Preface[1]

Ariel Handel and Erez Maggor

Hamitnahlim (the settlers), a documentary film directed by Shimon Dotan, premiered in Israel just a few months ago, in mid-2016. The large audience that filled the Tel Aviv auditorium responded predictably: tsk-tsking at the sight of interviewees who put Judaism before democracy; groaning upon hearing a Palestinian farmer on whose land illegal outposts have been built; nodding in agreement with the critical spokespersons of the left; jolting when a young father from the Esh Kodesh (holy fire) outpost promises his young son that when he grows up they will go together to beat up Arabs; and laughing out loud at the settlers who were so stereotypical that even the [satirical] TV program *Eretz nehederet* (wonderful land), it seems, could not have invented them.

According to the film, all the settlers live between Ofra and Kedumim – or, alternatively, between Bat Ayin B and Itamar D. The sporadic references to other settlers are partial and tendentious, and the only secular settler interviewed is presented as exceeding the bounds of good taste: He and his wife moved to the settlement Teqoa only, as he puts it, so they could have a "bedroom the size of a living room." The film's general thesis, which can be found in most popular references to the settlements—from the thick tome of Akiva Eldar and Idith Zertal, *Lords of the Land*,[2] to the opinion pieces of Ari Shavit and Gadi Taub in the daily *Ha'aretz*—is that of "the tail wagging the dog." The tail in this analogy is represented by the national-religious camp – formerly the junior partner in a larger, much more pragmatic Zionist coalition (namely, the dog). According to this standard

2   Akiva Eldar and Idith Zertal, 2004. *Adonei ha'aretz: Hamitnahlim vemedinat yisrael 1967–2004* (The lords of the land: The settlers and the State of Israel 1967–2004), Or Yehuda: Kinneret, Zmora-Bitan, Dvir.

view, these national-religious Zionists, radicalized by the ideological burst of the Gush Emunim movement, are responsible for dragging the entire nation unto an unplanned adventure, the end of which is still unknown.

This familiar thesis suffers from several significant problems. Not only is it factually incorrect, it is also politically harmful in that it limits the scholarly debates and overlooks several structural factors that underlie the growth of the settlements and their continuing influence. First, most of the settlers are not so-called "ideological settlers" (and of these, only the most extreme and colorful are shown in the film). The messianic National-Religious settlers number no more than several tens of thousands. To compare, Ma'aleh Adumim has 40,000 inhabitants, and the Haredi (ultra-orthodox) settlement Betar Illit has nearly 60,000. And that's without counting the 200,000 Israelis—indeed, the actual figure is even higher—who live in East Jerusalem.

The film's title, *The Settlers*, suggests that these are the true settlers, the driving force behind the movement of more than 600,000 Jews to lands that were occupied five decades ago. The tendency to focus on the human aspects of the phenomenon of settlement is understandable. Passionate individuals are far more intriguing than archival documents and clauses in the national budget. But focusing solely on the motivation, without talking about the institutional and political conditions that made its realization possible, keeps the discussion at a superficial level and precludes a broader view.

In fact, the vast majority of the settlers in the West Bank do not live there because of messianic zeal—or hedonistic greed—but rather, simply, because they can buy an apartment there that they would not have been able to afford in other places; because they were offered generous financing conditions, loans, and grants there; because the West Bank offers modern, beautiful, well-planned cities to live in (unlike the mobile homes and tents shown in the film), with modern infrastructure and educational institutions; because there is a supportive community; or because crossing the Green Line is not even a fundamental issue for them. In addition to these characteristics, and unlike the distant and disadvantaged development towns in Israel's periphery, many of these West Bank settlements were established near industrial areas (such as Mishor Adumim or Barkan), or at a short distance from the centers of employment in the Tel Aviv or Jerusalem metropolitan areas.

The academic discourse—which has already recognized the economic aspects noted above—also continues to grant disproportionate weight to the ideological

settlements and especially to Gush Emunim, which, although it ceased to exist as a real, active political movement three decades ago, seems, to this day, to be the explanatory factor and the main point of reference of those who study the settlements. Actually, and quite surprisingly, there is relatively scant research on the settlements. To be more precise, everybody seems to talk about the settlements but few actually study them. The settlements appear in academic scholarship as an obstacle to a negotiated political solution (in the International Relations departments), as a violation of international conventions (in Law faculties), as a source of internal political tension between "doves" and "hawks" (in Political Science or History departments), or as a locus of economic and political power (in Sociology departments). Another stream, which mainly grew out of the scholarship of critical sociologists, points to the continuum—both diachronic and synchronic—between the two sides of the Green Line. According to this stream, the settlements are actually the direct continuation of the pre-1967 settlement enterprise. Without detracting from the great importance of these studies, we point out that most of them view the West Bank settlements as a monolithic unit, with no substantial internal variety—"the Settlements" in the plural and with a capital "S"—which, as we have noted, are motivated by active-messianic forces (Gush Emunim and its successors) or passive-economic factors (the lower classes, swept along forcibly by religious ideology, when all they want is to buy a large, cheap home).

Of course there are exceptions, foremost of which are the studies by Meron Benvenisti and his collaborators in the West Bank Data Project,[3] and the work of David Newman and Juval Portugali in the 1980s and 1990s.[4] Throughout the past decade there has been a certain awakening in the study of the settlements—as part of the growth of what can be called "Occupation Studies"—but it seems that these

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3   See, for example, Meron Benvenisti, 1987. *Lexikon yehuda ve'shomron: Yeshuvim, minhal, ve'hevra* (Lexicon of Judea and Samaria: Settlements, Administration, and Society), Jerusalem: Kana; Meron Benvenisti, 1984. *The West Bank Data Project: A Survey of Israel's Polici*es, Washington: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research.

4   For example, David Newman (ed.), 1985. *The Impact of Gush Emunim: Politics and Settlement in the West Bank*, London: Croom Helm; David Newman and Juval Portugali, 1987. "Spatial Interaction between Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip," Unpublished Research Report, Ford Foundation; Juval Portugali, 1991. "Jewish Settlement in the Occupied Territories: Israel's Settlement Structure and the Palestinians," *Political Geography Quarterly* 10, pp. 26–53.

studies are few and have not yet consolidated to form a unified research school that has received recognition and resonance.[5]

This issue of *Theory and Criticism* presents up-to-date studies about the settlements in the West Bank with the aim of moving beyond the hegemonic research approach to the study of the settlements and developing an alternative analytical framework, at the heart of which is the concept of "normalization." This concept could be understood in two ways: The first is that the settlers will (eventually – or soon enough) look completely "normal" to Tel Aviv residents, just like the Tel Avivians themselves, and that Ofra will be no more than one settlement of many in the modern State of Israel. The second meaning is that the mission of the people of Gush Emunim and their successors "to settle in the hearts" will succeed to such an extent that Tel Avivians will understand that the normal situation is one of ideological belief, and that the amalgamation of Zionism and Jewish-Israeli existence lies in Judea and Samaria. In other words, the first meaning transforms Ofra into Tel Aviv the second meaning transforms Tel Aviv into Ofra.

The liberal left is fearful mainly of the second meaning—the scenario in which Judea, Samaria, and Gaza gain control over the "here"—that is, fearful of the creation of a binational state or of the religionization or messianism embodied in the character of the settler. But this special issue mainly deals with the first meaning: the blurring of the Green Line and the gradual transformation of the settlements into part of the "normal" Israeli space. Normalization, as we seek to examine it here, is not the result of the colonization enterprise but rather a continuing process which began as early as 1967, primarily in East Jerusalem, and then spread to the rest of the West Bank in the early 1980s. The settlement enterprise was never a phenomenon that was external to the Israel bounded by the Green Line. The settlements are not a political and geographical anomaly, but rather an integral part of Israeli society and of the underlying transformations that have characterized it for the past fifty years. Therefore, it is impossible to understand the growth of the settlements without

5   See, for example, Gadi Algazi, 2006. "*Matrix be'bil'in: Sippur al capitalism coloniali beyisrael shel yameinu,*" (Matrix in Bil'in: A story of colonial capitalism in contemporary Israel), *Theory and Criticism* 29 (Autumn), pp. 173–191; Hadas Weiss, 2011. "Immigration and West Bank Settlement Normalization," *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 34(1), pp. 112–130; Erez Maggor, 2015. "Hamedina, hashuk, ve'hahitnahluyot: Mediniut misrad habinui vehashikun vehama'avar me'he'ahzut meshihit lepituah ironi breshit shnot hashmonim," (State, Market, and the Israeli Settlements: the Ministry of Housing and the Shift from Messianic Outposts to Urban Settlements in the Early 1980s *Israeli Sociology* 16(2), pp. 140–167.

relating to the international trends of privatization and neo-liberalization of which the Israeli economy is a part; without understanding the trends of suburbanization and isolation in gated communities in Israel and throughout the world; without a nuanced view of the multiplication and dispersing of various religious streams; and without relating to global trends of importing cheap, temporary labor from developing countries and their effect on the relations between Palestinians and Israelis in the space between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River.

Therefore, at the start of the fiftieth year of the military occupation and the civilian settlement enterprise, this issue aims to propose a new and up-to-date view of both the object of study itself and of the analytical frameworks employed to study and discuss it. The emphasis on the connection between settlement in the territories and broad sociological, anthropological, cultural, geographic, and economic processes invites an examination that views the settlement enterprise as an object of comparative study, both historical and international. We hope that the analytical framework laid out in this issue will pave the way for future studies that, instead of seeing the settlements and the settlers as an anomalous and reactionary phenomenon, will make it possible to identify the similarities and differences between it and similar phenomena and will help in advancing a better understanding of the Jewish settlements in the occupied territories.

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In the article that opens this issue, **Honaida Ghanim** lays out a genealogy of the Palestinian view of Jewish settlement in Israel/Palestine from the end of the nineteenth century to this day. Her survey reverses the standard analytical perspective—that is, from the west to the east—giving us a deeper understanding of the dynamic of the relations between the inhabitants of Palestine/Israel and enabling us to view them in a wider context of global political transformations. The article examines how the discourse of the Palestinian inhabitants of the land conceptualized the Jewish settlers and the places of settlement they established, from "*kubaniya*" (the name given to the pre-1948 Jewish settlement) to "*al-buara*" (the extremist outpost). The linguistic genealogy outlines the history of relations between the two populations, their degree of familiarity with each other, the imposed relations and the voluntary ones in work-places and in everyday life. It also traces the divisions within Palestinian society and that society's attitudes toward the religious and political trends in Palestine/Israel and outside of it. In her article, Ghanim shows how each stage of

the expansion of Jewish settlement blurs the previous stage—until the existence of violent outposts de facto whitewashes not only Petah Tikva and Tel Aviv, but also Ariel and Kedumim.

Rivi Gillis's article shows how the underlying tensions of Israeli society reappear in the settlements. Her article first points out that in terms of the academic discourse, "ethnicity stops at the checkpoint" – that is, that the vigorous debates on ethnicity do not extend beyond the boundaries of the Green Line. Through an analysis of articles in *Nekuda* (a monthly journal aligned with Gush Emunim and its successors), Gillis is able to juxtapose the ethnic discourse which has emerged within the settlements with the existing scholarly literature which depicts the settlements either as religious-messianic or as a class project. At the same time, the analysis makes possible a distinction between those seen as "ideological" Religious-Zionists and those considered "non-ideological" who set out to improve their quality of life. This critical examination of the internal discourse, as expressed in *Nekuda*, against the scholarly perspective, has important implications for both the theoretical literature and political thought in Israel.

Lee Cahaner, in her article on the Haredi settlements, examines how a population considered apolitical came to constitute almost one-third of the settlers outside East Jerusalem. The article challenges the dichotomous distinction between "ideological settlements" and "quality-of-life settlements" and argues that the Haredi settlements represent a growing middle ground in which social existence determines consciousness and not the other way around. In order words, the fact that almost every Haredi family either lives—or knows someone living—beyond the Green Line ultimately creates a right-wing geopolitical awareness. The article examines the degree of connection and disconnection between the Haredi settlements and their surroundings, both on the politico-ideological level and on the everyday-instrumental level. It also examines the influence of the Haredi settlements on processes of integration and segregation that affect Israel's Haredi society at larger.

The question "Would you prefer a Haredi neighbor or a Palestinian one" yields surprising answers in the next two articles, which focus on specific case-studies that are urban in nature.. On the basis of the theoretical schema proposed by Henri Lefebvre, **Marco Allegra** examines the production of the national space through a description of the development of Ma'aleh Adumim, which lies in the intersection of international border disputes, professional planning systems, and spaces of everyday life. As noted, most existing research focuses on the ideological commitments of the

settlements' pioneering founders and their inhabitants, and on their geopolitical role as part of a larger policy aimed at spatial expansion and prevention of the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Allegra's article, by contrast, examines how the settlements become a promising space for social mobility – offering affordable housing, accessibility, security, modern urban planning, and a rich daily life. An examination of the relationship between Jerusalem and Ma'aleh Adumim reveals a complex picture in which the latter is considered part of the former for all intents and purposes (part of the metropolitan space and part of the daily life of its inhabitants), but is still differentiated from it in the sense of security it provides. Thus, paradoxically, for the residents of Ma'aleh Adumim the main threat is not the Palestinians; rather, they feel safe and protected in their city both from what they see as the Haredi conquest of Jerusalem's space and from other urban phenomena such as crime, dirt, and uncertainty.

Haim Yacobi and **Wendy Pullan** focus on one of the most overlooked aspects in the research on the settlements—at least by Israeli academics—namely, East Jerusalem. The city's eastern neighborhoods, inhabited by more than 200,000 Jews, are seen as an integral part of the city, and in contrast to the settlers of Silwan or the Mount of Olives, their residents are not considered "settlers" at all. The article focuses on the French Hill neighborhood—located in a key position, overlooking the Old City and linking the Mount Scopus campus of the Hebrew University to central traffic routes—and primarily the growing phenomenon, in recent years, of the relocation of well-off, highly educated Palestinian population to the neighborhood. The article sheds light on this urban dynamic and examines the case of Palestinian settlers in a Jewish settlement. As the authors show, the special legal status of the neighborhood/settlement and of its various inhabitants opens up possibilities for the Palestinian population that would be unthinkable in other settlements. Indeed, it is precisely the attempt to annex East Jerusalem politically and territorially that makes it more difficult for the state to achieve total Judaization of the area. Yacobi and Pullan discuss the geopolitics of the neighborhood and the social and economic dynamics involved in the presence of Palestinian "settlers" in a Jewish settlement. And against this background they show how assumptions regarding urban cooperation and public space take on new meanings in a city that is at one and the same time divided and mixed.

Erez Tzafdia's article marks a sharp transition to the other extreme – namely, from the middle-class neighborhoods of East Jerusalem to the makeshift and apparently

unauthorized outposts of the so-called "hilltop youth." Working in the discipline of legal geography, Tzafdia studies the processes of normalization of the outposts and their inhabitants and examines the connections between settlement, ethno-national aspirations of territorial control, law, and legitimation. The article focuses on informal planning—a practice implemented in the establishment of outposts and in the process of rendering them legal in recent years—and shows that the outposts are not anomalies, but rather lie on a broad spatial-legal continuum. The ethno-national aspirations, the support of the establishment of the outposts, the dialogue with the legal system, the evacuation of the outposts and their destruction, and the attempt to cope with internal and international pressures – all these are described in the article as a way of coding the spatial manifestations of the law in dynamic shades of gray. This coding undermines the dichotomous legal distinctions between law and crime and thus lays the ground for a new array of tools for examining the many links between law and space.

Assaf Harel's article examines the group that appears to be the most cohesive—the religious and ideological settlers—and exposes the diversity within it. Whereas most of the cultural and academic representations of the settlements focus on the 1970s and the Gush Emunim stream, Harel's article explores four contemporary groups and discusses their links to the issues of messianism, time, and secular politics: the non-mystical state stream of Religious-Zionist settlers, represented in the article by the inhabitants of Alon Shvut; Rabbi Zvi Yisrael Tau and his circle, which represents the growing stream of religious and state conservatism, deeply related to the messianic mysticism of the rabbis Kook; the followers of Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburg; and the followers of Rabbi Menachem Froman. True, the latter two streams represent contemporary fringe groups among the religious settlers, but their significance is not necessarily measured by their size: Just as Gush Emunim started out as a small movement, so, too, do these groups perhaps indicate the appearance of messianic forms that may grow and become stronger.

In the article that concludes the articles section in this issue, **Yael Shenker** examines the responses of writers and artists among the settlers to the greatest blow since 1967: the withdrawal from Gaza and northern Samaria, the dismantling of twenty-six settlements, and the evacuation of some 9,000 settlers. The "withdrawal," or the "expulsion," was the embodiment of the settlers' greatest fear – both physical (their evacuation and the destruction of their homes) and ideational (the failure to conquer the land, on the one hand, and the failure of "settlement in the hearts,"

on the other). The article focuses on works created during the withdrawal and in its wake and uses them to examine the representation of the settlement in the films and literature of the Religious-Zionist community in Israel. The works involve diverse practices of constructing the space of the settlement and reflect various voices within the settlements themselves. Unlike the actual settlement, the represented (that is, the imagined) settlement is often described as idyllic, free of power relations or violence directed at it or from it. The settler community sees itself as a minority, but also as one that maintains the original or authentic values of Zionism. The complex representation of this space—as a space of everyday life and at the same time as an exalted place of religious value—was meant, in many senses, to conceal the dispute between the settlers and secular Israeliness, and at the same time to preserve the settlers' sense of being leaders and to maintain their exalted sense of self.

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We have seen that the diverse articles in this issue discuss specific aspects of settlement and settlers: the success or failure of normalization, the fracture lines and internal splits, the relations between Jewish and Palestinian inhabitants of the West Bank. However, we must remember that the settlements are first and foremost a sophisticated and powerful state project. In a detailed report, **Mtanes Shihadeh** sheds light on the budgetary apparatus that feeds the settlement enterprise. The report presents an analysis of the budgets of the local authorities in the Settlements District as compared with those of the local authorities in other districts in Israel. It examines the funds that government ministries allocate to the settlements in the West Bank and the tax relief and exemptions granted to the settlers and the settlements. The report shows how the Israeli government implements a special policy that provides social and economic welfare for the settlements while implementing a neoliberal macroeconomic policy at the national level. As it pertains to the settlement enterprise, the state does not estimate public expenditure in terms of profitability and economic rationality or from a financial cost-benefit perspective. Instead, the state is willing to pay the economic and financial price in order to realize its political aims.

As if following directly from the research report, **Danny Gutwein** sets out to understand the economic, social, and political logic underlying the settlement enterprise. Gutwein's essay, which opens the "Essays and Criticism" section, continues the line of thought presented in his influential essay published in this

journal more than a decade ago.[6] In that essay in 2004, Gutwein argued that since the political upheaval of 1977, Israeli society has been shaped by two processes that are interdependent: the privatization revolution and the persistence of the occupation. The ongoing dismantling of Israel's welfare state is detrimental first and foremost for members of society's lower classes. In order to ensure their continued political support, parties of the right developed a compensatory mechanism which offers generous, yet partial alternatives in the settlements to the social services that were cut and privatized within Israel. But in the decade that has passed since the publication of the original thesis, this compensation mechanism has been gradually eroded, and therefore, Gutwein argues, the right has developed another mechanism for compensation: the antidemocratic counter-revolution that makes civil and social rights conditional on supposed loyalty to the state – and, in actuality, to the right. Thus, the settlers play a key role both in deepening the regime of privatization and in promoting the antidemocratic counterrevolution in what the essay calls "the rule of loyalty."

Miki Kratzman and **Ruthie Ginsburg** demonstrate—in a set of panoramic photographs and in the accompanying conversation—the appearance of the urban settlements, which are no different, as we have pointed out, from the suburban neighborhoods of Modi'in, Gan Yavne, or west Rishon Lezion. The dense, high-rise construction, along broad roads and near modern malls, was meant not only to settle more Jews in the West Bank, but also to normalize the settlements and to make them part of the regular and natural Israeli space, as part of what Kratzman and Ginsburg call "educational architecture." This normalization takes place, inter alia, through visual means and in conjunction with neoliberal market mechanisms. The desire for suburbanization unites with the "settlement urges" (a term coined by Amira Hass)[7] to create settlements that seemingly cannot be evacuated, because they are densely populated, massive, and primarily "normal."

In this regard, **Dror Etkes** and **Amira Hass** remind us that the fact that most of the settlers are "normal" people, whose lives are no different from those of Israel's citizens to the west of the Green Line, does not diminish the fact that the settlements themselves are built on Palestinian land that was expropriated from its

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6   Daniel Gutwein, 2004. "He'arot al hayesodot ha'mamadi'im shel hakibbush" (Class aspects of the occupation: Some remarks), *Theory and Criticism* 24 (Spring), pp. 203–211.

7   Amira Hass, 2004. "Kolonialism bekhassut 'tahalich hashalom' " (Colonialism under the guise of a peace process), *Theory and Criticism* 24 (Spring), pp. 191–202.

original inhabitants, or the theft of water and the drying up of whole areas, or the consistent, daily harm to Palestinian life by means of restrictions of movement, roadblocks, and military and police forces meant to protect those very settlements, and by the simple and overt violence on the part of some of the settlers and security forces. For the Palestinian population, Etkes and Hass conclude, the similarity between the urban settlements and the unauthorized outposts is greater than the differences between them.

The article that concludes this issue is devoted to Michael Feige, a sociologist, anthropologist, and head of the Israel Studies track at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, who was murdered in a terror attack in Tel Aviv in June 2016. **Moriel Ram**, who was Feige's student, wonders, along with us, the readers, how a private individual and a researcher can be memorialized. Ram provides a thorough review of Feige's studies on the settlements and Israeli society in general. He situates Feige's work within the "occupation studies" discourse in Israel and considers the complex way in which writing about the topic shapes it—both consciously and unconsciously—not merely as a work of scholarship but as a political object as well.

We conclude with the question raised by the late Michael Feige: "Has the Israeli-Palestinian conflict penetrated so deeply into the discourse that it is no longer possible to speak about it without participating in it?"[8] The aim of this issue is not only to present new articles on the settlements, but also to examine the limitations of the discourse and its language and to propose a new research perspective. It seems that the schematic view of the settlements in the academic and popular discourse—without an attempt to understand their sociological, cultural, political, and geographical effects on the entire Israeli/Palestinian space and on the populations living in this space—leads, in turn, to being trapped in a predetermined language that constrains opportunities for change.

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8   Michael Feige, 2002. Shtei Mapot lagada, Gush Emunim, Shalom Achshav, ve'itzuv hamerhav beyisrael, (Two maps of the West Bank. Gush Emunim, Peace Now, and the shaping of the Israeli space) Jerusalem: Magnes Press, p. 16.