Shapiro 2008; Shim and Nabers 2013; Shim 2014; Sylvester 2009). In the field of critical security studies, there has been work done on the role of images and other visual materials in the process of securitization(s) (Hansen 2011; Andersen, Vuori, and Guillaume 2015; Williams 2003; Vuori 2010; Heck and Schlag 2013). Yet other authors, most notably Frank Möller, have explored photographs' potential to disrupt the dominant political and ethical framing of major events with international impact like ethnic cleansing, genocide and other instance of mass atrocities (Andersen and Möller 2013; Möller 2009, 2010, 2017).

Most of these work are concerned with visual representation of the international through images, still or moving. However, as noted by Stephen Graham (Stephen Graham 2010, 202), "power of the visual always exceeds the simple matter of representation", an argument put forward also by Aida Hozić (Hozić 2011, 169) who remarks that there is "sense of fatigue with research focused on representation only". So far, the everyday politics of seeing has received relatively less attention in the critical IR and related fields compared to significance of images, but there is now a small yet promising body of works which look into "the embodied, spatial and

historically constituted nature of seeing and being seen in particular sites“ (Lisle 2016, 303). These authors[17] draw their theoretical, conceptual and methodological inspiration from a wide variety of interdisciplinary literature in order to explore the politics of seeing and its embedeness in various registers of social life. The next two sections discuss this scholarship.

Visibility and its Situadness

According to some, sight appears to be somewhat prominent among the human senses. John Berger opens his book on the gaze investigating European female nudes paintings by proposing that “Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak“ (Berger 1972, 7). Essentially the same argument is made by Fyfe and Law who propose that “Depiction, picturing and seeing are ubiquitous features of the process by which most human beings come to know the world as it really *is* for them“ (Fyfe and Law 1988, 2; emphasis in original). Nonetheless, other authors argue that the valorization of sight, and the various visual representations and depictions, is result of certain political, social and technological transformations that occurred in the West in the last several centuries (Jay 1993). Essentially, some propose, these developments can be understood as a shift from premodernity to modernity to postmodernity (see e.g. Mirzoeff 2009).

What needs to be clarified at this point is the difference between vision and visuality. According to Gillian Rose, vision can be conceived that “what the human eye is physiologically capable of seeing“ (G. Rose 2001, 6), though she notes that “ideas about that capability have changed historically and will most likely continue to change“ (G. Rose 2001, 6). By contrast, visuality refers to „how we see, how we are able, allowed, or made to see, and how we see this seeing and the unseeing therein“ (Foster 1988, ix). In other words, whereas vision is a biological feature (whose scope nonetheless can change), visuality is a socially and politically constructed and co-determined set of faculties, possibilities and closures: vision is a “cultural construction, that it is learned and cultivated, not simply given by nature“ (W. J. Mitchell 2002, 166).

[17] See especially the work by Peter Adey (e.g. (Adey 2004, 2007, 2008).

What these various authors largely converge on is the political and historical nature of "seeing" as "deeper ontological and epistemological questions of visuality are harnessed to dominant power relations" (Lisle 2016, 304). This is to say, far from being "obvious" and non-problematic, seeing has particular histories and is embroiled in various conditions. According to Gil Hochberg, what is at stake at the critical inquiries into visuality is to ask "what or who can be seen, what or who remains invisible, who can see and whose vision is compromised" (Hochberg 2015, 5). Halpern notes that „our forms of attention, observation, and truth are situated, contingent, and contested and that the ways we are trained, and train ourselves, to observe, document, record, and analyze the world are deeply historical in character" (Halpern 2015, 1). A distinct yet similar point is raised in an anonymous quote that opens Pader's piece on ethnographic sensibility: "I wouldn't have seen it if I didn't believe it" (Pader 2006, 162). What this yet again suggests is that there are certain preconditions, experiences and notions that inform and orient our gaze.

For example, in her work on the US Guantanamo Bay Base, Elspeth Van Veeren (Van Veeren 2014, 2011) discusses how particular visuality surrounding the camp made its existence and practices that had been taking place there much more acceptable for the American public. At some point, when discussing high-profile visits of the camp by celebrities and other VIP guests, she argues: **"**In part, the tours worked because they mobilized the tropes common in existing justifications of prison in US culture. The power that has historically been invested in making prison seems safe rendered Guantanamo commonsensically safe too" (Van Veeren 2014, 29). One could further argue that compared to other nations which were much more critical of the US detnetion program, the American public was attuned to the official narrative of the War on Terror.

In other words, what the Van Veeren's work demonstrates is the larger argument made in this scholarship proposing that various sense-making practices are embedded in and intertwined with the existing power structure. In this regard, the post-colonial scholars have showed that the Western domination of "the global South" was intimately linked to ways in which were the colonial subjects depicted in photographs, art exhibitions and books and travel diaries. The imperial gaze was thus an integral part of the political asymmetries between the colonized and

the colonizer, which corresponded to the observed and the observer (see e.g. Landau and Kaspin 2002; Poole 1997; Ryan 1997; W. J. T. Mitchell 2002). In similar vein, feminist literature demonstrates that gender inequalities are created and propelled, apart from other means and practices, through particular visual construction of "men" and "women" (Petchesky 1987; G. Rose 2003; Hunt and Lessard 2002; G. Rose 2010).

In other words, there is nothing "innocent" and "neutral" about sight. There is no "seeing" without power relations involved as particular modes of gaze feed into and are informed by particular social conditions and political projects. Critical scholars thus urge us to probe these conditions and histories in order to denaturalize the sight and situate it within the web of power relationships. For example, when discussing the political economy of images taken by Westerners in the Andes, Deborah Poole argues that scholars need to attend to "the cultural and discursive systems through which graphic images are appraised, interpreted, and assigned historical, scientific, and aesthetic worth. Here it becomes important to ask not what specific images *mean* but, rather, how images accrue value." (Poole 1997, 10; emphasis in original). Throughout her work, Poole shows how the photographs she studies became valuable, and by extension politically significant, when they were deemed to "truly" represent the realities in the Latin America.

This literature is a good starting point for my present concerns as it problematizes seeing as a natural, unmediated intake of visual information, and highlight the power relations that go into forming a certain (seeing) subject and certain relationship between the seeing and the seen; in the words of Gil Hochberg, these scholars work towards "denaturalization of vision and the political construction of sight and visibility" (Hochberg 2015, 5). So although, in a manner similar to much of IR scholarship on sight, Poole and other authors are concerned mostly with images and movies, their work highlights the political significance of seeing, including "embodied" seeing. I am drawing on these works in the next section which deals exactly with this mode of gaze.

Embodied Seeing and Its Politics

Drawing on the literature discussed in the previous section, here I want to discuss what Lisle "more-than-representational registers of seeing" (Lisle 2016), that is embodied, in-person ways of seeing. The starting point is that it would be simplistic to see embodied seeing as a mere physiological capacity to see, as Rose quoted above put it, for several reasons. First, the scholarship which informs this thesis persuasively shows that there is no such thing as unmediated seeing. All seeing is embedded in larger social and political structures, and is conditioned by its context. In her book on visual methodologies, Gillian Rose (G. Rose 2001) argues that audience is one of the crucial sites where perception of images is produced. To put it differently, although the production of the image (context in which it was made), and the image itself (its composition, resolution etc.) are important in determining its effects, it is the audience, its positionality and context in which they "see" things, that generates the meaning of the images. Even further, Rose argues a crucial aspect of audience is the social composition and context in which seeing occurs: "[seeing is] always practiced in particular ways, and different practices are often associated with different kind of images in different kind of place" (G. Rose 2001, 26). Although Rose talks about people looking at still or moving images at places like cinema or gallery, the notion of 'audiencing' that she borrows from John Fiske (Fiske 1992) can be applied to contexts beyond these contained sites and exposure to particular images. She argues that with regards to viewers, two aspects are important to inquiry into, namely "the social practices of spectating and the social identities of the spectators" (G. Rose 2001, 27).

Similar argument has been proposed by Debbie Lisle in her recent piece providing overview of critical IPS and IR approaches to gaze. She notes that "seeing always entails the related registers of being, knowing and becoming" (Lisle 2016, 300) and then goes on to argue that "The co-constitution of reality and representation, as well as the inclusions and exclusions produced by acts of framing, are central to the way scholars engaging with an international political sociology have explored the ontological and epistemological claims of visuality" (Lisle 2016, 300).

What stems from these notions is that, quite literally, different people see different things: for example, Rose talks about how her students of different generations analyzed a particular image

of a woman quite differently depending on the prevalent attitudes in the society. Along the same lines, in her discussion of jihadi recruitment videos, Anna Leander (Leander 2017) talks about "plurality of sense-making practices". She argues that despite the dominant focus on the apocalyptic and violent messages that allegedly define these propagation materials according to majority of Western experts and analysts, more careful reading/seeing of these videos demonstrates that they appeal to much more "ordinary" value systems of potential viewers. This discrepancy points at the multiplicity ways in which visual material can be employed and perceived.

Nonetheless, this is not to say that everyday, embodied seeing is exempted from politics. On the one hand, if one takes the literature on visuality and sight seriously, it becomes apparent that seeing is not only multiple but also a site of struggle and contestation. In their discussion of the importance of visuality within governmental programmes, Tazzioli and Walters argue that "we need to think of visibility not as a gaze emanates only from places of authority, but a more complex and variegated field in which multiple practices and orders of visibility intersect, resulting in relations of combination, contradiction and conflict" (Tazzioli and Walters 2016, 449). In most settings, gaze is thus never one-directional, and there is a multiplicity of sites at which the roles of the watching and the watched are in a constant flux and subject to contestation. Fleshing out these arguments, Gil Hochberg (Hochberg 2015) in her work investigates various artistic projects which seek to disturb and challenge the dominant ways of seeing in Israel/Palestine that subjugate the Palestinians to the Israeli rule. She looks into how these projects visually re-construct destroyed Palestinian villages and turn the surveilling gaze of the Israeli state on the soldiers who embody it at the checkpoints.

But although, per Foucault, there is always space for resistance to the dominant power relations and the gaze they employ, many scholars argue that the sight is often organized within certain dominant political structures. Both paraphrasing and complementing Foucault, Tazzioli and Walters argue "that that there are no power relations without a correlate production of a specific economy of visibility" (Tazzioli and Walters 2016, 449) which "produces spaces of visibility and spaces of invisibility, and determines from time to time the thresholds of what can be seen and

what remains unseen“ (Tazzioli and Walters 2016, 449). Various authors have offered various ways and vocabularies to conceptualize these economies. Feldman talks about scopic regimes by which he understands “the agendas and techniques of political visualization: the regimens that prescribe modes of seeing and object visibility and that proscribe or render untenable other modes and objects of perception. A scopic regime is an ensemble of practices and discourses that establish the truth claims, typicality, and credibility of visual acts and objects and politically correct modes of seeing“ (Feldman 1997, 30). In his influential account, Brighenti talks about “regimes of visibility”, that is “a repeated, agreed upon and more or less settled pattern of interaction. Each regime attempts to settle a series of normative questions: in the case of visibility, what is worth paying attention to, what we have a right to observe and what can be seen safely, taking pleasure from it“ (Brighenti 2010, 45).

Perhaps the most sophisticated account of these structures came from Nicholas Mirzoeff. Echoing other scholars who emphasize that visuality goes far beyond mere seeing, Mirzoeff understand visuality as “not composed simply of visual perceptions in the physical sense but is formed by a set of relations combining information, imagination, and insight into a rendition of physical and psychic space” (Mirzoeff 2011a, 476). At the same time, like other authors, Mirzoeff is highly attentative to the political hierarchies that sustain and are sustained in turn by visuality; it is visuality that „renders the processes of History visible to power" (Mirzoeff 2009b, 5). As such, “Visuality is a supplement, but it is the one that completes the ability to rule” (Mirzoeff 2014, 216).

Mirzoeff then goes on to introduce “complexes of visuality” that uphold given power regimes. Building on his understanding of visuality, he defines complexes of visuality in the following manner:

> “*Complex* here means the production of a set of social organizations and processes that form a given complex, such as the plantation complex, and the state of an individual’s psychic economy, such as the Oedipus complex, although I do not have space to develop that side of the argument here. The resulting imbrication of mentality and organization produces a visualized deployment of bodies and a training of minds, organized to sustain

> physical segregation between rulers and ruled and mental compliance with those arrangements. The resulting complex has volume and substance, forming a lifeworld that can be both visualized and inhabited." (Mirzoeff 2011a, 480)

Complexes of visuality are, according to Mirzoeff, formed through three steps. First, "visuality classifies by naming, categorizing, and defining, a process defined by Foucault as 'the nomination of the visible.'" (Mirzoeff 2011b, 3). In the next step, visuality demarcates between different populations, it separates the groups so classified as a means of social organization. Such visuality separates and segregates those it visualizes to prevent them from cohering as political subjects, such as the workers, the people, or the (decolonized) nation" (Mirzoeff 2011b, 3). In the last step, it naturalizes power by making "this separated classification seem right and hence aesthetic" (Mirzoeff 2011b, 3).

In Mirzoeff's account (Mirzoeff 2011a, 2011b), the complexes of visuality underwent three historical stages during which the power to see and surveil was configured in particular way. The first complex emerged at the slave plantation, cementing the exploitation of slaves' bodies. Its next articulation was imperialist one, establishing visual, cognitive and political power of the West over its colonies. Lastly, in the current era we are witnessing existence of military-industrial complex of visuality that promotes particular imaginaries and forms of rule underpinned by technological developments (Mirzoeff 2009a).

In his earlier work, Mirzoeff notes with regards to the ways of seeing that "what is at stake in the contestation of the sensible is rarely the formal question of visual perception but the social organization and control that is mediated by it. This divide between the 'police' and the people is not an incidental aspect or by-product of political power but is constitutive of it. The 'policing' of the division of the sensible is, then, visual culture's mode of address to the complex questions of optics and visual representation" (Mirzoeff 2009b, 5). I will engage these notions below but what is important to emphasize here is the systematic nature of organization of seeing. Not only Mirzoeff, like many other authors, emphasized the power-laden character of sight and its constellations. His account is further insightful as it sheds light on various aspects ("of a set of

social organizations and processes", "resulting imbrication of mentality and organization") that go into and relate to particular visualisations, thus attending to broader context. Lastly,

Although, as I elaborate below, Mirzoeff's work is highly useful for discerning processes that work to turn power hierarchies into non-problematic and "obvious" state of affairs, there are two aspects of his work which I find problematic. First is a certain ahistoricity of his account. His genealogy of the complexes of visuality – from slave plantations, to imperialist, to military-industrial complexes – is useful as a heuristic device for understanding major shifts of power to look but it is too schematic to allow for its analytical employment in contexts which do not correspond to the three types. In this thesis, I am therefore using Mirzoeff's notions but I am not following his historical categorization of different complexes. In other words, I utilize Mirzoeff's ideas on more general level as valuable framework for comprehending the politics of seeing.

Second, perhaps given his background and indebtedness to the field of visual studies, he seems to not paying enough attention to material and spatial configurations and their political salience. As I have repeatedly emphasized, Mirzoeff conceives visuality as a comprehensive arrangement of various faculties and dispositions. Nonetheless, I would still propose that he seems to underestimate the importance of the material constellations which establish conditions conducive for dominant way of sight, and diminish possibilities for "the right to look". I would further argue, echoing Van Veeren (see especially Van Veeren 2014) that this shortcoming characterizes a number of works concerned with visibility. In the next section I am therefore drawing on scholarship concerned with materiality as a way of corrective to this analytical neglect.

Visuality Meets Materiality

Although the studies of the politics of the visual and the material usually keep the two realms separate (at least for analytical reasons), there are now works which do trace the interlinkages between the two, some even go as far as arguing that one cannot really keep them separate. I

discuss some of these works before proceeding to engage the relationship between visuality and materiality in more conceptual terms.

It seems appropriate to start with the notion of Panopticon as it inspired a burgeoning research agenda (see e.g. Lyon 2007; Lyon, Ball, and Haggerty 2012). The idea of Panopticon discussed extensively by Foucault (Foucault 1995) indeed centers around gaze and imbalances in the possibilities to see. But although the Panopticon serves as a political diagram that organizes power relations in this sense, its translations into concrete programs and practices cannot be divorced from material arrangements. There are towers to be built, blinds to be put in place, angles to be measured and lights to be installed. Following these notions, most of the works concerned with the spread of disciplinary mechanisms in the modern society that are inspired by the Foucault's work in general, and the concept of Panopticon in particular, revolve around the notion that new technologies (i.e. material features) significantly facilitated their proliferation. In his critical review of the studies on panopticism, Chris Otter asks how this configuration of vision "can function without material systems to sustain it" (Otter 2008, 5), a concern which largely guides his following account of history of light in the 19th century Britain. In his book (Otter 2008), Otter closely follows not only philosophical and political disputes regarding the nature of light and its public utility, but also nuts and bolts of lamps, wires, windows and bulbs. It is this concern with the material arrangements which enables Otter to provide a nuanced take on the importance of the intertwined nature of seeing, materialities and particular subjectivities.

Although her focus is rather different, in her work on the *Guantanamo Bay* detention *camp, Elspeth Van Veeren attends closely to the material underpinnings of the ways we see things.* Already in her 2011 article on how is the US public support for the ongoing detention of the suspected terrorist produced by particular visual framing of the camp, she argues that "These [material] elements, while on the surface are part of the architecture of containment, also entail a specific visuality; fences, buildings, lighting and space are part of the material component of the discursive construction of the reality of Guantánamo" (Van Veeren 2011, 1737). *Van Veeren* (Van Veeren 2014) pushes further in this direction in her later work on the same topic which looks directly into how "visualization and materialization produced by touring practices

facilitated this understanding of Guantanamo“ (Van Veeren 2014, 21). Drawing on Judith Butler’s notion of performativity and framing, Van Veeren pays close attention to the spatial and material context in which tours of the Guantanamo camp take place. By attending to these elements, she is able to reveal mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion of certain visuals and images.

Lastly, in his work on the embodied politics of seeing, Adey (Adey 2004, 2007) attends actually mostly to the material conditions. Taking modern airports as his main point of reference, he shows how are the practices of seeing are conditioned by various spatial arrangements and physical artefacts. On the one hand, Adey (Adey 2004) discusses employment of objects like biometric IDs and X-rays to render passengers and their bodies visible and invisible in a certain way on the part of the airport authorities. On the other, he (Adey 2007) points at the role of the balconies, windows, screens and designated meeting points in managing and channeling passengers’ mobility as well as gaze. The embodied seeing is in Adey’s analysis intimately connected to its material context.

What thus becomes apparent in these works is that the everyday politics of the material and the visual are in some instances highly interconnected. Discussing the existing state of the visuality studies field within IPS, Debbie Lisle argues (after discussing the dominant scholarly focus on the images) that seeing should be “understood as part of the social relations that constitute us as subjects as well as the environments, infrastructures and landscapes we move through“ (Lisle 2016, 303) and that “the dominant asymmetries that constitute seeing/being seen relations within visual documents are similarly arranged within our material worlds“ (Lisle 2016, 303). She then proposes that scholars should further investigate ways of seeing in “in very specific material and spatial sites” (Lisle 2016, 304).

What Lisle and other authors hint at is then the need to pay attention to interplay of particular visualities and materialities. This should not be understood as prioritizing the material over the visual, in the sense that material configurations merely determine what can be seen, what cannot, how is the gaze framed, and so on. Rather, sight and matter are, socially speaking, mutually constitutive – what we see is materially conditioned, but material objects are also understood in different ways depending on the visual complexes they exist in. In the next section

I am therefore discussing the insights derived from literature concerned with materiality in order to strengthen the analytical framework of this thesis.

(International) Politics Materialized

In the field of critical studies of the international, there has been an increased interest in materiality as a prism to investigate processes pertaining to the global politics. The so-called material turn seeks to destabilize the distinctions between human and non-human, the society and the nature, and other binaries that we usually take for granted. Drawing on insights from Science and Technology Studies, Actor-Network Theory and other materialist thinking, a growing number of authors have applied this particular understanding of flat ontology in the investigations of the international (see e.g. Latour 2005; J. Bennett 2010; T. Bennett and Joyce 2010; Salter 2015, 2016; Acuto and Curtis 2014).

Although I am inspired by material turn in general, and its enactments in IR and IPS in particular, in contrast to much of this literature, in this thesis I adopt less "radical" understanding of materiality. What I mean by this is that I do not really look into the agency of various physical artefacts and I do not trace their precise interactions with other human and non-human actants in the dense webs of relationships. Informed by the Foucauldian approach that underpins this project, I rather attend to how are certain material objects and practices employed within governmental projects, how they relate to the overall rationalities of government.

What I want to emphasize here is that even if one does not fully attend to the matter's agency, "to the resistance of matter to political control" (Barry 2001, 26), the existing scholarship makes clear that one cannot simply see physical objects as inert and existing on their own out there in the world: they are always embedded in and intertwined with political and social structures. A related qualification concerns the type of phenomena I attend to. Unlike many other scholars who have looked into various "stuff" of (international) politics like bottles, letters, barbed wire, drones, and passports (Salter 2016, 2015), I attend to more profound material transformations. In other words, I am interested in large-scale projects rather than in micro settings which have

been the dominant focus of much of the STS- and ANT-inspired scholarship. I am aware that such distinction is in itself problematic – as have for example de Laet and Mol showed in their famous article with regards to the use of a water pump in Zimbabwe, even "a small device […] encompasses an entire state" (de Laet and Mol 2000, 237). Nonetheless, guided by the orientation of my project, I am focusing here on major transformation of physical environment. As opposed to the focus on relatively contained sites and/or specific objects, this perspective provides a venue for better attending to historical shifts as well as relation to the political forces at play. In the next section, I therefore discuss works by James Scott, Timothy Mitchell and most importantly by Chandra Mukerji that show how material arrangements condition political and social life.

Material Configurations of Collective Life

In his book *Seeing Like* a *State*: How *Certain Schemes* to *Improve* the *Human Condition Have Failed*, James Scott (J. C. Scott 1998) provides an account of modernist projects which sought to achieve political utopian projects through a whole range of practices. These efforts were in Scott's reading meant to improve the living conditions of the targeted populations. Nonetheless, as suggested by the book's subtitle, when coupled with the authoritarian nature of the regime, weak civil society and the disregard for the local context and practices, these policies resulted in large-scale suffering. Drawing on a wide array of empirical material covering Prussian state policies, agricultural reforms in Tanzania and communist collectivization in post-tsarist Russia, he provides a chilling account of the failure of state projects and their repercussions.

A lot could be and has been said about the projects and rationalities that Scott investigates. But what concerns me here is how the modern states that employed them sought to achieve their particular goals through transformation of material and physical environment. Indeed, as noted by Scott himself, what was common to the efforts he investigated was the central role of "the administrative ordering of nature and society" (J. C. Scott 1998, 88). In the Scott's account, this ordering was employed with the goal to render the society more legible, thus open it for more interventions. Such practices could take different material forms, like planting trees in straight

lines so that they would not obstruct the view or building wide streets suitable for military operations.

What is crucial for my current purposes is that these material practices and transformations drastically impacted terrain, both literal and metaphorical, in which political actions and social practices took place. These projects aimed to spread the state's reach and widen its options for interventions. By modifying the physical environment, the state projects also shaped agency of its subjects, thus endangering new power relations which were materially inscribed in everyday settings, a notion to which I return towards the end of this chapter.

The issue of interwoven nature of the material and the social has been taken up also by Timothy Mitchell who discusses in his early work discusses how certain material, organizational, institutional and disciplinary transformations shape the conditions for the political conduct. In his ground-breaking work on the colonial practices in Egypt and the shifts (epistemological, political, social, and material) they introduced, Mitchell (T. Mitchell 1991b) argues that the Western interventions should be conceived not only in terms of formal political structures but also in terms of minute, seemingly mundane practices. Colonization thus for Mitchell stands not only for oppression of the local population and appropriation of various resources but also introduction of novel epistemological positions and subjectivities. Mitchell scrutinizes these issues with reference mainly to urbanism, agriculture, schooling and army reorganization.

Importantly for the present thesis, he pays close attention to the material reconfigurations of the environment in which people lived, moved and worked. Indeed, while reflecting on the goals of novel urban development he notes that these projects went beyond merely providing new spaces for living, commerce and industry: "Streets and schools were built as the expression and achievement of an intellectual orderliness, a social tidiness, a physical cleanliness" (T. Mitchell 1991b, 63). Rather than purely physical objects, these reconfigurations had repercussions in terms of new social and political relations which they also embodied. In the same vein, reordering of classrooms, agricultural fields and military barracks worked to shape power dynamic in a novel way, more susceptible to minute interventions.

Towards the end of the book, Mitchell summarizes his argument in the following manner:

> “The reorganisation of towns and the laying out of new colonial quarters, every regulation of economic or social practice, the construction of the country's new system of irrigation canals, the control of the Nile's flow, the building of barracks, police stations and classrooms, the completion of a system of railways - this pervasive process of 'order' must be understood as more than mere improvement or 'reform'. Such projects […] had the effect of re-presenting a realm of the conceptual, conjuring up for the first time the prior abstractions of progress, reason, law, discipline, history, colonial authority and order.“ (T. Mitchell 1991b, 179)

What this makes clear is then that various material practices need to be seen in relation to larger power relations and visions which they promote. Although Mitchell does not employ the notion of dispositif which was not really available at the time due to the state of publishing of Foucault’s work, it becomes clear that these myriads of everyday and seemingly mundane actions had an overarching aim.

Nonetheless, it is the work of Chandra Mukerji which is the most pertinent to the issues investigated in this thesis. Her empirical material concerns mostly material practices of the French state in the 17th century. Providing close historical reading of building of Canal du Midi and fashioning of the Versailles gardens, she demonstrates how were these seemingly local and specific projects crucial for the centralizing and territorial ambitions of the French state. While doing so, she is paying close attention to how practices impacting physical environment had profound political and social implications. Reflecting on these practices, she argues that “unearthing fundamental cultural dimensions of material relations whose consequences are not so much mediated through thought or language as located in an ordering of the material world itself” (Mukerji 1997, 35), thus echoing many insights from the ANT and STS scholarship. Nonetheless, Mukerji complements the concern with matter with focus on larger political and social relationships.

In the case of the Versailles gardens, Mukerji argues, the political vision of the French absolutist state was embodied in the physical form and layout of the gardens (Mukerji 1997). First, the mastery, precision and resources that went into creating the gardens posed as a material

testimony to the prowess and power of the king and his realm: the capacities of the state were manifested in the physical form at the king's palace. The re-ordering of nature further drew parallels between the religious imaginaries of the God's power and the interventions of the King. Lastly, the contained and organized nature of the garden complex was resembling the ambitions of the French government to reshape the whole country according to these norms.

Mukerji's second large project (Mukerji 2009a) concerned the repercussions of building Canal Du Midi, a major infrastructural project that connected the Mediterranean Sea with the Atlantic Ocean, stretched over 240 kilometers and featured 100 locks (Mukerji 2009b, 17). Based on her close reading of various primary documents, Mukerji argues that building of Canal du Midi brought about a shift in the power relations in southwestern part of France where most of the population was opposed to the Paris government. The governmental engineers made sure to involve the locals and their "tacit knowledge" in the engineering project. Through participating in building of the canal local population became Franch by being invested in the project, their social collective intelligence embedded in the Canal (Mukerji 2003, 668–70). Simultaneously, building of the canal and other infrastructural projects led to the weakening of the French aristocracy by appropriating their land (Mukerji 2003, 673–74).

Building the canal also fed into the efforts of the French state to construct itself as a "New Rome" (Mukerji 2009b). Along with other material practices which were meant to solidify the image of France as an heir to the Roman empire (Mukerji 2011), the canal was resembling similar projects which enabled Rome to control vast territories. And in contrast to the Versailles gardens which would be visited by a relatively small number of both aristocracy and common people, the canal projected this message across a vast territory.

These material projects thus had both symbolic and highly tangible political consequences. Mukerji thus suggests that what is at stake here is a thoroughly novel form of power, power "derived from controlling and shaping the natural world" (Mukerji 2010, 402). The legitimacy to rule was based not only on the means of violence but also on "displays of material intelligence and stewardship over nature" (Mukerji 2003, 655). Specifically, Mukerji argues that one can talk about "logistical power" which is distinctive from "power to dominate". Whereas the latter is

"often associated with the use or threat of legitimate violence", the former revolves around "the ability to mobilize the natural world for political effect" (Mukerji 2010, 402). As such, logistical power "shapes social life differently, affecting the environment (context, situation, location) in which human action and cognition take place" (Mukerji 2010, 402).

In more general terms, Mukerji thus draws our attention to the political salience of material projects and configurations of the landscape. In her account, "power does not emerge simply from a balancing of interest groups or a definition of the legal bases for administering an area of the world, but from strategic uses of material advantages" (Mukerji 2003, 657). These remarks apply not only to the modernizing and centralizing states. As she notes, well into the 20th century, "military engineering and economic land-use policies remained vital parts of political life" (Mukerji 2003, 674). As "roads have been constructed, bridges built, telegraphs stretched, railroads laid, schools opened, libraries expanded, and dams erected" (Mukerji 2003, 657), these material objects and constellations "instantiate efficacy and deserved authority, acting simultaneously as claims to domination and tools for the exercise of modern power" (Mukerji 2003, 658).

Importantly for the present discussion, all three authors make clear that the practices of seeing are important part of newly established hierarchies and relationships. The very title of Scott's book hints at certain way of visualizing and imagining reality at hand. But it also becomes apparent that many of the efforts to introduce legibility were closely linked to, or even identical with, establishment of new regimes of visuality. In Mukerji's work, visibility is intimately linked to the material practices of the centralizing states as the projects it engaged in posed as visual remainders of its power, and its particular imaginaries fed into various civilizational and religious narratives. Lastly, Mitchell, influenced by Foucault's work, pays close attention to the role of seeing and visualizing as well – not only to the Europeans' imaginaries of "the Orient" but also to the disciplinary practices of training and surveillance. All these authors thus demonstrate that it is analytically productive to see visuality and materiality as interconnected, a notion that I elaborate on in the following section.

Visual-Material Complexes

Following the scholarly insights from the previous sections, I want to reiterate that the practices of seeing and the material practices are heavily interlinked. Conceived as such, and borrowing from Mirzoeff's work, one should talk about material-visual complexes, hinting at the mutual interdependence of the two fields. Before moving back to the notion of dispositif and the place visuality and materiality take up in it, I provide a few summary comments on their entanglement that are pertinent to their role in the processes of depolitization .

As I have sought to argue so far, not only is the visual and the material interconnected but they are embedded in wider social and political context. Addressing the alleged distinctiveness of gaze, W. J. T. Mitchell, a prominent visual studies scholar, argues that "all the so-called visual media turn out to involve the other senses (especially touch and hearing). All media are, from the standpoint of sensory modality, 'mixed media'" (W. J. Mitchell 2005, 257). Amoore (Amoore 2007) further elaborates on Mitchell's notion to show that even everyday ways of seeing involve much more than just a mere sight. In the same vein, Mirzoeff argues repeatedly in his work that complexes of visuality go far beyond mere seeing and encompass a whole array of mental dispositions, institutional arrangements and spatial distributions, to name just some elements.

Building on notions introduced so far, I thus want to emphasize here that the politics of visual-material arrangements goes beyond the immediate experience of those who encounter them. In other words, the specific character and shape of material and visual practices cannot be divorced from their larger context: the particular nature of the tours of the Guantanamo Bay Camp analyzed by Van Veeren are driven by the US officials' effort to render it legitimate; Scott's practices of legibility were clearly dependent on the availability of the bureaucratic and technical means of the modern state; the large-scale projects discussed by Mukerji would not be even conceived if it was not for the centralizing ambitions of the French government at the time. And talking about "splintering urbanism", occurring some three hundred years after Canal du Midi was built, Graham and Marvin make clear that "the way in which the contested politics of network development are played out in each city, region or nation is still closely related to the

broader constructions of governance, the state, and the market in each case" (Steve Graham and Marvin 2001, 12).

Nonetheless, the practices of visuality and materiality are not only determined by these "broader constructions": the visual and the material, located in larger networks of various realities, have also meaning-making significance. Indeed, in some conceptualizations of the notion of "discourse", the material and the visual are just another features, apart from the textual, through which meaning and possibilities for the social and political life are generated. With regards to the visual, for example, Elspeth Van Veeren has stated that "meanings are therefore produced through the interaction of elements within a discourse that includes the material" (Van Veeren 2014, 36). In a very similar manner, Barad, a leading feminist philosopher concerned with materiality makes a similar, yet a more general point in stating that "Matter and meaning are not separate elements" (Barad 2007, 3). Echoing this, Mukerji in introduction to her book on the politics of gardening in France in the 17th century notes that "unearthing fundamental cultural dimensions of material relations whose consequences are not so much mediated through thought or language as located in an ordering of the material world itself" (Mukerji 1997, 35).

In short, the material-visual arrangements constitute the political, but are also co-constituted by it. In the remaining part of this chapter I employ these notions to get to a better understanding of how are depoliticizing programmes translated into matters of the everyday. I return to the Foucauldian analytical tools to highlight the importance of the visual and the material in depoliticizing contentious realities. In other words, in line with the overall orientation of this thesis, I am looking into how material and visual arrangements, operating within larger overall rationality and practices, render given social and political relationship seemingly given, non-disputable and "natural".

Visual-Material Dispositif of Depolitization

Let me recount and summarize my argument so far. Visuality and materiality are not only interlinked with each other, but they are also embedded in the existing social and political

structures which give meaning to them, and whose meaning they in turn co-constitute. Understood through these prisms, the material and visual arrangements are therefore "harnessed to dominant power relations" (Lisle 2016, 304) which they feed into and are underpinned by.

How does this relate to the governmental programme of depolitization and the dispositif that is employed to translate these rationalities into reality? With regards to visibility, several authors have argued that both governmentality and dispositif operate, apart from other means, through particular visibilities. In his authoritative book on the subject, Dean (Dean 2010, 41) argues that particular regimes are characterized by particular fields of visibility: "an architectural drawing, a management flow chart, a map, a pie chart, a set of graphs and tables, and so on, are all ways of visualizing fields to be governed." Tazzioli and Walters go as far as arguing that "visibility is at the core of governmentality" (Tazzioli and Walters 2016, 447) since it is necessary to "acquire knowledge of the nature of things, of the environment and of the human beings" (Tazzioli and Walters 2016, 448). In the same vein, Deleuze (Deleuze 1992, 160) argues that each dispositif "has its way of structuring light, the way in which it falls, blurs and disperses, distributing the visible and the invisible, giving birth to objects which are dependent on it for their existence, and causing them to disappear." In short, what appears is then that governmentality and dispositif are inextricably linked to certain ways of making things (in)visible.

More generally, the emphasis that most authors put on the situatedness of both material and sight directly relate to the Foucauldian notion of dispositif: demonstrating that the material arrangements and ways of seeing cannot be divorced from various other features and conditions in which they exist resonates with the conceptualization of dispositif as a heterogeneous set of elements which follow certain underlying power-laden logic. What I want to emphasize here again is thus that although in this project I engage dominantly the visual and material features, this focus should be understood in the light of their position in the overall framework of strategically oriented dispositif, which in turn promotes the governmental programme of depolitization . With regards to depolitization, my specific focus on the material and visual arrangements is driven by the notion that they are highly pertinent to the depoliticizing dynamic

because they posses the quality of positing themselves as obvious and non-negotiable (see below).

As such, these notions pertaining to visuality and materiality directly relate to Rancière's work which informs my understanding of depolitization . "The distribution of the sensible", the presentation of certain realities as obvious and natural, is achieved through various practices, including visual and material ones. To put it slightly differently, the analytical focus on the visual and material contextualizes and specifies Rancière's ideas about how is naturalization of power hierarchies achieved. Going beyond the general notion of the aesthetic, they provide tools and prisms that enable us to attend to specific arrangements, mechanisms and practices that distribute the sensible. In the rest of this section, I therefore discuss insights from the literature reviewed above that are relevant for better understand of the dispositif's effects and form.

Before I proceed, a clarification is in order. I do not strive to provide a complete description of the dispositif and the elements that constitute it. Following Foucault's understanding of his scholarship as a toolbox rather than a set of narrowly defined methods, I offer a tentative, broad account of the dispositif; crafting a purportedly exhaustive account would go against the spirit of Foucault's work which seeks to provide apparatus that can be adopted to specific settings, problematics and interrogations. What I therefore want to achieve in the following section is to highlight the relative importance of some of the sets of elements and their position within the depoliticizing dispositif.

Dispositif

The thinking about the naturalizing power effects of certain manipulations of physical environment and visual relationships has been taken the furthest by Timothy Mitchell. Building on Foucault's work, Mitchell argues that the spread of disciplinary mechanisms led not only to their internalization by subjects but also made "power relations […] appear to take the form of external structures" (T. Mitchell 1991b, xii). What is at stake for Mitchell is thus "an alternative account of the new forms of power" (T. Mitchell 1990, 566), power which is "Far from being less

ideological" (T. Mitchell 1990, 566) and operates "by inventing the apparent distinction between material and ideological realms" (T. Mitchell 1990, 566) and by "creating an appearance of order, an appearance of structure as some sort of separate, non-material realm" (T. Mitchell 1991b, 94).

In his first book on the colonial governance and its minute mechanisms, Mitchell illustrate this dynamics by pointing at the project of turning Egyptian army into an "artificial machine", apparatus that "appeared somehow greater than the sum of its parts, as though it were a structure with an existence independent of the men who composed it" (T. Mitchell 1991b, xii). One of the effects of imposition of order (like turning a group of men into "the artificial machine" of the Egyptian army) was therefore rendering the modern framework which determines possibilities for political action as "something pre-existent, non-material and non-spatial" (T. Mitchell 1991b, 176). What is crucial for my purposes here is that as Mitchell extensively discusses, this appearance of structure, enacted by material and visual transformations, works to obscure power invested in these formations.

Mitchell's work on the "structural effect", a result of myriad of minute material and visual practices which give rise to the notion of the state, is instructive in this regard. This conceptualization, Mitchell argues, highlights that "boundary of the state (or political system) *never marks a real exterior*" as the boundary is rather "a line drawn internally, *within* the network of institutional mechanisms through which a certain social and political order is maintained" (T. Mitchell 1991a, 90) What is important for the concerns I pursue in this thesis is that "producing and maintaining the distinction between state and society is itself a mechanism that generates resources of power" (T. Mitchell 1991a, 90). Discussing the case of the Aramco oil company, Mitchell notes that "The fact that Aramco can be said to lie outside the formal political system, thereby disguising its role in international politics, is essential to its strength as part of a larger political order" (T. Mitchell 1991a, 90). Imposition of certain compartmentalization of the social world thus works to promote power relations.

In general, Mitchell therefore conceptually ponders how certain arrangements lead to situation in which "the world seems to be constituted as something divided from the beginning into two neatly opposed realms, a material order on the one hand and a separate sphere of meaning or

culture on the other“ (T. Mitchell 1990, 546). This conceptualization, Mitchell goes on to argues, has profound implication for how is power exercised and experienced: “the apparent existence of such unphysical frameworks or structures is precisely the effect introduced by modern mechanisms of power and it is through this elusive yet powerful effect that modern systems of domination are maintained.“ (T. Mitchell 1990, 561)

As Mitchell forcefully argues with reference to changes in a Malaysian villages in the 1970s investigated by Scott in his famous *Weapons of the Weak*, power's operations are so insidious and effective precisely because they pose as “fixed limits rather than modes of domination“ (T. Mitchell 1990, 557); they become naturalized and docilely accepted through their inscription in material (and technological, administrative and spatial) conditions of the new, capitalist village (see especially T. Mitchell 1990, 557–58). In other words, what is crucial for this thesis is not the “the world's division into two realms, the material and the conceptual” (T. Mitchell 1991b, 176) per se but rather how this division works to reduce “many of the more complex modalities of power to the status of givens or 'background'” (T. Mitchell 1990, 563).

By laying bare the “problematic distinction between power as a material force and power at the level of consciousness or culture“ (T. Mitchell 1990, 548), Mitchell makes important intervention in discussions on the possibilities of wielding and challenging power in the modern societies. It is this “background” (T. Mitchell 1990, 563), “pre-existent” (T. Mitchell 1991b, 176) nature of power which makes his work indispensable for my present project. Confronted with Rancière's work, the modern mechanisms through which power manifests and consolidates itself emerges as one of the ways through which the existing political hierarchies become naturalized and non-contestable.

In other words, the (seeming) bifurcation of power into material and cultural realm works as a kind of distribution of the sensible. If, as I suggested above, we understand these notions as operating not only in the realm of the aesthetic but as a particular mechanism which present only some segments of the reality as graspable and perceivable, the material/cultural division is indeed an instance of such mechanism. Although Mitchell in many regards concerns specific material and visual practices and constellations, his work on naturalization of power can be

further augmented by insights from the literature concerned with visuality and materiality, specifically from works by Mirzoeff and Mukerji.

Mirzoeff directly engages the issue of the implication of visual culture in propelling the existing power relations. Before I engage this aspect of his work, let me spell out one qualification. As stated in the very title of the book, Mirzoeff's work is explicitly aimed at deconstructing the regimes of visibility and stands on the side of those who found themselves under the overseer's gaze. Nonetheless, in this thesis I want to argue that his work can be used also capture other subject positions, including of those who look. I am aware that this shift is problematic in political terms as it goes against Mirzoeff's emancipatory project. However, following authors who have faced similar dilemmas (see e.g. Fassin 2008), I would propose that seeking to understand those we find adverse ideologically is still necessary with regards to both politics and academic work. In what follows I thus attend not to those are subjected to the overseeing gaze, but rather to those who "move on" when ordered by authorities (cf. Mirzoeff 2014, 1742). I want to argue that these people are also exposed to aestheticizing effects of the particular organization of sight, although privileged vis-à-vis the looked upon.

It is exactly this depolitization of given complexes of visuality which work to make them stable. Mirzoeff builds directly on Rancière to argue for the naturalizing power of particular constellations of seeing: "politics becomes a particular sort of aesthetics which determines what is presented to senses" (Mirzoeff 2009b, 19; Ranciere 2004, 13). As I recounted above, this remark relates to other authors's work concerned with visuality which emphasize that particular visibilities and invisibilities condition and constrain the nature of and available repertoire for political actions and subjectivitities.

Mirzoeff links the visual practices directly to the quest for power: "This self-authorizing of authority required a supplement to make it seem self-evident, which is what I am calling visuality" (Mirzoeff 2011a, 480). In other words, Mirzoeff suggests given systems of rule rely on more than just brute force. The role of visuality is to render the existing status quo seem obvious and non-problematic, thus exempting it from deliberations and contestations. In this regard, Mirzoeff situates the importance of sight within other registers as well: "This construction of the

use of sensory evidence is not so much concerned with the biology of perception or the scientific understanding of sight as how the sensory is deployed to make social, cultural, and above all political claims seem 'natural.'" (Mirzoeff 2009b, 17)

However, Mirzoeff makes clear that these naturalizations are never stable and uncontestable. Particular arrangements that together constitute and propel specific complexes of visuality (which then in turn maintain status quo) are in need of a constant work and intervention. As Mirzoeff puts it, "the authorizing of authority requires permanent renewal in order to win consent as the 'normal' or everyday because it is always already contested" (Mirzoeff 2011a, 474). What this also means is that the imaginaries that sustain the authority are permanently in flux.

Also adopting Rancière's understanding of "police", Mirzoeff emphasizes the importance of authorities in maintaining the visual constellations which then in turn propel the existing power hiearchies: "In 'normal' governance, the police create a cordon between what is visible and invisible, demarcated by the slogan 'move on, there's nothing to see.' Thus, the police do not interpellate us, whether as suspects or citizens, but simply insist that we keep circulating" (Mirzoeff 2009a, 1742).

Connecting Mirzoeff's work with the particular employment of the Foucauldian apparatus in this project is fruitful as it highlights the depoliticizing potential of specific visual arrangements, and at the same time situates them in wider socio-political context. In doing so, Mirzoeff draws attention to visuality as a crucial site for implementing of the programme of depolitization through dispositif.

Lastly, Mukerji provides insights into the naturalization of power through material practices. While she draws empirically on the specific case of the French state policies aiming to centralize its power, Mukerji discusses in more general terms how the manipulation of the physical environment works to depoliticize newly introduced elements and mechanisms of control. According to her, what is peculiar about material arrangements is that "The effectiveness of the resulting material regime lies in its mute presence as a form of impersonal rule. Without words, the built environment often seems to lie outside of political dispute, and thus can seem as

inevitable as the natural order" (Mukerji 2010, 404). Effectively, Mukerji argues, the physical inscription of the political order makes it undisputable and natural. As a result, although material configurations "define social worlds", they "disappear from consciousness when they are accepted and taken for granted" (Mukerji 2010, 403).

Elaborating on these remarks, Mukerji suggests that physical objects like the gardens or the canal she looked into seem to stand outside of politics, going as far as saying that they become something "like a mountain or a river in France - a physical part of the landscape that locals had to take into account." (Mukerji 2010, 414). Indeed, the comparison between a man-made canal and a mountain is instructive as it highlights the seemingly "inevitable, natural or true" status (Mukerji 2010, 404). Borrowing Bourdieu's notion of habitus, Mukerji continues to argue that "a figured world" shapes "cognitions as well as action […] the beliefs, tastes, identities, and habits" (Mukerji 2010, 406–7). The efficiency of these new constellations is then enhanced exactly because of the "quasi-invisibility" (Mukerji 2010, 414) of the novel conditions and power relations that they engender. For example, when talking about the urban layout of the newly (re)built cities in the 17th century France, Mukerji notes that "The orderly interiors of these geometrically designed places were supposed to bring out the rationality in their citizens, creating an ideal setting for public life" (Mukerji 2003, 661).

So although Mukerji's empirical material concerns fairly specific and historical case of the French centralizing state in the 17th century, her works provides crucial insights into large-scale material practices and their political salience. Following her work, one can discern the depoliticizing effect of certain physical and material reconfigurations of the environment. With regards to the issues that I am concerned with in this thesis, it becomes apparent that material practices and transformations can naturalize new power relations within larger set of elements. In other words, they can further our understanding of specific elements of the depoliticizing dispositif.

Conclusion: Towards the Ethnographic Encounters with the Depoliticizing Dispositif

In this chapter I sought to provide a framework which can be employed to comprehend depoliticizing dynamics as a certain power-underpinned project. I started with introduction of the Foucauldian apparatus, demonstrating how the concepts of governmental programme and dispositif can be useful in capturing the plethora of practices that make certain realities uncontestable and obvious. I then attended to specific elements which work to promote these rationalities. I started with a discussion of the scholarly works on the embodied, everyday seeing and the power relations which go into it. I then complemented this scholarship with literature that concerns large-scale transformation of material environment. As opposed to studies which focus on more contained settings or physical objects, this strand of literature enabled me to attend to more far-reaching transformations of conditions and possibilities for collective life. Following this, I argued that the material and the visual should be conceived as interconnected realms which are constitutive of and constituted by political and social structures. Next, I related these notions to the working of the dispositif. I thus sought to somewhat substantiate the general notions derived from Rancière's work which inform my understanding of depolitization. I argued that because their peculiar characteristics, material and visual practices are especially poignant within the context of depoliticizing rationalities. So what I wanted to achieve is a certain map that can guide us when looking for specific practices seeking to promote such programmes. Nonetheless, this is indeed a sufficiently loose map, allowing for specific constellations and contexts.

Understood as such, the framework crafted here enables me to highlight and draw attention to certain features and elements which are instrumental in the processes of depolitization . Nonetheless, subscribing to the ethnographic mode of inquiry, I am not necessarily interested in how these practices and technologies came into being, how they were planned and envisioned, but rather in how they are encountered and experienced by people in their everyday lives, and how they shape individual perceptions and inclinations. That is to say, although I attend to the

bodies of literature concerned with governmentality, visuality and materiality, I am ultimately concerned with how these practices imprint themselves in people's everyday lives.

To concretize these notions, I am less interested in how visibility poses as a precondition of government, as a "set of practices of knowledge that makes some things and subjects exposable and apprehensible and that at the same time leaves others as unseen or unperceivable" (Tazzioli and Walters 2016, 448), but rather, once it is put into practice, how it actually enabled and obscured the sight of people whose conduct was to be formed, channeled and nudged by the given governmental rationality. To borrow Dean's expressions (Dean 2010, 41), what concerns me here is how the functioning of the dispositif impacted "kind of light" people were exposed to, how this light "illuminates and defines certain objects" and how it also produces "shadows and darkness" that "obscures and hides" from the sight of those who find themselves in the midst of governmental programmes' operations.

In the same vein, with regards to material (re)configurations, my primary concern would not be to disentangle various aims and rationalities that underpinned conception and introduction of new projects seeking to change the physical environment. I am rather interested in how were these changes, once actually materialized, shifted, transformed and molded everyday conditions in the given locales. This is to say that, for example, I would not be primarily examining the plans of the Versailles Gardens, the writings of their architects, or official documents outlining the proposed route and features of the Canal du Midi. I would rather inquiry into the impressions of the people who visited the gardens (how did they relate to the geometries of the garden? How did this experience impact their relationship to the French king and the state?) and who lived along the Canal as it was being built (how did its construction impact relationship to the state emissaries? How did the Canal change the conditions in the surrounding areas?).

In short, if I was to borrow from Foucault's paradigmatic work on prisons, I would not be necessarily primarily looking into the diagrams of the Panopticon and the rationalities and goals that underlie its plans, but rather into, once the diagram was materialized in actual building, how these rationalities and concerns played out for the inmates: what could they actually see? Was

the obscuration of the view perfect? Was there no contact with others? Did they feel under permanent surveillance?

My approach is thus informed by the idea of distinction between the plan/diagram/objective and their actual realizations. As have several authors argued, governmental programmes very rarely achieve their envisioned goals: failure seems to be inevitable when the governmental rationalities are translated into specific, tangible actions (J. C. Scott 1998; T. Mitchell 2002; Li 2007). This means that looking into diagrams, plans, envisioned goals, and discourses that constitute given programmes can tell us only that much about how they were actually encountered and conceptualized by "laymen" once they were materialized in various ways. These notions thus find affinity with distinctions like "abstract" vs "lived" space introduced by Lefebvre (Lefebvre 1991), or the differences between "tactics" and "strategies" discussed by Certeau (Certeau 1984).

Despite these qualifications derived from ethnographic mode of inquiry, the bodies of literature reviewed in this and previous chapters orient the following analysis in a couple interrelated ways. First, these works draw attention to (indeed, enable to *see*) various practices and mechanisms that are crucial in terms of their depoliticizing effects. Although the actual perception of these features can be altered in their everyday employment, the discussed literature provides hints as for what to look for. Second, it provides us with means to grasp with the political implications of these practices. This is to say that the framework which I crafted throughout this chapter provides insights into the effects of these mechanisms.

3. Researching Settlements: Metatheoretical and Methodological Orientation of the Project

This study is firmly rooted in interpretative mode of social scientific inquiry. My aim in the whole project is to try to understand the life world(s) of people I decided to study, and to examine what features condition their views and experiences. The main methodological approach which informed my fieldwork was ethnography. Nonetheless, as I discuss below, for several reasons it might be more appropriate to talk about semi-ethnographic research rather than a full-fledged ethnographic study.

This chapter introduces the metatheoretical assumptions informing the project, its methodological approach, practicalities of the research and the empirical data generation. I first introduce the main general features underpinning my project. I then discuss the main elements of ethnographic endeavors which proved to be important for my research. I introduce my fieldwork in more details, offering an account of how I entered the field, made contact with informants, how my positionality played out and my reflection on the above. I further discuss specific methods, data generation and ethics.

Interpretative Social Science

Making Sense of Making Sense

In this chapter I do not seek to fully discuss the distinction between the positivist and interpretative mode of inquiry, in social science in general or in IR in particular. Not only would this require space that is simply unavailable but more importantly, there is a number of authors who have discussed these issues in depth (see e.g.Steinmetz 2005; Wedeen 2010, 260–64; Hawkesworth 2006; Yanow 2006a). What I want to do here is to discuss some of the central tenants of interpretative approach which proved to be crucial for my own research project.

The basic notion that guides interpretative research is that the world is not "out there" but is socially constructed: social "facts" are of intersubjective nature. That is to say, among members of the given group (be them inhabitants of an isolated island in Pacific or employees of a governmental agency) circulate certain meaning-making practices which, although never perfectly, enable shared understanding of utterances, actions and various cultural artefacts (Wedeen 2002; Yanow 2006b). As put by Pachirat (Pachirat 2006, 374), humans are thus in the constant pursue of "making meaning out of the meaning-making of other humans". These shared frames ensure functioning and reproduction of the social life within the given group.

In some simplistic readings of interpretative research, the making sense practices are understood solely in terms of language. Nonetheless, in this project I subscribe to much wider understanding of discourse which cannot be reduced to text, written or spoken. The series of recent "turns" made clear that "social life and political life is messy" (Salter 2013, 2) and that "[a]gency – the capacity to act – is everywhere" (Salter 2013, 2). Following these insights, in the thesis I draw on this widening of conceptualization of agency by attending to material and visual features and their political significance. Nonetheless, I still maintain that these elements are embedded in larger social and political structures and governmental rationalities. In other words, material artefacts and visual arrangements are organized in a way that feeds into and maintain certain power conditions. A more elaborate inquiry of the role of these elements in, and their relationship to, governmental programmes are at the heart of this thesis.

I am thus following interpretative scholars who aim to discern the intersubjective understandings, meanings assigned to and mediated by various entities and artefacts, and how all these guide people's interactions. Since social scientists who subscribe to the interpretative mode of inquiry study "specific, situated meanings and meaning-making practices of actors in a given context", (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 1), seeking to "make sense of making sense", this attitude leads to much more minute attention to the specifics of the examined phenomenon when compared to positivist scholars. Unlike the latter, interpretivists propose that we cannot understand the studied segment of social and political reality without attending to its larger context which informs the empirics we are directly interested in (Yanow 2006b).

In this regard, Andrew Neal urges critical scholars to embrace empiricism which is distinctive from positivism, the hallmark of mainstream IR which treats empirical as "inferior" (Neal 2013, 42). Contrary to the positivist quest for generalization, Neal argues that "the most exciting work […] describes rich empirical landscapes, unseen practices, and diverse knowledge systems" (Neal 2013, 44). Neal essentially proposes that even purely empirical investigations, as long as they bring new insights, should count as valuable academic interventions, regardless of their theoretical and conceptual sophistication and contribution.

Neal goes as far as proposing that that "theory risks clouding out detail" (Neal 2013, 43). Nonetheless, I do not mean to argue that critical and interpretative scholars at large would refuse the utility of theoretical apparatus (which, of course, Neal draws on extensively in his other works). I suppose most would agree with Bourdieu's famous quip arguing that "theory without empirical research is empty, empirical research without theory is blind" (Bourdieu 1988, 774–75). Interpretative authors usually approach the relationship between the general (theory) and the specific (empirics) in hermeneutic, or also abductive fashion.

Abductive Approach

As put by Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, "abductive reasoning begins with a puzzle, a surprise, or a tension, and then seeks to explicate it by identifying the conditions that would make that puzzle less perplexing and more of a 'normal' or 'natural' event" (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 27).[18] This approach thus stands in contrast to induction and deduction, i.e. "processes through which derive generalizations from specific observations and specific observations from generalizations, respectively" (Locke, Golden-Biddle, and Feldman 2008, 907). Rather than pursuing one-way investigation, be it from the specific to the general or vice versa, the main principle of abduction

[18] This rendering of abduction is thus quite different from that rooted in critical realism. In this research tradition, abduction is "a form of reasoning [that starts] from observed phenomena to underlying principles and factors that give rise to those observed phenomena" (P. T. Jackson 2010, 76). Essentially, such understanding of abduction aims to account for the unobservables and their casual effect.

is the constant dialogue between theory and empirical material (Van Maanen, Sørensen, and Mitchell 2007) in a "circular-spiral pattern" (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 28).

Abductive reasoning (understood in terms adopted here) goes in many regards beyond the academic, textbook-prescribed way of inquiry. As the quote by Schwartz-Shea and Yanow above suggests, abduction seeks to attend to and make sense of phenomena that we find strange, unfitting and curious. Unlike more rigid social scientific approaches, abduction makes space for puzzlement, marvel and wondering (Lobo-Guerrero 2013). Karen Locke and her colleagues further make the case for the generative role of doubt in the research process. According to them, "the living state of doubt drives and energizes us to generate possibilities, try them out, modify, transform, or abandon them, try again, and so on, until new concepts or patterns are gen erated that productively satisfy our doubt. From this perspective, doubt is an essential, not aberrant, part of the research process" (Locke, Golden-Biddle, and Feldman 2008, 908). Uncertainties and doubts are thus part and parcel of this kind of research.

Although it provides a way how to approach the studied matter in a creative way, abductive reasoning can prove to be rather confusing in methodological terms exactly because of this unruliness. Lobo-Guerrero argues that adoption of wondering "defies the very idea of research *design* since it entails a departure from carefully measured hypotheses and rationally focused 'clean' questions" (Lobo-Guerrero 2013, 25; emphasis in original), as "it does not provide the researcher with a *telos*" (Lobo-Guerrero 2013, 28; emphasis in original). These remarks are echoed by Van Maanen, Sørensen and Mitchell who note that in the case of abductive projects, "flow of research is lengthy and uneven, is seen most clearly in hindsight, and, perhaps most important, is contextually idiosyncratic, often chaotic, and always personal" (Van Maanen, Sørensen, and Mitchell 2007, 1146). Methodologically, then, abduction can prove to be rather challenging, as I have also found out.

I do not claim that abduction is an exclusive feature of the interpretative scholarship. Although positivist research designs tend to be more predetermined with regards to the relationship between the theory and the empirics, scholars with such propensities still allow for the intellectual travels between the particular and the general. However, it is safe to say that

abduction defines a much larger portion of the interpretative research. This is related to the features of the interpretative inquiry that I discussed above. Interpretative research entails close engagement with the studied matter, be it through interviews, field observations, or archives. These encounters then often bring about discrepancy between the empirical insights and expectations derived from the legwork and theoretical literature (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 28). The moment when we "become interested in a class of phenomena for which we lack applicable theories" (Friedrichs and Kratochwil 2009, 714) is the moment in the research process when abduction seems not only appropriate but necessary.

Or at least that is how it played out for me in the course of my own research project. I came to Israel/Palestine to write a Foucauldian analysis which would investigate how settler's neoliberal subjectivities interplay with state security strategies. Israel seemed to offer a perfect example (a "case") of a setting in which one can trace both neoliberal governmentality emphasizing individual freedom on the one hand, and heavy involvement of the state authorities in the security matters and their regulation on the other. Building on the literature dealing with the current governmental initiatives striving to turn "ordinary citizens" into "soldiers" and "detectives" in the everyday struggles against malicious actors (Butler 2004; Vaughan-Williams 2008; Amoore 2006), among whom the prominent place is held by the character of the terrorist, I wanted to offer a critical evaluation of conditions in which these strategies reached arguably one of its most advanced phases.

Nonetheless, the field totally defied my expectations and theoretical assumptions. I soon found out that security does not pose as an important issue in Ariel in which most inhabitants actually feel safer than in Israel proper. Moreover, the settlement proved to be a kind of banal, completely non-eventful suburbs of Tel Aviv in which my main impression was a looming boredom. My theoretical perspective, to put it bluntly, did not make any sense in this context. It was a perfect example of the "tension between the expectations researchers bring to the field (based on their prior knowledge, discussed in the previous section) and what they observe and/or experience there" (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 28). This puzzlement pushed me to look into

different body of scholarship in order to make sense of how the settlers related to their surroundings, space and politics on the everyday basis.

I became more familiar with literature dealing with visuality and materiality only after I finished the main bulk of my fieldwork, a fact that made the abductive inquiry somewhat more difficult. Nonetheless, I could revisit my fieldnotes, interviews and other sources after I came home, and re-read them in the light of the conceptual insights I received. I also recalled some experiences which I shortsightedly considered non-pertinent to my project during my fieldwork, and therefore did not write them down. All these sources led me to more deeply reflect on how I can use the theoretical literature more productively with regards to what I was interested in; which led me to examine the material in a novel light; which again somewhat shifted my analytical frame. The result of this circular thinking is the present thesis.

Reflexivity

Given all the underpinnings that inform also my project, interpretative scholars emphasize the need for reflexivity in all stages of the research project – as put by Lobo-Guerrero (Lobo-Guerrero 2013, 28), such research "requires continuous strategic self-awareness to understand where the project is going". I should note that as have several authors recently argued, there is a considerable heterogeneity in the IR field with regards to understanding of what "being reflexive" entails - in general, in terms of practicalities of research, as well as when it comes to political and ethical questions (Hamati-Ataya 2013; Amoureux and Steele 2015b). What follows are therefore necessarily selective elements of reflexivity that proved to be salient for my research.

Rahel Kunz defines self-reflexivity as "awareness of the ways in which our gender, ethnicity, class, nationality, language, socio-cultural background, and beliefs and values have crucial implications for conducting research" (Kunz 2013, 64). Anna Leander (Leander 2008, 23–26) provides a more nuanced discussion of these issues as she identifies three distinctive understandings of reflexivity. The most straightforward one is "reflecting on the quality and validity of the study in a methods textbook's sense", that means thinking about "accuracy, adequacy,

representativeness, and relevance of the information" (Leander 2008, 24). Nonetheless, as she notes, this is not enough.

The second rendering of reflexivity in Leander's terms consists of "epistemic prudence". This consists of researchers "us[ing] the thinking tools to analyze themselves" (Leander 2008, 24), which is "the only road to limit the bias entailed in looking at the world from one's own perspective" (Leander 2008, 25). Unlike more positivist authors, interpretative scholars refuse the notion of the "objective" researcher who is able to detach herself from the dynamics and processes she studies. Put slightly differently, turning the interpretative gaze on themselves, scholars recognize that like any other human, they are embedded in the social and political structures, and that to escape and distance oneself from them is impossible. Still, according to Leander interpretivists should seek "to limit [bias] impact and also be aware of it when [they] analyze the results" (Leander 2008, 25).

In the third understand of the term, reflexivity refers to the wider context and conditions of academic production. In this regard, critical scholars should be aware not only of politics they investigate, but also of those that are embedded in their own work. Most authors writing in this tradition would agree with Leander in her refusal of the idea of "purportedly neutral and objective scientific knowledge" (Leander 2008, 25), in favor of the notion that "knowledge originating from, pertaining to, and produced by the researcher will be a politically-situated knowledge' (Guillaume 2013, 29).

Importantly, what is at stake here is not only the value-laden nature of academic production. Although the trope of "ivory tower" is alive and well in many corners,[19] scholars need to be aware that their work can have implications and impact beyond the boundaries of university campuses and walls of research institutes. In a nutshell, in this third reading of reflexivity, scholars need to ask themselves what kind of social and political repercussions their own work has.

[19] The question of academia's "practical" relevance is obviously beyond the scope of this chapter (or thesis at large). I nonetheless discuss some aspects of these issues in the conclusion.

More recently, in the fields of IR, IPS and CSS, the reflexive orientations have been applied also to the social scientific methods. A group of scholars associated with *International Collaboratory on Critical Methods in Security Studies* project proposed that we should "make away from the approach to treat methods as a bridge between a theory and a technical instrument of analysis" (Aradau et al. 2015, 3) and reconceptualize them as "performative rather than representational" (Huysmans and Aradau 2014, 598). Following this, they suggest that we should "expand the question of reflexivity to include an analysis of the effects that methods as practices have" (Aradau et al. 2015, 3). In other words, employing (any) methods is an inherently political endeavor, rather one driven purely by ontological and epistemological concerns.

Again, my research closely relates to these notions. For me, the choice of ethnography as the main approach was far from dictated merely by concerns regarding academic standards (essentially a sophisticated version of "what is the most appropriate way of going about this"). What I found intriguing about this particular methodology was that it seemed to promise to overcome the sterility and detachment that I found on pages of most academic works. In contrast to much of the IR literature, anthropological pieces that I came across in the course of my studies managed to flesh out human conditions in much more lively and relatable manner. Opting for ethnography thus constituted an attempt to address disciplinary conventions which I found personally and politically problematic. This thus brings me to the specificities of methodological approach that I employed, to which I turn in the next section.

Ethnography[20]

For a long time, ethnography was a methodological approach deemed largely identical with the anthropological craft. Nonetheless, in the last few decades there has been a decoupling of the two and the ethnographic methods have been used in other disciplines. As such, ethnography is now understood as a particular methodological approach which can be adopted by scholars

[20] It should be noted that I focus here solely on interpretative strand of ethnography. For the discussion and comparison of interpretative and non-interpretative ethnographic kinds of research see e.g. (Kubik 2009; Schatz 2009a).

working in fields beyond anthropology, including the political science (Schatz 2009a) in general and critical IR and IPS in particular (Vrasti 2016; Gusterson 2008).

The basic definition of ethnography is often, in a somewhat playful fashion, captured as “deep hanging out” (Clifford 1997, 56). This catchphrase captures the main crux of ethnographic fieldwork: ethnographers aim to immerse in the local culture and elucidate the complex web of meanings, practices and their imprints on the everyday life. As put by Hopf, the aim of the ethnography is “the discovery of the intersubjective world of a community of interests” (Hopf 2006, 19). This discovery is usually captured by what Geertz famously called “thick description”, that is rich and contextual account of meaning-making practices. To get such an insight, ethnographers usually need to spend an extensive period of time to become truly embedded in the community they seek to research. Furthermore, according to some authors, a distinctive requirement of a good research in the ethnographic tradition is a particular kind of sensibility to the texture and nuances of the everyday life which enables to identify and interpret the implicit and often obscure social structures (Pader 2006; Jourde 2009).

Several authors have noted that rather than clear-cut methodology, ethnography poses as a general orientation of the given project. Schatz understands ethnography as a set of “approaches that rely centrally on person-to-person contact as a way to elicit insider perspectives and meanings“ (Schatz 2007, 2). What is distinctive about ethnography vis-à-vis other interpretative methodologies is the central role that the ethnographer herself plays in the research process: Sherry Ortner has argued that ethnography consists of “using the self-as much of it as possible-as the instrument of knowing“ (Ortner 1995, 173). More than in any other approach, it is the very body, subjectivity and personal experience and engagment of the researcher that pose as the main research tool.

Researchers utilizing ethnography thus find themselves trying to find a fine balance between “insider” and “outsider” positions, bearing in mind that these are ideal categories. On the one hand, they seek to get embedded in the field by participation in everyday activities and lives of the people they set out to work with. On the other hand, ethnographers not only usually cannot but do not want to become completely “merged” with the researched community.

Ethnographers need to retain some sort of analytical distance that provides them with avenue to identify implicit intersubjective notions which are usually not vocalized, or even noticed, by the local actors themselves.

In the remainder of this chapter, I focus on other aspects of ethnographic research which proved to be important for my project. I attend to access to the field and the subsequent stay in it; employed methods; the importance of positionality and reflexivity; the ethical concerns; and finally the matter of representation.

Access to and Being in the Field

One of the reasons why the ethnography is often considered more taxing than other methodologies is the issue of *access to the field*. The matter of access haunts a vast majority of scholars who want to conduct any kind of data-generating research project which requires direct contact with informants or archival material. Nonetheless, there is a rather major difference between convincing someone to meet for an interview for at most a couple hours, and being present at their meetings, hanging out with them in cafeteria, and spending holidays with their families. In other words, ethnographers in general face much higher obstacles in getting access that is necessary for the "proper" employment of their methodology when compared to other approaches. Although there are ways how to prepare before the actual commencement of the fieldwork, access often needs to be negotiated with gate-keepers in the field, be them a governmental official, a head of the local prominent family, or a gang leader (Gusterson 2008, 96–99). In some instances, one's success comes down to sheer luck.[21] As put by authors of a recent volume on dealing with the topic, "until you go you cannot really prepare" (Glasius et al. 2018, 29).

[21] The case of Zirzakzadeh's (Zirakzadeh 2009) research is rather instructive. He was successful in making rapport with his informants only after he by accident ended up taking shelter in a random house with some Basque activists following a dispersion of protests he observed by police.

Granting the “official entry” is however usually not the end of the quest for access. As I repeatedly mentioned, because the ethnographer seeks to immerse herself in the studied environment, she needs more than an approval from the gatekeepers. To be able to elucidate more of the insider’s perspective, the researcher needs to gain the trust of and rapport with the people she wants to understand. Seligmann (Seligmann 2005, 238) notes that ethnographers “cannot simply walk into an existing and ongoing social organization with its own structure, momentum, and history expect to be accepted.”

Because of all these concerns, the ethnographer needs to spend an extended period of time in the field, lest she be labelled as “arm chair ethnographer”. Although even in anthropology scholars do not insist anymore that one needs to spend at least a whole year in the field in order to be able to provide authoritative account (as used to be the norm), there is the expectation that the fieldwork will last more than a several weeks. The reason behind this is quite obvious: one cannot become a (semi)insider overnight. This makes an ethnographic project rather taxing, especially in the context of teaching and other administrative duties at the home university or research institute. Importantly, ethnography also poses rather high demands in terms of pre-existing knowledge of the local language, culture and politics, all of which hugely facilitate production of thick description (Wedeen 2009a, 86).

With all this being said, in terms of access my own fieldwork proved to be surprisingly easy. I came to Israel/Palestine to conduct my fieldwork in October 2015 and I left one year later. Out of this period, I spent four months, from mid-February to mid-June 2016, in Ariel, one of the biggest settlements in the West Bank. For the rest of the period (before and after staying in Ariel) I lived in Jerusalem. I then did a shorter follow-up fieldwork from early May to early July 2017 during which I stayed only in Jerusalem and was visiting settlements from there.

There were several factors that made my fieldwork so easy. Although this runs the risk of repeating stereotypes, Israelis are in general easy to approach and do not hesitate to share their views on almost any subject, to say the least. In practical terms, this meant that it was incredibly easy to start small conversations with strangers on a bus stop, and acquittances I interviewed were rather chatty. With regards to living in the settlement, I did not need to any official

permission to move there. I simply found several ads for rooms to rent in Ariel on yad2.il (essentially Israeli craigslist), called the listed phone numbers, and stroke the deal with one landlord. Although in some settlements potential newcomers need an approval from the local council, Ariel is one of the settlements where this is not required; indeed, the whole point is to make moving there as easy as possible.

Once I moved to Ariel in winter 2016, it was easy to establish rapport with the settlers. I already had two contacts. First was a family friend of a former classmate who put us in touch. Elya was a student at the Ariel University and introduced me to several other students soon after my move to the settlement. I came across my second entry contact through a pure coincidence. In summer 2015, I was doing an intensive Hebrew class in Haifa. One night at the university bar I struck a conversation with a girl who turned out to be friends with another Jewish Israeli who was originally from Ariel. Although Shira lived in Tel Aviv at the time, after meeting me for coffee, she was kind enough to introduce me to her family whom I first visited in December 2015 and I stayed in touch with the family during my stay in the settlement. Shira's family lived in Ariel since the early 1990s, and Sarah, Shira's mother, introduced me to a number of veteran settlers. In the same vein, approaching settlement officials also proved on average quite straightforward. I soon met Yossi, an American Israeli who was responsible for PR and fund-raising for the city of Ariel. Since it was essentially his job to promote the settlement, he was very forthcoming and helpful in introducing me to other municipality representatives and public figures. In settlements other than Ariel, I was usually introduced to future interviewees by common acquittances.

Getting access to relevant experts, academics and NGO workers was rather easy as well. The huge advantage of doing research in Israel/Palestine is how small the research community is, with the result being that there is dense net of direct interpersonal connections. I utilized my existing academic contacts (I was a visiting PhD student at Hebrew University in Jerusalem and Ben-Gurion University in Beer Sheeva during my fieldwork) who recommended me whom I should contact, and in many cases even gave me personal emails and number of the people in question. Nonetheless, what I found nearly impossible was to get in touch with governmental and security officials. First obstacle was the Israeli bureaucracy which is infamously

unapproachable – just getting in touch with people who could point me further took an amount of time and energy I did not expect. And in the cases in which I managed to get contact for a person I sought to interview, by far the most common response was a rejection. As a result, I had to abandon my original idea to complement the settlers' experience and perspective with insights derived from interviews with officials responsible for implementing and shaping the policies in the West Bank. My failure to interview representatives of the Israeli governmental agencies thus obviously narrowed down the scope of my understanding of dynamics that underpinned everyday life in settlements.

Nonetheless, although establishing contact in the field went (relatively) well, what I hugely underestimated was the personal and emotional toll that the fieldwork had on me. That is, as I soon found out, there is a world of difference between getting access to the field and *being in the field*, and the impact it had on me. Although boredom reigning in the settlements might be interesting in analytical and academic terms, on the personal level it proved to be, well, boring. I spent most of my day in my room or in the library, which was only rarely interrupted by an interview or some event. More importantly, I soon become deeply alienated from people I came to work with.

On the one hand, most people I sought to interview were very approachable, and a surprising number of them treated me very kindly – it is hard to recount how much coffee I had drunk, and how sandwiches and snacks I had eaten before, during and after interviews. People were also genuinely asking me if they could help me somehow with me settling in. However, this strongly contrasted with their political views. Although within the Israeli society they would be considered centrists, their statements stroke me as orientalist and racist. I was familiar with the Israeli public discourse quite well before moving to Ariel but being exposed to such statements on a daily basis gradually weighed me down. This alienation was even more profound since I was convinced, and still am, that most of the settlers I interviewed were decent people who would shy away from directly harming anyone, including "Arabs". I feel I would have easier time to talk to hardcore right-wing and messianistic settlers whose worldview would be utterly obscure to me. What made interactions with non-ideological settlers so taxing was that I could relate to this complex

intertwinement of chauvinism and decency - as I gradually realized, I held the same views until quite late in my life.

That is why, after four months in Ariel, I decided to move back to Jerusalem although I could easily stay in the settlement till the end of my stay in Israel/Palestine for three more months; I simply did not "have what it takes" personally and emotionally (D'Aoust 2013). So although, as I briefly recounted above, ethnography seemed at first as a venue enabling me to tackle the detachment of much of the academic output, it led me to a situation of quite profound personal despair.

As a result of all this, after I finished my fieldwork, my main impression was that of a failure. I felt I had failed at establishing a "proper" ethnographic connection with the informants, and that I definitely stayed on the outsider part of the insider/outsider spectrum. In a nutshell, my fieldwork was not only personally taxing but also full of mistakes, some of which hugely restricted the scope of insight I could have into the reality I was researching. I recount some of them in the empirical sections of the paper.

Nonetheless, I have gradually found out via several informal chats that the feeling of despair and failure is not so uncommon among graduate students who go through this experience for the first time in what we hope are our nascent academic careers. Perhaps this speaks to the ethnographic ideal of "full immersion" which proves impossible to achieve due to various circumstances as well as personal proclivities and conditions. I was still able to conduct a series of interviews and mere living in the settlement proved indispensable for understanding some parts of the settlers' everyday reality. This brings me to the specific methods I employed in the course of my fieldwork.

Methods

The hallmark method of ethnography has long been participant observation. As succinctly put by Linda Seligmann, "it consists of simultaneously *participating* in as many of the activities as

possible at a particular site or in a particular setting, *observing* what is transpiring, and *interpreting* what the researcher has participated in and observed" (Seligmann 2005, 235; emphasis in original). More recently, scholars have argued that seeking to understand the given cultural milieu and its sense-making practices can be achieved through other means as well. In this regard, for example, Patrick Thaddeus Jackson (P. T. Jackson 2008) has proposed to approach texts in an ethnographic mode of inquiry, with the sensibility that is supposed to compensate for the lack of in-person participation.

However, majority of ethnographers still rely on some sort of "direct" participant observation because of the method's several strengths. First, its long-term and indeed participatory nature enables to establish trust with the informants. Second, it provides contact with the observed reality which goes beyond its representations in interviews and documents. Finally, participation puts the researcher into position to capture the differences between "frontstage" and "backstage" in the researched setting. In other words, this method interrogates how social and political actors behave in more visible settings on the one hand, and in more informal on the other (Gusterson 2008, 100; Wilkinson 2013, 139).

In the case of my research, the scope for participant observation proved to be nonetheless rather small. As I discussed above, my personal and political alienation from the settlers made me reluctant to conduct "deep hanging out" too extensively. Also, because to the suburbian nature of the settlement, there was simply not many events to participate in. I attended public events like celebration of Israeli national holidays, and several lectures at the Ariel University. I have also been to Shabbat dinners, both at the campus and at settlers' homes, and I have been invited a couple times to attend a family gathering on occasions of Jewish holidays. Nonetheless, it turned out that the mere living and travelling to and from the settlement provided me with some valuable insights into everyday lives of the settlers.

Apart from observations in the field, I have mostly employed semi-structured interviews which ended up being the most important single method I used. Following the overall orientation of the project, I was relying on interpretative and ethnographic ways of doing interviews which aim to elucidate meaning and performative functions of discussed practices (Spradley 1979;

Gusterson 2008, 103–6). Overall, I made around 40 recorded interviews, and a number of more informal ones during which I only took notes. In some cases, I decided against recording the interview, mostly when talking with officials, because I was worried it would constrain the scope of things they would share with me.

As I hinted at above, I relied on snowball approach – the family of the girl I met through an acquittance and the female student at the Ariel University introduced me to veterans of the settlements and other students, respectively, with my range of informants naturally expanding. I also attended a couple events, some of which provided me with more opportunities for interviews. Lastly, I joined the unofficial Facebook group for the Ariel inhabitants where I posted a brief summary of my research and asked people who want to be interviewed to get in touch with me. This yielded several more interviews. Approaching settlement officials was hugely facilitated by Yossi, the municipality employee I became acquainted with soon after I moved to the settlement. Other interviewees (NGO workers, experts, etc.) were contacted upon the recommendation of my academic advisors at Israeli institutions. The interviews usually lasted around an hour, although there were of course exceptions from the rule.

Positionality and Reflexivity

Although these notions are important in any type of scholarly project which entails interactions with other humans, ethnographers are acutely aware of how their *positionality* shape their research and condition the (necessarily limited) knowledge of "the field". As I have noted above, a distinctive feature of ethnography is "using the self-as much of it as possible-as the instrument of knowing" (Ortner 1995, 173). The importance of the researcher's subjectivity as well as the body in the research process has crucial implications for ethnographic projects.

To quote Leander once again, "the impact of my physical appearance, reactions, gestures, social status, and use of language tends to have an immediate impact on what interviewees say and leave out from their accounts" (Leander 2008, 25). As we know from our "non-academic" everyday lives, people make snap judgements based on superficial and clearly visible

characteristics all the time. Whereas that can lead to unsettling situations outside the research setting, in the context of scholarly projects some features can prove damaging for connecting with some informants, while hugely beneficial with regards to others, hindering or facilitating rapport with different actors and groups (Shehata 2006).

One's demographic positionality is thus crucial when it comes to the issue of access to the field and informants. Gusterson notes that "it is hard, for example, to imagine a woman doing Louis Wacquant's (2003) research with boxers in Chicago, or a man doing Elizabeth Fernea's (1969) among wives of a sheikh in Iraq." Although these examples are rather clear with regards to what features enabled researchers access to their respective fields, it is pointless to list all the characteristics that can be relevant in general as these things are highly contextual. Although there are some basic features which play role in essentially all settings (like gender and race), in others one's birthplace, accent or a specific hobby can prove surprisingly important (Desmond 2006; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 67).

Of course, positionality is not restricted to physical appearances and demographic characteristics of the researcher. Importantly, which sites can the ethnographer reach, which meetings and parties attend, and which meals participate in "can profoundly affect what the researcher sees or does not see, learns and does not learn" (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 68). The issue of one's status and position within the researched context is thus crucial as well. Pachirat (Pachirat 2009) shows that different jobs that he held in the slaughterhouse crucially influenced what he could see and get understanding of. Whereas hanging livers gave him insight into how compartmentalization of violence plays out for the workers, the position of quality controller enabled him to map out the physical space of the slaughterhouse. Nonetheless, his latter position alienated Pachirat from his former coworkers, for whom he effectively became part of the management, thus foreclosing avenues for research available to him previously when his physical mobility was restricted.

Because of all these issues, *reflexivity* becomes even more pressing concern in the case of ethnographic research compared to other interpretative methodologies (Wilkinson 2013, 131–33). It is so exactly because it is the person and body of the researcher herself that is the main

tool for data generation through participant observations and other methods. Vrasti (Vrasti 2016) even suggests that it is more appropriate to see ethnography, autoethnography and autobiography as interrelated to the extent that makes them hard to distinguish from each other, exactly because of the role of the ethnographer in the production of knowledge. The ethnographer needs more than just to critically asses her biases and preconceptions, and see how they might have influenced her research. What is at stake is to reflect on how one's race, language skills, personal inclinations and so on shape interactions with the informants.

In this regard, Samer Shehata talks about ethnographers as "'positioned subjects' – human, constructed, 'natives' somewhere, with ideas, emotions, and agendas" (Shehata 2006, 246). Again, this applies to all kind of research. Nonetheless, because of the specifics of ethnographic projects, that is the need for immersion, the positionality becomes even more acute. Essentially, the ethnographer needs to ask, how does my positionality impacts and conditions the scope of my knowledge? In other words, it is not only the case that someone else would approach my research differently, or would it interpret my "data" in a different way (or asked completely different questions to start with). What is crucial to realize is that someone else, with a different passport, skin color and sense of humor would gain rather different insights into the studied matter as s/he would access and approach the field and informants differently, and would be approached in return differently as well.

In Israel/Palestine, as in many other contexts, my own positionality became apparent right upon leaving the plane and encountering a border officer. To start with, being in possession of an EU passport enabled me to cross a number of checkpoints, both physical and metaphorical (on the latter see Ritchie 2015). EU citizenship helped me to relatively easily navigate the complex system of layers of restrictions and permissions. Importantly, I could without problems enter both Israeli settlements and the zones A in the West Bank, which are under full Palestinian civilian and security control, which makes them illegal to enter for Israeli citizens. This privileged position, I feel, was crucial for me to better comprehend the profoundly distinctive experiences of living, moving and seeing on the part of different populations in Israel/Palestine.

It also soon turned out that the physical appearance mattered just as much as the name of the country written on my passport. Although this would be vehemently denied by Israeli authorities, most of the everyday security practices in Israel/Palestine are based on racial profiling (Ochs 2011). This was becoming apparent every time as I was going to and leaving settlements. In general, the guards would ask for ID people they "suspected" of being Palestinian based on their outlook. During my whole fieldwork I was asked for my documents only once. More importantly, since the settlement population is dominantly Ashkenazi, I had easy time to blend in while waiting for a bus or at a university hall.

My shaky yet sufficient knowledge of Hebrew, coupled with the acquittance with basic tenants of Judaism and Israeli history and politics, was crucial for approaching potential informants. Not only most people in Ariel did not speak English, which made my Hebrew skills rather necessary for conducting interviews. Most settlers I interviewed were rather eager to share their perspective, something that seemed to me to be related to their feeling that they are grossly misrepresented in media – indeed, I soon started to use (or, more precisely, take advantage of) this inclination by emphasizing that I am interested in settlers' own perspective that is largely missing from public discourse. My knowledge of the language and certain features of the life in the region proved to quickly convince people that I am genuinely interested in Israelis' point of view. In fact, the first impression was usually that I am myself of Jewish background. Interestingly, most people were even more forthcoming after I informed them I was not; I am quite sure that the idea was that I have no other reason than to be Zionist to study Hebrew and learn about Judaism and Israel, an assumption which obviously hugely helped me in the course of the project.

But, as I suppose has become rather apparent by now, this was and is quite far from my political convictions. In fact, my whole project is underpinned by critical attitude towards the occupation in particular, and Israeli systematic exclusionary practices in general. I am simply not able to disentangle my politics from the way I approach these issues in the academic sphere. Nonetheless, at the same time, because of my previous stay in Israel, my familiarity with the Israeli historical and political narrative, and the fact that there is a number of Israelis I consider friends, I felt I was much more understanding of Israeli perspective than a majority of foreigners

I met in Israel/Palestine, as well as critical scholars I encountered during my short academic career. Indeed, just the willingness to live in a settlement was not something that a lot of people I know would do because of political considerations. This issue is, I believe, not only political but also ethical issue.

Ethics: Why and Whose?

Research ethics is a problematic that has received extensive scholarly attention (see e.g. Glasius et al. 2018; Fujii 2012; Dauphinee 2007; Gusterson 2015; Wibben 2016; Van Maanen 1983). Most universities and research institutions prescribe certain guidelines which bound researchers who conduct research involving human subjects. The specifics of these guidelines, their strictness and the way researchers are made sure to obey them vary quite substantially depending on the country, discipline, and individual departments (see e.g. Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2008). There are ongoing debates with regards to which extent these requirements contribute to the quality of research and more nuanced ethical stances that their authors take, and to which extent these requirements serve mostly as a legal shielding of institutions which are then not liable for potential fallouts, so they entail more of a bureaucratic hurdle for researchers. In any case, as a result of these procedures, there are a number of stipulations which scholars must observe in the course of their research.

Several broad areas that are relevant for ethical concerns arise. First relates to the participants of the research. In this regard, ethical standards aim to prevent abuses of human "subjects" that were a rather occurring feature of a number of research projects in the past (Cassell 1980; Gusterson 2008, 109). In the ethnographic inquiry, these considerations are also informed by the anthropology's colonial legacy as ethnographers essentially served to harness knowledge about the colonized populations (Smith 2012). The cornerstones of informants' protection are the informed consent and "do no harm to your informants" policy. Researchers are required to familiarize the informants about the nature of their research and receive the permission to use information they are told. As for doing no harm, most researchers anonymize identities of their

informants by changing names and demographic features which are not crucial in terms of research. This is supposed to protect the research participants from possible backlash from their local community, prosecution by state agencies, and so on. Researchers are in general strictly prohibited from disclosing any information that can be used against the informants in any way.

Second, ethnographers are bound to take into consideration their fellow researchers. Essentially, scholars should aim to act in the way that will not close their research sites to others who might potentially conduct research there in the future. That mostly means that they should not abuse the trust of the local informants who might be otherwise unwilling to open their communities to next researchers. Lastly, the scientist has obligation towards herself. As a part of institutionally sanctioned ethical standards, researchers are required to perform "risk assessment" and avoid personal harm. As I mentioned above, however, these requirements are often driven by institutions' fear of suits and tanned reputation rather than by investment in proper ethical conduct.

However, as Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 22) argue, the focus on the formal matters as stipulated by institutional guidelines can be often too narrow. Other authors have also pointed out that it is more productive to approach ethical considerations as an ongoing responsibility rather than a series of discrete moments (Fujii 2012; Eckl 2008; Taylor 1987; Van Maanen 1983). Ethics should not pose as a "checklist", a mere technical requirement, but rather as a particular sort of engagement that occurs not only during but also after the fieldwork. Moreover, the institutional requirements often do not address ethical conundrums that the researchers encounter in the field. Although, as noted by Vanderstaay (Vanderstaay 2005), there is "no recipe" for resolving ethical dilemma one encounters in the field, authors whose research is based on extended contact with informants and/or some sort of immersion in the studied context propose that one needs to prepare for a whole range of moral dilemmas.

Indeed, the questions of ethics, going far beyond the "formal" ones, had started to haunt me quite early on since the onset of my fieldwork, and they persisted after I came home; to a large extent, they still animate a lot of what is written here. Here I address only the most immediate ethical concerns that arose in the course of my fieldwork, and I deal with some other ethical

questions that I was (and am) struggling with in the conclusion. I postpone this discussion for two main reasons. First, some of the issues that underpin my struggle become apparent and tangible only through retelling of what I experienced in Israel/Palestine, which is the content of the next chapters. Second, I gradually realized that the matters that keep weigh on me are not only ethical but also deeply political, with implications that I believe are relevant also for the discipline of IR and scholarly practice. As such, although I briefly recount some of the relevant debates in the last section of this chapter, I deemed it more appropriate to address these issues in the conclusion where I am trying to relate my particular experience and research to larger political questions pertaining to the academic realm.

Although my department did not require me too undergo any scrutiny in front of an ethical committee or alike, I did try to follow widely agreed upon principles during my fieldwork. I informed people I was about to interview about the focus of my project and told them that I could use their stories in my thesis. In the cases where I decided to record the interview, I asked for the permission, and told the interviewee that they could change their mind any time. I also decided to anonymize the identities of people I was working on. I am not completely sure why since the nature of personal histories and experiences they shared with me was not implicating them in anything that, as far as I can tell, would bring any harm upon them; although I consider a number of statements I heard during my fieldwork deeply racist, I am quite sure those who uttered them would consider them non-problematic. Perhaps anonymization stems from my understanding that "this is what academics do" when they write up field research. But perhaps it also stems from my fear what would people I lived with think about my account of their lives.

Because although I informed the settlers about what I am focusing on in my thesis, the most immediate and omnipresent dilemma I was facing was how much should I disclose about my political views. A vast majority of people I talked to did not ask me about my opinions on the issues we talked about. Nonetheless, I am quite sure that their underlying assumption, as I mentioned above, was that our political positions are very close to each other. More acutely, in those rare instances when I was asked about my views on a particular matter, I offered a series of evasive answers rather than offering my critical perspective. I am aware of the fact that a sort

of deception almost necessarily accompanies a number of projects whose authors found themselves critical of the actors they researched (see e.g. Pachirat 2013; Van Maanen 1983; Taylor 1987). Nonetheless, this did not dispel my sense of a certain ethical failure; I suppose this notion contributed to my decision to move out from the settlement earlier than planned. I remain unsure how should have I approached these issues even as I am writing this. Of course, all of this also raises the question of the future access for other scholars who would conduct research among settlers in Ariel and elsewhere. Again, I cannot offer a clear-cut answer, even less so predictions.

Representation

Although this is often left out from papers and contributions dealing with the ethical standards in various fields of social sciences, for me the matters of representation became quite acute, and I could not divorce them from moral conundrums I was facing. These concerns relate to the insider/outsider tension ethnographers need to tackle that I identified above - researchers live among the local actors and based on this (necessarily limited and partial) experience they claim to be able to discover and describe "deeper" social and political structures. What is at stake here is thus not only academic credibility of ethnographer's claims, but also the power hierarchy of representing/represented. Ethnography is thus not just about immersion, sensibility and participant observation: it claims to be able to capture life worlds of strangers.

In the field of IR and IPS, this issues has been forcefully addressed by Wanda Vrasti (Vrasti 2008) in her widely referred 2008 article. Essentially, Vrasti criticizes the use of ethnography in the studies of international politics for neglecting crucial features of this particular methodological approach. As have other authors discussed, the thrust of Vrasti's argument is that IR "draw[s] on a selective and instrumental concept of ethnography" (Lie 2013, 203) which remains "limited to the idea of ethnography as yet another tool for data-collection in the IR toolbox" (D'Aoust 2013, 34). In Vrasti's own words, the discipline thus glosses over "the distance we travel from research questions to finished manuscript" (Vrasti 2010, 84). In other words, what seems to be at the core

of Vrasti's dissatisfaction with the state of ethnography-informed IR research is the neglect of the politics of representation, something that anthropologists discussed extensively in the 1980s, but IR and political science have not taken up seriously yet.

Unsurprisingly, Vrasti's intervention has been met with a substantial critical reaction in several corners. In his rebuttal, Rancatore (Rancatore 2010) argues not only that Vrasti distorts the arguments of IR scholars whose work she discusses. More importantly, he proposes that Vrasti does not sufficiently distinguish between ethnographic *method*, i.e. "technical method of data collection" (Rancatore 2010, 72), and *methodology*, i.e. "a philosophical basis from which explanations can be constructed" (Rancatore 2010, 72).This then leads her to raise unfair criticisms against IR scholars who actually attend to the ontological and epistemological stakes of ethnographic methodology. Vrasti is further said to construct "pure" notion of ethnography which is "out there" (Rancatore 2010, 73), a claim that is highly problematic given the fluid nature of ethnography as employed in anthropology as well as IR. This line of has been shared by anthropologist Lie (Lie 2013) who substantiates Rancatore's critique with examples from his own research of the World Bank and a Ugandan ministry.

Political anthropologist Lisa Wedeen briefly weighed in the debate in her survey article on the use of ethnography in political science. She argues that Vrasti's dwelling on the anthropological debates that took in the 1970s and 1980s is rather outdated nowadays as their main conclusions are basically taken for granted by the contemporary (critical) anthropologists. More importantly, the humility and acknowledgment of the ethnographer's necessary partial knowledge "of the field" "is not an excuse to shy away from explanation or theorizing" (Wedeen 2010, 264). Rather than to further engage in discussion on positionality[22], Wedeen argues, ethnographers should these notions as a starting point for innovative conceptual and theoretical insights.

In a perhaps unwitting agreement with Wedeen, in her 2013 book Vrasti actually seems to adopt a more conciliatory tone when she notes that "I found theory to be essential for understanding

[22] I would argue that Wedeen builds somewhat of a straw man argument in this regard as Vrasti talks much more about the writing as representation rather than about the role of the researcher in the whole research process per se.

the duplicity and complexity of our current predicament“ (Vrasti 2013, 19–20). Nonetheless, she still maintains that “all research is essentially a problem of representation“ (Vrasti 2016, 275) and that “the fantasy of valid truth is constructed in writing, not in the field“ (Vrasti 2016, 276).

Given my modest familiarity with the literature at question, I do not purport to contribute to this debate. I side with Wedeen (and as suggested, Vrasti herself) when it comes to the importance of “potentially illuminating engagements with political and social theory” (Wedeen 2010, 263). Nonetheless, I also tend to agree with Vrasti’s argument, echoed by other scholars (see especially Dauphinee 2007, 2010; Doty 2004), that we need to take the political and ethical stakes of representing the lives of other people more seriously. Indeed, how and why to write academically about what I experienced in Israel/Palestine is a matter that I am still struggling to resolve; the conclusion of this thesis provides an insight into the interim stage of this struggle.

4. Making the Settlements Mundane

In the late morning in June 2017, during my shorter follow-up fieldwork, I was sitting with Nina in her car while she was driving me to her office that was located outside of the built-up area of Ariel. Once we took a minor road and left the streets, we drove right next to an olive grove. Slowing down, Nina pointed at the trees and told me how she liked the fact that that there were so many of them in Ariel. Playing a somewhat dumb foreigner, I asked Nina who did they belong to, adding that I thought that olive trees were usually owned by Palestinians (or rather "Arabs", as I had adopted settlers' terminology by then). Nina appeared to be rather perplexed. She was not sure at first but then she answered that yes, they must belong to Palestinians. But she was still unsure how the owners attended to the trees given the fence that locates them inside the settlement. Only after several minutes (we changed the topic of the conversation in the meantime) she suddenly realized that the army must give the Palestinians access to come to tend to the groves from time to time.

For me, this episode epitomized several issues that are at the heart of this thesis. Not only did Nina apparently have no knowledge of the arrangements in the area, like the regime of permits for the Palestinians to be able attend to their land from which they were cut off the security fence, or its seizure in the first place. Moreover, as I discuss in more details below, the political symbolism surrounding olive trees was completely non-existent for her. Rather than standing for the Palestinian national efforts and steadfastness, they just provided a pleasant background to her commute.

Using this experience as a starting point, this chapter relates directly address the tension that I identified in the previous chapter: how is the occupation, a foundational political fact establishing power-laden, racialized hierarchies in Israel/Palestine rendered non-problematic and depoliticized on the part of the settlers in terms of their everyday life? Following theoretical notions that guide my inquiry, I focus on material and visual configurations and their changes over time to highlight their depoliticizing effect as well as historicity. I am further drawing on some of the literature which has concerned the politics of architecture and space in

Israel/Palestine. Building on works which emphasize the political nature of built space, various authors have demonstrated how have been these practices employed by the Zionist and Israeli bodies for political purposes (see e.g. Nitzan-Shiftan 2005; Allweil 2016; Yacobi 2004; Tzfadia and Yacobi 2011). I take broad inspiration from these works to highlight how urban developments relate to power conditions in Israel/Palestine.

This chapter proceeds as follows. I first revisit the short history of Ariel as recounted to me in interviews with the veterans of the settlement. I juxtapose these accounts with the current conditions in the settlement, arguing that these developments in themselves pose as embodiment of the legitimacy of the settlements' existence. I then proceed to focus on three registers which work to depoliticize the everyday live in the settlements: provision of security, features promoting the quality of life in the settlement, and the notion of nature. I propose that it is a particular aesthetical rendering of these features which are crucial for the process of divorcing settlers' everyday experiences from politics.

History

"The Mountain of Death"

In essentially all interviews I conducted with the settlers who had been living in Ariel from the beginning, the name "Mountain of Death" ("Har HaMavet") came up. According to my informants, this was how local Palestinians called the place where Ariel was established. In the interviews, this marked the area as a barren and hostile environment that extracted significant efforts and sacrifice from the settlers as exemplified by these quotes from different interviews:

"In the beginning, there was nothing. There was a mountain that the Arabs called the Mountain of Death because nothing grew here, and then only rocks and stones, that was it."[23]

[23] Interview, April 14, 2016, Ariel.

"They called this the Mountain of Death. When they bought this land, when Ron Nachman and others started, they bought the land from the Palestinians and handed them the money. […] I walked on the far road above us and I counted over fifty Palestinian graves. So I thought, 'Is it because of this?' or was it because… What was said is that they [Palestinians] couldn't grow anything here. […] The land was not good for anything else. It would not grow fruit. It would not grow plants or trees. It was only when we established ourselves here that things started to grow, the trees began to grow. The Palestinians were asking us again and again 'How did you make things grow? What is the difference? What did you do?'"[24]

"Arabs who lived here called it Mountain of Death. I don't know why. But they didn't want to live here. There was not a single tree."[25]

Even if one approaches skeptically the narrative of the Palestinians' amazement at the Israelis' agricultural skills, the archival photographs attached below do show environment which appear fairly hostile: vegetation is rather scarce and dust and rocks seem to constitute most of the physical landscape. So although the notion of the Mountain of Death should be taken with a grain of salt, it appears that the conditions at the site were largely unfavorable and inconvenient, at least by standards of people coming from the coastal cities of Israel proper. In short, this was not a place that would attract people looking for a higher quality of life; before the first structures were erected, there was "nothing" but "two tents and a caravan".[26]

The origins of the settlement in the first few years were thus defined by significant discomfort and personal sacrifice on the part of Israelis who decided to participate in the enterprise and were vetted by the committee which carefully picked up candidates. What made the conditions taxing was not only the physical, "natural" environment per se. Even after Ariel was officially established in August 1978 and the first hundred families moved there, conditions remained far from convenient. In the first few years, the settlers lived only in small caravans, and semi-provisional structures. As put by one of the "founding" settlers, "The conditions were hard in the

[24] Interview, April 8, 2016, Ariel.
[25] Interview, April 10, 2016, Ariel.
[26] Interview, April 14, 2016, Ariel.

beginning. There was mud, we didn't have electricity. There was a generator, all the time it broke down."[27] Another Israeli who moved to the area right after the settlement's establishment confirmed this by saying "but we were not connected to the water supply, to the electricity supply, there were no telephones"[28].

Source: Ariel Municipality Website

[27] Interview, April 10, 2016, Ariel.
[28] Interview, April 19, 2016, Ariel.

Source: Ariel Municipality

Source: Ariel Municipality Website

Source: Ariel Municipality Website

In short, in the first several years the life in the settlement was highly demanding: there was no steady source of electricity ("we had more power outages than actual power" [29], one of founding members of the settlement told me), water supply was erratic and there was only one phone available at the small municipality office. These conditions started to change only gradually after couple years as the settlement was connected to the grid and permanent houses were built. The extraordinary, taxing nature of the settlement endeavor was thus inextricably linked to and present in the Israelis' everyday lives in Ariel. Indeed, as my interviews with the settlers who had lived in Ariel since its establishment demonstrated, the first people who volunteered to move to Ariel could not probably withstand this discomfort without ideological investment in the settlement project.

[29] Interview, April 10, 2016, Ariel.

"Such a Nice Place"

When I first came to Ariel in fall 2015, the origins that I sought to capture above were completely overwritten by the almost 40 years of settlement's development; there was no more "Mountain of Death". The pioneering spirit of the "nucleus" was replaced by the mundane mindset of suburbia. In my fieldnotes on that day[30], I wrote that "this place looks kind of dead". Nonetheless, I also further wrote to myself: "What did you expect? It is really just suburbs." As I discussed in the previous chapter, such mundaneness defines a large portion of the Israeli settlements in general. What I want to argue in this section is that especially when contrasted with the hardships that the first settlers experienced, this development, this rendering settlements mundane and even boring, in itself poses as an instrument of depolitization.

Among most people who live nowadays in Ariel, only handful had experienced the original conditions, faced power outages, did not have running water, and walked on unpaved roads. Nonetheless, the origins of the settlements and the original "state of nature" that defined Ariel in its first few years are being constantly evoked by the authorities through various channels. The municipality website has a link to an online album featuring a whole series of photographs[31] that capture the difficulties and bareness of the land upon the settlement's establishment, visually juxtaposing this history with the present state of the settlement. Similar pictures were hanging on the walls of the exhibition space located right next to the grave of Ron Nachman when I visited it in June 2017. There are also several official short videos that highlight this material transformation (Gidon Ariel 2018; CityAriel 2010, 2013). Furthermore, a book capturing the first 30 years of the settlement's history published in 2008 by the municipality contains a number of photographs and stories which capture the hardships experienced by the first settlers.

Lastly, the municipality offices are actually still located in the first structures that stood in Ariel. One of the veterans, originally from Eastern Europe, told me the following: "We lived in caravans for four years […] It is where municipality offices now are, they are in the same houses. We lived

[30] Fieldnotes, November 24, 2015.
[31] See https://www.flickr.com/photos/city_of_ariel/sets/72157645777614121/with/14696204932/.

in the same houses once."[32] The fact that the authorities reside in the oldest buildings in the settlement then introduces a notion of continuity between the past and the present. Every time a citizen needs to take care of official matters and encounters the authorities, she is confronted with a particular sort of a "monument in use" that recalls the humble and difficult origins.

As a result of all these arrangements, although the physical environment in which settlers find themselves has been completely transformed, they are repeatedly reminded of the far-reaching changes that took place through the Israelis' diligence and efforts. In short, the conquer of nature, the act of turning "the Mountain of Death" into a prospering community, is omnipresent in the settlers' lives and conscience. As such, although the conditions in the settlement are nowadays extremely comfortable, its inhabitants are constantly aware of the transformations that occurred there and the energy and resources that were invested in the community.

It is hard to miss the parallels between the accounts recounting the hardships experienced by the first settlers and their success in building the settlement on the one hand, and the Zionist tropes of redeeming the land and making the dessert bloom and sacrifices on the other. Indeed, one of my interviewees very much echoed these narratives: "The Land of Israel can be an example for the whole world how to organize from nothing. Look, from here you can see an Arab village. How, what they give to the land ('hakarka')? And what we give? You understand? […] You see, wherever we go, we increase the standard."[33] The Zionist tropes have been extensively challenged by a number of scholars by now (see e.g. Sternhell 1999; Shafir 1996; Zerubavel 1997) but what is more important for me here is not to refute this narrative playing out on micro-scale but to understand how it is embodied in the settlers' everyday lives, and what political effects does this process have.

[32] Interview, April 10, 2016, Ariel.
[33] Interview, April 10, 2016, Ariel.

A swimming pool in Ariel. Source: author's pictures

A new mall in Ariel. Source: author's pictures

The transformations that occurred in the area had profound political implications as they manifested the material powers of the state that conducted them. Although one can be skeptical of the Zionist redemption narrative playing out in the settlement, it is hard to deny that Ariel and its long-term inhabitants witnessed major changes of the physical environment. Transforming a barren land into a thriving community then poses as a testament to the resources and prowess of the Israeli state. Following Scott, the transformations that occurred in the settlement can be seen in broad terms as manifestation of the state efforts to refashion material conditions to promote its ends – as the settlers repeatedly emphasized, it was the Israeli government which approved establishment of the settlement and which then provided it with means to develop, plugged it to electricity and water, connected it to infrastructure, and so on. In doing so, the state imposed its presence and power on the subjects.

Nonetheless, as opposed to the policies investigated by Scott, these material transformations were not (primarily) aimed to establish dominance over the targeted population, at least if we understand settlers as the target of these programmes. Although normalization of settlements significantly consolidated the Israeli occupational regime, thus cementing its control over the Palestinian lives (Handel 2014), on the part of settlers these policies did not manifest themselves as practices of domination. They rather served as legitimization of their presence in the area. By overcoming the obstacles and challenges stemming from the hostile environment, and turning them into a basis for a thriving community, the Israeli state demonstrated its prowess and capacities. This worked to assure settlers that to live in the area is both legitimate (the legitimacy was embodied in the physical betterment of the conditions in the area, supposedly also for the Palestinians as I discuss below) and safe (the state proved itself capable of providing for the settlers).

In a related yet distinct process, these material transformations significantly reconfigured the scope of and possibilities for social and political life in the settlement. As I argue throughout this and the following chapter, these reconfigurations were crucial parts of the depoliticizing dispositif, subscribing to and promoting the rationality seeking to erase the contentious nature of the settlement project and its daily experiences by the settlers. In the remainder of this

chapter, I engage such transfromations in more depth, showing how these developments worked to depoliticize the life in settlements through institutional, material and visual practices. I focus on three broad areas: provision of security, quality of life, and the nature.

Depolitization through the Middle Class Everyday

Security

As I mentioned above, what was rather striking for me after I moved to Ariel was the absence of security measures. Spending several months in the occupied East Jerusalem, Israel proper and the Palestinian cities in the West Bank made me accept passing through checkpoints (of different sorts), X-raying of my belongings, being asked for ID, and seeing armed soldiers as essentially ubiquitous and normal features of the everyday live in Israel/Palestine; for me, gradually, the highly securitized practices also faded into the background. It was then their seeming non-existence which made me feel somewhat disoriented in Ariel. Especially after living in East Jerusalem, just walking into the university without being checked turned out to be a rather pleasant change. Nonetheless, in the manner similar to transforming the physical conditions in the settlements, the apparent absence of security measures was a long-term process which entailed significant amount of efforts. The family-friendly and safe environment that came to characterize the settlement by the time of my fieldwork did not just come about without a series of various interventions and reconfigurations.

According to my interviewees, security was a concern for the settlers and their leadership from the outset. After the site for establishment of Ariel was chosen (on the slope of the “Mountain of Death”), the prospective settlers were asked to stand guard there. A settlers who was a teenager at the time, and later worked for municipality as a security officer, told me at the beginning of the first interview I conducted with him: “Before we [complete families] came here, every family, a father from each family, had to come here and watch over the place for seven

days."[34] He then continued by saying that "In the beginning, there was army. One hundred soldiers who lived here. In the first few years, after that they moved out. We hardly saw any…"[35].

After the IDF did not station soldiers in the settlement itself, it was the settlers themselves who had to provide security in the settlement – the male adults were supposed to serve as a guard for several days a year, because of which they often had to take a leave of absence from their jobs.[36] Nonetheless, the potential dangers warranted these inconveniences: "You didn't know what it would be like, you wanted to protect your family, so everyone did a guard duty. They [the men in the settlement] would need to take of a week, two weeks from work every year to... almost do like a reserve duty ('meluim') in the community and spend all these shifts, day in and day out to secure the area."[37]

The security precaution did not stop there:

> "One more thing, about what you asked about danger here. I went to school here in Ariel, and there were six students in a class. And because I was the old one, they taught us how to use a gun. In 1976, there was an attack ['pigua'] in Ma'alot. They entered a school with weapons and killed twenty students and teachers. And because of this story, the adults here were under a lot of pressure. Because everyone was going to work and all who stayed here were the kids and two teachers, that was it. That was everyone who stayed in the settlement ['yishuv']. There was nobody. And so the parents decided, because there were a lot of employees of Israeli Military Industry, so they had access to all kinds of guns, to teach the older male students how to use weapons. […] So from the beginning I knew how to use a weapon. And every family had a family in their place. So I took the weapon with me on my hikes. And I was only fourteen."[38]

[34] Interview, April 14, 2016, Ariel.
[35] Interview, April 14, 2016, Ariel.
[36] Interviews, April 14, 2016, Ariel and May 8, 2016, Ariel.
[37] Interview, March 2, 2016, Ariel.
[38] Interview, April 14, 2016, Ariel.

After that, I carefully noticed that for me, as a European, it sounds weird. Or then said that "also in the country ('haaretz') it was not easily accepted. But here it was okay. Because of the place."[39]

What these excerpts show is that in the first few years, the settlers were highly aware of the precarious situation and the potential dangers stemming from living in the area, an attitude significantly different from the current one. "The place", as Or put it, was still considered if not precarious, then at least not completely safe. Rendering the settlement secure was a result of a wide array of practices, many of them also material as I discuss in the next chapter. Here I want to engage one particular development which especially stands out: privatization of security in the settlement.

This last major change pertaining to security in Ariel occurred in 1991 when the First Gulf War broke out. At the time, Ariel residents were still supposed to guard the settlement themselves. But since Israel was the target of Scud rockets fired by the Saddam Hussein's regime, most of the citizens were reluctant to leave the relative safety of their homes and shelters and patrol around the settlement.[40] These transformation were recounted by Yossi in the following way:

> "Things have changed since then, the community grew, the character of the community grew, it is more diverse, not everyone understands the need for security, for the guard duty, not everyone is trained for guard duty, not everyone is interested in guard duty. But everyone wants to be safe. And the world has moved on. So we have done what other places have done with private security company."[41]

I appears that this attitude was for some time in making: one settler told me that although in the beginnings of the settlement people performed the necessary security tasks, gradually "they started to complain – 'I work hard, what, that's not enough?'"[42] The municipality thus decided to hire private guards, a policy which stayed in place ever since.

[39] Interview, April 14, 2016, Ariel.
[40] Interview, April 14, 2016, Ariel.
[41] Interview, March 2, 2016, Ariel.
[42] Interview, May 8, 2016, Ariel.

Shira Havkin (Havkin 2015, 2011) engaged the issue of Israeli state's outsourcing of security service, underpinned by the neoliberal rationality, with regards to the specific case ff checkpoints separating Israel proper and the West Bank. She persuasively shows that privatizing the checkpoints should not be seen as a retreat of the state but rather its redeployment since "[t]he links between state actors, private security contractors, and the official military and security apparatus are very entwined" (Havkin 2011, 10). Indeed, an advisor who was involved in the privatization noted that the process does not really entail "delegating state responsibilities to private actors. [...] Sovereignty in this case is clear" (quoted in Havkin 2011, 7). What Havkin suggests with regards to the checkpoints in particular is that the alleged process of state's rolling back has the effect of empowering the state authorities by shielding them from accusations of human rights abuses (which now can be blamed on private personnel) which tar Israel's image abroad.

Havkin's analysis of the specific case of the privatization of the checkpoints' operations shows a lot of affinity with Timothy Mitchell's thinking on the political power being generated at the blurred line between the society (the private) and the state (the public). Taking these notions further in the context of Israel/Palestine, it appears that this power stems not only from diversion of state bodies' responsibility for the dire conditions of Palestinians, an argument that could be also made with regards to the employment of private guards who monitor the Palestinians working in the settlements. I rather want to look into how this seeming separation between the state and the society feeds into rendering the settlement uncontested on the part of the settlers.

One of the municipal officials explicitly told me, after I asked him about the presence of the IDF in the area, that the employment of a private company was meant to "normalize" the settlement. What he was suggesting was that the absence of the army was to mark the settlement as yet another community in Israel which does not need army's presence to keep it safe. Although, as some other interviewees told me, employment of private guards was also economically rational (echoing the neoliberal discourse about private sector's superior efficiency), the rationale of turning the community in less contested through employment of civilians as opposed to soldiers seemed to be present as well.

Nonetheless, as in many other contexts, the seemingly clear-cut line between the state and the society is a highly problematic notion. Not only, in line with arguments made by Havkin and others (see e.g. Abrahamsen and Williams 2011), it appears that even after the state supposedly retreats, it is still entangled in the security governance through novel channels. In the case of Israel, the distinction between public and private bodies in the realm of security is even more tenuous given the overall militarization of the society and institutional and personal connections between state agencies and private entities. And given the mandatory military service, the private security personnel draw on the state-mandated training and the experience acquired during it.

However, the gradual changes that occurred and outsourcing of security provision did have normalizing effect on the everyday life in the settlement. In the first years of the settlement, the military's presence in area was highly visible – as recounted in the excerpt from an interview above, there was basically one soldier per each family. Given the size of the settlement at the time, it is safe assume that it was impossible to not see the army wherever one went within the nascent community. Such visual background thus constituted a constant remainder of the political volatility and potential danger in the area which had to be offset by the presence of the Israeli state forces. This has changed after several years when the IDF moved out from the settlement itself. Nonetheless, the new setting which entailed settlers themselves providing security through patrolling around the settlement's perimeter and performing other tasks still disturbed the sense of normalcy in the settlement. The required involvement in security provision meant that the potentially dangerous conditions were part of the daily routine for all male settlers for some time every year, and by extension also their families.

Employment of private company then enabled to finally mark the settlement as a normal, uncontested and safe community. Using Mitchell's ideas on the boundary between the state and society, one can see that maintaining this distinction generates power through in a peculiar way. While Mitchell himself talks about certain legalistic and economic benefits that given actors acquire by operating on this boundary, and Havkin talks about the state shielding itself from its

responsibilities, in the settlement the seeming distinction between the state (army) and the private (private company) serves as a source of power by its very existence in the first place.

As I have just argued, the distinction between settlers as citizens and the IDF as state agents is rather tenuous given the militarization of the Israeli society. Nonetheless, employment of private security company does create conditions which are much more conducive to the realization of the middle-class suburbian lifestyle. Although the public space in Israel proper is highly securitized, it is usually non-military bodies which performs these tasks. The absence of the IDF, the visual non-existence of soldiers in settlers' everyday lives thus constructs the settlement as a yet another community. Seen through the prism of the Mitchell's structural effect, the state embodied by the soldiers appears separate from the society made of the citizens/settlers, thus seemingly extracting the official policies from the social sphere and settlers' everyday lives. Under the new conditions, settlers find themselves disconnected from the security matters which stem from the contentious status of their communities.

Outsourcing these practices to a private body produces a notion that security is divorced from politics and that it be simply turned into another service which can be purchased; as laconically noticed by one of the settlers, "everyone had to pay"[43] since municipality introduced a fee to cover the extra expenses after it hired the company. By its commodification, security is brought into the registers of the middle class, average community. The series of practices, measures and mechanisms which need to be in place due to the precarious status of the community are thus aesthetizated and rendered ordinary.

Quality of Life: Depolitization through the Middle Class

Although the changes pertaining to the everyday experiences of security in Ariel over the four decades were considerable, those that reconfigured the physical and material conditions in the settlement were even more significant as testified by the accompanying photographs which

[43] Interview, May 8, 2016, Ariel.

might help to capture these transformations. While in the beginnings the conditions were rather hostile and required significant sacrifices on the part of the settlers, by the 1990s everyday life became largely convenient and undistinguishable from those in any suburbian community in Israel proper and beyond. This process operated in several dimensions, so I will focus only on a few to give the better idea of overall changes.

A sports center in Ariel. Source: Author's pictures

Commercial center in Ariel. Source: Author's pictures

A park in Ariel. Source: Author's pictures

A street in Ariel. Source: Author’s pictures

To start with, the housing conditions improved rather dramatically in the course of the first twenty years of the settlement's history. The first settlers came to the site even before the settlement was actually established in order to guard the area. These beginning were recalled by an Israeli whose family was among the first settlers in the following manner: "in the beginning of February 1978, or perhaps in January, the army set up two tents in the area and the Jewish National Fund started to work in the area. And then in February 1978 they brought two or three caravans and members of the nucleus started coming here to for week-long shifts"[44]. Even after the settlement was officially established, the conditions remained taxing: when the first families moved in, they brought with them caravans in which they lived for a couple years.

It was only after that the settlers succeeded in pushing the government to build proper individual houses. A settler who was at the time part of the leadership remembered the political struggle in the following manner: "We were putting pressure on the government the whole time to build permanent houses, and industry, to do what was needed. The Ministry of Housing was very skeptical. They were asking 'Who will buy these houses? Nobody will do that.' [But] then they built these houses, 64 units, and they were all sold. All of them."[45] During the 1980s, the housing situation gradually improved to the extent that the settlement was able to absorb the influx of the immigrants from the crumbling USSR.

Different changes pertained to the matters of leisure and commerce in the settlement. In the first several years, there was nothing but the provisional houses/caravans and a couple of administrative buildings. This changed dramatically over the next several decades. When I visited Ariel in November 2015, one of my biggest surprises stemmed from big sport complexes that I did not expect in the Occupied Territories. Most of the settlers I talked to were very fond of the fact that the settlement now features a number of facilities, from pools and playgrounds to concert hall. Rivka, who witnessed these changes first-hand since she moved to the settlement in the early 1980s, observed: "We have a cultural center, there are concerts, theater plays, art. All the time someone tells me, 'Rivka, there is a concert, there is a play, there is an exhibition'.

[44] Interview, April 19, 2016, Ariel.
[45] Interview, April 19, 2016, Ariel.

We have a country club here, with all the activities, with a swimming pool. What else do I need?"[46]

The establishment of a college, which later acquired university status, was also quite important for the development of the settlement. On perhaps the most obvious level, it led to an increase of Ariel residents. Ariel University currently boosts some 15 thousand students (Ariel University 2018) whose diverse background (the student body includes Israeli Jewish citizens of Ethiopian descent and the Palestinians) was repeatedly pointed at to me by interviewees involved somehow with the university.[47] This was made clear by Ofira, a young mother who was born in Ariel and spent her whole life there. Reflecting on the importance of the university for the settlement, she told me: "The university impacted Ariel a lot. There is a lot of students, some of them live here. And because of the university, they are thinking about living here, about continuing to live here. I know several who continue to live here."[48]

More importantly for what I am concerned in this thesis, establishment of the college in the 1980s and its gradual development and growth also entailed infrastructural changes in the settlement. Several of the interviewees told me that due to the gradual increase in number of students and staff, Ariel had to develop more basic amenities and infrastructure to accommodate newcomers. In this regard, "the establishment of the university, of the college, was a strong push for the settlement"[49], as noted by one settler.

Lastly, the existence of a college, an institution of higher education, and its later recognition as the university, provided the settlement with further legitimacy. This was noted by one of the interviewees who told me that "and thanks to the university, Ariel also developed. In terms of importance as well. (…) And people also know about Ariel more, because of the university."[50] Another noted that after the college was founded, "people from the whole country started coming here."[51] It is important to note that this legitimacy is not purely ideological in the sense

[46] Interview, April 10, 2016, Ariel.
[47] Interviews, April 4, 2016, Ariel; July 6, 2017, Ariel.
[48] Interview, May 16, 2016, Ariel.
[49] Interview, April 10, 2016, Ariel.
[50] Interview, May 16, 2016, Ariel.
[51] Interview, May 8, 2016, Ariel.

of public discourse: the recognition of the settlement is now materialized and present in everyday life in the form of the modern and still growing campus. As such, the existence of the university turns Ariel into "a complete city ('ir shlema')."[52]

In short, by the time the immigration wave from the crumbling USSR doubled Ariel's population, the settlement was offering material conditions which justified its status of "the capital of Samaria". All these changes had several important implications of the political and social life in the settlement. One features which especially stood out in my interviews with the veterans was the shift from close-knit community to one which is much more akin to modern urban settings defined by anonymity and a lack of neighbors' solidarity. There was a clear nostalgia present when the interlocutors recalled very fondly the early days of the settlement; according to one account which was echoed by other veterans of the settlement, in the beginning people felt "we were like one family"[53]: there was a sense of mutuality and comradeship. This changed over the first decade of the settlement's existence as the number of its inhabitants grew to the extent that its communal nature largely disappeared.

Although many long-term residents of Ariel regretted the loss of its communal character, most of them seemed to content with these developments. Most would consider them "natural" result of the growingly important status of the settlement. Understood as such, the changes are necessary to accommodate newcomers, and in turn attract more people. This attitude was captured by one of my informants in the following manner:

> "On the one hand, it is easier to live in a smaller community. But on the other hand, in order to improve the conditions, you have to grow. When they are now building here a big shopping mall, it is thanks to the large number of residents. If there weren't many residents, there would be no mall. When they built here a cultural center, or a sports center, it is only because there are enough residents." [54]

[52] Interview, April 10, 2016, Ariel.
[53] Interview, April 10, 2016, Ariel.
[54] Interview, April 14, 2016, Ariel.

Relatedly, and quite obviously, all these transformations led to much more convenient life in the settlement. Another settler who has lived in Ariel almost from the beginning told me that nowadays "there is more places to go to, places to relax, to sit down. In the past, one had to go Tel Aviv or Petach Tikva."[55]

But what interests me most here is how these material shifts impacted the experience of the everyday in the settlement. Read through prism introduced by Mukerji, one can observe how all these changes transform the possibilities and space (both literal and metaphorical) for political and social life. Although there are some three hundred centuries separating her studied matter and the processes that I investigate in this thesis, Mukerji's work is instructive in terms of drawing our attention to the material transformations and their political repercussions in terms of structuring the public sphere.

In the first several years of the settlement's history, the taxing conditions meant that the extraordinary nature of the endeavor was impossible to evade: in the beginning, pioneering spirit, awareness of hardships and potential dangers were omnipresent in the settlers' everyday lives. A close confidant of the legendary Ron Nachman recounted the early days in the following manner:

> "Because Ron said that we need to make sure that people have the strength to live in different conditions, to live in a place that is not safe, is uncertain. The people came from Tel Aviv, a big city, and suddenly there is nothing, and [they need to] travel everywhere, and without families, without grandmothers and grandfathers."[56]

These sentiments were echoed by another settler who noted that "the main motivation for the first people who came here was ideology. The idea that we need to live here."[57] This effectively meant that the life in the settlement was highly politicized as the challenging environment, the lack of basic amenities and service, and the provisional nature of housing permanently reminded people of the political significance and nature of their everyday conduct. The permanent

[55] Interview, May 16, 2016, Ariel.
[56] Interview, April 19, 2016, Ariel.
[57] Interview, May 24, 2016, Ariel.

encounter with these features prevented the politics to become unremarkable through its immersion in the quotidian.

Nonetheless, as put by another veteran of Ariel, "then gradually other considerations played role as well as Ariel developed and people saw that. Education here was great, and roads were built. It became more comfortable. So people came for all sorts of reasons."[58] The various material changes effectively depoliticized the life in the settlement by doing away with its challenging nature. Providing proper housing, connecting the settlement with electric and water grid, building sport and cultural facilities deexceptionalized the settlement and turned it into yet another suburban community. As a result of all of this, the nature of the settlement in its everyday manifestations changed from a highly political, ideological project into one defined by calm and mundaness as illustrated by this excerpt:

> "People who work down ('lemata'; meaning Israel proper), like my husband, they always say that when they come back to Ariel, they come back to quiet. The chaos of the city was with them all day, in work, in car, on the road. When you come to Ariel, you come to serenity. You know, when me and my husband sit in the morning on the veranda, on Shabbat, and drink and have breakfast, my husband tells me the same thing every time: 'How much would I have to pay in a hotel, to sit like this on a veranda, with such a view, and such quiet.' And that's something that's unique to Ariel."[59]

Based on my interviews, it appears that the transformations that turned Ariel into "the capital of Samaria" were planned from the settlement's very beginning. Again, it seems that it was the vision of the founding figure, Ron Nachman, to gradually turn the nascent community with some one hundred families into a major city in the region. As I was told by one of the long-term settlers: "When Ron Nachman drew the plans, he planned a big city. From the beginning, in his head Ariel was to be a big city. He was saying 'commercial center will be here, university will be here, a hotel here, a lake here.' […] And that's what happened here."[60] Given his Zionist credentials, I would

[58] Interview, May 24, 2016, Ariel.
[59] Interview, May 24, 2016, Ariel.
[60] Interview, April 14, 2016, Ariel.

argue that for Nachman himself, these policies were deeply political. Ariel, the prospective "capital of Samaria", was envisioned as a fact on the ground that would cement the Israeli presence in and control over the northern West Bank. In this regard, an Israeli expert on settlements captured the whole situation and the politics of construction in succinct and unequivocal terms as follows: "The idea always was to build facts on the ground fast. Politically, it was always a contested project."[61] Interestingly, quite similar sentiments were expressed by an Israeli architect who worked mostly in the West Banking. While discussing one particular building, he mentioned that the projects in the settlements have to be "cheap and built quickly"[62] due to political sensitivity of the area.

Nonetheless, in a vast majority of interviews I conducted, the political considerations were absent and emphasis was put on the matters of the everyday concerns and quality of life. Even when I interviewed Ayala[63], one of the urban planners employed by the Ariel municipality, she never connected her work with any political agenda. My overall impression was that she takes political concerns as exterior to her work: freezing construction in the settlements by the Israeli government was frustrating but mostly for practical rather than ideological reasons – it delayed and complicated her work. It is then not surprising that as far as my experience went, for most settlers the matters pertaining to the politics of architecture and planning were completely absent from their everyday lives; they simply enjoyed a new mall, pool, or cultural center. Politics surrounding space and building in the contested areas faded into the background of the everyday life.

Nature

Based on the interviews, the last elements that work to depoliticizes the everyday life in the settlements is the aesthetic notion of "nature". Informed by the theoretical apparatus I employ in this thesis, I do not conceive it as a series of natural but rather *naturalizing* features, feeding

[61] Interview, May 18, 2016, Jerusalem.
[62] Interview, July 2, 2017, Oranit.
[63] Interview, June 2, 2016, Ariel.

into the aesthetization of contested realities. Understood as such, it fulfills an important role in rendering the settlements depoliticized on the part of the settlers.

"Nature" was another feature that was praised by the settlers and often posed as one of the incentives that attracted them to move to the West Bank in the first place. Quite a few Israelis I interviewed spoke fondly of Ariel parks which were frequented by young families and they appreciated that it provided a nice environment for the kids to play in. Furthermore, there is a big natural reserve just next to the built-up area of Ariel. Although it is a bit hard to reach by foot, I was told by several of my interviewees that they would go there with a car on Saturdays for family outings. Some also told me there is a whole variety of animals in the reserve, something that one cannot really find in Israel proper in proximity to the cities. Such attitudes were summed by a long-term Ariel resident in the following manner: "And another positive thing is the nature. It is a city in nature. It is surrounded by nature, there are animals. You leave the city just a small bit and you are right in the nature, you are not in the city anymore."[64]

A street in Ariel. Source: Author's pictures

[64] Interview, April 10, 2016, Ariel.

Nature reserve in Ariel. Source: Author's pictures

A park in Ariel. Source: Author's pictures

Nonetheless, such narratives completely ignore the political conditions that go into rendering nature as enjoyable feature of the everyday live. For one, the high number of parks in Ariel and other settlements is related to the governmental incentives and budgeting policies as I discussed in the previous chapter. The existing pleasant, family-friendly environment is thus result of profoundly political considerations and calculations that seek to promote the settlement project through allocation of resources. Again, as I recounted above, the whole area seemed to be rather hostile with a minimal vegetation, suggesting that significant efforts had to be put into creating the parks and greenery. Moreover, the reason why the nature reserve is so fairly accessible and convenient for the settlers is because it is located within the security fence that runs around the settlement. The perimeter of the fence is much bigger than what is currently the built-up area of Ariel (see Map 3) because when the Israeli security cabinet was deciding on the route of the fence, the officials projected its route as encircling the whole municipal area rather than the actual settlement at the time, and the former covers much more territory. The possibility to enjoy nature is thus intimately linked to the contentious political setting in the Territories.

Following Mukerji's work once again, one can attend to the reconfiguration of material conditions and environment which gradually led to valorization of nature by the settlers. In the beginning, there was indeed basically nothing *but* nature – as I recounted above, in the settlers' accounts of the early life in the settlement, the Israelis' dwellings were the only objects which pierced the nature in the area. It was only through building the settlement that the parks, trees and greenery could be appreciated – it is the juxtaposition of nature with the built-up areas which grants parks and "nature" its aesthetic function. The infrastructural, commercial and overall development of the settlement created conditions in which its inhabitants did not have to deal with more pressing immediate issues and could enjoy the leisure and aesthetic that the parks provide.

Let me now go back to the anecdote which opened this chapter. Nina's fondness of the olive groves seems to me to warrant attention for at least two reasons. First, it highlights the complete disconnection between the settlers and the political conditions in whose midst they live. Nina was not aware of the arrangements which underpin her everyday lives, like the system of permits

that control Palestinians' access to their land and trees, or the seizure and demarcation of the settlements' boundaries in the first place. In this regard, one can see how is the regime of separation between the Palestinians and the Israelis implemented to the extent that obfuscates even those practices of the Israeli occupation which settlers encounter on the everyday basis.

Second, and even more importantly for the present concerns, Nina's take on the groves goes against the usual conceptualization of the olive tree and its historical and national importance. In her work on "tree wars" in Israel/Palestine, Irus Braverman (Braverman 2009) elaborates on the notion of the olive tree as the symbol of the Palestinian national movement, an image which circulates both locally and internationally. Many of them hundreds of years old, olive trees stand for the Palestinians' ties to the land and their steadfastness ("sumud") in the face of the Zionist and Israeli encroachment. The stakes are far from merely symbolic: according to an UN report, Jewish extremist settlers destroyed or damaged around 10,000 Palestinian trees in 2011 only (quoted in Byman and Sachs 2012, 75), and the IDF routinely prevents the Palestinian farmers from attending to the trees and levels groves which stay in the way to infrastructural projects which in turn further propel the Israeli control. Indeed, as noted in a title of a Braverman's article, "the tree is the enemy soldier" in Israel/Palestine (Braverman 2008).

For Nina, none of this was present or pertinent to her everyday experience. The olive tree was divorced from the seizure of the land, from setting up a whole infrastructure of occupation, from the Palestinian quest for political self-determination; in short, from politics. She was enjoying the panorama, the background that the olive grove composes on her commute. The potent symbol of conflict and national struggle is rendered a mere visual feature that facilitated the middle-class way of life through provision of appropriate aesthetic experience. This relates to the mechanisms which Mirzoeff identifies as constitutive of the given regime of visibility. As I discussed above, there are three steps: classification, division and aesthetization. The case of Nina's conceptualization of the Palestinian olives testifies, I believe, to the importance of aesthetization in making the previous steps look obvious and natural. The seizure of the Palestinian land and its physical enclosure, the process of "separated classification" (Mirzoeff 2011a, 476), is situated

within "set of relations combining information, imagination, and insight" (Mirzoeff 2011a, 476) which effectively turn these arrangements into not only non-problematic but even alluring.

Closely related to the notion of nature, the concern for environment in more general terms was also expressed by Yossi when he talked about particular examples of water use in the settlement. In his office, he was explaining to me why he prefers not to have his car washed by the Palestinians at a shop just outside Ariel: "They were using so much water on my car. It looked like they were emptying the whole Kinneret on my car. And I do care more about Kinneret than I do about my car. I have more environmental awareness than they have."[65]

Although I am quite sympathetic to the environmentalist considerations on Yossi's part in general, in the context of the Israeli occupation that is defined by highly inequal access to natural resources which is differentiated along racial lines, I am left wondering if this is the most pressing problem. For example, a report published by Al-Haq, a Palestinian human rights NGO, states quite clearly that "In the West Bank, the Israeli settler population, numbering more than 500,000, consumes approximately six times the amount of water used by the Palestinian population of almost 2.6 million; this discrepancy is even greater when water used for agricultural purposes is taken into account" (Koek 2013, 16; see also Amnesty International 2009). In short, Yossi's concern with environment conceals larger structures of power and the racial distinctions pertaining to the use of natural resources in the West Bank, and Israel/Palestine in general.

And yet, I believe that Yossi's remark also reveals other dynamic pertinent to the everyday live in the settlement. The concern for environment can be understood as a manifestation of middle-class sensitivities and particular aesthetical taste and inclinations that orient oneself towards more thoughtful consumption. In this prism, prudent use of water and other environment-friendly practices are disconnected from the politics through emphasis on certain values that are realized and performed through these practices. Analyzed in this way, the unequal access to water is rendered non-problematic for Israelis not only because the settlers do not have the experience of the Palestinian population which faces its scarcity, nor are familiar with the

[65] Interview, March 2, 2016, Ariel.

mechanisms that maintain the inequality, although these factors are quite important in comprehending how can the settlers lead such non-contested lives. What is further at play is the particular aesthetics of the suburbian life and everyday practices that are supposed to accompany them. Water and its use and distribution become more of a class marker rather than matter of politics.

To explicitly connect the Yossi's concerns about environment and other people's appreciation of the nature, I would like to argue that the middle-class concerns and aesthetics effectively overwrite the politics of the occupation which is effectively hidden in the settlements in plain sight. The distribution of water and space along racial lines is rendered invisible by physically concealing mechanisms which establish and enforce these distinctions and access to various resources. But furthermore, the Israeli control over the Palestinians is not manifested to the settlers through imaginary of domination and subjugation; it is turned into greenery and venues for family outings. In this aesthetics of suburbs, repercussions of violence are rendered beautiful, appealing and even desired.

Yet these evaluative notions are also in complex relationships with the physical environment in which they exist: particular ways of seeing inform how are things (like "nature" in this case) perceived, but at the same they are cultivated and reinforced by the available venues to practice them. What I want to say is that the overall material changes in the settlement, from small community to a large suburbs-style city, made this aesthetization much more feasible. By transforming the hostile environment into family-friendly places with plenty of venues for family trips, the Israeli occupational authorities created milieu much more conducive to the aesthetization of its practices.

Conclusion

Much of the scholarly literature on the settlements usually emphasizes their integral part in the occupational regime. Logically, when it comes to their material and visual properties, most of the critical analyses then focus on their somewhat ominous and disturbing presence on the hilltops,

towering above the surrounding landscape (Weizman 2012). In his work, Scott (J. C. Scott 1998) talks about "hypermodernity" and its materialization in large-scale projects. Similar dynamics can be found in the settlements. From the outside, the settlements are imposing, highly modernist set of structures which work to further cement the Israeli control over the Palestinians' land and lives. This imaginary is clearly present in many photographic accounts which capture settlements from above or from the perspective of a (mostly Palestinian) passerby. The organized and threatening impression they convey directly relates to the elaborate mechanisms of the Israeli rule over the Palestinians.

But as I have tried to show throughout this chapter, these aspects do not relate to the settlers' everyday experience. Their communities are mundane and serene spaces, disconnected from politics. This becomes even more apparent when one adopts a historical perspective: whereas in the beginnings the everyday life in the settlement was demanding and constantly reminding the Israelis of the extraordinary nature of the whole endeavor, over the years it was turned into "normal", uneventful suburbs. All these features then create a certain cognitive dissonance between the settlement's political significance and the kind of political and social life that is generated inside them. I recall numerous times I myself walked or jogged through the parks in Ariel and was somewhat soothed by the calm environment. Although I was also heavily bored at times (actually, most of the time), I still appreciated the overall environment in the settlement and its aesthetic qualities.

For me, just as for a lot of settlers, the crux of politics that we encountered did therefore not take the form of demonstrations, deliberations, or speeches. It was in the walks in parks; in sitting by the pool; in attending a concert in a newly built cultural center. It is thus the everyday, the mundane, the aesthetic where the politics, through its very erasure, happens. Nonetheless, as I hinted at several points throughout this chapter, these practices of normalization and aesthetization hinge also on particular demarcation of the settlement and its boundaries and forms of contact with surrounding space. It is the issue of connections and disconnections of the settlement that I investigate in the next chapter.

5. Making the Settlements Connected

Me, Shimrit and Hadas sat down and when a waiter came, ordered kanafeh. As I was yet again struck by how sweet it was, Shimrit remarked that they come to this particular restaurant in East Jerusalem after almost every shift each week. Treating themselves with a Palestinian dessert was, I understood, their weekly ritual meant to soothe them after the things they witnessed and recorded during the day.

Shimrit and Hadas were volunteers with Machsom Watch, an Israeli female human rights organization that monitors the Israeli checkpoints and sometimes provides help and assistance to the Palestinians in their interactions with the Israeli authorities. Earlier that day, I met Shimrit at her apartment in West Jerusalem and then we drove to pick up Hadas at her place. We then went to Qalandiya, a major checkpoint between Jerusalem and Ramallah that thousands of Palestinians cross every day. After observing the checkpoint's operation for an hour or so, Shimrit and Hadas decided to drive through the checkpoint to entry to a Palestinian village roughly 10 minutes away by car. After taking some photographs, Shimrit was approached by an Israeli soldier who told her to stay put and went to make a radio call, quite likely to call police.[66] Shimrit and Hadas would not wait for whatever was to happen next so we got back into the car and drove through the village.

As we entered the major road on the other side of the village, I suddenly realized that it was the highway 60, the so-called "trans-Samaria" highway which crosses the Israel proper and the West Bank from Nazareth in the north to Beer Sheeva in the south. After several minutes we passed a checkpoint to Jerusalem[67] that I recognized as the one through which I had travelled repeatedly when taking a bus from the city to Ariel. Although I have travelled through both Qalandiya and the Hizma checkpoints on numerous occasions, I never realized how close they were to each other until then.

[66] The IDF is usually not allowed to detain Israeli citizens.

[67] In fact, we entered the settlement of Pisgat Ze'ev in East Jerusalem. Like other settlements in the proclaimed capital, nonetheless, Pisgat Ze'ev is an integral part of Jerusalem for most Israelis.

Even just a cursory look at a map (see Map 4) shows that my surprise, or perhaps dislocation, was rather misplaced – as shown on the map attached below, the two places are mere kilometers from each other. I suppose I was aware of that on some level before I joined the Machsom Watch women on their shift that day. But at the same time, mentally I located the two checkpoints in completely different registers. Whereas the Kalandiya checkpoint that controls the Palestinians' movement is characterized by constant delays, turnstiles and armed security personnel, the Hizma checkpoint, which is passed through mostly by Israelis going to the settlements north of Jerusalem, poses usually as a mere brief stop. It was this dissonance, I suspect, which made me surprised when I was confronted with the physical proximity of the two checkpoints.

Taking as the starting point my experience of a foreigner who can cross a multiplicity of borders, an option foreclosed to both Israelis and Palestinians, this chapter concerns the ways, both literal and metaphorical, through which settlements are connected with each other as well as Israel proper, and disconnected from areas populated by the Palestinians. In a way, it thus poses as a rejoinder to the literature which documents the Israeli control of mobility in the Occupied Territories. Palestinian as well as Israeli and non-local scholars have investigated the overall systems that conditions and curtails Palestinians' movement in the Occupied Territories, surveillance and management of these flows, and their political repercussions for the Palestinian national cause (see e.g. Zureik, Lyon, and Abu-Laban 2011; Kotef 2015; Hanafi 2012, 2009; Ophir, Givoni, and Hanafi 2009). Special attention has been paid to the Israeli checkpoints, an ubiquitous feature of Palestinians' lived in the Territories, and the impact of the Fence on the Palestinians' lives (Tawil-Souri 2009, 2011b, 2017; Mansbach 2009; Kotef and Amir 2011; Braverman 2012).

By contrast, in this chapter I am providing an account of how is this regime of mobility and (dis)connections experienced by the settlers, something that has not been fully engaged in most of the scholarship so far. I am attending to the materialization of the separation between the Israelis and the Palestinians in the West Bank through separate roads and checkpoints and how these constellations feed into depolitization of the settlements. Nonetheless, I look not only into the separation as I engage the aesthetic practices that depoliticize those elements of the Israeli

occupational security and (im)mobility infrastructure which would otherwise expose the precarious political conditions in the region.

I am specifically looking into three sets of elements which display a different relationality to mobility and connection. First, I look at the fence which physically separates the settlements from their physical surroundings, and how it operates in different political, material and visual registers. Second, I investigate how the settlers experience the changes in the infrastructures of mobility in the Occupied Territories. Lastly, lying at the intersection between physical barriers and travels, I discuss how the settles approach and conceptualize Israeli checkpoints.

The Barrier

The fence/wall/barrier is one of the most potent visual symbols of the Israeli encroachment of the Palestinian territory and its violent practices. Protests against its constructions are one of the focal points of Palestinian resistance, legalistic battles and international outcry. Indeed, the very terms used to describe the structure in question are highly political and contested: whereas the Palestinians and their political allies often promote the term "Apartheid wall", Israeli officials and like-minded commentators label it "security fence" (see e.g. Wills 2016). With this semantic struggle in mind, it is important to notice that a vast majority of settlers I talked to use the term "gader hefrada", literally a separation barrier. This, I believe, hints at one of the most prominent political roles the fence fulfills.

Nonetheless, before I proceed to discuss this in more depth, I should notice that even among settlers, there are different opinions regarding the fence and its political utility. The more right-wing segments of the settler population and their representatives are opposed to the fence since they see it as a definite demarcation of the settlements' borders, thus limiting their future expansion. This attitude was conveyed to me by a municipality official from Gush Etzion who told me that "here we were against the fence."[68] He then elaborated by saying that "the people who

[68] Interview, January 28, 2016, Efrat.

believed in building the wall or the fence, basically believed that one day this would be the boundary between two states"[69], a notion which he found politically alienating.

A different set of doubts regarding the beneficial nature of the fence relate to its proclaimed security function. The same Gush Etzion official told me "people such as myself, and many others, didn't think that the fence would stop the terrorists, and in general it really didn't".[70] A security official from one of the small settlements near Jerusalem provided a more elaborate take on the fence's inefficiency:

> "See, if you have a settlement, and you have a fence, you have a gate. Here, here, here. Not everywhere, just six, seven gates, okay. A Palestinian comes here, you can't go with a car and chase him because you have a fence. You need to go, open a fence and then chase him. And he runs away. That is one reason. Another reason is that if a Palestinian want to do a terror attack, the fence won't stop him. In Itamar, you heard about Itamar? In Itamar, they have electronic fence, and they have a lot of terror attacks. The fence does not stop the Palestinians. They know how to go through the fence and not to even touch the fence... They know how to do this. The fence is not effective. This is the second reason. The third reason that you have is the feeling of security, and that is a bad thing. Because you think the fence will protect you but it doesn't protect you. So you can use other electronic intelligence devices. You can use detectors."[71]

Considering all of this, Yinnon summed up, fence is essentially a waste to money. According to him, it would be more efficient to spend money on warning systems, cameras and other devices. Nonetheless, he later stated that most settlers in his community are pro-fence and the same sentiments were expressed by a vast majority of people I talked in Ariel. Interrogating these notion, in the next two sub-sections I engage the distinct practices and discourses that make fence politically significant on the part of the settlers, while render it non-political at the same time.

[69] Interview, January 28, 2016, Efrat.
[70] Interview, January 28, 2016, Efrat.
[71] Interview, February 4, 2016, Har Adar.

What Does the Barrier Do?

As have several authors argued (Lupovici 2012; Jones 2009), the building of the barrier and determination of its exact route should be understood not solely in terms of its security utility. The barrier is further important in terms of establishing political identities and belongings, literally including and excluding different communities. Such conceptualization of the barrier also speaks to the how the settlers felt about the fence in Ariel. Whereas, as I mentioned above, in more religious communities the settlers are warier of the limits that the barrier imposes, in my experience the Israelis in Ariel appreciated its existence. It is somewhat hard to determine to which extent this relates to the settlers' understanding of it as physical fact on the ground that firmly established the settlement's inclusion in the Israeli body politic because most of the people I talked to would not distinguish between Israel proper and the Occupied Territories (a sentiment rather common among centrist and right-leaning Israelis). Nonetheless, my impression still was that the notion of the barrier as a guarantee of the Ariel's belonging into the State of Israel was present among the settlers there.

In fact, one of the Ariel residents told me the following about the barrier: "This was designed as a predetermination of borders of what would be the boundaries of the Palestinian state. That's why they included Ariel on the inside of the fence, because Ariel was gonna be a part of Israel."[72] These attitudes were also echoed by a prominent Israeli expert monitoring the settlement project whom I talked with about the route of the barrier and its political significance. Although she was firmly opposed to the continuation of settlements' existence, she acknowledged that she could understand why settlers whose communities were on the "right" side of the barrier felt much less concerned about the potential future of their communities. As we were sitting in a café in Jerusalem and going over various various maps, she stopped once we discussed the route of the barrier around Ariel. She nodded and said, while looking at the map,

[72] Interview, March 2, 2016, Ariel.

what she imagined a lot of settlers would think due to the inclusion of Ariel on the inside: "It is part of.. [pause] It is ours."[73]

However, as I was reminded by her immediately after, what is curious about all of this is that in the case of Ariel, the fence is still not complete: 15 years after the Israeli state started erecting it, it has still not finished parts of it, including the ones west of Ariel. So far, large segments of the barrier between Ariel and Israel proper are only shapes on a map. As a result, the notion that the barrier establishes Ariel's belonging to Israel proper is according to her false: "It is misleading - it is not connected to anything"[74].

Nonetheless, this does not really relate to the settlers due to the constellations of sight, materiality and mobility in the area. As I experienced myself repeatedly while travelling to and from the settlements, the barrier is rarely encountered by the settlers in general (see below) so the fact that it is interrupted is not really clear. But the settlers are still aware of its existence through media, maps and public statements. What all these means is that the barrier poses as an everyday material testament to the settlement's inclusion in the Israeli body politic, even if it is not directly encountered. As such, it effectively works to depoliticize the settlement's status which is secured through these material arrangements.

Other functions of the fence in terms of normalizing the life in the settlements are more quotidian in the sense that they pertain to the matters of everyday live. As I have already suggested in the previous chapter, one of the crucial political functions of the fence is that it renders settlement's space as safe, non-eventful, and effectively depoliticized. The possibility to spend a pleasant day in the vicinity of the city, yet in nature and undisturbed, as well as nice and secure space for children, closely relate to the safety that the barrier provides. As somewhat bluntly put by one of my interviewees, "There are things inside the fence. […] It depends on where you go." [75]

In this regard, it is important to make distinction between "real" efficiency of the barrier in terms of security, and its perceptions by the settlers: whereas its real utility can be, and has been,

[73] Interview, June 14, 2017, Jerusalem.
[74] Interview, June 14, 2017, Jerusalem.
[75] Interview, February 4, 2016, Har Adar.

questioned, in fact a vast majority of settlers I interviewed concurred that they think the barrier "works" and makes them feel safer. Even the official whom I quoted above who was rather skeptical about the actual efficiency of the fence in terms of security it provides made clear that his opinion does not really represent how most of his fellow settlers feel about the barrier:

> Me: "But in general you said people [in the settlement] like the barrier?"
>
> Ari: "Yes. Because it makes a feeling of security. You see the fence […] and you sleep well in the night. It has advantage from that side."[76]

Similar sentiments were expressed by yet another security official who told me the following: "The fence helps. Listen, it is not a wonder wall. A fence can be overcome and breached. It is possible to shoot through the fence, no problem. But in general it gives us [pauses]. To burglars, and people like that, it is not easy to cross."[77] As far as I could tell, most of the settlers not involved with actual security matters did not even questions the barrier's efficiency in the first place, an affirmation of these statements pointing at the psychological rather than "real" contribution of the barrier in terms of rendering the settlements safe. In doing so, the barrier plays an important role in making the settlers' everyday life non-problematic and easy, removing the need to be concerned about safety and reflection on the (political) sources of insecurity in their communities.

Lastly, and relatedly to both the notion of the barrier establishing continuity between Israel proper and the settlement, and its provision of normalized space, on a deeper level it literally marks the boundary between inside and outside. In her work on the politics of architecture in Israel/Palestine, Alona Nitzan-Shiftan (Alon Nitzan-Shiftan 2009) situates the fence erected during the Second Intifada in the longer history of politics of architecture in Israel/Palestine. According to her, the physical fence is only the latest instance of boundary-making between Zionist/Israeli/Jewish and Palestinian/Arab communities, distinctions that are materialized through architectural processes. Somewhat similar, yet distinctive arguments have been made

[76] Interview, January 28, 2016, Efrat.
[77] Interview, May 8, 2016, Ariel.

specifically with regards to the separation barrier. According to several authors (Lupovici 2012; Jones 2009; Alatout 2009; Falke 2012), its erection relates to deeper questions pertaining to the issue of inclusion and exclusion of different political groups, nature of the Israeli polity, and the envisioned order on both sides of the barrier. That is to say, these authors in their distinct way encourage us to think about the barrier not solely in terms of its immediate physical implications but also larger political effects. Seen through this prism, the barrier does not serve only as a means of physical separation from the Palestinians and security provision but also operates in different identity registers.

According to my experience, this relates to the effects the barrier had on the part of the settlers. This was most articulated to me when they talked about the political violence conducted by the Palestinians in the area. When I asked about the relationships between the two populations, the settlers would usually recall the cordial relationships which were then, in their accounts, interrupted by the First Intifada during which the Palestinians resorted to the acts of civil disobedience. The situation grew even worse with the onset of the Second Intifada during which various Palestinian fractions resorted to the strategy of the suicide attacks; due to the level of violence, one of the settlers called this period "a war"[78]. At the time of my fieldwork, there was a series of individual Palestinian attacks, dubbed "Intifada of Knives" by some commentators.

But what is important is that all these particular instances of political violence (stone throwing, Molotov cocktails, terrorist attacks during Second Intifada, stabbings) occurred *outside* the settlement, something that nearly all of my interviewees who recounted them emphasized as captured by the following excerpts:

"All the attacks happened within sight from the town but not in it. They took place at the Ariel junction, at the entrance to the industry park, but not inside. Never."[79]

[78] Interview, April 14, 2016, Ariel.
[79] Interview, April 14, 2016, Ariel.

"No attack took place in Ariel. There was never an attack in Ariel. They took place where the hotel now is, outside Ariel. Here, they check everyone who enters."[80]

Building on these remarks and on the existing scholarly literature, I would argue that the barrier marks different domains on ontological level. In his landmark *Writing Security*, David Campbell (Campbell 1992) showed that there is no "us" without "them", with "the Other" lurking outside the polity. Although Campbell persuasively illustrated his claims through the historical investigation of the US foreign policy discourse, his work can be employed in different contexts as well. Other scholars have indeed looked into how spatial and material practices mark and reinforce the distinctions between in-group and out-group.

In the case of Ariel, these insights are pertinent to how the settlers conceptualized the everyday geographies. As the excerpts above suggest, the political violence is cast outside, a process in which the physical barrier is instrumental in both establishing and marking the Inside-Outside distinction. Whereas the exterior is a venue of violent and disturbing acts, the interior remains defined by calm and serenity. So although the attacks did point at potential political volatility in the area, they did not disturb the middle class suburban nature of the settlement. The distinction between the safe, livable and suburban "inside" and the dangerous "outside" thus remains intact.

To sum up, the barrier performs an array of functions affecting and conditioning the everyday life in the settlement. Geopolitically, it establishes Ariel's inclusion in the Israeli polity through its (arguably, incomplete) physical encirclement. In terms of more quotidian matters, despite its perhaps questionable efficiency, it does provide feelings of safety on the part of the settlers. Lastly, it establishes ontological distinction between the (dangerous) Outside and the (safe) Inside, which further cements the normalcy within the settlement. Together, these features thus grant the barrier normalizing and depoliticing effects. As such, the barrier poses as a deeply political technology operating in several registers. Nonetheless, in my experience the settlers

[80] Interview, April 10, 2016, Ariel.

would not approach it as such. In the next section I engage some of the practices which account for the depolitization.

Making the Barrier Apolitical

What is quite curious about the place of the barrier in the settlers' everyday life is how non-present it actually is. In my interviews, when people set out to speak about their experiences in the settlement they never mentioned the fence until I explicitly brought it up. Partially, this undoubtedly relates to the prominence of "security" in the Israeli discourse which renders practices pertaining to it effectively non-questionable and obvious. Relatedly, the fact that most settlers felt the barrier fulfils its security-related function well meant that there was not much need to further discuss it. Nonetheless, even when taking this into account, this status of a granted feature is rather curious given how potent of a symbol the barrier is and how much political and legal contestation it has generated both domestically and internationally. In this section I therefore discuss some of the tactics which render the fence so non-problematic on the part of settlers.

Perhaps the least sophisticated political technology which normalizes the existence of the barrier is its concealment. As I said above, the barrier demarks much larger territory than is the current built-up area of Ariel. This not only provides space for family outings in the nature reserve but it also means that the fence is located far from houses. Indeed, in one of the interviews I conducted with real estate agent from Ariel, he estimated that "95 percent of people don't ever see the barrier" [81]. This is not only due to the distance between the fence and houses. Even in those parts where the barrier leads close to Israelis' dwellings, it is hardly visible due to the topographic conditions: the northern part of the settlement is located on a relatively steep slope with the barrier at the bottom which effectively hides from the view of most settlers except for those who live right next to it. Indeed, during my stay in Ariel, I do not recall seeing the barrier at all.

[81] Interview, June 2, 2016, Ariel.

What is important to note is that this arrangement was a novel one: one of the long-term residents of the settlement remembered that "In the beginning, the fence was fairly close to the houses. Now it is quite far. But it used to be really close."[82] This, again, hints at the historical development of material arrangements in the settlement which had quite tangible political effects. Whereas in the past the (old, "primitive") fence posed as a daily reminder of the need for vigilance, this has changed dramatically. Under the new conditions, although the barrier still registers in the settlers' lives (everyone knows it is there), it does not really imprint itself visually.

Nonetheless, apart from its simple concealment, the fence, in fact materialization of profoundly political conflict and rationalities, has been normalized through other means and technologies as well. In this regard, it is important to highlight the fluidity of the meanings assigned to and generated by seemingly inert and stable material objects. In her work on the relationship of Turkish Cypriots towards abandoned "houses, land and objects" appropriated from the Greek Cypriots during the 1974 war (a process cemented by the following partition of the island), Yael Navaro-Yashin (Navaro-Yashin 2009) interrogates the role of affect vis-à-vis the materiality turn. What is important for my current concerns here is that despite their apparent "giveness" stemming from seemingly objective and non-changeable qualities, the same material objects can have quite different meanings and induce different relationships and affective responses depending on the social and political context and conditions under which these material objects are approached.

One of the mechanisms which normalized building of the fence was to turn it into a reasonable reaction to the hostile environment and belligerent actions of the Palestinians. In this perspective, the existence of the barrier is normalized as it is a mere reaction to an external threat. Consider the following excerpt from an interview: "The same people who are attacking us for building the fence are the ones who forced us to build it. Meaning there are two communities that are responsible for it. The terrorism community - people commit acts of terror and we need to protect ourselves. And the two-state solution people."[83] In this understanding,

[82] Interview, May 24, 2016, Ariel.
[83] Interview, March 2, 2016, Ariel.

the barrier is not result of political deliberations but is imposed on the Israelis from the outside, by the Palestinians resorting to violence and "two-state solution people", that is, the international community which insists on the establishment of the Palestinian sovereign state. As such, the barrier is a simple reaction, a natural step under the external pressure. This, I would propose, seriously obscures various rationalities and most importantly, Israeli authorities' agency in building the barrier.

Nonetheless, in renderings by other settlers, the barrier lost even these security-related, yet necessary and "natural" qualities. For example, one settler, after asked if she was bothered by the fence, answered "Bother? To the contrary, it is good that it is there. One needs to make a border, to know where the border is. This is theirs, this is ours. It is the same in Europe, between neighbors."[84] I did not bring up the fact that in Europe most borders do not feature several layers of physical barrier, constant guarding, movement sensors and a dense network of CCTV. What is important that it appeared that to this settler (and I have come across similar remarks by others), the barrier seemed to pose as yet a normal feature of bordering practices. As such, the unique and profoundly political nature of the barrier is erased by its comparison with other, allegedly identical structures.

Also, in the interview that I already quoted above, the rather skeptical security official noted that "To burglars, and people like that, it [the barrier] is not easy to cross."[85] The barrier thus does not fulfil a security-related function but according to this account, it is not important even as a means of separation between the Palestinians and the Israelis, something that its Hebrew name more than suggests. In this rendering, the barrier is turned into an artefact that preserves the quality of life in the settlement through prevention of crime; rather unspectacular task considering how much criticisms it has attracted.

Curiously, a lot of settlers I talked to noted that the barrier "has always been there". It turned out that what they had in mind was a basic fence which was erected around the settlement after first couple years. By obscuring the differences between the old and the new fence/barrier, they

[84] Interview, April 10, 2016, Ariel.
[85] Interview, May 8, 2016, Ariel.

effectively dehistoricize the political significance and novelty of the structure (or rather a series of structures) erected by the Israeli authorities during the Second Intifada and after. When compared with the old fence which essentially consisted only of wires, the barrier built after 2003 is of course much more permanent, imposing and disruptive for the Palestinian population. Through obscuring these differences, the settlers turn the barrier into a mundane matter of the everyday life rather than a potent testament to the profound political conflict.

Although all these features might appear inconsequential, they do shape the perceptions of the settlers. Van Veeren notes the following in her work on the material arrangements at the US Guantanamo base:

> "Its design and construction, however, also shaped the relations between those visiting and working and those detained by determining visualities. It produces visual regimes of limited looking as part of the state's efforts to (re)present and construct different groups, separating the 'safe' community who are to be protected—whether guard, tourist, or citizen—from the new, dangerous, and strange enemy. In that sense, Guantanamo serves as a reminder that matter such as walls are not just symbols. They also do more than control the flow of movement of objects. Walls segment space and order that which is contained. They are also spaces for limiting or encouraging certain types of looking." (Van Veeren 2014, 27)

Conceptualized in these terms, the barrier structures the social and political reality in the settlement. Together with other material elements that underpin the social and political life in the settlements (roads, parks, shopping malls), its specific character and its understanding by the settlers establish particular notions, possibilities and "certain ways of looking."

Transport

From Mud to Highway: The Infrastructure of Separation

In a manner similar to the harsh material conditions in the settlement itself, Ariel veterans made clear that transport options in the first few years were scarce and hard to come by. Indeed, at the very beginning there was not even a proper road connecting the nascent community with the system of roads in the West Bank. Nonetheless, compared to other settlements at the time, Ariel had still relatively good connectivity to Israel proper as recounted by a settler whose family were members of the nucleus group which established settlement:

> "Every morning men went to work, on a bus that the Israeli Military Industries provided. There was no bus connection, but there was one bus leaving in the morning and coming back in the evening."[86]

Still, this did not mean that the commute was easy. Another settler described his parents' commute to me in the following way:

> "Let me tell you this. [My family] came here and my father worked at Israeli Train Company in Haifa. For two years, he went to work every day. To Haifa from here. And back then there was not transportation like today. So he took a bus to the Tel Aviv train station, from Tel Aviv took a train, and went to Haifa. Roughly, it took him at least two hours one way. For six months, my mother was also commuting for work to Haifa before she found a work here." [87]

Other settlers who moved to Ariel upon its establishment or in the next few years were also mentioning the hardships stemming from the (relative) lack of public transport, dirty and unpaved roads, and long commute. The challenging conditions in the settlement itself were thus paired with discomfort stemming from the lack of proper infrastructure and impaired mobility. Nonetheless, the situation was gradually elevated. The state paved roads in the settlement and

[86] Interview, April 19, 2016, Ariel.
[87] Interview, April 14, 2016, Ariel.

connected them to other ones which led to Israel proper. The biggest change occurred during the onset of the Second Intifada when the Israeli authorities opened the Highway 5, (also called trans-Samaria Highway) which connected Ariel and other settlements with Israel proper.

I will engage the implications of much more convenient mobility in the next section. What is crucial for my concerns here is that the existing infrastructural arrangement in the first few decades meant that the settlers seemed to have quite intense relationships with the Palestinian population in the area. Although I suspect that the settlers were exaggerating the closeness of these relationships, from the accounts I heard it became clear that the settlers were visiting the Palestinian towns and villages on a regular basis. The reasons for doing so were rather pragmatic. First, given the lack of really developed infrastructure, the essentially only road to Tel Aviv and other parts of Israel proper went through the Palestinian villages.

Second, there seemed to be quite intense commercial relationships between the Israelis and the Palestinians in the West Bank. Given the lack of venues in the settlements and the cheaper prices in the Palestinian villages and towns, it comes as no surprise that the settlers were rather keen on going and purchasing various goods ("from soaps to tables"[88]) at the Palestinian merchants in Salfit, Bidiya and other Palestinian villages. As one settler who experienced this period herself put it, "Every shabbat they would turn the whole village into a market"[89]. She would even joke that "it was the first shopping mall in the country."[90]

According to the settlers, this pattern of interactions and contacts changed with the onset of the First Intifada, a notion supported by Gordon's work. After the first demonstrations and incidents involving stone-throwing, the Israelis became much warier of their presence in the Palestinian areas. Although settlers still had to travel through the Palestinian villages, they would not stop to fetch coffee or grab groceries, and would avoid talking to the Palestinians in general. Nonetheless, it was during the Second Intifada when the separation between the Israelis and the Palestinians reached its peak. In Ariel specifically, this was enabled by a specific constellation:

[88] Interview, May 8, 2016, Ariel.
[89] Interview, May 8, 2016, Ariel.
[90] Interview, May 8, 2016, Ariel.

opening of the Highway 5 which connects Ariel and surrounding settlements directly with the Tel Aviv coastal area.

Soon after the eruption of violence in fall 2000, the situation became quite unattainable for the settlers. Already in late September and October, there were dozens of instances of Palestinian violence which effectively meant that the settlers "couldn't get here and we couldn't leave".[91] The leadership of Ariel with Ron Nachman as its mayor pushed hard for opening of the highway for the public use as it was still not finished despite the fact that it had been being built on and off for almost 20 years, according to my informants because of the political stakes and different inclinations of successive Israeli governments when it came to the Occupied Territories. However, the combination of the Nachman's political clout and assertiveness, and the situation on the ground led to the opening of the highway in 2000. According to the settlers' accounts, this happened despite the fact that parts were still not completed: "On Yom Kippur in 2000 the highway was open. The police said it was not good, that the highway was dangerous. But Ron said that the road through the villages was even more dangerous. [After that] people had to travel on the new highway. There were parts with asphalt and parts which were still under construction."[92]

Opening of the Highway 5 for civil use significantly altered the conditions in Ariel and supposedly in other settlements in the area as well. Not only it significantly decreased the commuting time to Israel proper as I discuss in the next section. It also further detached the settlers from the reality of the Palestinians' lives. After the highway was opened, it "was prohibited to go through the villages. Because before that we used to go through the villages."[93] Indeed, as a part of the Oslo agreements, the Israelis were legally prohibited from entering Area A under the full control of the newly established Palestinian Authority. Nonetheless, Highway 5 effectively meant that the Israelis living in Ariel did not have to go through *any* areas inhabited by the Palestinians, including those under the direct Israeli military control (see Maps 2 and 5). One of the settlers

[91] Interview, April 14, 2016, Ariel.
[92] Interview, April 14, 2016, Ariel.
[93] Interview, April 14, 2016, Ariel.

summed the new conditions rather succinctly: “The difference [from the past] is that now you don’t enter the villages, the Arab villages. And it is more straightforward.”[94]

Avi, another Israeli who has experienced these changes has also commented on the new setting. He stated that “until 2000, we drove through the villages. Through Bidiya, Mescha, Arab villages, Chares, Kifer Chares. After 2000 we were using the highway which goes next to the villages.”[95] Avi then showed me an older map which depicted the old road that the settlers used to take and pointed at different communities: “This is an Arab village, this is a Jewish settlement [‘yishuv’], Arab village, Arab village, a Jewish settlement”[96]. By juxtaposing the old road which went through the region regardless of the identities of different communities, and the new highway with clearly subscribed to the differentiated racial order, Avi thus inadvertently captured quite well the logic of separation discussed by Gordon.

The reality of separation was vividly brought to me when I visited Ariel for the last time during my main research stint in Israel/Palestine in October 2016. Unlike on all other previous occasions when I visited the settlement before, I was coming not from Israel proper but from Nablus, a major Palestinian town north of Ariel which I had visited with a couple friends. While they took a bus back to Ramallah, I found a taxi van which was going to Salfit, a Palestinian town next to Ariel. My idea was to get off the taxi at some junction close to the settlement and then hitchhike, a common practice among settlers in the West Bank.

When the van filled up with people, we departed for Salfit. I recognized the way from Nablus up to the Tapuach Junction, an intersection heavily guarded by the IDF, as it was the same route I took from Ramallah to Nablus a couple days back. I also frequently passed by the junction before since most buses going from Ariel to Jerusalem would go through it on the way to smaller settlements in the area before heading south. However, after the van left the main road, I experienced a phase of quite intense dislocation. Although I knew that I am not too far from places I became familiar with in the past months (the Tapuach Junction and Ariel are distant from

[94] Interview, May 16, 2016, Ariel.
[95] Interview, April 14, 2016, Ariel.
[96] Interview, April 14, 2016, Ariel.

each other only several kilometers), the van drove on the roads and villages which I have never visited – because I have never taken a Palestinian bus in the area before. Although it was the same geographical area, due to the distinct, separated infrastructures, I was utterly lost. After we drove through two Palestinian villages, I started to think that perhaps this was not the best idea and was thinking what to do if I ended up driving all the way to Salfit.

Then, I suddenly recognized a bridge in front of us, striding the road. It was a bridge not too far from the eastern entrance to Ariel which I have crossed repeatedly on the bus from Jerusalem. I asked the driver, in the combination of English and my basically non-existent Arabic, to stop by it. I suppose all of other passengers were rather surprised; as far as they were concerned, there was no sense to me getting off the vehicle at this particular point, between two villages. Although it was mere hundred meters from the settlement, I suppose that given the differentiated regimes of mobility, that did not really matter for the Palestinians.

After I climbed on the road leading to Ariel and ten or so minutes of walk, I arrived at the settlement's entrance. As I was walking towards the gate, I became highly nervous. There was basically no way how I could get there by foot – the nearest junction where I could possibly get off if I had taken an Israeli bus or hitchhiked with an Israeli going to a different settlement was a couple kilometers away and it would constitute a rather taxing trek considering the heat and altitude (that junction is located in the valley below Ariel). To my relief, the guard only returned my greeting in Hebrew, and did not even ask me how I was, quite a common profiling question aiming to discern accent, and hence the identity, of the speaker. I took this as a testament to the privilege that I was enjoying: even if me coming from this direction by foot did not make my sense, my physical appearance overrode these calculations (or the guard was just too bored to bother to check my ID). The disjointed geographies of the occupation and separation finally somewhat blended together for me as I found myself in the by now familiar space of Ariel.

To relate all this to the central concerns of my thesis, the essential feature which turns the military infrastructure into means facilitating middle class suburban live is the virtual non-presence of the Palestinians. As I stated above, most of the settlers I talked to could be defined as benevolent racists – during my time in Ariel, my interlocutors did not call for expulsion or even

extermination of Palestinians, but the notion of civilizational superiority was clearly present. Another common trope was the denial of the Palestinians' unified political subjectivity; I suppose a lot of settlers would subscribe to the argument that Palestinians "are not a people ['Am']"[97], as put by one Ariel residents. These remarks are indeed rooted in the Zionist and Israeli official discourse, as manifested by Herzl's (in)famous description of Ottoman Palestine as a "land without people" or Golda Meir's remark that "there is no such thing like Palestinians", and they are transmitted by the Israeli educational system and media.

But drawing on the insights into the inseparable nature of discursive and non-discursive practices that I discussed in the conceptual chapter, here I want to highlight how are these ideas and political notions facilitated by and embodied in particular material and visual arrangements that constitute the settlers' everyday lives. Essentially, my fieldwork provided some more ethnographically informed insights into the regime of separation discussed extensively by Gordon. Although, as I discuss in the next chapter, there are still some contacts between the Israelis and the Palestinians, since the First Intifada they became very rare due to the threat of political violence and security-related concerns on the part of Israelis, trend which was further exacerbated by the wave of attacks in the late 1990s and even more so during the Second Intifada. In the case of Ariel, opening of the Highway 5 further deepened the detachment between the two populations: nowadays, the Israelis rarely see the Palestinians on their commute, a situation rather different from the one in the first two decades of the Israeli occupation.

Another element which is crucial for rendering the transport and commute unproblematic for the settlers are specific visual arrangements that define these mobilities. In her work, Gil Hochberg (Hochberg 2015) shows how is the Israelis' field of sight not only obstructed by tunnels and walls but how are these imposing infrastructural features rendered pleasant and overwritten through various means like paintings. What these material and visual arrangements effectively mean that the settlers are detached from the reality of the Israeli occupation even if they find themselves in the physical proximity to the Palestinians on the everyday basis. Indeed, when I

[97] Interview, August 8, 2016.

was going through my fieldnotes when I worked on this thesis, I realized how little attention I paid to the surrounding on the commute after the first couple trips to and from the settlement. I found out that there was not much in my fieldnotes about the commute: I wrote on occasional barbed wire along the road and the pleasant view in the case a bus I took went to settlements located on hilltops (I engage the politics of the view more extensively in the next chapter). Although I would visit Ramallah and Bethlehem quite often during my stay in Jerusalem, on my commute I did not pay much attention to the Palestinian villages around. As I tried to show throughout this section, for the settlers this lack of attention is even easier as they do not have access to the Palestinian areas at all due to institutional, spatial and material arrangements. For all practical purposes, for the settlers Palestine literally does not exist.

Depolitization through Convenience

As I recounted above, various material and institutional transformations significantly changed the scope and possibilities of settlers' mobility. Whereas in the first few years there was very scarce connection between Ariel and Israel proper, by the time of my fieldwork there were buses going to the Tel Aviv area every 20 minutes or so, and to Jerusalem every few hours. One of my interviewees in Ariel summarized these transformations as follows:

> "There were buses but not every 20 minutes, and not to every place. Just to Petach Tikva and Tel Aviv, and that was it. Today, it is much easier to live here, in the physical sense ['mepchinat fyzi']. We have a highway that goes through Samaria, highway which opened much quicker connection to Petach Tikva, to Tel Aviv. And it is direct, not through the villages."[98]

According to other settlers, it was Highway 5 that "changed everything."[99] One person elaborated by saying that "in the beginning, it was very hard. Also security-wise. That is to say, there was no highway. We drove through all the Arab villages. Today, it takes 20 minutes to Petach Tikva. In

[98] Interview, April 10, 2016, Ariel.
[99] Interview, May 8, 2016, Ariel.

the past, it was an hour and half. It was our biggest problem."[100] What I would like to propose is that in a manner similar to the conditions within the settlement, the transformations which facilitated increased mobility of the settlers did significantly alter the possibilities for social and political conduct for Israelis in the West Bank. It established the settlements not as taxing environment which required personal and ideological determination but as a space in which convenient, middle-class lifestyle could be realized. Indeed, as put by a settler I already quoted, because of these various changes, "it is much easier to come here."[101]

The political importance of the shifts in the transport system that I just discussed was illustrated by an interview I conducted with Liva, a lecturer at the Ariel University who commuted to the settlement on a daily basis from Tel Aviv. After we got coffee at the kiosk at the university campus and were sitting in one of the atriums, I asked her why she decided to work at Ariel. Liva just shrugged and said that it was a good offer. She then added that she would never take the job if it was not for the Highway 5 which provides a convenient connection to the coast. Finally, she smiled and said that while a lot of people think it is about ideology and politics, in fact it is often about "technicalities". Liva was essentially proposing that it was particular "apolitical" material arrangements which made her work in Ariel, as opposed to some political persuasions.

Of course, authors who have critically interrogated various technopolitical issues would vehemently refuse this distinction between "ideology" and "technicalities" (see e.g. Hecht 2009; Edwards and Hecht 2010). Summarizing Mukerji's work, Patrick Carroll states that material arrangements functioned not simply "as a symbol but also that they served as forces that structured interaction in a manner that served symbolic articulation" (Carroll 2006, 16). In the case of the Israeli settlements, the infrastructural arrangements – separation from the occupied population, the smoothness of the mobility, its affordability – structure the mundane, everyday tasks in a way that are instrumental in feeding into the comfortable, non-contentious, middle class life style of the settlers, which then maintains the occupational regime.

[100] Interview, May 24, 2016, Ariel.
[101] Interview, May 8, 2016, Ariel.

Sentiments similar to those of Liva were also expressed by an employee of COGAT responsible for planning in the West Bank that I interviewed in her office at the IDF base near the Beit El settlement, in view from Ramallah.[102] I came to talk to Judith about the rationales behind specific details of planning of highways and checkpoints around Ariel. However, I soon found out that most of issues I was interested in were not part of Judith's areas of responsibility since the most contentious and impactful decisions were imposed on her from higher echelons of the security and political establishment. But the interview still yielded some interesting insights. After she introduced the basic parameters of her job, division of responsibility for urban and infrastructural planning in the West Bank, she simply noted "I just provide services to citizens/civilians" ('ani stam notenet sherutim leezrachim').

She then complained that "Arabs" do not cooperate with her office too well. When I tried to push her on this point, cautiously suggesting that the Palestinians perhaps do not enjoy full benefits of the infrastructural projects, as they do not have as much access to them as Israelis, Judith was quick to respond that "nobody wants big roads near their homes" because of noise and traffic. Now, Judith's reaction quite likely relates to my clumsiness when inquiring into her remarks (I was not sure how to probe into these issues without revealing too much of my own political position). But what I found intriguing was that her first frame in answering to my remark was to emphasize the quality of life (noise, traffic): "Just providing services to citizens/civilians" renders her work apolitical as its seeming purpose is to merely making people's lives more convenient. This, of course, completely ignores the politics of mobility and infrastructure in Israel/Palestine.

The importance of the smoothness of the settlers' mobility flows can be highlighted by one anecdote. Soon after I moved to Israel/Palestine in fall 2015, I had dinner with a flatmate and several of her friends at our place in East Jerusalem. One of them, an Israeli Jew, grew up in Ma'aleh Adumim, a major settlement right outside Jerusalem. When he heard about my doctoral project, he started a long rant about how boring it was to grow up in the settlement. He then briefly mentioned a checkpoint that was erected at the beginning of the Second Intifada on a highway to Jerusalem which Ma'aleh Adumim residents had to cross to get to the city. Due to the

[102] Fieldnotes, July 7, 2017.

intense security checks which were enacted because of the wave of Palestinian suicide attacks, inevitably the checkpoint caused long delays on the commute and waiting lines. He then laconically remarked: "Traffic jams… That is how Israelis experience the occupation."[103] At the time, I did not appreciate the importance of these remarks. It was only after I started reflecting on the political salience of the commute and its easiness on the part of the settlers that I revisited them.

There is a large body of scholarship on infrastructure which argues that one of the distinctive characteristics of infrastructure is its fading into background of the everyday live. As Edwards noted in his landmark piece, when it comes to elements of infrastructure which hold our world together, "we notice them mainly when they fail, which they rarely do" (Edwards 2004, 185). Usually labelled as black-boxing (Edwards 2004; Steve Graham and Marvin 2001), what is characteristic of these processes is that we experience infrastructures as something both unitary (as we do not distinguish between its various elements) and unremarkable (it is simply something we use without giving much thought to it). Such accounts have been rightly criticized for their Western bias as in most countries in the Global South, infrastructures break down rather often and their presence and delicate and complicated nature is thus encountered on the everyday basis (Von Schnitzler 2016, 2008; Larkin 2008; Anand 2011; Robins 2014). Nonetheless, the notion of black-boxing is still pertinent to many Western contexts, and to some extent in Israel/Palestine as well.

But what I want to propose here is that in this context, when it comes to the Israelis' experience, the political stakes of "successful" black-boxing in Israel/Palestine are somewhat different. For one, as argued by Newman (Newman 2017, 2006), easy commute is instrumental in maintaining the appeal of the settlements for middle class Israelis as it enables relocation to the Occupied Territories and enjoyment the benefits of doing so without the need for any considerable concessions. In this regard, smooth, uninterrupted mobility between the settlements and Israel proper is crucial for the future growth of the settler population. Second, the constant need to

[103] For reasons that I cannot comprehend now I did not write this anecdote down in my fieldnotes. Nonetheless, I remember that moment very vividly.

black-box infrastructural arrangements in the West Bank relates to the governmental programme of depolitization of the Israeli control over the Palestinians on the part of the settlers. The smoothness of the commute ensures that the Israelis are never exposed to or reminded of much more violent practices that maintain the political conditions in the area. In other words, disruptions like traffic jams have the potential to draw attention to elements of the infrastructure that betray the violent order imposed on the subjugated population. The inconvenience, breakdown in infrastructural smooth operations, could raise the questions like why is there actually the need for a checkpoint? Why is there violence committed by the Palestinians? Although I do not want to argue that asking these questions would bring down the seeming normalcy of the settlers' everyday life completely, it could, arguably, pose as a small crack in the fabric of depolitization.

What all these separate stories together demonstrate is that smooth mobility to and from the settlements is profoundly political. Seen in this light, the increases in numbers and frequency of buses serving the settlement is far from being just a matter of individual (in)convenience. Provision of sufficient transportation is political not only in the sense that it is a precondition for attracting middle class Israelis who need to commute easily to their places of work in Israel proper but also because it enables much more contentious instruments of the Israeli presence and rule in the area to fade way. The traffic jams induced by the new checkpoint then threatened to both interrupt the convenient middle class life of the settlers and had the potential to reveal the phenomena which would arguably disturb the settlers' mundane experience of the Occupation.

The overall success in black-boxing and normalizing the mechanisms of the Israeli occupation, coupled with the Palestinians' effective absence in the settlers' commute, result in rather tangible political effects. When I talked to a renowned expert on the settlements, she argued not only that the Ariel bloc severely complicates the viability of a potential Palestinian state, and thus poses as a major obstacle to the realization of the two-state solution. She furthermore argued that in the case of a peace agreement which would ensure that Ariel remains part of Israel, even settlers themselves would not like to live so deep in the Palestinian state (not to speak about the

resources that would need to go into securing the road connecting the enclave and Israel). "Who", she asked rhetorically, "wants to travel twenty kilometers to get to the country?"[104]

But based on my interviews with the settlers in Ariel, and my own experience with the commute from the settlement to Israel proper, this perspective neglects the subjective perceptions of space and distance on the part of settlers. The trip to Tel Aviv takes not only 40 minutes by bus and even less by car (although this is highly dependent of traffic), but it is also extremely non-eventful. As has David Newman stated, "with the paving of highways linking Jerusalem and Tel Aviv to their exurban hinterlands, one came to feel that they were living not in 'Greater Israel' but in a greater metropolitan area" (Newman 2006, 115). My interviews as well as own experience with the commute very much support Newman's remarks.

Checkpoints

As I suggested in the introduction to this chapter, there is a still growing body of literature which shows that the checkpoint is a crucial site at which the Israeli domination over the Palestinians manifests and materializes on the daily basis. Indeed, in Palestinians' stories the checkpoints feature prominently as they embody the Israeli occupation and its incursions into their lives; violence they impose is both symbolic (in their imposing structure) and omnipresent (as it severely impacts Palestinians' lives on several levels). As I show here, by contrast, for settlers (or even most of "non-suspicious" foreigners like myself) checkpoints pose as a mere inconvenience at most. This is not to say that they (we) do not encounter them.

In this regard, it is worthwhile to recall argument made by Mansbach (Mansbach 2009) about the role of the new checkpoints and their role in the Israeli occupational regime. Echoing other authors (Havkin 2015, 2011; Kotef and Amir 2011), Mansbach argues that the institutional and material transformations that occurred at large Israeli checkpoints separating Israel proper and the West Bank which were supposedly meant to "normalize" their existence and mitigate their

[104] Interview, Jerusalem, June 14th, 2017.

impact on the Palestinians' lives in fact further cemented the Israeli rule by obscuring responsibility and authority at these sites. In this section, I argue that on the part of the settlers, the checkpoints, and by extension the Occupation, have also been profoundly normalized. In fact. in a manner similar to the separation barrier, I was somewhat struggling to really inquiry into the checkpoints during my interviews. Until I explicitly brought them up, my informants would not mention them, hinting at their non-presence in settlers' lives.

In Ariel itself, there are two checkpoints controlling the movement the flow of people to and from the settlement which are manned, as I discussed in the previous chapter, by private security guards. On the Highway 5 from Ariel to Tel Aviv, the Kafr Qassem / Kafr 'Ein checkpoint is located some twenty minutes ride from the settlement (see Map 5). It is thus not the case that the Israelis living in the West Bank would never come across this particular feature of the Israeli rule. Nonetheless, when compared to the checkpoints that are deployed to manage the Palestinians' mobility, the Israelis' encounters with them are rather benign and unremarkable.

For one, Israelis are usually merely waived through the checkpoints, an experience which is in a very stark contrast to that of a vast majority of the Palestinians who, depending on the type of the checkpoint, need to provide required documents, and are searched and X-rayed. As noted by other scholars who conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Israel/Palestine (Löwenheim 2014; Ochs 2011; Manor 2015), much of the everyday security practices are underpinned by racial profiling, effectively meaning that most Jewish Israelis are exempted from the full scrutiny. My own experience is very much testament to that: during my whole stay in Ariel, I was asked to show ID only once at a checkpoint.

Furthermore, the checkpoints designed mostly for Israelis significantly differ from those meant to control the Palestinians in terms of their materiality, as testified to by the attached images. Although the latter can take many forms, those which actually monitor the Palestinians' movement to and from the West Bank are large, imposing, maze-like structures. By contrast, An Israeli acquittance who did not live in the West Bank but was familiar with the conditions in the settlement due to family connection stated that more than anything else, the checkpoints remind him of a toll station. I would argue that its impact on the settlers' lives if comparable.

Qalandiya checkpoint between Jerusalem and Ramallah. Source: Wikipedia Commons

Qalandiya checkpoint between Jerusalem and Ramallah. Source: Wikipedia Commons

“Tunnels” checkpoint near Bethlehem. Source: Activestills

“Tunnels” checkpoint near Bethlehem. Source: Activestills

Apart from the checkpoints located at the entrances to the settlement, the only visible material remainder of the precarious conditions in the settlement is an IDF watchtower located on a ridge between the settlement and the Palestinian town of Salfit. Again, what was rather intriguing about that post was that even when I asked about the security conditions in the settlement, rarely anyone would talk about it. In this regard, it is important to highlight the fact that this post is inaccessible for the settlers. Located on the horizon, on the hilltop, it is visible from many parts of the settlement. However, it has been normalized on the part of the settlers who, in my experience, seem to not register it anymore.

The IDF watchtower in Ariel. Source: author's pictures

One of the mechanisms of this normalization was, in a way similar to those which depoliticize the existence of the barrier, to portray it as a natural reaction to the violence imposed by the Palestinians. Consider the following excerpt:

> "And in year 2000, it was the Second Intifada. Then they had rifles, after Oslo. So they took rifles and started shooting at the civilian neighbourhoods of Ariel. And they went to this little hill over here, and they set up [a position]. So the IDF came and pushed them back. And ever since 2001 there is a permanent IDF presence there. Now, we didn't have a need for that since 1978 till 2001. […] So when media talk about that post […] If you were to take a CNN or BBC camera and take a picture of the antena hill post, they would say 'look at the Israeli military occupation of that region'. You can see that story with a particular angle or style of the camera. But if you were trying to actually understand what happened, you would know that from 1978 to 2001 there was no post. It was only when we had a peace process, and the Second Intifada, and our neighbors started shooting at us that we asked the Israeli Defense [puts emphasis on 'defense'] Forces to defend people of Ariel. That's how we understand it. There is one more interesting thing about that post which kind of takes it into a different direction but it's interesting to think about."[105]

Mitchell's thinking on normalization of power can be instructive here. While discussing novel political and social arrangements, he notes that "the difference is that the articulation of these local powers into larger networks now creates the effect of power as a system of demand that exists as something external to ordinary life" (T. Mitchell 1990, 567). Seen through this prism, construction of the post becomes, on the part of the settlers, something exempted from the sphere of their conduct and agency, and thus non-negotiable. Rather than a manifestation of a concrete political struggle in which they participate, the IDF post becomes something that is a mere part of the everyday life due to its necessity.

Lastly, what is important to discuss with regards to the political conditions in Israel/Palestine is that there is a complete discrepancy between the location of the checkpoints and the actual

[105] Interview, March 2, 2016, Ariel.

armistice line from the 1948 War, the so-called Green Line. Although the latter is supposed to be a border between Israel and the prospective Palestinian state, even those checkpoints that separate Israel proper and the West Bank nowadays are relatively deep in the Palestinian territory (not to mention a myriad of checkpoints separating Palestinian communities from each other). The same applies to the checkpoint on the Highway 5 as can be seen on the map above.

When coupled with the now straightforward and easy commute, these arrangements make sure that the Green Line is effectively non-existent for the settlers. Indeed, this mirrors larger issues as the Green Line is marred with a number legalistic and political arrangements which effectively make it irrelevant in many regards on the part of the Israelis. However, as argued by the author of a recent *Ha'aretz* (Auerbach 2017) article, if needed, the Green Line can quickly emerge as a political technology meant to control and manage the Palestinians and their political agency expressed through mobility. It is exactly this fluid nature of Green Line, as well as the checkpoints, that grants them such political potency: where for the Israelis it can fade to the extent of non-existence, for the Palestinians it is a firm, omnipresent condition of their lives.

Conclusion

Susan Star famously remarked that "one person's infrastructure is another one's issue, or difficulty" (Star 1999b, 380). The case of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories could not be more instructive when it comes to the different experiences of infrastructural arrangements. While the settlers enjoy the benefits of the smooth mobility and security, physical as well as ontological, provided by the apparatus of checkpoints and barriers, these very features severely disrupt the Palestinians' lives. As noted by Newman, "Colonization through suburbanization is the essential banalization of the settlement project, transforming settlement into a series of daily life activities [such as] easy commuting distances" (Newman 2017, 46).

As I argue throughout this thesis, this banalization operates on a number of levels in terms of the settlers' everyday life. Whereas in the previous chapter I engaged practices which rendered the life inside the settlement "normal", in this chapter I investigated mechanisms that turn highly

political mechanisms and practices of the Israeli control over the West Bank into mere features of the everyday live. The result of all these constellations is that the settlements are at the same time connected to Israel proper and disconnected from its physical surroundings, that is, the Palestinian-populated areas. In this regard, an Israeli researcher who works extensively on settlements proposed that "Ariel is microcosmos of Israel." He elaborated by saying that when it comes to the connection to the outer world, "there is only one corridor, which in the case of Israel is of course Ben Gurion Airport." Overall, he did not spare rather harsh words: both Ariel and Israel at large are "proudly oblivious, ignorant, isolated from the immediate surrounding, politically, religiously, economically culturally. I mean, you name it."[106]

Yet again, what interests me in this thesis is not really the normative judgement itself but rather the conditions which enable this ignorance. What I wanted to argue here is that due to material, spatial and racial dynamics that underpin settlers' experience, and set them apart from the occupied Palestinians, various features of the Israeli regime in the West Bank are rendered apolitical and reframed as matters of quality of life, rather than manifestations of a prolonged, violent conflict. In this regard, depolitization of the Occupation's defining features through various visual, material and institutional means is necessary for continuation of the convenient, non-problematic everyday life.

[106] Interview, May 18, 2016, Jerusalem.

6. The Palestinians and the Disruptions of the Normalcy

I cannot but admit that there is something conspicuously missing from the previous chapters, a feature one could expect in a study of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: the Palestinians. To a large extent, this omission reflects settlers' everyday experience - there is simply a minimal contact between the two population even in the midst of the West Bank. This relates to the thorough regime of separation that has been analyzed extensively by Neve Gordon (Gordon 2008a, 2008b). As have several authors showed, and as I also argued before, in the West Bank this regime has acquired a form which makes Israeli and Palestinian lives almost completely detached.

Nonetheless, what I want to argue here is that the notion of physical separation does not capture the situation entirely. After all, settlers still do *see* Palestinians and their dwellings, and they sometimes encounter them in person. In this regard, I also engage Hochberg's argument that "*concealment* […] is key principle organizing the dominant Israeli (civil society) visual field, a visual field restricted by a vast mechanism of erasure, denial, and obstructions of sight" (Hochberg 2015, 7; emphasis in original). Although I concur with Hochberg in the sense that this is the overall orientation of visual dispositif which channels Israelis' seeing, there are always disruptions, as her own work shows. In more general terms, Anna Leander argued that "regimes [of visibility] are not closed, but open: they need to be constantly reproduced in practice and may become objects of contestation and resistance in their own right" (Leander 2017, 352).

So although the principle of concealment, which manifests itself both visually (as argued by Hochberg) and materially (as I argued by Gordon and others), defines most of Israelis' vision, I am interested in this chapter in the disruptions of this concealment, that is in those instances in which the obscuration gives way to contact, visual or physical, among the Israeli settlers and the Palestinians. I specifically investigate how these encounters are rendered (seemingly) non-political for the settlers. Building on the insights from the literature on visuality and materiality, in this chapter I thus also want to draw attention to social and political frameworks in which the seeing and (rare) encounters occur. I argue that it is the middle-class ethos and the notion of civilizational superiority that work, together with material and visual constellations, to

depoliticize the physical presence of the Palestinians in the area. Through these arrangements, "the distribution of the sensible" (Rancière 2004) that works to naturalize and depoliticize the settlers' everyday lives is left intact despite the physical presence of the people who contest the existing power relationships.

I focus on three broad areas in which Israeli settlers, to a varying degree, come in actual contact with the Palestinians. First, I discuss the political salience of "the view" in the settlements and its aesthetics which work to depoliticize what is in plain sight, i.e. Palestinian villages. Second, going back to issue of transport, I show that Palestinian passengers on Israeli buses were largely rendered a quality-of-life, rather than a political or security problem on the part of the settlers. Lastly, I attend to instances in which the Israelis actually meet in person the Palestinians who work in the settlements.

"It is the view": Aesthetic Erasures

"Settlers often talk about Toscana, the Toscana landscape. But who cultivated this Toscana?"[107]

After I visited Ma'aleh Adumim, a major settlement outside Jerusalem in winter 2016, my main impression was that it offers a rather stunning view, and very much the same sentiments were expressed by nearly all of my informants. In Ariel, after an interview that took place in her living room, Nili invited me to join her to go to the rooftop of her house near the border of the settlement. The day was rather foggy and the visibility was low but Nili insisted that I should check out the rooftop. As we were standing there, she stretched her arm to point at the surrounding landscape hidden behind the fog and light rain. "You cannot see much now", she said in Hebrew, with an accent that was still bearing hints of her childhood in Eastern Europe, "but usually it is really beautiful".[108] This was the first of the many instances in which my informants pointed at "the view" as one of the main advantages of living in Ariel.

[107] Interview, June 2, 2017, Jerusalem.
[108] Interview, April 10, 2016, Ariel.

These considerations were clearly present for David, a Russian speaking settler in his late fifties. After he moved with his family to Israel from the crumbling USSR, they first lived in the Tel Aviv metropolitan area where they were struggling to make ends meet. After a couple years in Israel he met other Russian speakers in the restaurant where he was working. They were sharing difficulties of adjusting to the new country, and David was complaining about the hassle and overcrowding in the city. But after he noted that it is most likely like this all over Israel, his companions recommended him to come to see Ariel. When he came for a short visit, David was immediately intrigued by better climate, spatiality, and the view. Twenty years later, as we were sitting on the balcony of his large and rather luxurious flat in Ariel and sipping our second cans of beer, he spread out his hands and pointed at the scenery we were looking at. “You just don’t have this in Tel Aviv”, he noted.

The view (“hanof”) thus plays a big role in settlers’ everyday experience: although not uniformly on every occasion, the praise of what one could see featured prominently in the interviews with Ariel inhabitants. There was a common appreciation of the landscape one could oversee just from their window or balcony, without having to move from the comfort of their home, something that is hard to get in Israel proper. Although it took me some time to notice the pattern, I gradually realized that my interviewees often emphasized that the landscape they have immediate “access” to is one of the main draws of living in the settlement. In the fifth chapter, I argued that the nature is one of the mechanisms which work to depoliticize the everyday live in the settlements through the aesthetization of “natural” material elements and the politics which underpin them. In the same vein, here I want to argue that the view has a similar function.

“The view” in Ariel. Source: author’s pictures

“The view” in Ariel. Source: author’s pictures

“The view” in Ariel. Source: author’s pictures

The reason why living in Ariel provides such great opportunities for appreciating the view and landscape is because it is located on the slopes of a mountain that dominates the area. As has Eyal Weizman (Weizman 2012) argued, part of the settlements’ importance within the Israeli occupational regime is based exactly on this topographical prominence as they are often located on hilltops, overlooking the Palestinian cities and villages in valleys. In his important work on the Israeli occupation, Weizman (Weizman 2015) talks about “the politics of verticality” which grants the settlements their strategic importance as they effectively establish control over the Palestinian villages located below them, posing as points of surveillance over the Palestinian population. Although I do not dispute this strategic function, as became apparent to me during my fieldwork, the settlements’ location has political implications not only in terms of surveillance but also aesthetics.

In this regard, the work of W. J. T. Mitchell (W. J. T. Mitchell 2002) on the politics of landscape appears pertinent. In his seminal piece, Mitchell argues that landscape should be understood as a set of social, cultural and political practices that maintain power relations (imperialism in his case) rather than a "mere" genre of painting. At one point Mitchell discusses the Jay Appleton's thinking on the landscape which he connects to animal behavior: in Appleton's reading, landscape is conceived from the perspective of the predator (W. J. T. Mitchell 2002, 16). This is the landscape of Weizmann's politics of verticality, the landscape of surveillance, conflict and war. However, this is not the landscape that settlers see. Indeed, Mitchell himself proposes that landscape can serve as medium for not only power-laden relations but also commercial interests (W. J. T. Mitchell 2002, 14). He further (W. J. T. Mitchell 2002, 16) notes that contra Appleton's reading of landscape, there can be other subject positions of the observer – "woman, gatherer, scientist, poet, interpreter, or tourist". What Mitchell suggests is that the notion of the landscape is not fixed and is fluid, related to the social and political context and identities which go into the practices of viewing. Indeed, on the part of the settlers, the appreciation of the landscape stems from the fact that it is perceived as "gorgeous" ("meshagea")[109], quiet and still.

What I thus want to argue here is that for settlers, "the politics of verticality" does not stand for intensified surveillance enabled by topographical conditions. When Yaakov told me in an interview that "When you go to the balcony, and there is no rain, you can see as far as Nablus"[110], he did not talk about the gaze as a mechanism of control but the gaze of aesthetical enjoyment and appreciation. The mechanisms and features of the Israeli occupation that facilitate the control over the Palestinian lives also provide space, literally and metaphorically, for aesthetic experience which enables Israelis to (re)assert their belonging to the middle class. In other words, moving to the settlement did not bring about only an increase of the quality of life for settlers, which made sure they would still be considered middle class in socio-economic terms, as Gutwein (Gutwein 2017) would argue. It is further appealing in terms of providing social and cultural capital which they seek.

[109] Interview, April 14, 2016, Ariel.
[110] Interview, May 8, 2016, Ariel.

However, there is one feature of "the landscape" which is hard to miss and that would seem to disrupt the idyllic "view" hailed by the settlers – the physical presence of the Palestinian villages and towns that is impossible to miss, as testified by the remark about seeing Nablus. At the beginning of my fieldwork, I thought that this aspect of the landscape would somehow disturb the settlers and their appreciation of the sensory experience that the settlement provides. However, this proved not to be the case. In fact, in most interviews I was struggling to formulate questions which would get at the heart of this matter. Most settlers whom I asked how they feel about Palestinian villages in their immediate proximity expressed confusion after they heard the question – why would they feel in any way about them? I believe there are two constellations which are important for accounting for this erasure of the Palestinian villages from settlers' field of vision.

First, this aesthetic experience is still conditioned by the material separation between the two populations. Perhaps the most succinct and to the point reaction came from Yaakov, an elderly veteran of the settlement who had been living in Ariel since the early 1980s and who made the remark about Nablus. Sipping coffee in his living room, I asked him if he was not bothered by the Palestinian villages that made up the landscape that he was just praising. He laconically answered: "No, you just don't go there. They are there, we are here."[111]. This quote is essentially a direct reference to the regime of separation that has been discussed in detail by Gordon (Gordon 2008a, 2008b). Indeed, as I have discussed in the previous chapter, Israelis "here" and Palestinians "there" is the basic condition of settlers' everyday experience.[112] Unlike in the past, with a very few exceptions, the settlers do not enter the Palestinian villages anymore.

The physical separation between the Israelis and the Palestinians enables the settlers to construe this distance as mental and political detachment as well. If in the past the Palestinian villages were still part of fabric of settlers' everyday experience due to their visits there (if only because of cheap prices), under the conditions which are in place for the last two decades, the Palestinian villages were effectively turned into mere features of the landscape for the Israelis. Because they

[111] Interview, May 8, 2016, Ariel.

[112] Except for Palestinians commuting on the Israeli buses and working in the settlements, issues that I discuss in the following sections.

do not in any way (beyond visual imprint) impact the settlers' lives, the Palestinian villages can be relegated into the realm of non-importance and political irrelevance. One of the long-term Ariel residents told me, after I asked what she thinks about the "Arab" villages which are part of the view she was just praising: "We got used to them. They didn't bother me before, and they don't bother me now. They are a part of… I have been here for 37 years. It is a part of life."[113] Essentially the same sentiment was expressed by another settler who had lived in Ariel since its establishment: "They are part of the land ['shetach']. That is the area ['ezor'] we moved to. We knew from the beginning that the Arab villages are here."[114] The Palestinian population becomes, literally, a part of the land, apolitical and non-threatening, merely a background to the everyday live in the settlement.

Second, "unseeing" (Miéville 2010; see below) Palestinian villages on the part of the settlers needs to be situated within particular subject-positions and how they interact with larger discursive structures. In this regard, it took me some time to realize that my expectations were indeed tied to my own subjectivity and ways of seeing things conditioned by it. Mirzoeff's work is again useful for capturing the interplay between certain embedded notions and sensatory experience. In his article on visualisation of Anthropocene, he talks describes New York City in the early 20th century whose rivers were at the time heavily polluted. And yet, although a number of visitors expressed their profound disgust at the state of water in the city, New Yorkers seemed simply not to take a notice. Mirzoeff (Mirzoeff 2014, 224) notes that "it appears that the desire to live in a modern city was so great that it literally anaesthetized the senses, or at least allowed people to disregard what they saw and smelled in the water." This "anesthetization" is one of instances of naturalizing given regimes of visibility.

In the case of Palestinian villages, the enjoyment of the view and the overall middle-class ethos within which this aesthetic experience takes place work to obliterate the political nature of these dwellings. In their article offering a genealogical perspective on the position of the Arab village in the Zionist and later Israeli architectural imagination, Yacobi and Shadar (Yacobi and Shadar

[113] Interview, April 10, 2016, Ariel.
[114] Interview, May 24, 2016, Ariel.

2014) argue that while at first it stood as a marker of the Otherness, it was soon coopted and domesticated into the discourse and practice as a convenient source of the local authenticity. Following Yacobi's and Shadar's work, I would like to argue that in the case of Ariel settlers, one can talk about layman valorization of the "Arab village" as a source of everyday enjoyment stemming from the pastoral nature of the settlement's surroundings. In this regard, "the romantic gaze over the Arab landscape" (Yacobi and Shadar 2014, 988) feeds into the depolitization of the everyday life in the settlement by turning the physical reminders of existence of another people claiming the same territory into a source of visual enjoyment. In other words, the view provided by the topographical conditions is not only aesthetic; it is also aesthetizing the mechanisms of the occupation.

The settlers' conceptualization of the Arab village, drawing on its longer history in the Zionist and Israeli imagination, thus highlights some of the more intricate operations of the regime of visibility that propels the Israeli occupation. For one, it demonstrates the fact that the regime operates in several registers, not only through concealment as suggested by Hochberg or physical separation, although these features are quite crucial. But what is further important is not only "what is presented to the senses" (Ranciere 2004), but also the way it is presented, the frames in which these presentations take place. As I argued in the previous chapters, aesthetization of the features of the occupational regime and its infrastructure is indispensable for maintaining their effective "non-presence" in the settlers' everyday lives. The same can be said about the existence of the occupied.

The practices and mechanisms operating in various realms work together to maintain the non-political status of the settlements. By physically removing the settlers from the Palestinian villages, and subsequently rendering the latter a mere element of the landscape, they work to erase the existence of villages as physical remainder of existence of a people with political demands for the same land: they are rendered "'still life', a-historical and de-politicized" (Yacobi and Shadar 2014, 975).

"There are just not enough buses": Commuting with the Palestinians

In 2015, commuting made headlines in Israel/Palestine and beyond (see Beaumont 2015; BBC 2015). Caving in to the pressure of the settler groups, the Israeli government floated the idea of establishing separate buses for Israelis and Palestinians living in the West Bank. The proposal concerned mostly the Palestinians commuting to Israel proper for work who had to cross the border through one of the Israeli checkpoints in the morning. Nonetheless, they could, and did, use Israeli buses going to settlements to travel back to junctions near their towns and villages in the Occupied Territories where they got off. The proposed rules mandated that the Palestinians would have to leave Israel proper through the same checkpoint they crossed in the morning, effectively forcing the workers to take special Palestinian-only buses to the checkpoints. Although the plan for separate buses was quickly scrapped by the Prime Minister Netanyahu after a wave of criticisms from the Knesset opposition and human rights NGOS which denounced the proposal as racist, the issue was still hotly debated at the time of my fieldwork.

In an interview, Yossi has described the situation as it played out for the Ariel settlers as follows: "[The Palestinians] get on at the first stop in Tel Aviv, and by the time you get to the stops in Petach Tikva or other stops in Tel Aviv, where the Israelis from Ariel are working, there are no spots left on the bus." He then continued: "Not only it is uncomfortable but technically, there are sometimes, often actually, there are not even enough seats on the bus. There are not enough buses going. So it becomes a major issue."

In terms of issues investigated in this thesis, there are (at least) two aspects which are politically significant. First, in using the Israeli buses, the Palestinian workers essentially subvert the Israeli occupational regime vested in the infrastructural arrangements. A number of authors have shown that among other technologies of power, the Israeli rule is founded on a profound differentiation between the occupied Palestinians' and Israelis' mobility (Zureik, Lyon, and Abu-Laban 2011; Ophir, Givoni, and Hanafi 2009; Handel 2014). Whereas, as I have also discussed in the previous chapter, Israelis can and do move easily in the West Bank, the Palestinians' mobility is severely curtailed. The role of infrastructural features in maintaining these conditions is nearly impossible to overestimate.

The Palestinians getting back to their homes on Israeli buses thus constitute an important breach in the allocation of "the right to movement" that is one of the founding stones of the occupational regime (Kotef 2015). Although (at least so far) it is not actually illegal for the Palestinian workers to use Israeli infrastructure, it goes against the overall rationality of the power relationships in Israel/Palestine. Furthermore, Palestinians use the very means which are supposed to make settlers' lives as convenient as possible. This was made clear by Yossi when he talked about financing of the bus transportation:

> "These buses by the way are subsidized by Israeli taxpayers. All public transportation, especially public transportation going through Judea and Samaria where they want to encourage public transportation instead of hitchhiking which is popular in Israel. Because of the dangers of hitchhiking and kidnappings. So Israel is investing in subsidizing, so the Israeli tax payer is paying for the subsidized buses. But the Palestinians are using the buses. Because if they don't use the buses, the Palestinians and the Arabs who take money from them for public transportation are ripping them off. So it's much cheaper to use the buses."[115]

This resonates with the claims made by Netz in his introduction to the history of barbed wire:

> "It should be seen, however, that the prevention of motion is in a sense more fundamental than the facilitation of motion. A train is worthless unless you can prevent some people – those who did not buy your tickets – from boarding it. Like all property, the train becomes valuable only when access to it can be controlled, and so the system of the railroad – lines that connect points – is anchored by the system of *stations*, buildings whose walled lines enclose space and control motion. A world where the railroad exists without the station is unthinkable, because without control over motion, value cannot be formed. Value arises from lines of division – even when they happen to enclose lines of connection" (Netz 2009, xii; emphasis in original).

[115] Interview, March 2, 2016, Ariel.

Seen in this light, the Palestinians who commute on the Israeli buses essentially undermine the existing system on two levels. Not only they constitute, in the post-Oslo regime of control, "an anomaly" in terms of Israeli curtailment of the occupied population's mobility. Moreover, they use the occupiers' infrastructure to subvert this system of control. As Netz argues, means of transport are valuable only as far as their base of users is limited and controlled. The proposed rule that would prevent the Palestinians from using the buses testifies to the significance of motion in general, and in Israel/Palestine in particular. This is, to put it in a nutshell, not a matter of a mere commute.

Second politically significant dimension of the whole affair concerns the contact between the two populations. The moments of a seemingly quotidian task, a commute, become threatening as they destabilize the regime of separation between the Palestinians and the Israelis living in the Occupied Territories. The Palestinians who had been largely removed from the Israelis' lives are now present and bodily demonstrate the potential for a contestation over the racialized systems of governance. In fact, although as I discuss below these concerns have been downplayed by other factors, Yossi himself hinted at how racially informed politics of separation and superiority crumble on the commute:

> "So besides the fact that, and you can call it whatever you want, people feel uncomfortable riding the buses when they are one of two to five, or whatever it is, perhaps ten Jews out of overcrowded Arab bus. It's uncomfortable, and people can call it racist, people can call it whatever they want, it's uncomfortable. I can tell you straight up, my wife doesn't like to take the buses anymore. Because she feels, if the bus driver is Arab, and everyone else on the bus is Arab, and we have seen a lot of terrorist attacks that were happening not only by Palestinian Arabs but also Israeli Arabs, so who is to say who is next? You don't want to be the only Jew on that bus. You also don't want to be the minority. It becomes very uncomfortable."[116]

[116] Interview, March 2, 2016, Ariel.

In Ariel specifically, the dynamics of separation (and hence the threat to the existing power relations posed by the Palestinians using the same means of transport as the settlers) is even more pronounced. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the settlers are almost completely disconnected not only from the reality of Palestinians' lives under the Israeli occupation but they rarely encounter a Palestinian while travelling. This was made vivid to me by a story recounted by Elya, a family friend of a former classmate of mine and one of my entry contacts in Ariel. While we were sitting in a common area in the Ariel University library, Elya mentioned a rather mundane story of her commute in the West Bank a couple years back.

Elya was waiting for a bus just outside a settlement at a stop when she was approached by a young man who started to speak to her in Hebrew. Although she was a bit startled in the beginning, she was quickly assured by his friendliness and flawless Hebrew. After some time, a Palestinian minivan/shared taxi drove by and the guy waved at it to stop. "What are you doing?", Elya recounted herself saying, "It's an Arab taxi!" The guy just laughed, told her he was indeed a Palestinian, and got on the taxi. Apparently, his identity was completely obscured for Elya because of his mastery of the language as well as physical appearances.

It was clear to me that Elya recalled this story, seemingly mundane, exactly because it was completely out of ordinary for her. It not only marked a breakdown, albeit very short-lived, of the everyday identification which informs the racialized practices of surveillance and insecurity in Israel/Palestine. This experience was also in stark contrast to the everyday norm regarding travelling to and from Ariel which, as I discussed in the previous chapter, is for settlers defined by the absence of the Palestinians – which is being disrupted by the Palestinians commuting on the Israeli buses.

One could perhaps argue that the situation is different in other areas of the West Bank where a large proportion of the road system is shared by both populations, and settlers thus encounter the Palestinians, or are at least accustomed to seeing them. However, my observations and interviews led me to think that even in these contexts the principle of separation is rarely disrupted, especially with regards to transportation. For example, in the Gush Etzion settlement bloc south of Jerusalem it is not uncommon to see both Palestinian and Israeli hitchhiking along

the same road.[117] But even under these circumstances, the presence of the Palestinians and the Israelis in the same place usually does not disrupt the separation that runs between the two populations. As I have been repeatedly told and observed first-hand, even on the roads shared by the settlers and the Palestinians, the contact between them is usually minimal. On the part of the settlers, the disengagement from the reality of the occupation can effectively amount to a visual erasure of the Palestinians.

This was made clear to me when I took a part in a tour in the area organized by the Hebrew University which involved a short talk followed by Q&A given by a rabbi who had been living in the Gush Etzion bloc for a couple decades and who was involved in a joint Israeli-Palestinian peace initiative. Among other stories, he talked about how he was driving near a settlement with two (non-Jewish) friends visiting from the USA (his home country) a couple years ago. They were rather surprised when he picked up random Israeli hitchhikers along the road. The rabbi recalled how, when they asked if this was normal, he answered that of course, he would take everyone. At that moment he realized that it was actually not the case: he would never even consider taking the Palestinians who hitchhike along the same roads. Until then, the rabbi told us, the Palestinians were virtually invisible to him.

When I met the rabbi a couple months later for an interview, I inquired more into his brief remark. My main interest was what, according to him, was behind this "blindness", as he himself called it. He first talked about his first 25 years in Israel/Palestine as follows:

> "I was interested in a peace settlement that would give the Palestinians their political rights and would create a true peace but my thoughts were not about Palestinians as people who exist, it was about a political issue that had to be solved. […] I had a thought that Palestinians should have a state. And they should have rights. But I never thought of

[117] In general, hitchhiking is much more common in smaller settlements. Most importantly, there is not as many buses which necessitates relying on other means of transport. Also, compared to big settlements like Ariel or Ma'aleh Adumim, the communal spirit is more alive there which makes people more willing to take strangers.

them as people whom you actually gonna meet. They just didn't exist as people, they existed as an abstract entity."[118]

Later in the interview, he talked about how his background fed into the practices of (non)seeing:

"Because the paradigmatic structures that determine what we see are not only sociological. They are also religious. You can't separate between the religious and the sociological and since my coming to Alon Shvut was a part of my religious studies, my, lets say my socialization into the paradigm didn't have to wait until I got here. It begun earlier because being a religious Jew involves a certain way of a mainstream way of looking at history. And when you are at any place in Israel, whether it is here or in Jerusalem, reality is interpreted... The way you see it is a part and parcel of a larger worldview that is very wonderful on the one hand, and very restricting on the other hand."[119]

These introspective remarks closely relate to the scholarly insights about the social conditioning of seeing. Gillian Rose (G. Rose 2001, 25–27) argued that the "social modality", the various identities of spectators, is the most important factor impacting how and what people see. Although Rose talks mostly about consumption of images, her insight that "the different social practices […] structure the viewing of particular images in particular places" holds for embodied seeing as well. These remarks were echoed by a prominent Israeli expert on settlements who, when talked about the Israelis not really noticing the Palestinians, remarked that "When we think about people looking at something, seeing something, that doesn't mean that they can observe it. Language here is very misleading. We see many, many things but we comprehend very, very limited amount of information when we compare it with what we actually look at."[120] So, although the material arrangements do not prevent (some sort of) interactions between the Israelis and the Palestinians, the particularly constructed ways of seeing still unsure that the regime of disassociation is left intact.[121]

[118] Interview, July 22nd, 2016, Alon Shvut.
[119] Interview, July 22nd, 2016, Alon Shvut.
[120] Interview, May 18, 2016, Jerusalem.
[121] I am aware that the interview suggests that the rabbi was politically aware before (see the first excerpt from the interview). Nonetheless, he made clear that it was only after he started "seeing" the Palestinians and established

Importantly for the concerns pursued in this thesis, these social prisms clearly maintain the existing power structures. An Israeli expert noted that:

> "When we talk about colonial context, and the conflict between colonial bodies and the native population, like the one in the West Bank, the members of the ruling power, Israelis in this case, they are from the beginning trained to see things which supports certain discourse, certain political story."[122]

He then continued to argue that

> "Our identity is dependent on this ignorance, so to say. We see what we want to. We look at what we want to look at. And we ignore what we are, so to say, programmed to ignore. And I really think that Ariel is a great example of how people are trained to see things and to ignore other things."[123]

What thus appears is that there is a circular relationship between the political hierarchies and sight: seeing and intake of the visual is informed and shaped by existing social and political conditions which they then help to maintain. Furthermore, in the precarious setting of a protracted conflict, such dynamics take up even more intense form. In his work on surveillance and seeing in the Northern Ireland during the Troubles, Allen Feldman notes that "in turn, the fabrication of the politically visible infers the concomitant creation of that which is politically invisible. The circuit formed by vision and violence is itself circumscribed by zones of blindness and inattention" (Feldman 1997, 29). So whereas in the previous section I looked into how are potentially disruptive and contested everyday imaginaries re-articulated through particular, middle-class "distribution of the sensible", in the case of the rabbi and other settlers, one can

personal relationships with them (as opposed to conceiving them as "an abstract entity"), that he became actually active politically. In *Rancière*'s terminology, he still "moved along" when told to do so before. This therefore highlights the importance of everyday (non)seeing and its social, as well as material, conditioning.

[122] Interview, May 18, 2016, Jerusalem.

[123] Interview, May 18, 2016, Jerusalem.

talk about visual erasure of the Palestinians[124]; in *China Miéville's words* (Miéville 2010)*, they "unsee" the Palestinians*.[125]

All this underlies the importance of Palestinians boarding the same buses as Israelis. In the contained space of a vehicle that is simply supposed to provide convenient transportation for the settlers, their presence cannot be denied. In a manner parallel to the importance of traffic jams as moments highlighting certain political underpinnings of settlers' everyday lives, commuting Palestinians lay bare the power dynamic invested in visual and material conditions in the settlements. In this regard, Stephen Graham argues that

> "Studying moments when infrastructure cease to work as 'normal' is perhaps the most powerful way of really penetrating and problematizing those very normalities of flow and circulation to an extent where they can be subjected to critical scrutiny […] Disruptions and breakdowns in normal geographies of circulation allow us to excavate the usually hidden politics of flow and connection, of mobility and immobility, within contemporary societies" (Stephen Graham 2012, 13).

Graham's remarks point at the analytical significance and utility of infrastructural breakdowns that reveal that underlying power conditions. But breakdowns of given constellations more generally also pose as political problems in highlighting, demasking these conditions and opening space for contestation. In Foucault's terms, one can conceptualize them as moments of problematization as they enter the realm of governmental calculations and interventions. According to Foucault, "problematization doesn't mean the representation of a pre-existent object, nor the creation through discourse of an object that doesn't exist. It's the set of discursive or nondiscursive practices that make something enter into the play of the true and

[124] Indeed, the rabbi told me "the only thing we thought about was security. And they threw rocks at us. And it was dangerous." Interview, July 22nd, 2016, Alon Shvut.

[125] Miéville's work is of course a work of (science) fiction. Nonetheless, it is hard not to see the parallels between what the rabbi told me and, for example, the following passage from the book: "An elderly woman was walking slowly away from me in a shambling sway. She turned her head and looked at me. I was struck by her motion, and I met her eyes. I wondered if she wanted to tell me something. In my glance I took in her clothes, her way of walking, of holding herself, and looking. With a hard start, I realized that she was not on GunterStrász at all, and that I should not have seen her" (Miéville 2010, 12). I am grateful to Katharine Millar for drawing my attention to the Miéville's book.

false, and constitutes it as an object for thought" (Foucault 1990, 257). In this perspective, the Palestinians commuting on the Israeli buses indeed pose as problematization since, as I have just extensively discussed, challenge the current order on several levels. The proposed rule to ban them from using the buses is one of the governmental reactions. Nonetheless, on the part of the settlers, the depolitizing dispositif worked along somewhat different lines.

When I talked to the settlers in Ariel, the political concerns were mostly not articulated. This is striking especially because the settler groups which advocated for the separated buses rationalized their demands on security basis (BBC 2015). Although this rhetoric was sometimes present in interviews I conducted (Yossi indeed talked about "a lot of terrorist attacks" in the quote above), much more emphasis was put on the quality of life concerns. In his blog, a prominent resident of Ariel noted that "while diplomats continue talking about borders, national rights and demographic trajectories, the people whose lives would be most directly affected by negotiations simply want to return home at the end of a long day" (Zimmerman 2013). These resonated with most interviews I conducted that touched upon this issue.

So although the security and racialized concerns were mentioned by Yossi, it is the mundane that works to-recode these issues as non-political. In the same vein, when I discussed the matter with Suzanne and her husband, they repeatedly insisted that Israelis' reluctance to share the buses with the Palestinians should not be seen as a manifestation of racism. Echoing the Zimmerman's blog post, they both firmly stated that the current demands are firmly rooted in practical concerns as the current situation in which the Palestinians can board the buses going to the West Bank makes the commute highly inconvenient for the Israelis.

Probably to further affirm the benign and non-racist nature of the demands to change the existing rules for the Palestinians, Suzanne recalled how she once took a bus with her elderly mother who had moved in with them several years before. They were sitting next to each other when a Jewish ultra-orthodox man boarded the bus and stood in the aisle right next to them. It was at the height of warm summer and everyone was sweating but because of the traditional Haredi attire, the man's smell in particular was apparently very prominent. "It was awful", Suzanne told me, "I had to breathe through my mouth". I gathered that the fact that the man

was Jewish and not Arab was meant as a proof that the settlers are annoyed at inconveniences regardless of the ethnic/racial/religious identities of those who cause them.

However, apart from the Palestinians, the ultra-orthodox (Haredim) community also poses as one of the Others for the Israeli secular culture. Making the parallel between the two thus does not really erase the doubts about Suzanne's intolerance. To put it slightly differently, one could perhaps ask if Suzanne would mention the same story if the person in question was a secular or national religious Jew as opposed to an ultra-orthodox one. It is the matter of the notion of Otherness which contain different categories that might be at play here.

But more importantly for what I am interested in this thesis, by drawing the parallels between the inconvenience stemming from the lack of seating, and the sensual discomfort, Suzanne renders all these instances apolitical. The issue that was never questioned, at least in my presence, was on what basis it was deemed to be expected that the Israelis were to have more convenient commute than people who shared the same space; the racial order and the differentiated mobilities it organized were never interrogated. Focus on the essentially technical matters of insufficient means of transport thus work to obscure the power disparities that threaten to disrupt the normality of the everyday and the mundane on the part of the settlers. In this case, then, the potentially re-politicizing encounters with the Palestinians are removed from the political sphere by rendering them as a mere logistical issue.

I am aware that my respondents in general were quite likely eager to downplay behavior and opinions that could be considered contentious. And especially on the Facebook groups which serve as communication platforms for Ariel residents, I have come across posts which were clearly racist. Nonetheless, based on my extended contact with some of the settlers, I still believe that for many people the practical inconveniences were the dominant framework through which they approached the presence of the Palestinians workers on their commute. By redelegating the profoundly political issues pertaining to separation and differentiated, racialized mobilities into the realm of "quality of life", the settlers effectively depoliticized the matter. The desired absence of the Palestinians on the Israeli buses could then be conceptualized by the settlers not as racist but as a natural expression of a mere desire for convenient live and aesthetic norms.

"I don't really care": Palestinian Workers in the Settlements

On early morning in early June 2016, I was waiting outside my apartment to be picked up by Ari, a retired Israeli who had been living in the settlement for the last 25 years. Still half asleep, I received a call from him saying that they will be slightly late. It was one of the hottest months in several years, and right after sunrise the temperature already rose over 25 degrees Celsius. After some waiting, a large car, or rather a jeep arrived, and Ari waved to me to get in. Inside, he introduced me to the driver and other man, both of whom spoke Russian to each other. The ride to Ariel's eastern entrance took only 10 minutes or so. Once we parked and get off the car, we joined a couple other Israelis standing and smoking in a circle close to a dusty parking lot. It was a working day and Ari and other settlers I met that morning were security guards at a construction site. Apart from them and a couple Israeli Jewish construction managers, all manual workers were Palestinians.

Benefits of the Occupation

According to Kav LaOved (Workers' Hotline), an Israeli NGO focusing on enforcing Israeli labor law for vulnerable workers, there is roughly 30 thousand Palestinians working in the settlements throughout the West Bank (Kav LaOved n.d.). In Ariel specifically, I was told by a municipality official, 3 thousand Palestinians commute from the nearby villagers to work mostly at the constructions sites.[126] There is an abundance of evidence that Palestinians resort to work in the settlements out of necessity rather than anything else: due to the soaring unemployment in the West Bank, working in Israel proper or the settlements poses as one of the most profitable jobs. Indeed, according to a report published by a Palestinian research institute based in Ramallah, "82% of Palestinian wage workers have the desire and willingness to leave their work in the settlements if a suitable alternative is available" (Sbeih 2011, 5). This is not surprising not only

[126] Interview, April 14, 2016, Ariel.

given the national goals of the Palestinian people but also the systematic abuse of Palestinian workers' rights by the Israeli employers (Kadman 2012).

Based on my interviews and informal chats in the settlements, these concerns were nonetheless completely absent from settlers' understanding of the Palestinian workers' experience. During my fieldwork, several settlement officials maintained that the Palestinians enjoyed the same rights and benefits as their Israeli counterparts. Ordinary Israelis repeatedly pointed out that the Palestinian workers in the settlements highlighted the potential for cordial relationships between the two people, potential which was disrupted only by incitement by the Palestinian leadership and religious authorities. As stated by one of the settlers: "Here in Ariel we live with them [Palestinians] fine ['beseder gamur']. They drink coffee at our places. Whom you let in your house to drink coffee with? Only someone you are sure about."[127]

These attitudes extended beyond the matter of Palestinians' employment by the settlers. While I was conducting my fieldwork, there was a medical facility being built as a part of the Ariel University campus. According to at least one municipality official who was involved in the project, the idea behind the facility was to also improve the Palestinians' wellbeing as well: "It will serve not only Israelis in the region but also the Palestinians. It is built specifically there near the exit [from the settlement] so that the Palestinian will have access."[128]

Even more importantly for the present project, settlers repeatedly pointed at the presence of the Palestinian workers in the area as a sign of benign nature of the settlement project. Most would further claim that their presence actually shows that the Palestinians in fact benefit from the opportunities provided by the settlement project, a discourse that is also promoted by the Israeli state officials. Much of this relates to even more over-arching narratives of the Israeli civilizational superiority. Consider the following quote from an interview in which an Ariel veteran describes early encounters between the Israelis and the local Palestinians:

[127] Interview, April 10, 2016, Ariel.
[128] Interview, March 2, 2016, Ariel.

> "We used to drive to Salfit to buy stuff all the time. When we drove there, the kids would run and chase the car. First I didn't understand why but then we scouted around a bit I understood: there was no car. It was the first car they saw. The Arabs in the villages here lived five hundred years in the past. They had no running water, no electricity, no cars. You have to understand, what it was like, no telephones, no electricity. So when we came there, they were running after us, not to attack us, quite the opposite."[129]

It was hard to miss the notion of Israelis' advancement compared to the Palestinians, something that was present in quite a few of my interviews. In one of the most striking interviews, when talking about the Israeli-Palestinian relationships in the West Bank, Daniel told me that "Arabs treat their women better because of Jews' presence" [130]. In another instance, the interviewee almost directly tapped into both the colonial discourse on the improvement of the living conditions by the Westerners and specific Zionist narrative of redeeming the land:

> "The land of Israel ['HaAretz Yisrael'] can be an example for the whole world with regards to how to organize from nothing. Look, from here you can see an Arab village. How, what they give to the land ['hakarka']? And what we give? You understand? We [built] new university, highways… with electricity, with high standards. You see, wherever we go, we increase the standard."[131]

Of course, I am tempted to write this and similar remarks off as a text-book example of a tired colonial trope that has served to discursively uphold racial superiority for at least a couple hundred years. But that would obscure how similar narratives enable depolitization of contested realities (what is, after all, contentious about educating and providing for other people?), and how they are enabled in turn by particular constellations. As such, it is more productive to look at the political function and position of these discoursed beyond the colonial conditions.

[129] Interview, April 14, 2016, Ariel.
[130] Interview, August 8, 2016, Ariel.
[131] Interview, April 10, 2016, Ariel.

"Respect but Suspect": Rendering the Palestinians Non-Threatening

Settlers' perception of the Palestinian workers cannot be divorced from institutional, spatial and material arrangements. First of all, since the Second Intifada, all employees have to provide Israeli guards to watch over the Palestinians during their stay in the settlement, which also entails Palestinians' mobility being tied to the site of work. This arrangement was described to me by a security official working for the municipality in the following manner:

> "Look, for example someone wants to build a house and he needs workers. He brings them, we make sure they have permits, and tell them they can enter. And we make sure there is someone with a gun who watches over them. So in the case there is something going on, he can take care of it. […] I make sure that everything is the way it is supposed to, the workers are at their sites, don't walk around, don't enter schools, kindergartens."[132]

Nonetheless, even some settlement representatives expressed their skepticism with regards to the actual nature of these practices: in the words of the same security official, "it is less guarding ['lishmor'] and more making sure they don't do mess ['balagan']."[133] Indeed, at the construction site I visited, there was just a handful Israelis tasked with looking over at least 150 Palestinians – an assignment which realistically could not be really done to the full extent, as the guards themselves confirmed to me.

But more than the actual effectivity of these measures, what matters politically is the resulting imaginary. Unlike in the past when the Israelis went to the Palestinian villages to get cheap grocery or repair their cars, nowadays the settlers see the Palestinians mostly working on the construction sites in their own communities. But there is always an Israeli guard accompanying them, watching them, making them (seemingly) docile and non-dangerous. This everyday settlers' perception of the Palestinians is thus in a stark contrast to the visuality of young, revolting, throw-stoning Palestinians with a keffiyeh that is prominent on the international stage.

[132] Interview, April 14, 2016, Ariel.
[133] Interview, April 14, 2016, Ariel.

According to my interviews as well as just everyday chats with the settlers, most of them felt safe as a result of these arrangement, an attitude exemplified in the following excerpt:

> "They have not got into Ariel since this whole knife Intifada started. And we do have workers. But we are careful now. When there is a group of people sweeping and cleaning, there is someone riding in a jeep along with them. You saw that. That is new you know. There used to be… Workers would just come in, would have their cards, they would be in the system, and they might go. There were few incidents, problems or whatever, nothing serious. There were some fights, nothing serious and they were excluded afterwards. People got their work permits pulled and they didn't come back afterwards."[134]

What is important in this regard is that the Palestinian workers have separate checkpoints. Although these are still located fairly close (some 100 meters) to the entrances meant for Israelis, it still matters because the settlers are physically detached from the small abuses, misunderstanding and bureaucratic hassle which is an omnipresent and systematic feature of the Palestinians' lives (Tawil-Souri 2012, 2011a; Berda 2017). The settlers simply see a line of workers who are after (presumable smooth) vetting let to win bread for their families in their community, visual construction which again feeds into the notion of the settlements' ordinariness. Interestingly, according to the official whom I already quoted above, the medical facility which was being built by the border of the settlement will also most likely have a "some kind of a special entrance which will allow people [Palestinians] to be there" [135] and there will be indeed "security at the entrance to the building itself" [136]. This suggests that the same material and institutional mechanisms, and the resulting visual rendering of the Palestinian presence in the settlement, will be reproduced in different contexts as well.

But even in the case of Israeli guards who interact with the Palestinians on the daily basis, political concerns are not tangible. As far as I could say during my presence at the construction site, the Israelis were treating the workers quite decently: when I was shown around the construction site

[134] Interview, April 8, 2016, Ariel.
[135] Interview, March 2, 2016, Ariel.
[136] Interview, March 2, 2016, Ariel.

by Ari, he joked with the Palestinians, had small talk with several of them and threw around a couple phrases in Arabic. The ordinary nature of these interactions is quite crucial: by contrast, images capturing Palestinians trying to cross overcrowded checkpoints between the West Bank and Israel proper, abundant in human rights report and international media, would disturb settlers' middle-class sensibilities. Still, there was a certain benevolent notion of entitlement, a point which was made clear to me when I sat with one of the Israelis in the shade of a booth and he immediately asked one of the Palestinians to fetch us coffee.

This is not to say that the Israelis do not retain a certain distance as exemplified by a popular saying "respect but suspect" ["kavud aval chashud"] that was mentioned to me by several guards. But more importantly, based on my experience at the site as well as other interviews, I would argue that for the Israeli settlers (even those who actually interact with the Palestinians on the everyday basis), the mechanisms of the Israeli occupation do not register. This became apparent to me after several hours at the site when Ari told me to go to the municipality office with him. One of the worker's documents did not match the record filled with the Israeli security at the checkpoint. Ari was thus asked to get an updated list from the municipality office. As we were driving, I asked Ari if he knew the Palestinian. He just scoffed and retorted "No. Doesn't concern me ['lo ichpat li']."

My point here is not that Ari apparently did not care about the specific Palestinian whose paperwork he had to deal with. More importantly, my overall impression was that even on the part of Ari and other guards, their knowledge of the bureaucratic arrangements pertaining to the management of the Palestinian labor force was meager at best. As I was told, the Israelis guards' job was to compare IDs of the Palestinians with a list handed to them by the municipality, and let in only those Palestinians whose names matched. Usually, this would be a rather straightforward and automatic tasks. Only occasionally (like on the day when I visited the site) there would be an issue which had to be resolved by going to the security department of the municipality. What the Israeli guards encounter on the everyday basis is thus just an iceberg of far-reaching and sophisticated apparatus that controls the Palestinians and manages their employment and physical mobility.

In her recent book, Yael Berda (Berda 2017) provides a historical overview of the Israeli permit regime that captures the increased bureaucratization of the control over the Palestinian lives. Since the First Intifada and the onset of the Oslo process, this control became significantly more complex and obscure, which applies to the possibility to work in Israel proper or a settlement as well. In the past, these jobs were both highly sought by the Palestinians and entailed almost none additional procedures. This changed as the Israeli authorities set out to separate the two populations and introduced a sophisticated system of IDs and checks. Nowadays, to receive a permit to work in a settlement, Palestinians need to undergo a thorough examination by the Shin Bet, Israeli internal security agency, and receive a special magnetic ID card, fulfill certain demographic criteria, and so on (Kelly 2006; Tawil-Souri 2011a).

What is important to note is thus the historical development of these mechanisms and their increasing complexity. These transformations were, albeit rather succinctly, recounted to me by an Israeli who has been involved with the Palestinian workers for quite long time by that point. After briefly summarizing the current situation when it comes to the employment of the Palestinians in the settlements (like the need to receive a special magnetic card, undergo clearance by Shin Bet, and so on), he remarked "before it wasn't like this. They [Palestinian workers] just wanted to work, so they came, entered, their IDs were collected, received a note saying what time they started, and that was it. Now there is just more supervision."[137]

I believe that this increased complexity and obscurity of the bureaucracy surrounding the management of the Palestinian lives is not only hugely detrimental for the Palestinians themselves as demonstrated by several authors (Tawil-Souri 2012, 2011a; Braverman 2011; Kelly 2006) but also effectively makes the Israeli occupation less present even for the settlers who are in contact with its operations on everyday basis via their involvement with the Palestinian workers. Discussing the case of a Malaysian village and transformations that occurred there during the 1970, Mitchell notes "how a series of relationships that were the subject of negotiation have become determined and nonnegotiable" (T. Mitchell 1990, 567). Following his overall interest in forms of domination, Mitchell argues that this non-negotiability was one of the

[137] Interview, May 16, 2016, Ariel.

means through which power naturalizes itself. I would propose that the same process occurred over the time in the case of Palestinian workers in the settlements.[138]

Read through Mitchell's analysis, one can see how certain arrangements became non-political through their fading in the background of the everyday live. Partially, this relates to the potency of the notion of security in the Israeli public life that makes a number of practices and policies uncontestable and "obvious" (Ochs 2011). But I would propose that mechanisms that depoliticize the specific mechanisms of the Israeli occupation go beyond this. In contrast to the early days of the settlement when the Palestinians were coming to the settlement without almost any regulation or security procedures, in the last few decades this process became highly bureaucratized and restrictive. Together, the material and institutional arrangements turn the whole apparatus of the occupation into something that is taken out of the settlers' comprehension and rendered natural. The separate entrance, the physicality of the required documents, the lists of workers with permit that arrive every month to the municipality every month (from where exactly?), all of these features seem to be non-negotiable and given. This then enables Ari to detach himself from the politics of governing Palestinians' mobility and lives (why, after all, had this particular Palestinian inadequate permit?) since it is simply something "out there", almost a force of nature.

The very obscurity of the Israeli occupation's mechanisms and policies thus effectively work to depoliticize them on the part of the settlers by making them appear exempted from the sphere of the changeable. Their historical development, that is, the increasing complexity of these practices, leads to a situation defined by "the fixed, self-producing power" (T. Mitchell 1990, 568). Furthermore, much of these mechanisms are materialized in a very concrete way: the separate checkpoint, the papers, the lists, the magnetic IDs make the practices of the Israeli occupation appear embedded in the physical environment and thus non-negotiable. As a result of similar transformations, Mitchell argues that "these new forces create an effect of fixity and permanence. The earlier, less coordinated forms of domination seemed always unstable. To

[138] I am aware that this claim runs analytical and political risks. Mitchell talks about the naturalization of power vis-à-vis the subjugated rather than the privileged. Nonetheless, here I would like to propose that similar processes permeate all spheres of social life.

maintain them required the innumerable techniques of euphemization, and the periodic acts of violence, by which relations of subordination were continuously created and recreated. The new forms of domination, by contrast, appear fixed and enduring“ (T. Mitchell 1990, 567).

What all these arrangements then mean in terms of the everyday live in the settlements is that when in their close physical proximity, the Israelis are exposed to highly sanitized images of the Palestinians, images which are disconnected from the whole economy of occupation and resistance. On the one hand, due to the security arrangements, the Palestinians appear controlled and non-threatening. On the other, their presence in the settlement actually feeds into the notions of the settlements' overall benign nature: the Palestinians working in the settlements constitute the physical embodiment of the narratives putting forward the Israeli benevolence and civilizational superiority. And due to the complexity of the Israeli occupation, even those settlers who interact with them on the everyday basis are not disturbed by its mechanisms, which they encounter as an external, non-negotiable reality.

Conclusion

In this chapter I sought to engage situations which could supposedly threaten to disrupt the normalization and depolitization of the settlers' everyday lives: encounters of various sorts with the Palestinians. In doing so, I also wanted to show that maintaining the occupation and the mundane nature of the settlements is not realized only through concealment and obliteration of the Palestinian people and the disturbing mechanisms of the Israeli occupation. As I argued in this chapter, rather than about erasure, one can perhaps talk about a palimpsest: the existing materialities and visualities are overwritten by different modalities of sight, perception and experience.

Nonetheless, to repeat the claims I made throughout this thesis, I would propose that what is at play here is not only ignorance, although certain lack of knowledge about the Palestinians' lives undoubtedly facilitates these particular ways of seeing and being. But the latter are also deeply intertwined with various discourse and mechanisms which effectively produce and channel given

inclinations, like appreciation of “view” or concerns with easy commute. The matters discussed in this chapter thus further testify to the complicated interplay between the discursive, the material and the visual.

The notion of Ariel as a “great example” of human ignorance, raised by an Israeli expert whom I quoted above, then brings me a series of problems that I engage in the conclusion, that is the matter of the uniqueness of the Israeli settlers’ experience. But while speaking about ignorance and comfort, I might want to recall how my visit to the construction site ended. After Ari came back from the security coordinator’s office, he offered to give me a ride back to the construction site. I hesitated for a bit and then refused, telling Ari that I would head back home. I assumed that I would be able to join him to work some other day. But when I talked to him next time, he informed me that his boss forbade me from tagging along because of the safety concerns. Those several hours were my only time spent at a construction site in a settlement. Of course, I could not know that that morning but I still consider me not going back to the site with Ari one of my bigger mistakes in the field. At the same time, even before I read my fieldnotes I could easily remember why I decided to go home. Although it wasn’t even noon, I was fairly exhausted: I had not properly slept in the last several days because of the heat (my room did not have AC) and I had to get up early to come to the site. But I also felt inappropriately, sitting with my sandals in the shade, chatting with an Israeli guard and drinking coffee prepared by a Palestinian.

In short, I did not want to go back because I was exhausted and felt out of place. I left the settlement for Jerusalem in a couple weeks.

Conclusion

"More than anything else, the movement of Telangana questions me. It interrogates my arranged order of the self and presentations of the international. Challenging my apparently healthy distance from the world that I research, write and teach about, it probes deeper intimacies involved, particularizes me to names that will not stay hidden and caste histories that should not be sanitized."

Himadeep Muppidi: *Politics in Emotion: The Song of Telangana*, pp. 90 (Muppidi 2014, 90)

"Whole thing felt kinda shady, you know, like morality-wise?"

Skinny Pete, *Breaking Bad*

In this final chapter I seek to draw conclusions which go beyond the confines of the subject I set out to study, engaging several different problematics and discussing some potential avenues for future research. I first relate my project to the existing debates on the Israeli occupation and the settlement project, both academic and policy-oriented. I then proceed to argue, contra some critical analyses of the conditions in Israel/Palestine, that the case of the Israeli rule and the concealment of its disturbing nature on the part of the large portion of the privileged is far from unique, illustrating this claim by references to a variety of settings in which similar dynamics is present. Having established similarities between the specific context I investigated and others, I turn to more conceptual and theoretical discussions. I start with summarizing the contribution of my project for the discipline of IR by highlighting the particular form of aesthetics and its power-laden ramifications in the form depolitization . I then explore the implications of these processes on questions pertaining to ethics, followed by reflections on issues of presentation in academic production. The conclusion offers some personal reflection on the research and its implications, political and academic.

I conclude on this note because what ultimately underpins this chapter (and the thesis in general) is a sort of personal destabilization that had impact on how I conceived the doctoral project and sought to write up the present work, destabilization that closely relates to my somewhat problematic positionality of an outside researcher in Israel/Palestine. I was one out of thousands of foreign researchers, activists, journalists, NGO workers, politicians and representatives of the international community who came to the region to study and, at least in some cases, potentially help to transform the conditions in Israel/Palestine, a task which, arguably, is not going very well. Indeed, the main empirical findings of my own project, highlighting the success of the normalization of everyday life in the midst of violent and contested reality, do not provide much space for optimism with regards to future developments.

Under these conditions, characterized by a peculiar combination of an intense international scrutiny and bleak prospects, a series of questions arises. How can one arrive to some sort of political action which could disrupt the current power relations? And what is the role of any academic knowledge in this context? Why should one bother to research this topic at all if the conclusion is that to disturb this system, so deeply entrenched and embedded in existing frameworks, seems nearly impossible? To me, these questions pertain to academia, politics and my own self, and as such warrant not only scholarly but also personal reflection.

Perhaps paradoxically, I found at least a partial answer to this question as I gradually realized that the case of the settlements can provide us with insights into seemingly different settings as well. The line of argumentation that I am pursuing here is that the case of Israelis, their indifference and the mechanisms which go into facilitating the depolitization of their everyday lives is less exceptional than sometimes proposed and can help us to discern similar processes in other contexts as well. Going back to remarks I made in the introduction, I propose that the political and even individual utility of my research lies exactly in approaching the case of Israel as illuminating processes that take place in other settings as well. I further propose that if we take these notions seriously, they also have implications for the scholarly conduct.

"The practical use": The political implications of depolitization

In the course of my doctoral studies, several interlocutors, acquittances and friends inquired into the "practical use" of my project, a question not unfamiliar to many researchers, especially to those working within critical paradigms. Although I was at first rather uncomfortable with these questions as they echoed often simplistic critiques raised by positivist scholars against the possibility of political purchase of poststructuralist thinking, I gradually realized that there are some insights which can actually inform and enrich the discussions on the current political situation in Israel/Palestine. I realize this translation into what many people would call "policy relevant" conclusions might seem to go against the ethos of Foucauldian scholarship which seeks to problematize rather than to solve. Nonetheless, what I want to argue here is that it was actually the poststructuralist conceptual apparatus and ethnographic methodology adopted in this project that led to destabilization and, indeed, problematization of what we often take for granted, including some matters pertaining to high politics and diplomacy in the region.

During my shorter follow-up fieldwork in Israel/Palestine in 2017, I even gave a few presentations for foreign representation offices based in East Jerusalem and Ramallah. The most common question I encountered was if, based on my interviews, the settlers would be willing to evacuate settlements and move to Israel proper under a peace agreement that would involve some sort of financial compensation. I was further asked what could be some possible approaches that would overcome the obstacles posed by the presence of the settlements in the West Bank for the two-state solution.

As I conveyed at these meetings and on other occasions, the acquittance with the literature on the topic and my own fieldwork leave me rather pessimistic when it comes to the future prospects of the two-state solution and the possible evacuation of the settlements. This opinion is nonetheless not unanimously shared as some commentators claim that the efforts to incite the Israeli Jewish population to move to the West Bank are failing. Drawing on census data, a prominent Israeli expert on the Palestinian-Israeli talks and Israeli policies towards the Palestinian Territories Shaul Arieli (Arieli 2018) in a recent article argues that "Some settlements are actually losing residents due to negative migration that is not offset by natural growth. Others

are growing more slowly than the Israeli annual average." He further notes that the settlements have not succeeded to establish themselves economically as their inhabitants still rely on heavy governmental subsidies and they commute for work to Israel proper. The same sentiment was expressed by the Israeli-born scholar Gershon Shafir in a lecture introducing his research project on the history of the settlement project.[139]

Although the data Arieli, Shafir and others draw on to make their arguments are irrefutable, I would still propose that these perspectives overlook, in my opinion, several crucial points. First, although there is stagnation in the size of the settler population, and some smaller settlements might even witness Israelis leaving, the large settlements blocks are definitely not less of an obstacle to a peace agreement because of that. Even if the population increase in the blocks remains restricted to the natural growth (which seems to be happening in the last years), they pose as "facts on the ground" whose presence makes some sort of two-state solution agreeable for the Palestinians hard to envision, not to speak about the significant hardships they continue to impose on the occupied population.

But even more importantly, when Arieli argues that "Sixty percent of the Israeli workforce in the West Bank makes it way every day to work in Israel" and that "If [settlers] had to evacuate their current communities as part of a peace agreement, most would not lose their jobs" (Arieli 2018), he suggests a sort of detached, rational, cost-benefit analysis that should persuade the settlers that evacuating the settlements and moving to Israel proper would not be harmful. But this does not take into account the whole depolitization and normalization of the mundane in the settlements. As I argued throughout this thesis, the minute mechanisms and technologies that condition the Israelis' everyday life in the West Bank work to erase the contentious nature of relationships in which they are embedded. For settlers, "their current communities" are simply their homes and their commute could not be easier and less noticeable and uneventful.

Curiously, then, even adoption of the Israeli official state terminology concerning the West Bank is not appropriate to label the settlers' everyday life. Calling the territories in question "disputed"

[139] Public lecture "A Half Century of Occupation", November 16, 2017, NYU, New York City.

rather than “occupied”, the consecutive Israeli governments sought to challenge the wide international consensus regarding the legal and political status of the land taken up in the 1967 War. However, such conceptualization is completely detached from the lived experiences of the settlers which is decisively uncontested.[140]

When it comes to political implications, this means that analyses provided by Shafir, Arieli and other commentators miss the point that on the part of the settlers their everyday lives have been normalized to the extent that they simply do not see why they should evacuate their communities in the first place: since as far as they are concerned, the existence of settlements is non-contentious, why would they leave places they feel attached and connected to? Indeed, very similar attitudes are held by most people who feel rooted in places they would call home.

In academic terms, my research complements the existing critical works capturing the processes through which the settlement enterprise entered the Israeli societal and political mainstream. Building on this literature, I sought to investigate how such dynamics play out “on the ground” in settlers’ lives. What I argued is that the normalization of settlements on macro level, i.e. “the ongoing incorporation of the settlements into Israel’s social, economic, and administrative fabric” as understood by Allegra, Handel and Maggor (Allegra, Handel, and Maggor 2017, 1), is intimately linked to, and many regards perhaps even dependent on, normalization of the everyday and mundane concerns and experiences of Israelis in the West Bank. It is the process of depolitization that works in these seemingly unremarkable registers that enabled, and keeps maintaining, the settlement project through its banalization (Newman 2017). But at the same time this project’s insights also reveal wider social and political dynamics, a line of argument to which I turn now.

[140] I am grateful to Pavel Barša for raising this point.

Depolitization Beyond Israel

As I proposed in the introductory chapter, following the anthropological mode of social scientific inquiry I sought to be sensitive to the distinct nature of the studied case and context, yet also to utilize these necessarily particular insights to understand larger dynamics that play out across different settings. This perspective reveals that when it comes to the matter of depolitization, the case of Israel/Palestine in general, and Israeli settlements in particular, is less exceptional than many authors, commentators and activists suggest. Although mechanisms that seek to erase the contentious nature of the underlying political conditions on the part of the better-off segments of the population are especially pronounced in Israel/Palestine, what I want to emphasize here is that the case of Israeli settlers, or even a large portion of the Israeli public, is far from unique. To illustrate this claim, I discuss several contexts which show affinity with phenomena I engaged throughout this thesis. What follows does not purport to offer an exhaustive account; it rather aims to make the case for de-exceptionalizing Israel/Palestine.

One of the examples which could possibly be helpful in this regard is the China's occupation of Tibet. Although there is a scarcity of academic research on the subject, some of the existing journalistic accounts point at not only surveillance and control of the local population but also at constant efforts of the Chinese authorities to normalize their presence in the area (Hessler 1999; Vanderklippe 2016). As a result of policies implemented by Beijing, "salaries are up, roads are being built, sewers are being installed and residents are being housed in well-made new concrete buildings" (Vanderklippe 2016). One of the Chinese officials, quoted by a Western journalist, captured these changes in the following manner: "a great leap from darkness to whiteness, from backwardness to progress and also from dictatorship to democracy" (Vanderklippe 2016). What appears is that, in a manner which does not seem dissimilar from some of the processes investigated in this thesis, Chinese authorities seek to render the repressive policies non-problematic through their embedding in various, less benign and even aesthetic practices.

Apart from specific geographic regions, a setting at which one could see quite a few parallels with what I investigated in this thesis are so-called gated communities; indeed, many people I talked to about my research made the point that what I was describing does remind them of these

enclosed and privileged spaces.[141] In their famous book on splintering urbanism, Graham and Marvin describe gated communities as "spaces [that] are overwhelmingly geared to affluent and largely white groups seeking the ontological security that, for them, comes with living in 'communities' whose essential foundation rests on the regulating out of ethnic and social difference, diversity and chance encounters" (Steve Graham and Marvin 2001, 272).[142] Arguably, an important part of the "ontological security" that Graham and Marvin talks about are certain aesthetic notions which define, partially, the status and identities permeating the everyday live in these spaces.

For example, the politics of aesthetics in the case of gated communities is quite important in the work of Hannah Appel on enclaved communities of expats working in the oil industry in Equatorial Guinea. Although her focus is rather different (she discusses the politics of responsibility for societal development and its negotiation through various material practices), Appel's study of these communities also inadvertently highlights the importance of aesthetics in rendering one's position vis-à-vis global networks of exploitation unintelligible and distant. The gated communities, modelled according to Houston suburbs, with their "manicured lawns, landscaped hedges and flowers, paved roads with speed limits and fire hydrants, stately suburban homes with SUVs in garages" (Appel 2012, 440) create conditions which are not only detached from the physical territory in which they find themselves, but also obscure the political and social inequalities which underpin the everyday lives of their inhabitants. It is this "pastoral atmosphere" (Appel 2012, 446) that propels the expats to "move on because there is nothing to be seen", effectively rendering expats' everyday experience non-problematic and natural.

Furthermore, what is intriguing with regards to the parallels between the Israeli settlements and perhaps the most quintessential instance of gated communities, the American suburbs, is the deeply political nature of not only the former but also the latter. Reviewing US documents and urban plans, Leopold Lambert (Léopold 2014) argues that these middle-class enclaves need to be situated within the context of the Cold War and the US military strategies enacted at the time.

[141] For a different conceptualization of the Israeli settlements as *gating*, rather than gated communities, see (Handel 2014).

[142] For more on the gated communities see (Steve Graham and Marvin 2001, 267–87).

Specifically, he argues that the suburbanization and the infrastructural projects that accompanied served two purposes. First, highways connecting various communities and urban centers had "the capacity […] to become instantly militarized infrastructures" (Léopold 2014) in the case of military emergency and resources mobilization. Second, in the context of the ever-present risk of nuclear war, "spreading population […] was therefore a way for the American government to diminish the destructive effects of a nuclear attack" (Léopold 2014). These contingency-oriented, securitized features nonetheless do not manifest themselves in the everyday lives of those who live in these communities. The population dispersal means that the families have plentiful personal space while the massive highways provide convenient transport to urban centers; the highly political rationalities are recoded and incorporated into the mundane.

In a similar way, what some have called "war against the poor" (Wacquant 2009) operates, apart from other means, also through aesthetic registers. Perhaps most obviously, authorities often tend to relate the stated need for the surveillance and the removal of the marginal segments of population to the notions of "clean" and "orderly" public space which provides justification for such practices. In this prism, the political matters pertaining to the socio-economic order are overwritten by the aesthetic notions. Pacification of the outcomes of social and political inequalities are normalized by the concerns for everyday convenience and "common sense", thus effectively depoliticizing the larger power-laden issues at play. Moreover, the very technologies which are meant to deter and expel homeless from inhabiting public spaces are often designed in a way which does not impact the better-off citizens (Molloy 2018), evoking differentiated uses of the same objects and normalization of its malign effects on the part of the privileged.

This, of course, did not purport to be an exhaustive list of examples that show (some sort of) affinity with the case of the Israeli settlers having comfortable lives in the midst of creeping annexation and violence. What I rather wanted to demonstrate was that similar, yet distinct processes took place in different contexts as well. This is not merely a scholarly exercise in comparison. Drawing these parallels is also a political argument, showing the perils of singling out the case of Israel/Palestine. Just as much as political violence defines many other polities, its

concealment is not unique either. And foreshadowing discussion below, I would hope that these empirical excursions can also serve as a provocation of sorts, inciting the reader to reflect on the presence of these mechanisms in her everyday enviroment.

On a different level, what this section sought to highlight was the presence of the mundane in the extraordinary, just as much as of the violent in the quotidian. Thus, in disciplinary terms, I would further propose that this cursory overview also demonstrates the need to look more closely into matters of depolitization and various relationships between aesthetics and power in the field of IR.

Self-legitimization of Power: Beyond IR's Aesthetic Encounters

After almost two decades, it seems that Bleiker's call for more aesthetic engagements with the world politics has been heard and heeded. Further eroding the IR disciplinary norms, a growing number of scholars have set out to interrogate the political through the aesthetic. These authors have both looked into how the art can disrupt power dynamic but also utilized these insights to challenge the very way we think and research the political. Generally speaking, utilization of the aesthetic of both object of analysis (in its relation to the political) and as a mode of inquiry thus contributes to the study of power in (international) politics and its various enactments. In this thesis I further sought to build on this body of scholarship through a detailed examination of a specific case of the Israeli settlements in the West Bank. By attending to mostly material and visual arrangements, I investigated particular, minute operations of power and their impact on the political landscape in Israel/Palestine.

My disciplinary contributions are twofold, and in both regards I somewhat depart from much of the IR literature dealing with the intersection of the aesthetical and the political. First, much of this literature remains focused on the aesthetic notions of difference and othering: the underlying concerns of these authors seem to relate to the ways in which the Self is established through various constructions of the Other in various registers. This is not meant as a critique of these works – they provide important insights into how the notions of supremacy and inferiority

are established and maintained, attune us to novel spaces of political contestation, and significantly widen the scope of the discipline.

But what I tried to argue throughout this thesis is that power legitimizes itself not only through these mechanisms of distinction. Although these remain a potent venue for assertions of dominance, power operates in different realms as well. In some instances, it is its mundaneness, the seeming lack of difference enacted by it, that grants the existing conditions their longevity and stability. Relatedly, I aimed to show that the sources of legitimacy do not necessarily lie only in spectacular manifestations of power like mass marches, military parades, imposing buildings, or large-scale transformations of physical environment. By attending to the quotidian, I sought to highlight the importance of the aesthetical notions in self-legitimization of power which work through its manifestations in everyday, seemingly unimportant settings through what might appear as almost banal means.

Second, rather than highlighting the political via recurses to the aesthetical, I drew on Rancière to show that the latter can actually work to obscure the former. Certain aesthetical notions, I argued, can have eminent power-laden effects by concealing conflicts, disagreements and contestations. In other words, my aim was to show how power operates through its own disguise, how it acquires salience through its fading into the background of the everyday. In doing so, I wanted to draw attention to the political stakes of rendering contentious realities normal and non-problematic; in short, depoliticized.

In this regard, my thesis also speaks to some of the recent "turns" in critical IR that take seriously the political salience of various processes and phenomena that had evaded scholars' attention until relatively recently like practices, visuality and materiality (Guillaume and Bilgin 2016; Salter and Mutlu 2013). Although my research directly built on these novel insights, it also provided a note of methodological caution, or perhaps inspiration. Studies of materiality and visuality in IR, fields that my research directly engaged, too often focus on exceptional and extraordinary moments defined by controversy, urgency and emergency (see e.g. Bueger, 2014; Lisle, 2016; Walters, 2014). There are good reasons for this approach as these contexts reveal the political rationalities, tensions and stakes in what are usually taken-for-granted facts. Nonetheless, in

contrast to this tendency, by focusing on the quotidian my research suggested that there are valuable insights to be gained if we approach given complexes at times of relative quiet and normalcy. It is the periods when seemingly nothing happens, when one finds hard to discern politics against the background of the everyday, that reveal a particular, yet crucial operations of power.

Nonetheless, apart from the strictly disciplinary contributions to the field of IR, I am further convinced that the case of Israeli settlements, investigated through the prism of aesthetic, might be also instructive with regards to other academic issues. Most importantly, my research touches upon the relationship between politics and ethics, and issues pertaining to the matter of representations. In the remainder of this conclusion, I engage these issues in more depth.

Depolitization and Erasure of Ethics

Some might argue that what I actually described was, in Pachirat's (Pachirat 2013) footsteps, concealment of violence. But what I sought to show was that the processes at play were not just about distancing settlers from disturbing practices of the Israeli occupation that make their everyday lives possible. Although Israelis' physical detachment is an important factor behind the longevity of the existing power constellations, what I called the depoliticizing dispositif operates in more registers. After all, Pachirat's account goes as well beyond the sheer material and physical arrangements.

Partially this is a matter of what can be seen by the settlers, relating thus to the compartmentalization of sensual experience that Pachirat extensively engaged. Indeed, the settlers never experience the pressure of other crammed bodies in a line leading to a checkpoint upon dawn, they do not witness the IDF raids in the Palestinian villages in the middle of the night, they do not taste the polluted water, they do not shiver in a tent after their buildings were razed by the occupational authorities. In this regard, living in the midst of the occupied population is simply deemed non-problematic and non-political on the basis of different realities co-existing on the same territory.

But what I further wanted to show was on the one hand the historicity of these constellations by recounting how the settlers experienced material transformations in their surroundings, and on the other hand flesh out the social and the political conditioning that goes into settlers' understanding of these surroundings. Within these constellations, occupied Palestinian villages become a part of the picturesque landscape; effectively dispossessed olive groves pose as visual pleasure on the commute to the office; separation fence that destroys the fabric of the Palestinians' everyday lives provides space for family outings. What is remarkable in the context of much of the critical analyses of the Israeli occupation is that it is the most contentious symbols and features of the Israeli rule (the fence, different topographic conditions of Palestinian and Israeli dwellings) which are approached by the settlers in a rather different way: contested issues fade into background, are rendered aesthetic enjoyment, become mere inconvenience in terms of the everyday life. What matters is thus not only what can one see and touch, it is also about the social, political and cognitive frameworks in which it happens.

These features mark a profound difference from authors who are concerned with violence, suffering and trauma. Indeed, a colleague of mine, upon hearing about my project, suggested that I should look into how is constant violence ignored and becomes embedded in the everyday life. But the whole point of the dispositiff's working is to exactly obliterate the presence and imprint of this violence on the part of the settlers. As I suggested above, Palestine does not really exist for most of the settlers; perhaps more importantly, Palestinians' hardships do not either. This is not to say that such everyday live is inevitable on the part of the settlers: there is still space for individual agency and resistance. In this regard, it is interesting to note that as I was told by an Israeli leftist expert on the settlements working for an Israeli human rights NGO that one of the members of the same organization was actually born in Ariel to a rather Zionist family, and yet as was growing up changed his political stances and became active in the activist movement against the Occupation. Nonetheless, as I found out first hand, the various practices, technologies and mechanisms that work to depoliticize the everyday life in the settlements are rather comprehensive and effective. In the case of Israelis, moreover, this is further accompanied by exposure to nationalistic discourse which condition them to approach the political realities in the region in a certain way.

Although a lot more can be said about the depolitization programmes that are at the heart of this thesis, one particular feature stands out: they essentially erase the ethical questions surrounding one's everyday habitat, position and status.

At one point in his book on the industrialized slaughterhouse, Pachirat talks about "the knocker", the person whose job is to actually make the livestock unconscious by firing the bolt in their skull:

> "The mythologizing of the work of the knocker—the almost supernaturally evil powers invested in the act of shooting the animals by the other kill floor workers, including, notably, the chute workers themselves—makes possible the construction of a killing 'other' even on the kill floor of the industrialized slaughterhouse. It legitimizes and authorizes statements like the one made by Richard the maintenance worker, statements underscored rather than undercut by the fact that those making them are themselves contributing daily to the work of the kill floor: 'I'm not going to take part in this. I'm not going to stand and watch this.'" (Pachirat 2013, 158)

Pachirat further argues that "divisions of labor and space on the kill floor work to fragment sight, to fracture experience, and to neutralize the work of violence" (Pachirat 2013, 158). At this particular point of his book, Pachirat is not explicitly interested in the ethical implications of these arrangements, but it is not hard to imagine that it is this "division of labor and space" which makes the workers' conduct a bit more bearable by erasing responsibility and the related ethical dilemmas for killing numberless animals every day.

Pachirat actually enters a debate on ethics a couple pages later where he recounts an argument with a friend about who is ultimately responsible for the suffering of animals slaughtered at the site he worked at. Whereas his friend "passionately and with conviction" proposed that "the people who did the killing were more responsible because they were the ones performing the physical actions that took the animals' lives", Pachirat maintained "that those who benefited at a distance, delegating this terrible work to others while disclaiming responsibility for it, bore more moral responsibility, particularly in contexts like the slaughterhouse, where those with the fewest opportunities in society performed the dirty work" (Pachirat 2013, 160). Nonetheless, Pachirat then continues by saying "But perhaps it is the preoccupation with moral responsibility

itself that serves as a deflection. Perhaps there are at least some who would be willing to […] accept moral responsibility for the killing as a condition of benefiting from it, as long as they could continue to be shielded from any direct contact with or experience of it“ (Pachirat 2013, 161).

What Pachirat engages here is then the matter of how, when and under what circumstances does ethics register as a concern for people connected to systems of violence. He argues that “seeing, smelling, hearing, tasting, touching“ (Pachirat 2013, 161), the immediate contact with the unpleasant reality, make a difference, politically as well as ethically. In other words, even if one accepts responsibility for certain violent practices, the distance from them (physical as well as non-physical) works to erase ethical concerns. Drawing on my own research, I propose that in the case of the Israeli settlements, this dynamic is even enhanced by rendering glimpses into, or perhaps palimpsests of, the oppressive and violent occupational regime into a matter of the aesthetic and the mundane.

In his work on the politics of architecture, Leopold Lambert describes Israeli settlers as “a population whose poor sense of ethics has been ideologically driven by Israeli institutions” (Lambert 2013, 79). Indeed, such condemning attitudes were rather common among many of my friends and colleagues with whom I shared my experiences from the field. But I came to believe that these arguments miss the crucial feature that defines a slaughterhouse as well as a settlement: ethics simply does not enter into one’s considerations. Because of the pervasive, minute mechanisms, practices, technologies, arrangements and frameworks, the settlers simply do not find themselves under conditions that would require contemplation on moral questions. Echoing other authors (see e.g. Bauman, 1989; Zigon, 2007 who offer distinct, yet complementary perspectives aligned with the argument pursued here), I would propose that coming into contact with situations that somehow disturb and, indeed, unsettle one’s everyday sense of the ordinary (which is usually exempted from deliberations on one’s conduct) poses as a potent opportunity for engaging questions pertaining to ethics. This is not to say that this is the only venue – for example, as proposed by Richard Rorty (Rorty 1989), arts and literature can also work as powerful moral interventions through establishing connection between the Self and

suffering of the Other. Still, removal of disturbing realities from the sphere of the everyday does curtails the potential for moral deliberations.

This realization further led me to adopt a more nuanced take on the individual implication in the Israeli policies. As is the case in many other research projects involving direct rapport with the informants, I often found myself in situations which were not only uncomfortable but also made straightforward political and moral judgements unfeasible. What I did not mention when I was describing me talking with Boris on the veranda of his luxurious duplex was what he answered after I asked him if he ever visits Ukraine, his home country. He just shook his head and said that "There is nothing for me. I have three friends whom I see when I go back occasionally. The rest are at the graveyard." Upon hearing that, I just had a sip of beer he offered me before. And when I did interview Ofira in her house, I could not but notice how cold her husband, who also there at the time, treated her. He would barely answer her question and when he would, it would be with a fairly clear annoyance. Although I came to their house as a researcher, I felt like a coincidental observer of a slow family dissolution.

Such stories of course did not characterize most of my contacts with the Israelis in the West Bank. Nonetheless, at times when was the fragility of life stories of individual settlers coupled with the insights into moral implications of the existing depoliticizing constellations, I came to reconsider what posture one should take vis-à-vis those benefiting from the highly violent regime. Indeed, as I discussed in the previous chapters, much of the focus of this research project was driven by what I at first saw as discrepancy between the decency of many people I met in the settlements and their implication in the Israeli occupation.

Although this might run the risk of over-valorizing the particular case, I think that these notions have repercussions for the matter of representation of lives of the others in the critical tradition, a tradition I consider myself adhering to. The question really is, what is one then to make of this? How can one capture the tension between criticizing the oppressive system, and simultaneously make space for too human tendency to look away, to unsee (Miéville 2010), to shut off, tendency which is often so facilitated by various arrangements? And furthermore, how can one not strip others of their agency, of the possibility to not look away, to see, to open up to uncomfortable

reality? The scope of this thesis does not allow for an elaborate answer to these questions. They nonetheless highlight potentially promising avenues for research into the relationship of morality and politics.

This is not to say that IR scholars have not probed ethical quandaries pertaining to international politics, rather that so far most have paid attention to questions related to large-scale phenomena and dilemmas like humanitarian interventions, transnational justice, national self-determination, just war, and so on (Hutchings 1999). By contrast, what the ethnographic mode of inquiry I employed in this thesis revealed was that the everyday moral conduct and its conditioning through various means can have considerable imprint on political processes. In this regard, I find especially promising the possibilities of dialogue betweenIR and anthropology of morals and ethics (Fassin 2012a; Faubion 2011), a field which does not seek to provide "moral evaluation" of controversial and divisive facts of social life (Fassin 2008b, 338) but "takes these moral tensions and debates as its objects of study and considers seriously the moral positions of all sides" (Fassin 2012b, 3). This perspective not only cautions against scholars projecting their moral evaluations on the studied matter cf. Fassin, 2008) but also situates ethics within larger social and political structures, guidelines whose importance I came to appreciate in the course of my research. And as I further argue in the next section, a more thorough and critical considerations of ethical life can lead to a critical introspection on the part of scholars, with implications for academic conduct.

The Ethics of Academia: Writing the Lives of Others… and Oneself

As have some authors forcefully highlighted recently, the IR norms are built on the detachment form the world the discipline seeks to study. Doty passionately argued that despite the fact that "many of the debates that IR scholars have spilled much ink on in our academic journals are actually quite significant, […] their connections to the world of human beings is lost in sterile writing that reaches a small group of select readers" (Doty 2010): 1050). In order to prove ourselves credible in academic terms, we need to distance ourselves from the lives of the others.

On the face of it, what became known under the term "critical scholarship" promises a different way of engaging the world. Most of the scholarly works drawing on a wide range of insights from feminist, post-colonial, post-structuralist and (neo)Marxist thinking are underpinned by a passionate dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs. Most of authors in this tradition, I believe, would subscribe to Marx's famous aphorism about changing rather than just interpreting the world.

There is a lot to be said about these intentions, and some issues regarding how they are translated into reality, like the reluctance to engage policy-makers because of the fear of compromise with power, or at times incomprehensible language that alienates rather than draws in wider audiences.[143] But what I want to discuss here is one form of distancing that seems to be quite persistent among critical scholars: a certain moral superiority of the author vis-à-vis the discussed phenomena. I am aware that to certain extent this is an elusive claim as such sentiments are almost never expressed explicitly. But a higher moral ground is, I would argue, almost a necessary component when scholars with critical perspective engage certain topics. After all, who did not think 'how could they participate in that?' or 'how could they ignore what was happening next to them?' when reading about structural adjustment programs, problematic politics of internationally sanctioned state-building or the international responses to atrocities? Who did not think, at least for a moment, that they would not be some compliant, or blind, or indifferent, or ignorant in such circumstances?

This might be a bias stemming from the fact that I dedicated a rather lot of time, energy and attention to this particular context, but I came under impression that this moral distancing applies especially strongly to the case of Israeli rule over the Palestinians. In their article reviewing works on the Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories, Dalsheim and Harel argue that much of the scholarship effectively erases "historical discontinuities between old and new settlers and settlement practices" (Dalsheim and Harel 2009, 227). I came to believe that

[143] In her piece from 2010, Vrasti remarked that "We have lost the ability not just to translate our findings into policy-relevant advice (something many practitioners resent for good reason), but also to communicate our work to people outside the profession and, implicitly, to insert ourselves in the public discourse. […] Yet we rarely pause to consider that it is our responsibility to produce research that demonstrates the value of our work." (Vrasti 2010, 86)

exceptionalization of the Israelis also came to mark a similar discontinuity between the occupation and our daily lives. And although in the case of the condemnation of Israeli policies this is especially pronounced, similar discontinuities can be traced in writings on other topics as well. To somewhat paraphrase Talal Asad (Asad 2007, 2), our efforts to "distinguish between morally good and morally evil ways […] are beset with contradictions, and these contradictions remain a fragile part of our modern subjectivity". I want to argue that our scholarly attempts at such moral distinctions are especially fraught because of the distancing between our "non-academic" and "academic" selves.

Although I do not have enough space to fully engage these issues here, I would propose that these notions should lead us, "social scientists", that is, people who make living out of writing about other people, to become humbler when we investigate and discuss cases, practices and phenomena that we find morally reprehensible and problematic.[144] Because even in these instances, the question "What expert are you?" asked so powerfully by Elizabeth Dauphinee (Dauphinee 2010) still looms large above us. And perhaps even more so if we somewhat despise people "whose voices we authoritatively interpret" (Amoureux and Steele 2015a, 7), an attitude which might easily translate itself into sweeping, easy judgements and ungrained analysis.

In short, I believe that looking into experiences of the (relatively) powerful and privileged, and weighing these experiences carefully, is important for political as well as ethical reasons. Usually, the critical scholars seek to give voice to the underprivileged, the oppressed, the subaltern. As argued succinctly by Meera Sabaratnam (Sabaratnam 2018) in a blog post drawing on her recent book, "scholars engaging with relations of power from any field of study – and particularly in the field of 'political science' – should be especially interested in the perspectives and experiences of the relatively disempowered as a point of departure for analysis." In stating this, Sabaratnam articulates attitude that animates a large bulk of critical scholarship. Although this is especially pronounced in anthropology, a field in which "A significant proportion of contemporary […] studies deals with inequalities and violence, refugee camps and military conflicts, human rights

[144] I am quite worried that I failed in actually putting this attitude into practice in this thesis. To my defense I can only say that I hope to somewhat rectify this in my future work.

and sustainable development, ethnic groups in danger and social resistance to domination" (Fassin 2008b, 337), similar choices of research topics underpinned by political inclinations are prevalent among critically oriented students of international politics and security as well.

I would like to suggest here that if we truly try to understand the oppressive conditions, we also need to complement these studies by attending to the experiences and voices of those who maintain and benefit from these conditions. Already in 1972, Laura Nader inquired into the kind of insights that could be generated if social scientists "were to study the colonizers rather than the colonized, the culture of power rather than the culture of the powerless, the culture of affluence rather than the culture of poverty" (quoted in Pachirat, 2018, p. 73). And Sabaratnam (Sabaratnam 2018) herself states in the post that "the researcher working in good faith must listen to and hear things which they did not know and did not expect and must deal with questions of conflicting interpretation." I am convinced that these notions should be also extended to those we find, for whatever reasons, opposed to.

This is why I have certain problems with Harding's dominant focus on the marginalized in her work on standpoint methodologies. Harding proposes that "if one starts from the activities of those who are necessarily disadvantaged in a particular kind of social order one can come to understand objectively existing features of it that are much harder to detect when one starts thought from activities of those who benefit most" (Harding 1992, 584). Although I am sympathetic to the political concerns underpinning Harding's and Sabaratnam's positions, and I agree a lot of academic output would benefit from heeding Harding's call for "strong objectivity", I would still propose that "members of dominant groups […] can learn […] *about themselves* and their conceptual and material universe" (Harding 1992, 585); emphasis in original) by looking not only at the experience of the marginalized, but other privileged people as well. Of course, questions which would be asked in that case are quite different. In fact Harding herself argues that "Starting thought from lives other than one's own should not be a controversial idea since it is presumably the goal of a good part of the educational process" (Harding 1992, 584). Following this, I want to argue that such sentiment should be extended to the privileged, to those who "move on" when told so by the police, as Rancière would put it.

Based on my research presented here, I propose that close, personal confrontation with the studied matter can be crucial in leading to a more nuanced take on the reality in question in analytical as well as moral terms. In this regard, Cai Wilkinson (Wilkinson 2015, 403) talks about the productive encounters during a fieldwork and their repercussions as follows:

> "The result is that the researcher might experience a sense of cognitive dissonance of displacement that causes her to review her understanding of her and of her relationship to both her research and the field. While the experience may be quite uncomfortable and evoke powerful emotions, the critical sensibilities from such displacements can be also used strategically to create particular opportunities for the generation of additional insights into and critiques of both the phenomenon being investigated and the nature and politics of knowledge production."

Approached this way, scholarly endeavors have at least the potential to diminish the distance (moral and political) between the researcher and the researched and disturb the usually heavily guarded borders between the Self and the Other in academic writing.[145] To stick to my own project, confronting myself with settlers' everyday experience and its political conditioning posed as a political and ethical intervention by closing the moral gap between myself and the people I studied by seeing parallels between their and my own conduct. I would imagine other scholarly endeavors can challenge us in a similar way: if we really take these notions seriously, then I find it hard to escape the need to turn to ourselves, to interrogate the parallels between our "non-academic" lives and the subjects we study. In this regard, the use of theoretical notions does not serve only to illuminate certain aspects of the reality which could otherwise escape our analytical gaze; nor does it just provide a framework enabling us to "contrast and compare" different contexts. Theoretical and conceptual apparatus can further highlight the presence of similar technologies, practices and notions in our own lives.

[145] In this regard, I am deeply influenced by the so-called autobiographical/autoethnographic/narrative turn in IR (see especially Brigg and Bleiker, 2010; Daigle, 2016; Dauphinee, 2010; Inayatullah, 2010; Inayatullah and Dauphinee, 2016; Löwenheim, 2010).

In her piece on the political and moral lessons of the Human Terrain System, Evgenia Ilieva suggests that close investigations of the US military project can be instrumental in "keep[ing] us in touch with our complicity in the structures of oppression we condemn" (Ilieva 2015, 204). What I wanted to suggest here is that Ilieva's remarks can be taken even further. Interrogating the phenomena we study can push us to reflect not only on our scholarly practice and its implications; it can further highlight our everyday compliance in "the structures of oppression" that are not directly related and subjected to our academic conduct.

Conclusion: We Other Settlers

When I talked to a prominent Israeli expert on settlements about how much I was surprised at what seemed to me as a lack of the Ariel residents' attention to their physical surroundings, he nodded and said:

> "They go back and forth every day, some of them. And they see only what they are programmed to see. Why? Because otherwise the narrative might collapse, or be cracked, or hard questions should be asked. And people usually don't want to ask hard questions. Most human beings are not keen on having bad consciousness about things which they do, or ask themselves hard questions about the everyday reality. You know, they prefer to live and life is complicated anyhow, even if you don't get into the guts of the Israeli occupation."[146]

After I remarked that this seems to be the case to me in many other cases, he again answered positively: "there is nothing unique about Israel [in this regard]… We are talking about human beings."[147] It is this notion of the non-uniqueness that for me makes the subject of the present thesis so analytically and politically salient and instructive.

[146] Interview, May 18, 2016, Jerusalem.
[147] I consider it important to note that he then engaged his personal history of non-seeing the Palestinians.

Because as I reflect on this project, it seems to me that to a large extent, the main political insight and "practical lesson" I gathered in its course is that, while bearing in mind the differences between various contexts, the case of the Israeli settlers is not as singular as would some of its critics (and supporters, although for different reasons) propose. In my opinion, what might be distinct about Israel is how entrenched, non-present and "natural" the current power conditions become. As such, Israel for me poses as a warning rather than anything else: warning in terms of how non-contested oppressive political and social structures can become in a wider polity. Seen in this light, singling out Israel as a state with distinctively detestable policies is in a way counterproductive. Rather than perceiving Israel as an ultimate evil, it might be more fruitful to see the parallels between it and other contexts.

Approached in this way, the case of Israel/Palestine can be politically mobilizing by making visible some of the contested yet concealed mechanisms and dynamics. Although this is hard if not impossible to achieve on a societal level, even personal insight can politically productive. I fully acknowledge the critiques that rightly point out that it is a collective action which proved to be basically the only means which can lead to shattering of the status quo and political and social transformation (Lukacs 2017). Nonetheless, I still believe that individual emancipation serves in many cases as a prerequisite to realization that there is a cause warranting such collective action in the first place.

Because even in the settlements, with so deeply entrenched mechanisms of concealment, aesthetization and depolitization, there were still instances in which the power-laden and unequal conditions revealed themselves. These were nothing more than moments in which I and other people from Ariel could, if we chose to, have a brief glimpse at disturbing practices and realities that underpinned our everyday lives. It was possible to talk to the Palestinian workers in the settlement; the soldiers at the junctions pose as a remainder of the military rule; one could inquire why are the Palestinian olive trees on the inside of the separation barrier. Despite their fleeting nature these instances still provided opportunity to see through the cracks in both literal and metaphorical wall and witness the violence. And I believe that it is these moments which can ultimately prove to be crucial in inciting some kind of political change. So if there is one thing that

I would take away from my whole experience in Israel/Palestine, it would be the moral and political imperative to look for such cracks in the wall, and to try to render visible the exact practices that obscure and conceal.

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