

Nationalist Narratives

The double-bind of unemployed Israeli men

Benjamin Gideon Schröder



Master's thesis

Department of Social Anthropology

University of Oslo

Autumn 2020

© Benjamin Gideon Schrøder

2020

Nationalist Narratives: The double-bind of unemployed Israeli men

Benjamin Gideon Schrøder

<http://www.duo.uio.no/>

Abstract

Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in West Jerusalem, this thesis explores the lives of Israeli men trying to make meaningful lives in a country both struggling for the status as a Western democracy and at the same time using its own past to justify its very existence. Just as the country is inherently dependent on a past without Palestinians, its people imagine their past and tell stories about their past in order to create this imagined community. These stories are a main focal point in this thesis, both how they are created, how they are used and why they are such big parts of people's lives. Family, war and representations of community are also themes that inform, structure and give meaning to these narratives. As everything seems contested, everything must also be defended, and the family is no exception. Discourses of progress, how democratic countries are imagined, and the changing ideology of the Israeli state are big parts of everyday representations of the Jewish Israeli community. What are the options for creating a meaningful life under these conditions and how does the attempt to achieve a stable state shape its citizens? The core of much of this is how misrecognition works on a community and how this fuel a particularly fervent sort of nationalism.

Acknowledgements

Without the people I met in Jerusalem and elsewhere during my fieldwork, there would be no thesis at this point, and I am therefore hugely indebted to you. Thank you for showing me your world.

I'm indebted to a number of people for reading, commenting on and discussing my thesis. Along with that, an even bigger number for bearing with me during the writing period.

You know who you are.

First, I would like to thank my supervisor Keir Martin for sound advice and intriguing conversations throughout my degree at the University of Oslo. I would also like to thank Thomas Hylland Eriksen for additional comments towards the end of my project.

Thanks Annabelle, despite being my anthropology padawan your brutally honest feedbacks and questions about my project have helped shape and structure both research questions and arguments. Much indebted to you I am, yes.

None of this would have been possible without my partner, May-Linn. Thank you for being there while I doubted every word I wrote. Our conversations of life and anthropology make me a better human day by day.

Much of our lives are made up of intricate webs of coincidences and if my mother had not left for Israel as a 19-year-old, about 30 years ago, this thesis nor I would be here right now. Thank you for opening my eyes to the world, in every sense.

Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	iii
Introduction	1
<i>The Field and Research Question</i>	1
<i>A Brief History</i>	5
<i>Literature Overview</i>	9
<i>Theoretical Framework</i>	10
<i>Methodology</i>	15
<i>Positioning and Ethics</i>	17
<i>Summary of Chapters</i>	20
1 Narratives of Fear and Mistrust	21
<i>The Makings of a Narrative</i>	25
<i>History as Narrative</i>	31
<i>Placing blame</i>	34
2 War, Family and Values	42
<i>Symbols of War and Peace</i>	44
<i>A Different Sort of Story</i>	45
<i>“Pink Washing” the Conflict</i>	53
3 Of Work and Recognition	59
<i>The Changing Israeli Ideology of Work</i>	62
<i>Politics of Progress</i>	65
<i>Choosing Sides</i>	70
Closing Remarks	73
Bibliography	75

Introduction

As I walked up to the line waiting to board a plane to Tel Aviv, the sound of shrieking kids and their parents arguing in Hebrew replaced the silent businessmen that populated the other parts of Gardermoen airport early that morning. A small girl, probably no older than three years old, tried sneaking in behind the vacant desk and was a moment later stopped by her laughing father, mother and siblings watching from the side. Several other families stood gathered, children yawning and parents talking to each other in a mix of Norwegian, Hebrew, English and Arabic. Most were nuclear families, some young people with coffee and headphones and some middle-aged businessmen. The mix of languages among the families suggested either leaving for or departing from a family trip. As I was about to experience for myself, the family was important in a different way in Israel, from what I knew from my Norwegian family.

An important fact about my relation to Israel and therefore also my field and how I ended up studying Jewish nationalism; I'm half-Israeli. Although I grew up with my mother in Norway, I visited my father and his family in Israel a lot as a young child. When my parents broke up, contact with my father became sporadic at best and there were years without any contact between us. This position as ethnically half-Jewish, but not Jewish enough to be considered so by most religious Jews, placed me both within and outside Jewish society. So, there was a feeling of recognition as I watched the kids with their brown curls running about and the chattering of Hebrew and Norwegian, a weird sense of belonging. When I stepped out of that plane and into Ben Gurion Airport, it was my first time in Israel in 21 years.

The Field and Research Question

Choosing a field site and a theme when beginning my master's program induced a sort of existential crisis for me. Who am I, both as a person and now also as an aspiring social anthropologist? I was surely not going to Israel, that was clear. With family there, making everything more complicated than it needed to be, not to mention the political situation which seemed more stuck than ever. Nothing I could do would mean anything to anyone and surely other, better anthropologist and other researchers had already tried their best. So, what then? I dreamed a while of small islands, maybe in the Caribbean or the Pacific, at least somewhere I didn't feel like I would compete with a dozen

other researchers for people's attention and time. But what would I study? I'd been interested in witchcraft and rituals during my years as an undergraduate but felt that maybe the world didn't need that sort of knowledge right now. Therefore, I settled on nationalism, maybe not a new phenomenon, but one that seemed ever so relevant and found new exiting forms all the time. Right now, fervent nationalism seemed to attract a particular kind of demographic. They were often branded as "lone wolfs", sitting home in their flats, writing about immigrants and women. This imagination of them fascinated me. Who had something to gain by picturing these people as "lone wolfs" and what mindsets lurked behind these imaginations? Another thing which I though made this an interesting project was that the people with those kinds of opinions that I'd met prior to research seemed to have one thing in common: They loved to talk about politics, at least when they were on the fringes of the mainstream accepted forms of politics. That way, I could give a voice to those that felt cheated by the politics of our time, which I was genuinely intrigued by. But where? The US and Europe were options, especially Eastern Europe, which seemed to be changing rapidly at the time.

Going home to the town I grew up in over the summer, I were reminded of something I had been interested in way before I started studying, the Israeli/American settlers on the West Bank. What could be more nationalistic than actually being on the front lines of expanding your countries territories? To me, they seemed like the essential nationalist. In addition, they had been around longer than the new nationalist movements. The relationship between a colonizing state urging its citizens to do its work for it by just appealing to a strong sense of ideology and fear sounded like something out of a dystopic novel. Therefore, I was back to two themes that had been written a lot about and that felt vaguely too personal and confronted me with my own background. At the same time, I felt that confronting my own history as I went out to explore the mystery that was fieldwork, would open to some interesting reflections on positioning while perhaps opening up doors access-wise. I'd already heard, both through family and others, that getting past the initial scepisis of Israelis was quite hard for outsiders and this view was enhanced as I met with various other students and professors in my first weeks at the University of Oslo, who without fail would tell me that I was lucky to have the background that I had, as they could never have done that particular kind of fieldwork themselves.

When imagining nationalist men in their thirties, pictures of angry men protesting against immigrants, women's rights or against higher taxes comes up. And while this seems to be the case a

lot of places and surely is something one should study further; it doesn't paint an accurate picture of my experience from fieldwork in Israel. Sure, they were to some degree passionate about these themes, but their lives did not revolve around political action. On the contrary, many of them were proud to not be associated with any specific political sphere but remain a commentator on the side lines. Most of the time, they were passionate about something happening a lot closer to them. We can say that they were "scaling down" to their personal life choices because the political level in which changes happened seemed out of their control.

The aim of this thesis will be to explore how fears, hopes and dreams about an uncertain future are narrated and lived on the ground level. This includes how life stories and events are transformed into narratives of politics. I will argue that because of the way Israelis view their position in between the West and the Arab world, they negotiate that position and try playing to both Europe and the US. This means both creating moral stories, placing themselves within discourses of progress and denouncing the Arab world for its backwardness. While I will draw much of my theoretical framework from others, it is my wish to use my ethnographic experience to support existing theories, but also to challenge and use them for new purposes.

My fieldwork centred around men in their early twenties to their late thirties and their struggles to fit into a nationalist Israel. It also explores longings for a different future along with resentment about personal life. My research participants faced choices that apply to a growing group of people which not only stand outside full-time employment but also in effect outside of a social discourse of control and development. Despite, or because, of this, they used what they could to place themselves according to these discourses. The title for this thesis does sound like a theoretical category and while it certainly has helped me frame much of my project, it's also an emic term used by the people I met quite often, which points to a certain reflexivity around their position vis-à-vis the Palestinians. After some time getting used to the city and finding my first research participants I got into a sort of rhythm where I'd hang out with them at a café owned by Chaim, who became the person I talked to the most. I'd met him through a friend of his, Yechiel, who I also spent some time with throughout my fieldwork. Chaim and his friends became my main group of research participants, which was convenient, as they represented an interesting group of people with different perspectives who willingly shared their views about politics and life. This gave me both insight into their everyday struggles, without seeming too intrusive and provided me with a solid network of people to talk to. Some visited Chaim's café often and some came by more rarely. Due to some occasional changes in Chaim's group of friends, mostly due to the fact they moved about a lot. This gave me possibilities to

see new dynamics between Chaim's different friends. As time went on and I was increasingly treated as part of Chaim's friends, I felt more confident coming there and soon I spent most of my days there, drinking coffee and chatting as the rain subsided and was slowly replaced by the scorching sun sometime in April.



Photo 1: A small street close to Jaffa square (Photo by the author)

But what was life in Jerusalem like? As an important religious place for the three largest, monotheistic religions in the world, it is a puzzle of religious locations. Complicating things further, the Israel-Palestine conflict has made sure there are borders with checkpoints and armoured guards between all of them. Which of course makes navigating Jerusalem a nightmare for any visiting tourist, in turn making guided tours a profitable career choice. Or just an easy way to earn some quick money by offering free tours and then charging whatever amount they felt like, which offended a lot of tourists I talked to. Although tourism won't be a central theme of this paper, it's worth noting that it's a major part of the city and is a big topic of debate among Israelis in general. While providing an income for some, for others it's an everyday annoyance, taking up space in an already crowded city, where the tourists are seen as people who just want to check something off a bucket list and "doesn't get" Jerusalem. Therefore, whilst this isn't a topic that will receive much focus, the

views of Israelis towards tourists will be dealt with through the thesis and gives some insights. Just as I was not a part of what they saw as being Israeli, which was pointed to a lot of times, because I had not lived with the conflict my whole life and therefore, didn't get what was at stake. This was most of the critique of outsiders, but it also shapes my view of how narratives were used. Because tourists were free to go wherever they wanted to, and usually had very specific goals with their trips, they didn't partake in the community of endurance that Israelis expressed through their stories. They also didn't have the same things at stake when discussing anything relating to the Israel-Palestine conflict. I find this quite telling and relevant because the narratives concerning the conflict changed as to who told it and what they intended to accomplish.

A Brief History

Some background about Israel sometimes seems unnecessary, because "everyone" has an opinion about Israel's history and their victories/mistakes, all depending on where you stand. Nonetheless, I think an introduction to my field is needed, as well as some background which explains the ideas and ideologies of my research participants. An issue when talking about Israeli history is the fragmented and contested element to history. It's a common saying that the winners write history, but in this case, while Israel undoubtedly has the upper hand, the Palestinians are struggling to hold onto their version of history, while Israel tries to legitimize their history. Amar-Dahl touches upon this when he states that:

societies shaped by nationalism tend to "produce" nationalistically oriented historians. This is also true for other ideologies. When it comes to Jewish nationalism, Israel and the Jewish-Israeli society are steeped in Zionism, just as are most of its historians. They write their history from their own, that is, *authentic*, perspective (Amar-Dahl 2017: 10).

The rest of the world also has a very clear view of which of the two sides to support, including the United Nations. So how does one set about writing a fair account of this area?

Israel is special in the sense that the whole country is very much a result of both longing and a strong conceptual framework. By this, I mean that before the state of Israel, the Jewish homeland was imagined in light of the prevailing ideologies of the time. As the Jewish people of Europe started imagining a homeland of their own, they were heavily influenced by the ideology of nation-states in Europe at the same time. This was when that same focus on different peoples and their claims to a homeland of their own was closely linked to the ongoing anti-Semitism, which culminated in the Holocaust (Amar-Dahl 2017:1).

Zionism is a political movement which emerged from the increasing pressure put on the Jewish people living in diaspora¹ in Europe. Many of the ideas took shape in Theodor Herzl's book *The Jewish state* and from then on, were discussed among communities of Jews in Europe mainly. The Zionist movement gradually grew, and some people chose to settle in what was then the British Mandate of Palestine (Amar-Dahl 2017: 4). As I will deal with later, this era was characterized by a variety of different narratives and much of the basis for their disbelief in the existence of a Palestinian people, let alone state. This “mystification” around a specific time function as a great tool for creating convincing narratives, but to get a clearer picture, let's look a little more closely at it.

For once, the persuasive thought of an “empty, uncultivated land” seems to be easily dismissed. For example, the coastal fortress in Acre was a trading port on par with its competitors and became an important economic and military factor in the area (Anderson 2016: 62-63). Another (mis)conception of this period of time was that the Ottoman empire held their subjects in an iron fist, neglecting them the possibility to engage in trade, again Anderson shows how at least the more wealthy people managed to build up a network of trade that connected them to more global flows of goods (Anderson 2016: 64-65).

A prevailing line of thought is that the transition from the religious focus and in to the nationalist one that followed, is that it represents a “progression”. Israel as a state replaces the dispersed nature of the religious diaspora and in that way, religion is more of an addition to the security the state represents (Amar-Dahl 2017: 6).

Since Israel's formal beginning in 1948 the country has both gone through several full-scale conflicts and political changes. The War of Independence is to many Israelis a proud part of history and is celebrated each year as *Independence Day* and marks the first triumph in the makings of modern-day Israel. At the same time, Palestinians remember the exact same time as the *Al-Nakba*, or the catastrophe, when a lot of families lost both their physical homes as well as their home country. According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (henceforth referred to as the UNRWA) over 1 500 000 Palestinians are living in refugee camps in Lebanon, Jordan, Syrian Arab republic and the Palestinian territories. This includes the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. Over 5 million Palestinians are eligible for support from the UNRWA (Palestine Refugees | UNRWA, 2020).

¹ Diaspora referring to Jews living outside of the territories considered as their homeland.



Photo 2: A refugee camp in East Jerusalem (Photo by the author)

The formation of the state of Israel was followed by a number of wars and smaller incidents which one could say ran continually until they were stopped for a short period of time in the 1990's during the Oslo Processes. One could say these wars are as disputed as the one in 1948 and interwoven into international processes and conflicts. After the 1948 war, Israel had effectively settled much of what is now modern Israel, with the exception of the Golan heights and what they have later occupied on and around the West Bank and the Gaza strip. The Palestinians who had not fled abroad before or during the 1948 war, ended up either on the Egyptian controlled Gaza strip or the West Bank, controlled by Jordan. The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) emerged from this, keeping the interests of the Palestinian people alive. To keep the character of Israel essentially Jewish, the Law of Return was passed in 1950, granting Jews citizenship in Israel, while denying others the same right (Gelvin 2016: 238-239).

The war in 1967, known as the "Six Day War", was an important reference point in many discussions among Israelis I met. The war started with a number of Israeli raids into Jordan and Egypt, known as "reprisal raids" which were planned to avenge Palestinians who'd crossed the

armistice lines to either harvest crops or gather possessions from their old properties, now held by Israeli Jews. Some of the Palestinians had also crossed the line in order to sabotage Israel. The war acting as a result of almost 20 years of small incidents, it went as follows. Israel beat its neighbouring countries combined strength in a show of force. The war resulted in Israel laying claim to the Golan Heights (from Syria), the West Bank (from Jordan) and both the Gaza strip and Sinai Peninsula from Egypt. These were used for bargaining for peace deals from their Arab neighbours', resulting in Israel's continued existence. These peace treaties are quite contested and has been the background of much dispute between Israel and the United Nations (Gelvin 2016: 240-242).

A time in Israeli history which became especially relevant during my fieldwork, both because of who my research participants saw me as, as well as it is an important part of history to them, was the Oslo Processes. It was mentioned as a point of reference to me more times than I care to recall, both as a way of connecting me to the conflict and sometimes trying to figure out where my loyalties were. In addition to this, the Oslo Processes were also subject to a great deal of resentment and conspiracies, featuring in some narratives of the "the whole world is against us"-kind. People on both sides of the political spectrum felt that the conflict had been brought to a standstill just because of the agreements signed by both parts.

During my fieldwork, the political situation changed from a stable state of insecurity into a locked political situation in which the elected parties were unable to form a coalition government. Although not something I spoke a lot to my research participant about, it was a running theme which was touched upon now and then. The regular election was held in April while I was doing fieldwork in Jerusalem and the results were discussed in the weeks surrounding the election as both Likud and Blue and White (the main parties in that election) tried and failed at forming governments.

The political instability came along with a rise in military action both in the West Bank and Gaza. This was understood among many Israelis I talked to as the Palestinians taking advantage of the political situation in Israel to reach their goals. By other people I met, which were more sceptical towards Israel's actions, this was seen differently. They were leaning towards the sitting Israeli government trying to create insecurity and fear to hold on to their power, which was founded on just that. Other facts I think are important to note of Israel's situation right now is among others that Israel was ranked as the OECD country which had the highest proportion of poverty. This is closely linked to the rise of neoliberalism in Israel and its effects on the welfare state. While the economic

and social consequences of this will be discussed further, it is an important backdrop for my fieldwork as most of my research participants were affected negatively by this.

Literature Overview

“I accept that there are two narratives, but ours has been proven scientifically to be the right one”

Moshe Lissak remarked, attending an event discussing whether or not Israeli Academia was “an ideological tool in the hands of Zionism or a bastion of free thought and speech?”. This happened in Tel Aviv 1994 and if there were doubts about the question beforehand, this cleared them up pretty quick. It also inspired the book in which this quote is copied from (Pappe 2014: 2). It sums up something vital, that most Israelis are aware of the other way of seeing the story of their country, they’re just dead set that they’re right. Why is that?

While researching Israel, both during and after fieldwork, one gets the impression that there is an overwhelming amount of existing literature. While the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been looked at for some years now, as Orit Abuhav notes, anthropology in Israel didn’t catch on until the 60’, although introduced to the Hebrew University of Jerusalem already in the 20’s. Abuhav argues that this was because of the heavy focus on building a congruent community and later national unit (Abuhav 2004).

Some of those early anthropological fieldworks conducted in Jerusalem clearly bore the mark of collecting data of a disappearing and endangered way of life. Like so many anthropologists of that time (Malinowski to name one) they were concerned with collecting data for preserving ways of life that they thought would disappear as modernization spread (Granquist 1935, Canaan 1927). Following this, not much care was given to fieldwork in Israel, except for some Zionist researchers looking to explore the lives of Jewish people living in then Palestine (Abuhav 2004).

Literature on the conflict have centred much around the lives of Palestinians living in occupied territories, as well as settlers. Here I note the anthropologist Rabinowitz – who is himself Israeli - contribution in *Overlooking Nazareth* and *Coffins on Our Shoulders*, which both deal with the lives of Palestinians. The former explores the lives of Palestinians living in close proximity of the Israeli city of Natzerat Illit and the conflicts and forms of oppressions taking place there. The latter is co-

written with family therapist Khawla Abu-Baker and entails an historic and personal account of the Palestinian history and life from the 1920's to the early 2000's (Rabinowitz 1997, Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker 2005).

Anthropological accounts on the makings and re-makings of nationalist politics on the ground should also include *Nationalism and the Politics of Fear* by Cathrine Thorleifsson. The book focuses on Jewish Israelis of Middle Eastern heritage, Mizrahim in Hebrew and how they deal with being on the fringes of Israeli society, both in terms of ideology and geography. The book features as an excellent example of how anthropology could be done, as a study of a relatively small group of people and their ties to greater Israel. It also adopts a critical stance towards Israeli politics, while taking people's lives and stories seriously (Thorleifsson 2015).

Worthy of note is also *City on a Hilltop*, written by Sara Yael Hirschhorn. It explores the somewhat mystical nature of American settlers on the West Bank, which often are conceptualized as right-wing or religious extremists, but carry much of their - American - liberal heritage with them (Hirschhorn 2017). As some of the people I met were in fact American settlers, and Israeli society was in general also very much influenced by the same liberal ethos that describes the settlers in Hirschhorn's descriptions.

The point of this summary has both been to illustrate popular trends in anthropological research on Israel and to show some of the more related examples to my own research. As is apparent there are ways of focusing on a conflict which has gained international publicity through close examination of people's everyday lives. Yes, a conflict *can* and should be studied as a legal and state-oriented issue, but to really understand the people living in it, we must engage ourselves in their lives and not just through the "official" version. This has been one of the major goals of this thesis.

Theoretical Framework

While I will be deploying a number of theories and analytical tools, not confined to one "genre" or "paradigm" of anthropology, the common thread will be that what people *say* needs to be supplied with or even contradicted with what they *do*. At the same time, my own presuppositions, agendas or wrongful beliefs during fieldwork will be dealt with and hopefully uncovered. In this sense, I'm inspired by anthropologists such as Paul Rabinow or Richard Madden (Rabinow 2007 [1977],

Madden 2017), which place the anthropologist firmly in the ethnography. Not because the attention is sought after, but because in using ourselves as research tools, we are subject to our own partial perspectives and biases. And these insights provide a background in which the ethnography can make more sense than on its own. At the same time, the conflict I will be dealing with, while I focus on the ground-level, also happens on an international, national and economic level, which I'll bring in to contextualize. However, as the people I spent my time with didn't care much for organizations and had little belief in the state, I feel that it's fairer to take their experience of the conflict as my starting point and rather supply history and analyse their actions where due.

As I've explained earlier, my thesis will focus much on nationalism among the people I spent time with during my fieldwork. Nationalism can be explained as "a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent" (Gellner 1983: 1). By this, we can understand that the ethnic, linguistic and cultural traits of a people should as much as possible be the same, for the national state to work (Anderson 1991). Nationalism everywhere can be classified as both belonging to the political right, through the exclusion of immigrants or minorities, or the political left through feelings of solidarity (Eriksen 2010: 129) and in Israel, both at the same time. This is because the left side of Israeli politics has been diminishing ever since the failure of the Oslo Process and the Second Intifada. Thus, these two modes of nationalist thought are used at the same time and with no clear boundaries. The term nativism can be defined as a form of excluding nationalism, which claims that each nation-state should be inhabited by one native group and that if mixing occurs, it threatens the function of the nation-state (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017). Kapferer goes as far as to argue that nationalism is an ontology, meaning that it gives a sort of shape to reality and uses myth in much of the same way as religion does (1988, 1989).

As Thorleifsson states, there are differences between the nationalism of the liberal centres in Israel, such as Haifa or Tel Aviv, when compared with Kiryat Shmona, where she conducted her fieldwork. She describes this as a sort of peripheral nationhood, where the people on the fringes of the state need to negotiate for their belonging while people in safer parts belong in that hegemony in another sense (Thorleifsson 2015: 3). On the West Bank and in Jerusalem, some of this rang true as well, as these areas were contested and subject to some ambiguity and insecurity.

The nationalism I witnessed was, as it often is, coupled with populism. Populism can be understood as an ideology which separates the people into the people on the ground, which are good, and the corrupt elite on top (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017). This was often made a point of in discussions of

politics I heard, exemplified by the allegations towards Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that he, quite successfully, has managed to dodge. This became a sort of proof of the continuing abuse of power by people in high positions and fuelled the feeling that they were powerless.

An understanding of colonialism is also essential to understanding Israel's position in the middle east, and how they are perceived by both minorities living in Israel and condemnation from neighbouring countries and the rest of the world. As Horvath explains "(t)he changing morality of colonialism contributes to our lack of understanding. People feel strongly about colonialism – it has either been a dirty business engaged by evil people or a praiseworthy endeavour undertaken by fine gentlemen for the noble purpose of saving the wretched, the savage, the unfortunate" (Horvath 1972: 45). And just this way is Israel often condemned for their colonial practices by the outside world, while internally proud of their efforts to make Israel a democratic country in line with any European country. We can also understand the views of Israelis towards the Palestinian people as "the savage", which needs to be lifted up to the development level of the of colonizers. To understand this notion, we need to look at how progress came to be the defining word to describe how Europe transformed itself in a relatively short time. "(T)he ideology of progress in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries followed, accompanied, and produced institutional, technical, and cultural changes of extraordinary scope and increasing momentum" (Almond et al (ed.) 1982).

This focus on the progress of societies, together with the workings of colonialism constitutes what Edward Said explores in "Orientalism". Orientalism we can term the way Western imagines the Orient, or what we would call Asia, Africa and the Middle East now. Said points to how this representation relied on a domination of the Orient by the West and how it was imagined as something exotic that could be experienced by mostly privileged Europeans. At the same time, it distorts and exaggerates the culture of those who belong to the orient, constituting a "savage" or "uncivilized" stereotype (Said 2003). Both as background to some of the discussion I will engage in and used directly in some empirical examples, Said's theories concerning the "othering" of especially Palestinians has proved useful throughout my thesis.

My project must also be placed in its contexts, which is an Israel that is not only feeling threatened by their Arab neighbouring countries but also has had a steady decline in supporting countries around the world. While this might seem next to the point, a lot of the people I talked to complained about the lack of support and the public scrutiny Israel and the Jewish people were met with not only from a lot of countries but from the UN and other non-profit organizations. One can say this response

is fully in line with a populist-nationalist ideology, in that it values inside stability and homogeneity against any foreigner. However, what came first is hard to answer... Which brings me to another useful concept I'll be using in this thesis, the double-bind. *Double-Bind* is a concept by George Bateson which refers to "a situation in which no matter what a person does, he 'can't win'". Now to be fair, this theory was aimed at people who suffered from Schizophrenia but has been used in Social Sciences as a term to explain situations where no matter what you chose, it leads to some kind of negative outcome and you have to choose the least harmful one, either to you or others (Bateson 1972). A lot of my research participants spoke in terms that are easy to understand if thinking through the concept of the double-bind. A common example being how Israelis were judged by the outside world for their treatment of the Palestinian people, but not being able to do anything about it because of the dangers Hamas² posed to the people.

Neoliberalism, I use to describe the political ideology of lesser state regulations and the belief that a free market will generate more profit. This market ideology was pursued first by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan in the '80s and began with a structural change towards a free market. Although a concept with ideological ties, it is useful as a tool for understanding the types of political action that attempt to maximize gain, instead of satisfying human needs (Eriksen 2016:18). There was a strong belief among people I talked to, that the way to both get ahead in life and for Israel to get out of its unhealthy situation, was to work hard to become financially stable. A sort of cynic view that downplayed the culture and made everything a question of economy. Maybe not that weird, when it was Thatcher that preached that "there is no such thing as society". As Thorleifsson states, "neoliberal privatisation of state-owned enterprises and mass immigration of Jews and non-Jews from the former Soviet Union has increased unemployment and labour competition" since the 1980's (Thorleifsson 2015: 2). The people I spent my time with were very much victims of these kinds of politics, although they wouldn't admit to it openly in fear of being seen as weak for not achieving what they felt that they ought to.

This ties in with Guy Standing's concept of the *Precariat*, the newly emerging class of workers with little to no security, going from one job to the next with no future to plan. They're according to him, the children of neo-liberal politics and what is termed "labour market flexibility", which just means they're expandable and have little formal rights. The scary part? It's difficult to rally behind a call for

² Hamas is a social movement and political party, recognized by Israel and other states as a terrorist group, see BBC (2017)

less market flexibility, as there is an identity struggle between feeling like the victim and rejecting the existing system (Standing 2017). While, as I wrote earlier, my research participants didn't rally behind anything, this uneasiness about their identity and the struggle between flexibility and stability was a re-occurring theme.

In addition to this, it is exceptionally hard to research a place which isn't affected by globalization in some way. Now of course, globalization can be said to be the one of the buzzwords of our time. Indeed, it would be possible to talk about connections instead. Eric Wolf argued in "Europe and the people without history" that the world had always been interconnected and that this sudden focus on the connectedness of the world was just a part of a discourse of Western progress that originated in Europe and affected the rest of the world (Wolf 1982). But words can be useful and theorizing globalization isn't just understanding that the world is interconnected like it has always been, but how these connections work and affect people. Eriksen argues that what changes the connectedness of the world now from just 10 or 20 years ago is the speed at which it is happening and that this constitutes what he terms an *Overheating* effect. Not only are the changes happening faster than before, but we're lacking a thermostat that could cool down the change as it becomes harmful (Eriksen 2016).

Really, much of the background for my project could be summarized by this:

...the Jewish–Arab Palestinian conflict constituted an "overheating effect" which heightened the precarity of identity, resulting in increased nationalist fervour, nostalgia, and cynicism, all of which are typical responses to accelerated change (Thorleifsson 2017: 102).

And just this mix of causes led me to invest a lot of time and energy into narratives, or how to tell stories that are personal, but ties into greater political stories. To make my point about narratives, I'll go more into detail later on. But some ways to understand narratives would be through Bourdieu or Foucault, in their theories of *doxa* and *discourse*, respectively. They work in much of the same way, in which a story is placed in a room (or discourse) of the "allowed" stories. What isn't inside the allowed one could assume would be frowned upon and would therefore not be a successful narrative. Because the successful narrative *achieves* something, it builds upon what a group considers to be true, in order to prove its legitimacy (Bourdieu 1977, Foucault 1971).

Methodology

My fieldwork started in January 2019 in Jerusalem with the intention to study people who chose to live in settlements and the reasons behind their choice. While my initial project had a lot in common with the project I ended up doing, some things changed. Before changing to the focus on the constructed narratives among Israeli men that I ended up doing fieldwork on and writing about, my plan was to do my fieldwork among Israeli Jews living in Israeli settlements on the West Bank, which were legal by Israeli laws, but not by international ones. I was going to see how these people defended their lifestyle and made themselves a part of Israel they imagined.

When I got to Jerusalem, I immediately started asking people I met for a way to live in a settlement, the responses were not very positive, to put it mildly. Some would simply ask "what settlements?", which is very interesting in itself, and others would scoff and start defending Israel's policy on the settlements. Very few seemed to want to introduce me to anyone and I had to change my strategy. As I started getting contacts in Jerusalem, I quickly saw the possibility of doing my research there, among them, but at the same time resisted the idea and wanted to keep my original project. As the weeks went by and I spent more time with the people I'd met in Jerusalem, I found myself having to make a choice. Really, it wasn't much of a choice anymore, as the information available and the people I had talked to were so interesting that it seemed a better way to conduct my fieldwork than chasing uncertain possibilities outside of Jerusalem.

Another important aspect of the fieldwork is that, as I briefly mentioned earlier, my father's family live in Israel and have been living there all my life. This means that while I did spend some time with my family during the duration of the fieldwork, I had not met most of them since I was a young child and had no close bonds with any of them. Although I did get to know some of them better during my fieldwork, they remained outside of the fieldwork itself and I tried to separate family time from the time I spent in Jerusalem with my research participants. It did, however, help immensely when introducing myself to new people, to place myself within the Israeli community.

To study nationalism using ethnography naturally means exploring hopes, fears and general assumptions about the state. However, like Thorleifsson points to, this is not enough, one must also point out how these structures are used or ignored by social actors. Also, a study on nationalism does

well to not only look at the grand-scale, (often state-sponsored) nationalism or the forceful movements but also on everyday practices (Thorleifsson 2015: 4-5). This was early on something I wished to do, both as a relevant anthropological project but also as an alternative to what I experienced as often state-focused views on the Israel-Palestine conflict, which largely ignored social movements and focused on more elusive concepts such as the economy of occupation, resource scarcity and terrorism. And while all these things could be studied in a helpful way, they don't necessarily tell the story of people outside of the political processes.

I also use the terms 'ethnic' or 'race' throughout this thesis as a means of understanding how my research participants made sense of the world and used these terms to separate themselves from other people. However, these terms in no way refer to an actual focus on racial differences among people, but on the social belief that such differences exist. This relation between what my research participants see as a social reality and my own belief was an uneasy one. But by reading Sherry Ortner's *Identities: The Hidden Life of Class* one can get a glimpse into how different labels are used to help underpin some standard narratives of failure and success. Here class is seen as an obstacle, which goes against the thought of people achieving just because of their skills and persistence (1998). Again, a strong focus on an "American Dream" kind of ideology, which mostly ignores social ties.

As I wanted to look at nationalism from the ground up, I knew that participant observation would be essential to my fieldwork, but I was unaware of just how large a role it would take on. I had imagined using more interviews or at least be prepared to utilize other methods. But as I got to know people, it became more apparent that they preferred to just go about their lives without too much focus on me. Sure, they were interested in my project and sometimes would discuss it with me and were very well aware that they were part of it, but they simply preferred that I asked some questions here and there, not separating them from each other. I was uneasy about this, to begin with, but soon saw the benefits of immersing myself into their lives, without creating unnecessary boundaries between us.

During the writing period the question of how much one should let the ethnographic examples speak for themselves and how much one should argue came up regularly. "Is this too much description?" "Is this enough description?" "Should I support these observations by adding more work from

others?” and so on. Two texts that both gave me some sort of reassurance, and some direction, were *Writing Against Conclusion*, by Nina Holm Vohnsen and *Public Ritual in Mauritius*, by Thomas Hylland Eriksen, both from the book *The Composition of Anthropology* (2018). Vohnsen points to the importance of creating small “bubbles of meaning” and not forcing everything into an argumentation. Reality is too multifaceted to be put down in its entirety but should all the same try to represent it as fully as possible in its contradicting ways (Vohnsen 2018). This has added more focus on the small pieces of ethnographic description that helps paint a conflicting picture of the reality which I took part of. Eriksen on the other hand, describes how his focus on his argument made him focus on the – in retrospect – less important parts of public events he attended (Eriksen 2018). When writing up and trying to choose which parts to include this proved to be a great tool for guidance. And while this focus on writing may seem misplaced, I would argue that while we as anthropologists invest a great deal of trouble into the methodology of fieldwork, a disproportionate amount of focus is placed on the writing up of ethnographic texts and how we represent ourselves and the people we write about.

Positioning and Ethics

My link to Israel gave me some benefits when dealing with new people. But I soon found out that my appearance was most times interpreted as European or even Scandinavian anyway and the link to Israel often had to be made explicit. As all of my main group of research participants soon knew this, it worked to the extent I wanted it too and when going about the city I was just branded as another tourist, which meant that I was left alone by everyone except salesmen and tour guides. This was a relief as I was free to roam both parts of Jerusalem in my leisure time, without feeling confined to one side.

Being what’s termed a “halfie” in anthropology, is theoretized to some degree. It is being both inside and outside of the social expectations, and in some ways being caught between engaging fully in the social life and fulfilling one’s role as a researcher. This means according to Abu-Lughod that the halfie researcher “(not only) position themselves with reference to two communities but because when they present the Other, they are presenting themselves, they speak with a complex awareness of and investment in reception” (Abu-Lughod 1991: 142).

I did occasionally regret the choice to conduct fieldwork in my father's home country, as the expectations from my family showed me another side of being Israeli often talked about by people I met. Although I spent most of my time in Jerusalem, as soon as I'd visited my family, there was intense pressure to come there in the weekends and little understanding for what I actually tried to do while staying in Israel. As I got a closer relation to parts of my family it became easier, but that part of my fieldwork took a lot of energy at times and felt more overwhelming than the actual fieldwork at times. But as Zulfikar, who also did fieldwork in a country one of his parents were from, states:

However, as a 'halfie' researcher, I may get an advantage. The fact that I position myself as both an insider and an outsider researcher enable me to generate balance perspectives on these young Muslims' ways of being in their natural settings (Zulfikar 2014:378).

Therefore, while spending time with my family did feel like an extended fieldwork, it's because it was, at least partly. While I don't use a lot of information from my time with my family, it did undoubtedly help me emphasize with the Israelis I met who struggled with their families, and especially their expectations towards them. Now, it sounds like all Israelis have family problems and I'm in no way claiming that, but it became an important thing in common with a surprisingly large number of people I met. I will get back to why later on in my thesis.

Language can easily be seen as an ethnic marker in Israel. In order to obtain status as a native, Thorleifsson claims language skills were just as important as the will to make *Aliyah* or moving permanently to Israel. An example she uses is from her own Hebrew *ulpah* class in which as she exceeded in her studies, her teacher joked that she was better than many of the other even without being Jewish. From which we can gather that Jewishness and proficiency in Hebrew are closely connected generally is Israel (2015: 15). I can easily agree with that observation and by not investing the time in learning Hebrew I lost much of the good-will that Thorleifsson described that she received from Israelis. Despite of my heritage, which seemed important as a start of conversation to many, they often lost interest as I was (1) not learning Hebrew and (2) not intending to make *aliyah*³.

Here Wikan's use of resonance has been helpful. She argues that even if one is not adequate at the language, it doesn't need to mean that it is impossible to do fieldwork.

³ *Making aliyah* is a term used for the act of moving to Israel.

“Resonance thus demands something of both parties of communication, of both reader and author: an effort at feeling-thought; a willingness to engage with another world, life, idea; an ability to use one’s experience... to try to grasp, or convey, meanings that reside neither in words, “facts,” nor text but are evoked in the meeting of one experiencing subject with another or with a text (Wikan 1992: 463)

As Wikan also points out, this is not only something that happens through text after it has been written, but during the writing period and fieldwork in itself. I was lucky that the people I met not only took the time and effort to talk to me in English, but also to occasionally translate and explain the meanings of what they saw as everyday details of their life.

Before embarking on fieldwork, I read the book *My Life as A Spy: Investigation in A Secret Police File* (Verdery 2018). The thought was to prepare myself for what I saw as the unlikely event that I would encounter problems from the Israel Security Agency, commonly known as Shabak or Shin Bet. By the time I had finished the book and had started the fieldwork, I had become so paranoid that I was certain I was followed. It didn’t help that most of the people I talked to in Israel seemed sure of that as well. It even went so far as my father promising to print out information that proved that I had relatives in Israel, which he thought could help me in a tricky situation. Well, I didn’t get those papers, and nor did I need them. Although interviews at the airport are known for being tough on foreigners, my anxiety about them seemed unneeded as I passed through after talking about my family for a couple of minutes. But while this worked out for me, I could easily imagine the horror of getting held at the airport for hours because of your research.

Gender became something that I had to take into account in some ways. I’d expected that Israel would be less liberal and that it would probably be easier to get in contact with male research participants. But the degree in which it was difficult getting in touch with women astonished me at first. What seemed to be the solution to this was getting in touch with the families of my predominantly male friends to talk to their mothers or wives. Of course, there were some exceptions, but usually by quite liberal women I met.

Informed consent was given by the people I write about in this thesis, in addition to this their identities have been made anonymous by giving all of them new names. With some of them, I also mixed up a couple of people with a similar background into one new fictional person and vice versa. This I did to further discourage anyone from finding out the identities of the people I studied.

Sometimes this has led me to alter descriptions, to not betray any of them by giving out their workplace by ways of description.

A lot of them expressed the wish to be named in my thesis and eventual articles based on my fieldwork, and while I initially took this as a sign of their trust, I soon began to suspect that they just wanted their name on print. No matter the reason, I see it as my responsibility to protect them while being part of my project. Of course, the few public figures that I mention are named as they are usually politicians and it would be back-wards not to.

Summary of Chapters

The first chapter will focus on how the people I spent my time with told stories as a way of relating to and politically commenting on the outside world. It seeks to discover how narratives are built, used and contested as both identity- and community building. It also stresses the pragmatic nature of narratives and how while the overall shape of a narrative could be discussed, it doesn't help discover the *use* of those narratives.

In the second chapter, the focus turns to both the ambiguity around discourses of progress and traditional values and how this clash influences families. The ever-ongoing Israeli-Palestinian war is also something that puts additional strain on families and enhances their ambiguity. The chapter also uses Independence Day and the Pride celebration as examples of how Israel tries to represent itself inwards and outwards, traditional and liberal.

The third and final chapter explores the links between longings for a better future and how aspirations are shaped by current political situations. Jobs are hard to come by and the good ones near impossible, making finding meaning increasingly harder. What is seen as meaningful in a political landscape so filled with distrust? How does one get recognition and is that even possible in such a locked social position? It also deals with some alternative ways of looking at previous themes and questions.

1 Narratives of Fear and Mistrust

I met Yeziel in a bar in the same building as the hostel I was staying in. I had been there some early nights to try talking to people. Most nights I'd talked to the bartender for some time before leaving, just because he didn't have a lot to do, and the rest of the people there were kind of busy chatting with friends. Most of them were also tourists, so while those who were travelling alone usually appreciated having someone to talk to, I felt like I was shying away from my real task when talking to them. So, I talked to the bartender. He was at least Israeli, although not overly fond of my project, as he didn't himself think that there were any occupation or Palestinian people for that matter. After having talked this over a couple of times, me trying to get to the "why" and him denying the existence of the issue I was there to research, he pointed to a friend of his sitting some chairs away from me.

"You see that guy? He is from the Gush⁴ and knows these things better than anyone. Hey Yeziel, this guy wants to know about the Gush!"

I thanked him and a little sheepishly walked over to this new guy, who for me looked like the quintessential American settler. He wore the sort of clothes that I later recognized as the "uniform" of Israeli men; dark brown boots of the brand Blundstone (or some cheap replica), blue jeans and a black hoodie. His hair tied into a loose sort of ponytail and beard well down his chest, he looked to be at least 35 and quite intimidating. After some introductions and explanation of the project and my background (he was quite interested in my Israeli family) we started talking about the West Bank and the life and politics surrounding Israeli settlements there. A couple of weeks earlier I had visited a settlement in the southern part of the West Bank and told him about my experiences there and how the people there had explained their choice to live there. In short, the settlement I had been too relied on a strong sense of religious connection to the land to explain why they had the right to be there. They were also known for choosing not to have fences around their settlement, as to provoke nearby Palestinians enough so that they in turn could retaliate. To put it mildly, they didn't paint the most peaceful image of the Israelis living on the West Bank⁵. While he acknowledged that this one

⁴ Short for Gush Etzion, an area of some settlements in the Southern part of the West Bank.

⁵ Which is part of the reason why conducting research there was ruled out.

settlement was built on another basis than some of the others, he also said that religion played some part in the reasoning. He himself had grown up and lived most of his life in one of the towns in Gush Etzion with what he described as "moderately religious" parents. I later found out his father had passed away some years ago and that his mother had married another man who was much more religious, which had caused some resentment from Yechiel and his brother.

Yechiel was the first person I got to know when beginning my fieldwork and what struck me quite early on was his fragile work situation, combined with his sort of careless but searching attitude. He worked as a tour guide in the West Bank and explained that he made a quite modest amount of money and didn't feel strongly connected to what he did for a living. On top of that, the work was totally dependent on the number of (often American) tourists to book a tour of the Israeli held parts of the West Bank.

His explanation of his hometown centred around some incidents which had led to a lot of anger in his community, for example one of his High School teachers who'd been killed some years ago by "an Arab guy, totally brainwashed", I will return to that story a bit later on. This was a reoccurring way of describing people on both sides of the conflict as "brainwashed" and therefore dangerous. He said himself that he had nothing against the Palestinians/Arabs as long as they kept to themselves and "didn't cause any trouble". I didn't want to push the point at the present time in fear of pushing him away, but rather wait and see. After some more talking, he offered to take me with him to Hebron⁶ the following day with his Palestinian friend, Jamal, who had promised him a trip there. I was both surprised by the sudden invitation and that he had Palestinian friends, and at the same time annoyed at what I saw as something not entirely relevant to my project. This sort of "you need to see this"-attitude was something I encountered throughout my entire fieldwork. Although this was an excellent opportunity and I accepted, the notion that I needed to see all sorts of places and talk to all sorts of people was a misconception that made getting the focus that I wanted for my project, always being shown interesting, but not always relevant peoples and places. Of course, the intention was probably of the best kind, but nevertheless felt like constant detours from my focus.

Although we had planned to travel to Hebron the following day, because of the rain we delayed the trip. As we both had time, we decided to travel the next morning, using bus out to the settlement area around Gush Etzion. However, after leaving Jerusalem Yechiel decided that we should hitch-hike the

⁶ Hebron is controlled by the Palestinian Authority and illegal to enter for Israeli citizens.

rest of the way to avoid waiting and paying for the bus. Standing there on the side of a highway in a desert-like landscape as far as the eye could see, having departed the bullet-proof bus that had taken us out here, I couldn't help but think "what have I gotten myself into?". But as an older car stopped in front of us, that was soon forgotten. The driver was an old man who talked non-stop with Yechiel the entire way, while I sat in the backseat trying to pick up phrases. I was later told by Yechiel that they'd talked about the situation on the West Bank and how people were losing their jobs because of Western boycotts of products produced on the West Bank. This was a reoccurring complaint, that when the rest of the world meddled, they usually made things worse. As for this particular example, a big international corporation had faced a boycott because their factory was situated on the West Bank and therefore had moved out to Israel territory. The irony was, as Yechiel liked to point out, that the people who had actually suffered from this, had been the Palestinians working in the factory. The factory owner had just lost some money and had to hire new, Israeli factory workers and had to relocate the business to the outskirts of Tel Aviv.

The older guy was according to Yechiel an Arab who lived in a Palestinian village close by. I later asked him if he was afraid as an Israeli on the West Bank and he said that yes, sometimes the thought occurred to him. But as he also said, he was used to it and knew that most people he met were nice people, he was only afraid of the people who'd been "brainwashed". While he usually talked about this when referring to Palestinians, he also admitted that Israelis or anyone else could also be brainwashed, especially the religious.

When we got to the little mall at the centre of Gush Etzion I was surprised, not because the mall looked like anything special, but that it was situated in the middle of an area which I had conceptualized in a particular way. And a shopping mall with a sushi restaurant, American brand names and a liquor store was not part of that conceptualization. Not that I should have been that surprised, American settlers are a prominent group on the West Bank, but the scale and how it lay vis-a-vis small and vulnerable-looking villages made it look monstrous. Walking towards it Yechiel showed me where a former teacher of his had been killed while trying to prevent a young Palestinian man from killing a young, Jewish man. He didn't give any details as to how it all started, but to him, it didn't seem to matter. According to him, the teacher had been carrying a gun⁷ and had seen the Palestinian assaulting another man and there fired warning shots. The Palestinian had therefore shifted his focus to the teacher and gotten hold of the gun, but not before being shot in the leg by the

⁷ Carrying firearms is allowed if you live in the Israeli controlled zones of the West Bank.

teacher. The story ended with the teacher bleeding out from a gunshot wound and the Palestinian guy surviving.

The act by the teacher had been termed as "local heroism" and there was a huge poster of him over the place where he'd been killed. Yechiel said this had been a traumatic event for him, although he'd been in the Army at the time and only heard about it later.

After waiting for Yechiel's friend for some time we went out from the mall and I was again surprised to find a light blue, brand new Mercedes waiting for us. Next to it stood a well-dressed man smiling friendly, he and Yechiel embraced and exchanged some welcomes in Hebrew⁸. He then turned to me and welcomed me in a clear British accent. On the way from the mall into Hebron, Yechiel and his Palestinian friend, Jamal, talked like old friends, speaking English as no one of them understood each other's language. As I sat dumbstruck in the backseat of the sportscar on the old, shabby road to the checkpoint, the contrasts between the landscape surrounding us and the Palestinian man couldn't have been bigger. The sand-coloured hills around us with its patchy architecture and shabby-looking shops, over-populated with 30-year-old Toyotas and old women carrying their weight in groceries, in worn-out plastic bags. We drove through the checkpoint outside Hebron without a second glance and were explained that "they never stop anyone driving this sort of car", a small grin on Jamal's face.

On the way Jamal told us of his businesses in Hebron, painting a very different picture from the one I was expecting. He was in his late twenties but co-owned several factories and restaurants with his brothers, which they had inherited from their father when he passed away. Driving past what looked like a tiny palace placed upon a hill, he remarked that he, his mother and his youngest siblings lived there. The roads were much smoother here and although one easily could spot areas without the same standard of living, this little part of the outskirts of Hebron displayed something outside of my scope of imagination. Driving on, he proceeded to show us the surrounding hills and we soon saw how big the differences were between rich and poor. Here and there houses were being renovated, which usually entailed building another floor to them. Jamal explained that property was so expensive that most families had to build upwards to afford to live. As we drove on, I asked him what he thought would help lessen the economic gaps he had just described and whether he thought it plausible. He

⁸ I soon found out that Jamal didn't in fact speak Hebrew but know some phrases which he often used when meeting Israelis.

replied, maybe not that surprising, that he thought he were doing just what needed to be done, giving people the possibility to work, both to support their families, find something to do with their lives and lessen the dependency on aid or the local black economy. As we drove on, the roads got worse again and with that, came people, cars and other obstacles occasionally blocking our pathway. The architecture went from sparse in the outskirts of Hebron, to what looked like bombed out buildings, some abandoned, some seemingly lived in. Jamal looked tense forward, his hands gripping the steering wheel tightly while Yechiel stared out, seeming far away.

As Jamal parked the car and paid a young boy to watch over it while we were gone, I glanced around me. The buildings were of massive stones, the same as the streets themselves. Ornaments lined the windows looking down on the narrow street. As we walked out of the tiny street we'd parked in and made our way towards the main street, the pictures I was used to seeing emerged. The street was filled with garbage and people were standing on both sides of the road, selling what looked like a lot of old clothes, much of it looking more like rags than actual clothes. Jamal kept on talking about how there were too few jobs in Hebron and that as people donated things to the poorest, the poorest in turn tried selling their stuff to afford to live. As we walked past all the small tables, we neared a small tunnel in the end of the street. On top of it, were barbed wire made to protect one or both of the sides and graffiti on the surrounding building, most of them in Hebrew. Noticing where my eyes were at, he explained that the wire was set up to stop the Israeli settlers living in those buildings from throwing stones and eggs on the people walking in the streets below. Yechiel seemed quite collected through it all, having said little since we left the car, just gazing around. We entered the narrow tunnel and found it to in fact have been a small street, which now gave the impression of a tunnel, due to its makeshift roof above and the buildings above it on either side. At the end of it was the small, but heavily guarded checkpoint between the Palestinian city of Hebron and the Israeli settlement Kiryat Arba.

The Makings of a Narrative

Some days after I'd been to Hebron with Yechiel he sent me a message asking if I'd like to meet some of his friends and he also said he'd show me around the area. As I was thrilled that my first real informant himself took the initiative to meet up and show me around, I agreed. The following day I met him outside the hostel I was staying at and we walked to a nearby street which I'd passed through a number of times without giving it a second thought. It was a narrow little street with towering buildings on each side, blocking out the sun and adding some shabbiness. The street was

shabby enough as it was, mismatching pieces of asphalt making up the road and a few shops on one of the sides. A few empty, closed out shops were next to the remaining ones, not helping the general look of the street. As we walked towards the café in the middle, Yechiel told me about his friend who worked and owned the small place. The guy's name was Chaim and he had earlier studied sociology, which was why Yechiel thought it appropriate for me to meet him. This immediately made me wary, as I'd already experienced how people tried pushing me unto the people with some sort of academic background, although I tried explaining that I wanted to talk to all kinds of people. But as I was already heading towards the little place, I could not help but tag along to meet this new guy.

My fears that this would be a dead-end were soon proved wrong. After we'd sat down with coffee and some food, I found out why I was led to Chaim. Not only did his background in sociology help him understand my position and what I wanted to gain a little better than others, but he had a big network of friends and customers who regularly sat in his café and talked about life in general. He also had a sort of Israeli street-smart about him that came from owning a small coffee shop and dealing with all sorts of people. In time, that would turn out to be an advantage.

As Chaim had heard about our eventful trip to Hebron, this soon became the main topic of discussion. Yechiel did most of the talking and I listened without interfering, which in retrospect I'm grateful for. Chaim might have set the tone early on, as one of the first things he asked was if it had been safe. A little fact that might be helpful here is that it's illegal for Israelis to travel to Hebron and the Palestinian controlled parts of the West Bank. There are huge red signs on the roads leading out of Israeli controlled zones that warn of danger to one's life. I can myself attest to the fact that these make one feel quite insecure about entering Palestinian held zones of the West Bank and might shape people's views of the West Bank and Palestinians. And Yechiel, in stark contrast with how he'd seemed the day before, told of how he had called some veterans he knew the day before entering, telling them that if he were captured, they would need to rescue him without making a fuss about it. While this might sound strange, Yechiel was concerned about having to "release terrorists to get him out" and therefore didn't want Israel to suffer for his own adventurous behaviour⁹. But as he hadn't told me any of this on the day we were there, I was baffled by what seemed to be overly suspicious at

⁹ The practice of trading prisoners is not uncommon between Israel and the Palestinian Authorities. Usually Israeli soldiers are being traded for the release of Palestinians in Israeli prisons. See for example Bronner and Farrell (2011).

the time. Not only did it feel unfair to Jamal, who'd extended his hospitality to us, but untrue to my experience of the event.

He went on to retell how we'd walked through the poorer part of Hebron, seeing people with absolutely nothing trying to make a living from selling scrap. Instead of telling it like I expected him to, he talked of them as opportunists who made a living from stealing. Which in retrospect might be true, but not evident from what Jamal told us on our trip, and surely not something that influenced our trip in any way. As he told Chaim about the high-class restaurant we had visited, not only did he omit the fact that we were greeted like old friends and that he didn't let us pay anything for our meal but questioned the means by which the owner was making a living. At the time it all seemed like twisting the truth to me, but another way of looking at it might be by seeing it together with a larger trend of narrative making. Goodson writes that narratives can be described as "... a relationship between social structure and story, and how social structure at particular historical times provide available scripts or scripted narratives from which people can construct life stories" (Goodson 2013:5). From this, we can understand the highlighting or even twisting of some parts of the story to function as an individualized story that connects to a broader political narrative of mistrust and vilification of Palestinians. Not only that, but Palestinians are constantly viewed as potential threats. His way of relating to a personal story is in a way saying, "I'm on your side" and later on I'll return to this and what happens when these narratives doesn't express that. This shows how political narratives not only constitute an official story on a big scale but is used actively as a means of making meaning and even more so, making boundaries.

A personal narrative can also be viewed as a series of themes which relate both to individuals and to society as a whole. It is a kind of soap opera: 'an everyday story of country folk' with their births, deaths, marriages and divorces. In the case of Mohammed, as with most human beings, there is both pleasure and pain: the happiness of his early relationship with his wife, followed by their protracted and unhappy separation, the joys of having children, and the pain of losing them: a son aged nineteen from drowning at sea, a daughter in her thirties from illness, their eldest son, also in his thirties, from illness, leaving only four daughters and one son from the original eight children who survived to adulthood (Caplan 1999: 288).

As Caplan shows through this example, narrative is not only a relation to the social world around us, but a highly personal task, one that combines one's self into a wider context, within a set structure. Even though his example clearly deals with themes that seem more like the everyday material of people's life, it is fair to point out that relating to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict *is everyday life* if you live in either Israel or Palestine.

Narratives also have a performative character, which I hope to bring into these accounts. As William Labov explains, a narrative is “a particular way of recounting the past” and some of the focus of the narrator is to make the listener feel the same feelings as the narrator did at the time of the event and maybe even as they tell it. He also recognizes some core themes which often feature in narratives: (1) death and the danger of death, (2) sex and relations between the sexes and (3) moral indignation (Labov 2013: 4-6). Now the thing is that the narratives I am telling here is not always what Labov would call “fully developed” as in, they do not always keep to the formula that he describes. In his case, a narrative should contain the following:

...an abstract, an orientation with information on persons, places, times and behaviour involved; the complicating action; an evaluation section, which identifies the point of the narrative; the resolution; and a coda, which returns the listener to the present time (Labov 2013: 5).

I find these helpful, if not always present in the everyday, political narratives that I experienced on a daily basis. Yes, Yechiel definitely used a sort of abstract when telling about the veterans that he'd contacted, it made the trip seem much more hazardous than I'd experienced it at the time. But after that it is rather blurry in terms of an “evaluation section”, “resolution” and “coda”. But does that mean that this isn't a narrative? I would argue that, no, even if this narrative doesn't follow the “recipe”, it still presents a personal story that both has a structure in that it has a sequence of events that are told in the order that they happened and that the story has a greater moral side. It's also easy to find what Labov argues are the usual themes of a narrative. The story is first and foremost a moral story as it deals with the supposed wickedness of Palestinians and that they are not to be trusted and on top of that, there is definitely an element of “danger of death”.

An additional way of theorizing narrative-making than previously explored is the way Bourdieu describes *doxa*. He describes the terms *doxa*, heterodoxy and orthodoxy, which are all tightly interwoven with his theory of the habitus, like this: Habitus is to Bourdieu that which is both structured and structuring within each person. It is both shaped by our experiences, but in turn also shaping which possibilities we have in everyday social improvisation. Here the term *doxa* comes in. *Doxa* refers to what Bourdieu explains “goes without saying because it comes without saying” (Bourdieu 1977: 167). In turn, heterodoxy challenges that truth that comes without saying, and ultradoxy will try reinforcing the existing *doxa* (Bourdieu 1977). My point here is that narratives can either challenge or reinforce existing stories. In the case of Yechiel's explanation which differed

from the way we talked about it the previous day, he was confirming an existing narrative, which was the one I encountered most frequently, that Palestinians were an enemy and that they wished to get rid of Jews from the Middle East entirely. Therefore, if Yechiel had told the story to Chaim the same way I'd told it, with an entirely different background, he'd probably be regarded as a sort of social outcast. Or said another way, it would go against the established Israeli narrative and therefore weaken his Israeli identity in the eyes of other Israelis. This also explains why he was free to go explore the West Bank with me, as he didn't have to live according to that story when travelling with someone so outside of that social sphere. We can even understand it as having a different sort of obligation towards me, as a foreign researcher, for example showing me that the conflict was more nuanced than it looked like in the media.

As a comparative example, Sherry Ortner's fieldwork on Sherpas on Mount Everest gives insight into how stories are shaped by their tellers. Now mountaineering on Everest might not seem relevant here, but I would argue that just as these Sherpas make narratives of the same events as the media and the tourists who climb Everest, in a whole different style we can see how the same thing happened in my own example. First off, she explores how stories from the native group called Sherpas and which lead these sometimes dangerous tours to mount Everest, structure themselves and deal with the high mortality rate of the profession. They are the basic caregivers during these dangerous expeditions and cater to the needs of tourists often without much experience with mountaineering. Their specialization and mastery of the skillset being a result of a demand by the British empire in India. Of course, there were and still is a power differential between the Sherpas and their customers, which is called the *sahbs*. The *sahbs*' motives for engaging in mountaineering is according to themselves noble, they romanticize, or orientalise, the act of climbing the mountain and makes it a story about themselves. That it for example shows moral fiber and even is worth dying for. In short, they create a particular sort of meaning for themselves and each other. The Sherpas on the other hand, only engages in the work because it is well paid and looks at the hazards the *sahbs* make meaning out of as secondary (Ortner 1997).

In fact, several examples showed how because the Sherpas had to deal with the death of their own as a regular basis, the threat needed to be dealt with. As mentioned, the *sahbs* saw it entirely different. This resulted in that when something went wrong, as it often does and a Sherpa died, the rest would sometimes refuse to move any further, but be forced by the *sahbs*. The *sahbs* however, because of the conceptualization they have of the Sherpas as composed, underestimate how deeply the Sherpas are affected and push through. Ortner argues that, as Said points out, orientalism and the power

dynamics inherent in it, forces the colonizers', in this case the sahbs, definition of the colonized upon their identity. Or to quote Ortner: "if they show their fears in the face of death, they are children; if they do not show – or perhaps do not allow themselves to experience – their fears, they have failed to develop the higher moral sensibilities of the West (ibid.).

As Ortner's example shows, the expectation towards the Sherpas from the sahbs shape their interaction with the world and how they react to the dangers of their occupation. So, to use this on my example, we can see how Yechiel's conceptualization of the Palestinians first came to life when he came back from our trip. Then he had to apply the orientalist structures about how the Palestinians were thieves, likely terrorists and conspiratory beliefs about where they got their money from. But we can move even further. Because of the way Yechiel conceptualized Palestinians, Jamal played on defying those stereotypes, both by showing us around his factories, which were full of equipment that he had imported from Europe, as he proudly announced several times. That he had an education also helped establish how in fact the power dynamic was turned around to some degree.

As Goffman famously wrote, one can first see how things work, when they go wrong. When Jamal defy everything Yechiel has explained about Palestinians, being both educated, generous and seemingly not corrupt or a terrorist. Yechiel is somehow caught in a double bind. He cannot accept the reality of Jamal's life that we've seen and accept that the Palestinians doesn't deserve the way Israelis talk about them. Thus, he is left with fitting what we've seen into the discursive structures that he knows. Jamal being well-off is villainized, instead of being seen as when he commented on Israelis doing well economically, as working hard. More so, Yechiel places back in the discursive structures he has managed to break free from and makes himself the colonizer once more.

From this example, we can see clearly how narratives are used as pragmatic tools for making distinctions between "us and them" and making sure that others know which side you're on in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But these discursive structures also give room for even more. In fact, when other people are conceptualized in this way, I would argue that it gives room for villainized conspiracy, that feeds into these power-structures again.

History as Narrative

Originally Gush Etzion was populated by Jews. Okay, so Jews always lived in Hebron with Arabs, way before there was a state, like Israel you know. But what happened was in 1929, there was a riot in Hebron, the first. And the people that were your neighbours, who had been babysitters for your kids, but there was so much... Uhm, you know, hatred, let's get that on the table. And there was a lot of main leaders, you know, the so-called "religious leaders", that urged people to go kill. A lot of people were killed that way. This led to the Jews in the area running away, moving to Jerusalem or Tel Aviv. And that was when the British mandate was still in force, so the area didn't see Jews again until 1967 when the Green Line of today. But in the Gush Etzion, Jews bought land from Arabs back in the 1920s and the first kibbutz is somewhere around where we are now. It didn't really survive very well, because of disease and they didn't really know how to work the ground very well. So eventually they split up until smaller villages now called Kfar Etzion and Bat Ayin and so forth. And they were doing great despite living with Arabs all around them. Not the best connection, because of all sorts of stuff with the British Mandate and the war. But you know, sometime before the War of Independence in 1948, the Jordanian leaders, and of course the Arabs were with them, killed all the people who were living there. I mean, most of them, the ones that survived fled [...]. So, Gush Etzion was, by that time... There were no Jews living here. That was between 1948 and 1967. The IDF¹⁰ re-conquered everything. Which, by the way, is totally legal by international law, I mean, they started the war in 67. So that was only, you know, smart intelligence.

Yechiel is sitting on a rooftop veranda overlooking part of the West Bank as he explains. We've come out here because I wanted a better understanding of how he views the situation in these areas. This explanation by Yechiel builds on some interesting narrative structures, like the ones discussed earlier. The reason why I'm bringing it up here is that it also brings forth some of the elements of both suspicions against both local and foreign Arab leaders, but also one of the beliefs among the Jewish Israelis which really helps conceptualize the idea of the conflict. That is the view that the Arabs, just like Nazi Germany during WW2, wants to get rid of the Jewish people altogether. This is shown here with the story of the Jewish people living peacefully in these areas, before being wiped out by religious leaders or having to escape. There are several pieces about this that are fascinating. Both how the event resembles the Holocaust, but in a micro-scale, and also how it ties with the term "brainwashed" that I introduced earlier. The ones at fault aren't the people in the street, but the extreme leaders, who for either religious or political reasons murder innocents. Now, I'm not saying that this massacre never occurred, it has been cited by numerous sources and it is not my intention to doubt it. The aspect I'm looking at how the story is presented, with focus on how the blame is placed on some and how the narrative structure highlights this.

¹⁰ Israeli Defense Forces

Amar-Dahl also explains this as a turn from a defensive stance and a reluctance towards violence from the first Zionist settlers and how with the “Arab revolt” in the 1930’s this changed. From the image of the exiled Jew as weak and defenceless and the conceptual change into the “muscular Judaism” that came to define Zionism from that time on. Violence was seen not as an attack, but rather as a legitimate way of getting up from its defenceless position (Amar-Dahl 2017: 92).

Conspiracy theories can be described as "an effort to explain some event or practice by reference to the machinations of powerful people, who attempt to conceal their role (at least until their aims are accomplished)" (Sunstein and Vermeule 2009: 205). On the one hand, conspiracy theory is often characterized as illegitimate, pathological, and a threat to political stability; on the other hand, it seems an entertaining narrative form, a populist expression of a democratic culture, that circulates deep skepticism about the truth of the current political order throughout contemporary culture (Fenster 1999: xiii). As conspiracies have become an increasingly popular subject within and outside of the social sciences, some different perspectives can be useful. First off, as is apparent from a lot of the stories already presented, conspiracies can be seen as a weapon of those not in power. When groups are feeling left out of the political groups in power, to accuse them while using conspiracy theories helps build common cause against something they see as unfair (Uscinski & Parent 2014).

Moreover, while conspiracies may not be true (all the time at least), they do play on genuine fears and therefore appeal to bigger groups that feel left out (Butter 2014). Butter goes on to say that while it may seem like conspiracy theories are on the rise, this is probably a result of the change in how people argue. He argues that conspiracies or claims of the agendas of other powerful actors against the common good, was in fact more accepted before. But due to the fact that one is expected to argue one’s views using scientific arguments, it has been more marginalized and therefore less accepted as valid claims to the truth. He also notes that the dangers of conspiracy are that while it can be easy to spread within a marginalized group, it can be way harder to debunk, as the group will insist that those who oppose them are naïve or even part of said conspiracy (ibid).

Furthermore, if one is to understand conspiracy theories in Israel, it’s crucial to consider that Jews (which, at least officially, make up the state of Israel) have been one of the groups to suffer the most from the consequences of conspiracy theories. One needs only to mention the Holocaust, which is still very much alive in the collective memory of Israelis. In addition is the anti-Semitic actions which still is seen across both Europe and the US, and the long history of laws that regulated Jewish diaspora in Europe before the second world war. While not going into details on this, it suffices to

say that conspiracy has shrouded the public opinion of Jews long before the state of Israel. While it may seem contradictory to believe that this has made conspiracies more common among Israeli Jews, there are some good indicators that this is in fact the case. For example, it was common for my research participants to point to the Eurabia conspiracy as a definite reason behind the prolonged conflict. Most of them had never read the actual theory, but the suspicion was part of a national repertoire of underlying reasons for continued trouble both on the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank.

As I earlier explained, the term "brainwashed" was commonly used by some of my informants to explain radical behaviour, not just Palestinian, but also Jewish. This I interpret as an understanding of the social character of the conflict, in which people are shaped by their peers into certain modes of behaviour. I find this interesting because at the same time as people are aware that others are socially influenced in their opinion and actions, they don't see themselves as part of that. Here we can, for example, use the example of Yechiel who saw the Palestinians who greeted us in Hebron as possible wrong doers, no matter how warm a welcome we received.

It's more about the money than the land. Because why would they not sign the peace agreements? They came here after us! It was just a huge waste here, a lot of reports say so. We came here around 1870 and it was no one here, they came from Jordan and Egypt after us [...]. It was a few cities, Jaffa, Jerusalem, a couple of smaller ones. And they people living there were Armenians and Christians, well, Armenians are Christian, but different. But no Arabs. And Jerusalem was always divided, nothing new! And it's not theirs, for sure! But they say, "it's ours", well, show us. They built a village here, a village there, after 1870 sometime. So, they came here after we came here. Don't look in the bible, look at the 1800, it's a good starting point. No one was here. So, when the UN divided the Land of Israel, they did it wrong. They gave them some land they never had to begin with!

While showing me around a small hostel, the guy in his early forties is talking fast, almost stumbling over his own words while waving his hands. It's early January and I've only been to Israel for a week or so, still coping with the many emerging problems of fieldwork. The man is just showing me around his hostel, while chatting. Still, this was a defining meeting, and it introduced me to some themes that continued to be important throughout my fieldwork. To begin with, already here there is the belief that before Jewish immigration started into 1800 century, there was no one inhabiting the land.

As I described earlier in this chapter, the narratives function as tools for expressing nationalist viewpoints about politics and life in Israel. Here I use an understanding of conspiracies as a subset of nationalist narratives, or as something which the narratives are built upon. They're also used to denounce claims by other countries or organizations, such as the UN or BDS, that claim Israel's use of force or settlements on the West Bank is illegitimate. In the current discourse of outside influence as anti-Semitic, these are seen in that specific light and not as humanitarian help for Palestinians, which they are viewed as by others. But what informs these narratives and what assumptions do they build on?

Placing blame

This all leads us to understand these narratives as a way of legitimizing the act of placing blame on somebody. Like the people I've talked about live insecurely, both due to their economic backgrounds, current situation and the conflict, they need someone to blame, which "doesn't talk back", at least not directly. This way they can always come out as the winners, at least to themselves.

Ironically, a lot of the people I talked to were aware of this fact, and a story I was told a lot of times underlined this. It was often told in relation to some other topic, usually political instability or military actions, to defend Israel's action, while also admitting to a sort of "us against them"-mentality. For example, one would talk about the current political situation and comment on how little unity there was at the time, and how this reflected the fact that Hamas or the PLO were so severely beaten that they didn't serve to unite against. And then someone would say "this always happens when the Jewish people beat their enemies, we start beating down each other. That's the way this conflict has made us strong because we had to deal with it together".

The objective reality of a state surrounded by hostile states was made into an ideology and a siege mentality, 'a nation with its back against the sea'. The Arab aim was seen as 'Politicide' and was superimposed on the collective memory of Nazi genocide against the Jews. This mentality was, and still is, the basis of Israel's political consensus (Ehrlich 1987: 125). As we see from this description, this ties in with a lot of the conspiracies used by the people I talked to.

Another way of seeing the act of placing blame is possible through looking at scales and how people place blame while trying to create meaningful communities around them while also making sense of how they live their life. As Eriksen claims:

In fast-changing, multiscalar societies, a unilinear account is not very credible; trust in large scale systems is unlikely if they neither deliver on their promises nor produce knowledge that comes across as true and relevant. You are then likely either to place your trust in large-scale knowledge regimes, or to revert just to trusting people you know personally and your first-hand experiences, blaming the processes on a higher scale for everything that goes wrong (Eriksen 2016: 139).

While Eriksen positions a choice between the big regimes of knowledge or to trust in the people you know, I would argue that both could happen, simultaneously. What happens during the makings and performances of conspiracy theories is just that one distrusts one knowledge regime because it doesn't fit with your own experiences and the views of people you know, but usually the people I talked to just found another knowledge regime to pledge themselves to. It actually makes some sense to, when the dominant knowledge regime doesn't acknowledge your lifestyle and deems it unethical, but you're too interwoven in your own life to actually be able to make much of a change. It's no wonder people follow other knowledge regimes, or even create them, to make some meaning out of their lives.

I've decided to meet with an older man in much the same situation as many of the younger people that I usually hang out with, both because I want to see the differences and similarities between the younger and older generation, but also to experience another part of Jerusalem than I usually got to see when I spend time with Chaim. Therefore, Moshe, who is around 50 years old, took me on a round trip.

As we drive along the outskirts of Jerusalem, he points to what he calls "Arab villages", which are hidden behind high walls and barbed wire. The houses look like they have been randomly strewn across the inside of the walls, which Moshe is quick to point out. "Look there, you can see how all the houses have been built on top of each other in different styles. That's how you can spot an Arab village, they can't build! The Jews brought the architecture of Europe with them, while the Arabs still build like savages!" While baffled by the sudden aggression, I couldn't help but ask, "what about all the beautiful, older architecture?" to which he replied that it was only religious buildings which were focused on and that they often had been stolen. We drove on in silence, as I was unsure as to

how to deal with these negative outbursts. The scenery was beautiful in a sort of worn out, dusty way. Not exactly a desert, but rocky plateaus with lush green trees clinging to the dried-out ground. The many suburbs of Jerusalem stretched out into this harsh vegetation, in some cases crisscrossing with small villages secluded by fences. The terrain can be seen as a living sign of what the conflict has done to people living on both sides of the fence and the opinions uttered by the man beside me only worked to highlight this.



Photo 3: In the bottom right corner, tourists visiting the King David museum, in the background a part of Palestinian East Jerusalem. These contrasts are a vital part of Jerusalem (Photo by the author).

While this small story doesn't account for all Jewish stereotypes against Palestinian Arabs or Arabs in general, it shows how one aspect of life (architecture in this example) can be drawn out and used to delegitimize someone else. While Moshe claimed what he saw as "bad architecture" was a direct result of "Arab mentality", this is one possible way of seeing it among several other. For example, as Jamal explained during our trip to Hebron. While driving through the hills around Hebron he casually said that "because of higher prices for land and the big economic differences here, most

people don't have much of a choice. If their son marries a woman, they have to be able to house them if they themselves can't afford somewhere else to live". Therefore, the necessity for a place to live in growing families is a whole different way of seeing architecture. In reality, the two approaches differ because one focuses on class and the actual, economic possibility to build anything at all and the other one focuses on what can be called a view on culture that focuses on traditions and not flexibility.

An understanding of how imperialism has made an imagined other can be useful here. As previously stated, Said argues that orientalism distorts our view of other people's choices and life. Moshe in this way positions himself and Israelis in general, in virtue of their western architecture as superior to Palestinians who in his story is represented as uncivilized, or in this case not accustomed to the art of architecture, while this doesn't seem to be the case. Therefore, what Moshe saw as "modern architecture" which was also European was far superior to the way the Palestinians were crammed together.

Close to Chaim's café, there was a small kiosk in which I usually bought snacks or something to drink on my way to or from the café. A couple in their 60's owned the place and would stand behind the counter on different days of the week, with seemingly no system to it. The husband was a quiet man, smiling at most people but keeping a firm distance between himself and the customers. The wife, on the other hand, I saw speaking to a variety of different people, always welcoming everyone. The first week I just paid for my snack, thanked her and went on with my business, but as time went on, we started talking now and then, about trivial things such as weather or the latest news. Then on one evening, I stopped by to buy something before going back home after a long day. I noticed that she was talking to an American man in his 50's about the conflict, but as I was pretty tired after the day, I just paid and turned to leave. Just then he was saying «...and there is really no law that prohibits Israel from seizing the territories, they're yours!" and I froze out of curiosity. He must have noticed, because he immediately turned towards me, asking what I thought. Drawn between the wish to return home and shut out everyone for the rest of the night and my curiosity, I turned halfway towards him and replied that I probably wouldn't know, as I wasn't interested in arguing. To my great relief, he just continued explaining his points about the legality of Israel's action, while I and the older woman stood listening. She seemed to zone out of the discussion and only give brief responses, before saying "Yes, you're right, all that is fine. But in the end, it's now about that for

them. They just want us Jews gone from the Land of Israel, they don't care if international law is on their side or ours. It's a question of religion and culture for them. For us it's not, we could live here with them. But all the time, they've tried to either get us out or kill us. It's just like the European Jews experienced during the war, it doesn't matter what we do, we are chased". He nodded enthusiastically and agreed, while I stood dumbfounded and listened. Here I had been talking to hardcore settlers a couple of streets away, while an old lady served an even more compelling, and brutal, narrative than them just out of nowhere?

Here are several interesting aspects of building a narrative, for example, she interrupts and doesn't seem to care about the legalities of occupation or what the world has to say about Israel's actions for that matter. What she does though, is creating a human story which built upon a contrast between the "good Jews" and the "bad Arabs", where one of them tries to defend itself from the other. And since being in a position of defence from a great outside force is much more impactful, the term "Arab" works to unite the Palestinian population living on the West Bank and in Gaza with the other Arab nations of the Middle East. In comparison, if one talks about "big Israel" and "the defenceless Palestinians" the whole picture is turned on its head and Israel loses its symbolic value in the narrative. These are ways of relating a story to a bigger system of meaning, much like Goodson describes the making of narratives for politicians in England. It's much more effectful for a politician to have a sort of underdog story, rather than being born into power (Goodson 2013).

Another way of looking at this is how both the world and Israel and the US especially has branded terrorism. While from Hage's exploration of the difficulties of talking about suicide bombings, we can get at how "the Other's" violence is constructed as opposed to legitimized forms of violence.

The fact that we approach suicide bombing with such trepidation, in contrast to how we approach the violence of colonial domination, for example, indicates the symbolic violence that shapes our understanding of what constitutes ethically and politically illegitimate violence. Indeed, the fact that terrorist groups never classify themselves as terrorists, instead calling themselves revolutionaries, martyrs, nationalists, or freedom fighters, is an indication of the depth of this symbolic violence. If we accept a less morally outraged and more empirical conception of terrorism as a form of violence specific to a mode of distribution of the means of violence, there is no necessary contradiction between *martyr* or *freedom fighter* and *terrorist*. This does not make terrorist violence less condemnable for those who want to condemn violence; it does, however, make us question why it is terrorist violence that is always at the center of a condemnation/no condemnation problematic, and not other relatively more lethal forms of violence (Hage 2003: 72-73).

What is clear from Hage and his discussion on the phenomenon of suicide bombers and what is termed terrorists in general, is that terrorism is only deemed much worse than say, the violence that

Israeli engages in because it is “aimed” at civilians and that it is often branded as a standalone act. Another point Hage gets at is that terrorism has always been the weapons of those with no other means. Sure, it is nevertheless a horrible incident and not wanted by anyone, but when you are desperate and losing what little you have left, what options do you have besides giving up? Or as a Palestinian Hage talked with said: “Who would want to be a suicide bomber if such a luxurious mode of fighting is available to us? You can kill more Israelis, and the world will think you are more civilized!” (Hage 2003: 73).

Now this is where a focus on the discourse of Israelis as “developed” and Palestinians as traditional is very helpful to understand the sort of double bind the whole situation is in. Because as is pointed out, if one fights with modern weapons and follows what we can call “a protocol of war” then the violence is more acceptable. But if you are so thoroughly beaten that acts of terrorism is the only weapon you have left, you end up feeding into the discourse of yourself as “back-wards and traditional”. Thus, no matter what you do, you have lost. I will be getting back to this point in the final chapter.

Encouraged by the excessive nodding from the American man, she carried on with her story. "Compared to other countries we have been merciful to the Arabs, even if they continue trying to kill us. The problem wouldn't exist anymore if we had done as other countries from the start. We could have just defeated them properly the first time, with force. Instead, we have this conflict which has made our homeland unsafe to us for so many years now". I looked from her to the American man, and across the old street, with the tourist shops and fast food shops side by side, people walking around in groups and as usually talking loudly. The atmosphere didn't betray the underlying fear the story conveyed. On the contrary, the mismatch of narrative and the life going on around us were striking.

As the lady got busy tending to some customers, I chatted with the man. He explained that he had a master's degree in political science and seemed interested when I told him I studied anthropology, although sceptical towards my project. Maybe not that surprising from the conversation up until this point, but still, I was curious. Is it really that controversial studying nationalism tendencies in a country where a nation-state has never been a given state of affairs? Before I could get any good answers to this, the elder lady joined us again, breaking up the theme of my project with a little shrug and a "now, where were we?" The two of them recapped parts of the conversation we'd just had before she continued with new energy. "But because of the goodness of our hearts, we can't do that,

even if it would be the right thing!" She went on explaining how the Palestinians didn't exist before the war in 1967 and were really just Arabs from Jordan or Egypt, a story which was widely accepted and used as a way of legitimizing views about the conflict and their claims to sovereignty over the West Bank and Gaza. While this is central, it will be treated in a more detailed way in the chapter about conspiracies.

Even though shocked by the sudden change of rhetoric, from the sweet old lady to military strategist, her story fitted in with what I'd at the time thought of as the quintessential narrative that legitimized Israel as the only legitimate country in the area. Not only as of the legitimate state power in the areas currently called "West Bank" and "Gaza" by a big majority of countries, but also the only legitimate country in the Middle East (which I'll also return to later on). This sort of narrative was not only told by her but repeated with small alterations by nearly all the Israelis I talked to about the theme, which was nearly every Israeli I met.

Much like the term "class" in the US, it's a theme which lurks in the background and while apparent for everyone, is under communicated or reduced to the will to work oneself upwards. And just like the US, all focus on social inequality is put on ethnic differences. As Sherry Ortner described:

The idea of habitus in turn directs us to the doubleness of class representations: part of the 'public culture,' on the one hand, and part of the subjectness, the 'identities,' of factors, on the other. The 'hiddenness' of class operates in different ways on these two levels. At the level of public culture or discourse, the hiddenness of class means that the discourse is muted and often unavailable, subordinated to virtually every other kind of claim about social success and social failure. At the level of identified actors, it means that the dialectic of the making and unmaking of habitus of the internalization and externalization of limits, and of their naturalization is not open to reflection and self-reflection. Yet it is precisely in the internalization and naturalization of public discourses about 'identities' that the fusion of class with race and ethnicity happens in American cultural practice (Ortner 1998:14)

As we can see from Ortner, the economic and social differences may be under communicated by rather using racial or ethnic terms which embeds some of the economic and social *expectations* of these categories, more than their actual place in the community. For instance, Chaim and Yechiel were obviously Ashkenazim¹¹ to everyone they met and were also treated that way. But when these expectations are not met, it leads to a discrepancy between the social truth that Ashkenazim are well

¹¹ Jews immigrating to Israel from Europe.

off and properly educated, and in this case the truth that these young people are left out of work and struggle to both find a meaningful way of living, but also acquire a job to earn a living.

The struggle between these two factors, the social expectation of status and the lack of it in social life, leads to a conflict, which in this case is a catalyst for these nationalistic narratives. The narratives work as an outlet for the feelings of being outside and create ties between strong emotional terms, such as 'strength' as I earlier described. Not only do they make up for the lack of social power experienced by these people, but they're a way of voicing opinions and being taken seriously. It also works as an ethnic and social boundary marker in the style of Fredrik Barth's "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries" (1969). The stories work as emblematic sign of which stance you take in relation to the conflict, or to put in the simplest way possible, if you're with Israel or not. This all leads us to understand these narratives as a way of legitimizing the act of placing blame on somebody.

Not only that, but that these different narratives function and rest upon much of the same ground, even though different in terms of contents. Most of them concerns themselves with some major points: (1) they present history in much of the same way, drawing attention to the pains one has suffered as people and thereby legitimizing wrongful actions oneself has committed, (2) a certain populist element, separating one's own group of people, be it family, community or state from the corrupt elite, whoever they may be and (3) claiming that just these people are conspiring against you. In a way, this approach could be said to be quite structuralist and similar to the workings of Vladimir Propp in that the parts could easily be varied, but the structure and function of the narrative would remain much the same (Propp 1997).

But what I would argue is that while this helps us understand these narratives as a definite sort of story, it doesn't give us an answer as to what they *do*. I believe I have presented enough material to argue that while, yes, the narratives do have a certain shape, what really drives them are their connection to both an imagined and real past, and their moral character. Or as Eriksen writes, that while myths are part of every society and can co-exist with other mythic interpretations of the past, it is those myths that leave no room for other interpretations that must be placed under close scrutiny (Eriksen 1996:108-110). Thus, we can say that a narrative is neither defined by its shape or its contents, but by the relation between these.

2 War, Family and Values

“He who fights with monsters should look to it that he himself does not become a monster. And when you gaze long into an abyss the abyss also gazes into you” (Nietzsche 2014 [1886]: 107).

As I'm sitting at a table in the main room of the new hostel I'm staying at, writing fieldnotes, I become aware of some activity at the counter. Some of the staff are discussing who should go put up posters for a party in a few weeks. Like the hostel I'd used up to now, this one held different parties and social arrangements every week. This hostel had opened not that long ago and probably tried to attract roughly the same type of customers: Young, liberal people wanting to explore Jerusalem without too much focus on the religious pressure. But at the moment I was intrigued by the discussion, so much so that one of the staff members arguing turned to me and before I could do much more, I was holding a huge pile of posters and a roll of adhesive. One of the people in charge of the hostel accompanied me, her name was Johanna. As we walked down the sandstone pavements towards some cafés, we started talking about the hostel in which I was staying, and she is working. She explained to me that before she came to Jerusalem to work here, she and some of her friends had lived in Tel Aviv together, living what she described as “the Tel Aviv life¹²” but they had searched for more meaning, or as she put it: “something bigger than ourselves”. Before that, she had grown up with her religious parents in Jerusalem. It was an uncomfortable subject, as she said her life choices had pushed them away. While I had not thought about it that way, she explained that living a life outside of the religious norms in Jerusalem meant that you would get looks from people all the time, and if your family was religious, you would risk offending them. That's why a lot of people “like her” chose to move away. She was right of course, she did stick out in Jerusalem if one compared her to religious women, with a pair of well-worn jeans, a tank-top and tightly braided hair down to her lower back.

While hanging up a poster on a street corner some blocks away from the hostel, Johanna asks me what I think a poster we pass, advertises for (as it's written in Hebrew), just based on the look of it. The poster shows a dance floor, with black and white chequered floors, black silhouettes frozen in their dance moves against a bright pink background. Self-conscious, I answer that it's probably some sort of techno-music festival, not getting the context of the question. She nodded and added that “it's

¹² One would often contrast life in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. In this line of comparison, Tel Aviv was the urban place filled with wild parties.

full of alpha males, you know those guys who just try to control everyone around them and be the boss of people”. She explained that Israel had a big problem with guys like that because there is such a macho culture built on war and conquest. “So, you see, people transfer that to their everyday lives, they are used to bossing people around from the army, and so they think they can do the same thing around everyone else. And since almost all men go to the army, a lot of people behave like that”. This definitely points to something important about gender roles in Israel and while maybe not a direct cause of what I have termed a nationalist narrative, I would argue that they feed into each other. Whilst I wouldn’t describe my closest friends and research participants as Johanna described these men, I had however met some of the men who would fit her description, and they were usually less interested in talking to me. This gave me some personal experience with the men she talked about, as well as some second-hand accounts and stories, mostly given by Chaim. It was ironically pointed out by a lot of Israeli men as an Arab trait and something that defined their “backwards” mentality towards women and that Israel as a “modern, Western democracy” didn’t have a problem with.

As we continued hanging the posters in the neighbourhoods around Independence Park, we continued talking about the differences between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and how she felt torn between them, between “the spiritual” that she attributed to Jerusalem and the greater acceptance that she had met in Tel Aviv. We ended up in Independence Park, eventually encountering what she said she had intended to show me, what looked like a great pool in the middle of the park. It was probably around ten meters deep, its walls slightly slanting inwards as it got deeper, green spots of grass clinging to the sand-like dirt. Some people had walked along the stairs on the one side and to the bottom of it. She tells me that it was in fact part of the old water cistern in Jerusalem, storing water for the city. We sit on the edge of it as she tells me about the park, legs dangling. The park used to be what separated the Jewish and Arab parts of the city, before the 1948 war, after that it was kept as a green area for people to use. At night it was frequented by what she described as the “underground of Jerusalem”, or as she commented a moment later, her kind of people. As some of the opinions don’t exactly match those of other people I’ve met, I ask her if she’s been in the Army or if she tried to get away from it due to political reasons. She replied in a sort of reserved way that yes, she had been. Sensing that there might be more, I asked if she was happy with that choice. A while passed in silence as we sat there. I thought to myself that maybe I’d asked to personal of a question and ruined what seemed like a different and captivating story. But she went on and stated that “I don’t know, it depends what you mean”.

I am happy about it because I see it as essentially feminist that women should contribute in the same way as men. And that's why I joined a combat team, not just a desk job, like a lot of women. But I'm not happy about the things I did while on duty and they sometimes bother me, because I know they were wrong. But it's all a part of the bigger picture, you know? We can't not have a strong and outgoing military at this point, maybe if we did things different earlier. But now, if we changed that, I think it would mean even more trouble. It's complicated and it's something that I still struggle with, ok?

As we walked out of the park later on, taking to other way out, the path is lined with graves, some of them looking centuries old. As I ask Johanna, she remarks that it used to be an Islamic cemetery before the war of '48 and so the graves are at least 70 years old, a lot of them considerably older. It strikes me just as much now, writing this as it did then, that one can see a lot of the different elements of the history of Israel and the social life I encountered in Israel, just walking around Independence Park. Just as the old parts of the of the park are called Manilla, which is derived from *Ma'man Allah* (God's sanctuary is Arabic) as is the case with many places in Israel. The graves are long abandoned, and the cistern remains unused and overgrown (Jacobs 1998: 367). The park itself is named Independence Park, just to publicly occupy this old park as well, because the history in it builds upon the "other" narrative. It contains both what was before, what is unwanted and the attempt to cover it up.

Symbols of War and Peace

Independence Day in Israel is a huge deal, which I had imagined long before actually experiencing it. It was celebrated on May 8 in 2019 and was the time of the year and the occasion to express one's political beliefs. In a time of even greater instability, with the election going to its second round in a year and no stable government at the time, my experience was that a lot of people were even more eager about politics than usual. A few days before Independence Day I was sitting with Chaim outside his café and he asked me what my plans for Independence Day were, and I said that really, I didn't have any clue what to do and asked him what he recommended. Because he was already very familiar with what my research was about, he said I should follow people in the crowded areas of the city, maybe even try to enjoy it, he added smiling. I was unsure about what to do as I wanted to see the general public and their celebrations but was curious about Chaim and his celebration as well. But I figured that since Chaim was, according to himself, not going anywhere, I might as well go out. I still regret listening to him, as I probably would have gotten a better insight by just staying with him.

Later I found myself sitting on a low stone wall, facing the usually crowded Jaffa Square, looking at people walking about. In some ways, it reminded me of Constitution Day in Norway, the streets were full of flags and cheap toys sold to kids. But unlike Constitution Day in Norway, Independence Day in Israel took place mostly after dark. Kids were running about with Israeli flags draped about them like cloaks, parents running after them, warning them not to getting lost. Groups of young people stood close together, chatting loudly and sometimes merging in with another group. Older people were standing more still, some standing with friends and what looked like their whole family around them. A stage had been built next to the bank that towered over the small square, in turn making the scene look small. From the stage different artists played during the evening, ranging from pop and some rap, to more traditional instruments and compositions. Some I recognized as what religious people believed to be music from when the Jews lived in Israel in biblical times, resurrected by composers after moving back to Israel. This fascination with their supposed roots is also a quite interesting phenomenon in Israel. Studying Israel's roots and what they termed their "primitive past" was considered intellectual, but if talking about a history of the Middle East which included others, the interest was suddenly replaced by villainizations of the Arabs in particular.

A Different Sort of Story

While not the most common solution, an alternative to being part of the "nationalist way" was what we can term the "apolitical way". This alternative allows you to be free to express whatever opinion you want, and few would care, as you're already discredited. An example of this is Dan, who I met infrequently at first and talked to increasingly often. He said early on he would be unsuited for my project, as he didn't care about politics and since my project seemed to concern itself with politics, he had nothing to contribute with. Dan is about 30 years old, has two young sons and a wife who works at a school nearby. They were reasonably well off but still preferred to live in a small apartment connected to the house that his wife's parents owned. I visited them sometimes, and occasionally met Dan and some friends of his on Friday nights as a sort of alternative to the traditional Sabbath. They would order pizza from Domino's and sit outside drinking beer and smoking cigarettes, talking about whatever went on in their life. When getting to know Dan I imagined that his friends would maybe share his lack of interest in politics and was surprised that he was alone in the group in terms of political views. This resulted in some awkward conversations concerning political events or recent military operations. They would often start with a friend of Dan

apologizing to Dan in advance for something he was about to say, in a tongue-in-cheek fashion. Then he would ask me or some of the two or three others what we thought about some recent event, often the election. If Dan actually came with a reply, he was immediately dismissed, due to his supposed unfamiliarity with politics, and a roar of laughter would erupt around the table. I often felt sorry for Dan, as I felt that my mere presence ignited just these sorts of discussions. What I later understood was that Dan's reluctance when it came to politics had little to do with him not caring about what happened to people, but rather a feeling of powerlessness and disbelief in the system.

It was if his lack of loyalty to the (nationalist) politics that stripped him of any right to have an opinion. Or at least be taken seriously. Another aspect with Dan that separated him from his friends was that he had not served in the IDF and therefore "not committed himself". And while he seemed to be comfortable with his choices, he would sometimes get frustrated for not being heard and explained he felt a deep sense of disconnection with his friends and family because of this. Even his mother would sometimes show her disappointment with his lack of interest in the Israeli collective and how he "didn't contribute to their shared heritage". As time went on and I talked to him, it became clearer that he, while not picking sides, had a clear idea of what he thought about some events, while also admitting that he didn't know enough. But he persisted in staying out of politics and handling the disappointment from those around him. Not only disappointment, but a sort of contempt similar to what I described about Chaim because of his choice not to follow the sort of "masculine way" that was often expected. While Dan doesn't have a lot in common with other people I met, since he was better off economically, there are some interesting aspects which both separate and connect him to some of the others. Although his work paid a decent salary and he had a secure job, his background looked a lot like Yechiel and Chaim's. In fact, we could say he started off worse: Dan grew up with two older siblings from his mother's former marriage, and neither he nor his two siblings had much contact with their respective fathers, which led to his mother taking on the full weight of parenting the three children. Chaim and Yechiel, on the other hand, grew up in what they described as "stable" families, meaning their parents had stayed together. But he had chosen a career path at a profession that was strictly working class, certainly not university level, but unlike the others, had excelled at his job. While it didn't come with a lot of social status, it supported his family and thus allowed him a basis of recognition and meaningfulness that Chaim and Yechiel hadn't found yet.

A way of understanding how Dan lost credibility could be through recognizing that Dan is a *refusenik*, or one who refused to serve in the IDF. A common misconception about the nature of

refuseniks is that they're public deniers of Israel's military politics and therefore put in jail for refusing the military. A heroic sort of sacrifice for what you believe in, but in the end, a sort of defeat to the state anyway. An often-overlooked part of the *refusenik* phenomenon is those who in non-public ways defied the state by simply not showing up, not filling out papers or in other ways simply refusing to act according to state procedure. Which in fact was composed of a much larger portion than the public refusals. In addition, there was a certain upper middle-class, Ashkenazim element to the public denouncing of the IDF and people from less fortunate families weren't being taken seriously when publicly refusing (Weiss 2016). This sheds some light on Dan's position as an outsider as he has not partaken in the nation-building it entails to join the IDF but neither has he denounced Israel's politics. He has simply refused to comply to the expectation of the state. While I was never told explicit about how Dan evaded the IDF, it is just this reluctance to talk about it that define those abstinent from military service.

Which brings us to Aharon's family, which I met through Chaim, as Aharon dropped by quite often to drink coffee, smoke cigarettes and chat with Chaim. He was a little older, but many of the same difficulties applied to him, being stuck in a job he didn't find any meaning in. Yet he was more stuck than some of the younger men, as he economically had to use his meagre income to provide for his three children. After I'd met him sometimes, he invites me to his place to talk about "whatever you wanna know". But he warns me, he is tired after work, caring for kids and his mother, so when he has had enough, he will let me know. A relief to me, as I spent a considerable amount of time worrying about boring people with my questions and persistence in staying with them.

As Aharon gets us something to drink, I look around the backyard. The sun is at its highest and the shade of the huge olive tree in his garden is the only thing that makes it liveable outside at this time of the day. Usually, his kids would be all around us he tells me, but the biggest ones are at school and the small one is taking a nap inside the house. The houses surrounding us are all low buildings of the same beige colour, some of them with the popular sandstone bricks and others of just painted concrete. The only green grass in sight is fake, the patches of regular grass turned into brown spots by the sun. Aharon's mother, Golda, is there as well, I've been told she usually comes around at this time of the day to help watch the kids. Although now she is mostly occupied with her cigarette, staring into the distance while drawing deep breaths.

Aharon returns with our iced coffees and starts the process of rolling his own cigarette. Most of the people that I met during my fieldwork rolled their cigarettes, and like them, Aharon did it with a steady hand. Sitting back in the plastic chair, putting his cigarette to his lips and lighting it, he draws a sharp breath, lets his head fall back and runs his sun-tanned hands through the long, grey-streaked hair. After some seconds of quiet contemplating and smoking, he starts to talk.

Aharon: “No one who truly cares about Israel votes for Benny Gantz¹³, it’s just a shout for change, not a real political direction. How is his politics different from Bibi’s? He is a guy from the Army, he wants a strong Israel just like Bibi. So, people are just voting for a new face because of the case against Bibi”

Golda: “But how has that worked? We are still in a war! For as long as I have lived it’s been the same, just war. And Bibi has not made it better, just worse”.

Aharon: “But Gantz does not know how to rule a country! He has been chief of the army, not Prime Minister, so he has no real experience. It’s like someone like me should start doing politics without any training, I could not run Israel. And Gantz has no more experience than someone else, and especially not Bibi. Bibi has made Israel strong, both inside against the Arabs and against control from the UN, Europe and the USA. Sorry, I know you are Norwegian, but we don’t want help from the outside. We want to deal with it ourselves”.

Benjamin: “But don’t you think there is some reason why Israel gets criticized by countries outside?”

Aharon: “Honestly, I couldn’t care less. The UN doesn’t intervene with the US, no? Why would they bother us? We defend ourselves from these Arabs that want us dead, it’s not pretty, but war never is. But Europe and the US doesn’t get that. Maybe because you don’t have any wars”.

¹³ Leader of “Blue and White”, the main political party running against sitting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the 2019 Election.

Later that day I talk to Aharon's mother without him there. I have talked to Aharon several times about his mother being controlling towards him and his siblings, and although I never viewed her as a potentially controlling person from the times I met here, I know from my own Israeli family how it can work. She starts explaining how her life changed when her kids moved away from home, her daughter being the last one to leave home. Talking about the past in which she had been a busy mother caring for her children, the passiveness in her demeanour disappears and she turns into a storyteller, explaining her role in the family. Taking her children to the beach at the weekends, or just going to the mall with them. These stories are told in a way that highlights her own position as important in her life, thus giving her own life meaning. Later, when she turns to talk about her life as the kids moved away and married, later on, she changes again, her voice getting more distant and her gaze focused on something far away.

The war changes us, mothers, I know all mothers worry, but our children defend this country, and not all of them come back. It's tough. And although Galit¹⁴ didn't serve in the army, the boys did. She was home with me the longest, and it made me feel like a mother a little longer. When Galit married I lost that. It was really hard for me, not being able to tell her what she should do. We fought a lot at the start because she did not want to listen to me. And she told me to stop trying to control her. It was tough.

As Golda explains here, being in control of her children, in this case, her daughter, made her feel important and without it, she struggled to find meaning. She often told me how she would sit at home smoking and watching television for days, feeling more and more sorry for herself as time went by without contact. She felt let down. There is also a sense of powerlessness, for as her boys were in the army, doing something that she clearly sees as important, her important task has been child-rearing. Now that is has ended, she feels useless.

Stories like these I heard quite regularly during my fieldwork, and although I recognize some of the elements from my own experiences with Israeli family life, at first, I didn't give it much thought. But there were too many similarities to be comfortable with leaving it out and I feel confident that these examples highlight something essential that is connected to the narratives I have discussed earlier. The subject of control of one's children has been written about before, perhaps especially in Muslim societies in the Middle East.

¹⁴ Her daughter

Another example of control is from Chaim. He would often talk to me about his family, both his parents and his wife and kids. At this particular day, he had been with some friends in Tel Aviv for the weekend and come home the day before. We sat outside his café in the shade as he sighed, sat back in the creaking chair and rubbed his face in his hands. As usual, he had already complained about being tired after waking up with his kids in the morning and not getting enough sleep.

“You know what, Benjamin? Last night when I came back from Tel Aviv, my mother started asking these questions, it’s like she wants to annoy me”.

I tried answering something vaguely comforting, while also waiting for a more elaborate answer. Chaim took his time, his eyes squinting against the daylight, stretching his legs across the concrete. “You see, my parents’ generation is different from mine, they have these ideas about how you should live, how to treat your family, how to be a strong man and so on. I don’t fit into those. I’m not married, and I don’t earn enough to support my family by myself. So, because of that, I think my mother doesn’t let me live my life. And how can I blame her?”

What seems to be a major point with these stories is positioning yourself in relation to other people in a particular way. Not by relational terms such as how you feel like being with the person, but by what they give in terms of self-value and a sense of power. Value as an analytical term is so broad, so some different perspectives are much needed to continue this discussion. In these examples, we see a sort of value that is not communicated as inherent in the person itself, but by its meaning to another person. When Golda talks about her relation to her daughter, she doesn’t mention how her daughter feels about this change, but about how this affects her. It might be seen as a special case of a controlling mother, not willing to let go of her daughter. But when seen together with similar stories and reflections from other parents I met, I don’t think this is the case.

From this, we can gather that having children can be more about power and the ability to exercise power over somebody, it seems from these talks than other, more sentimental reasons. Not to underplay that children are sought after for those sentimental reasons, but they are at least not communicated as strongly as the reasons that centred around power and the meaning it gave people to have children. And I think it would be naïve to assume this is the case in Israel alone.

A running theme through my thesis this far has been different ways to relate to different versions of the truth. These different versions are in turn informed by values such as bravery, masculinity and

integrity. But what gives one the power to be deemed trustworthy and in what situations? As I hinted at the very start of this thesis, if you visit Israel as an outsider, you will likely be bombarded with these sorts of narratives, trying to convince you to pick their side and believe their story. You will hear things like “I’ve lived in this my whole life; don’t you believe me?” and “nobody but we Israelis understand this because we’re living this life every day”. Truth is claimed through senior experience in dealing with that life, not in any way by referring to something exterior.

As I’ve shown in this chapter, some of the hardest truths to accept for parents were the realization that they could not dictate truth to their children anymore. It was this loss of power that was described, not the time they spent with their family in general or any other aspect, although these were also probably concerns they had. This is not a way of saying that Israeli parents don’t care about their children, quite the contrary. The parents of most of my research participant were a big part of their lives, even after they married and had children. This closeness, while losing some control over the consensus of truth in the family, led to a lot of unease on both parts of the relation. What helped me connect to and gain people’s trust in these personal matters was that I often could use my own experience to build trust.

As I’ve presented earlier, some are left out of these power relations. For example, Dan, who wasn’t taken seriously anymore, on accord of his lacking interest (or belief) in the existing political system. While he seemed content with this trade, it was perceived as a loss of power by both his wife and mother, who felt uneasy about his choice. Another example is Moshe, who is out of sync with the current Israeli political environment and longs back for a past which fits with his own political views. His pro-peace and left side views aren’t accepted anymore, so he has given up talking politics and just votes on the lesser evil in each election. While he may not be content with the current situation both in his personal life and the greater political context, he finds some comfort in reminiscing about the past, in which he had a great deal more to contribute with and the possibility to travel abroad as he wished. The nostalgia for the past we can see as a way of finding meaning in a reality which seems to be out of your own control, and like Thorleifsson describes, can be seen as:

a potent source of social reconnection and identity in turbulent times. The representation of memory, even when mythologised, can salvage a ‘damaged’ sense of identity and re-territorialise ... experience (Thorleifsson 2016).

In opposition to these examples are Chaim, Yecheil and their group of friends, who despite their insecure situations are very much part of this discourse and thus have every ability to express

themselves within the political environment of Israel as of now. Perhaps this is one of the few ways in which they feel like they both have a say and contribute with something in their community. While Dan has a more secure and interesting job, that makes him less invested in the national community and more secure in his critique of these instances.

A way of making sense of these reactions to what we could term the neo-liberal politics of Israel, would be through an understanding of Eriksen's concept of *overheating*. Overheating could be understood as what we see as accelerated changes in the way the world works globally. As Eriksen explains "Modernity in itself entails change, but for decades change was synonymous with progress, and the standard narrative about the recent past was one of improvement and development." (Eriksen 2016: vii). As he further explains, this recipe of change as the common good has changed into one where the change has come out of control and is threatening us in new ways (ibid). While some of the focus in the Overheating project has been on climate change and the rapid changes that go on in an economy without breaks or a thermostat, a point is also how these accelerated changes enter into people lives, identity and how it affects our way of perceiving the world. An example of his that strikes me as oddly similar to my own experiences in Jerusalem, is from his fieldwork in Gladstone, Australia where factories have been the main source of income for as long as the town has existed. The people there are bombarded with negative PR from the outside, mainly from people in offices, in cities far away from Gladstone. And they complain that the people writing negatively about them don't understand what they're criticizing, because they're not there. "Yes, the factories may be damaging The Great Barrier Reef and even our kids, but what alternatives do we have?" While of course, this gives little justice to the complex problems of the people of Gladstone, it serves to explain my basic point, one of clashing scales.

Scaling up means enlarging something in order to gain some benefit or other. The classic modern version in politics is nationalism (Gellner 1983), whereby the relevant systemic boundaries of life-worlds expand through the effective incorporation of communities into nation-states. The key to success for a nation-state lies in its ability to create congruence between the political scale and the cognitive scale of the inhabitants, ensuring their identification with the imagined community of the nation (Eriksen 2016: 133)

While I've already discussed nationalism, this basic definition is essential to point out something that might be useful to understand the nationalism I experienced among my research participants in Jerusalem. As established earlier, while many of the people I talked to didn't object to the military

politics of Israel, they had troubles with other parts of the political system. Mainly this regarded increased taxes both on work and on for example cigarettes, which was imposed while I was there. We could say this points to a sort of neglecting of class while holding onto the imagined community of the national state. At the same time, we can glimpse an attempt at scaling down to personal life and control this in spite of the insecurity going on at a nationwide level.

“Pink Washing” the Conflict

The theme of masculinity often came up as a topic of discussion, or as a symbol of Israeli culture. Israeli men take great pride in their masculinity, comparing themselves with Europe and the US, which according to them had lost their masculinity. It was pointed out by other people if a guy was not seen as masculine enough, he was jokingly branded as "gay, but not like really gay, just gay". Actually, being gay didn't seem like a problem in Chaim's group of friends, as a close friend of him was open about his sexual orientation and worked as a bartender in a bar that was known as "the gay bar of Jerusalem". So, there was this distinction between actually being gay and being branded as less of a man, which the lack of masculinity was often seen as.

Therefore, masculinity was a trait my research participants were especially passionate about and something they numerous times connected to a sort of “Israeli cultural spirit” and a sort of nostalgia. As earlier described by Thorleifsson, this sort of nostalgia for a past is heavily ingrained in many Israelis imagining of the state (2015, 2017). It is also, as I pointed to in last chapter, one of the cornerstones of the narratives they told each other about who they were. This fascination with the past is interesting for a number of reasons. First, as I will go into detail about further down, the Israeli past is often imagined in a particular way, with focus on a strong working spirit and a community of endurance. At the same time, the present and future is represented by the opposite, a liberal progressive and technologically advanced society. While the Arabs are imagined much like the mythic sense the Jewish Israelis look at their own past. We can in this way suggest that while they look at themselves as capable of change and progress, they view the Arabs as eternal “savages”. This is much in line with Said's view of orientalism and shapes both how people present and perceive themselves, but also treat others (Said 2003).

In this sense, masculinity is an interesting trait. As Bourdieu points out in *Masculine Domination*, gender and sexuality in some manners works as binary oppositions and is associated with other

aspects of society. A quick and relevant example is that masculinity could be associated with the public, domination or in short; with culture. While femininity was associated with the opposites of these; the private, subordination and nature, respectively. Despite this being quite a static illustration, it gives a quick image, more of how the masculine/feminine is constructed in societies which have a strong patriarchy, such as in Bourdieu's example, Kabylia or in mine, Jerusalem (Bourdieu 2000A).

I believe this could also be even clearer understood through Connell's theory of how masculinity is a hegemonic sort of power, which manifests itself differently through different societies and through time. Connell argues that there are different sorts of masculinities, some are dominant in certain societies, a different kind in others. Many of these masculinities revolve around a sort of domination aspect, while others don't necessarily. Of course, there are degrees in between these polar opposites, but the idea is that masculinities are not one thing, but an integral part of how many men are taught how to behave themselves in the world. With that comes a certain way of perceiving men (Connell 2006).

Connell also presents some regular ways of seeing masculinity, all of them lacking in some way or another. The one which I would argue fits how masculinities were presented and performed, came closest to what Connell brands as the "normative" definition. The normative view of masculinity, as is apparent from the name, focuses on a strong sense of what men "ought to be" and which they achieve in various degrees. It defines masculinity quite narrow and therefore we can say that very few men actually live up to it. Still, it exerts a strong pressure to conform into one type of man (Connell 2006: 70).

So, Chaim could be jokingly called "gay" because he was seen as quite caring towards his friends, while his friend Omer (who was openly gay) didn't get any comments from anyone. At least not to his face. As he described, he wasn't as free in Jerusalem, in comparison to what he would have been in secular Tel Aviv or some other place. In Jerusalem, yes, he could go out drinking with his friends, but everything else was associated with the religion he felt he didn't belong to. In a place like Jerusalem, religion has a link to almost every part of the city. Therefore, while the categories put on people verbally became signifiers of fitting in among the norm of masculinity, what was not said was that Chaim had the opportunity to move as he chose to and to have both a partner and kids. Omer, on the other hand, was restricted to certain parts of Jerusalem and while not being branded as gay, he didn't need to be. He knew when and where society accepted him, keeping away from the places he

didn't feel safe in. Thus, like Johanna, he was in a way drawn to both Tel Aviv and Jerusalem because he didn't feel at home in either.

Pride in Tel Aviv was to me at the time a sort of getting away from Jerusalem and seeing something entirely different. Both research participants in Jerusalem and friends in Norway urged me to take the possibility to experience something other than the fieldwork. I'd been to Tel Aviv a few times other than this, with a few family members or alone for a couple of days. I sensed an immediate difference on the train from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv. Usually occupied by a lot of orthodox Jews, they were now few and far between. Instead people my age with rainbows on their clothes occupied the usually half-empty train. Talking merrily in a mix of English, with Hebrew occasionally thrown in with bits of German and French, I could not wait to get out into sunny Tel Aviv and out of gloomy Jerusalem for some days.

Getting off the train at Hashalom Station, I was bumped into by eager visitors on my way out. Even though the summer had taken its time this year, as I was told about a thousand times by complaining Israelis, it had finally gotten scorching hot. As I made my way to the hostel I'd booked in the north end of Tel Aviv (picking hostels in Tel Aviv was a game of chance, until now I'd been mostly unlucky) I picked the route by the beach. This being the longer route, it offered me the opportunity to gather much more of Tel Aviv's vibe on a Thursday afternoon. Because of Pride it was even fuller than usual - people were gathering in loose formations on the beach and on the huge stairs from the main street down to the beach. Walking the sidewalk up from the busy middle of Tel Aviv it was just as packed with people, the whole city full of people and colour, rainbow flags on every building. While the little part of Tel Aviv facing the sea looked generic Euro-American and new, it sometimes revealed shabby streets further from the water, that resembled other parts of Israel I've been in much more. The frequency of flags lessened as one moved away from the beach. Just like that, the streets closest to the beach were full of people with rainbows on their clothes and painted on their cheeks, happily celebrating what to them was probably the most important day of the year. A couple of streets up, life looked a little different and at the same time, more similar to what I recognized from both Jerusalem and Haifa.



Photo 4: People gathering along the beach promenade in Tel Aviv during Pride (Photo by the author)

When I returned to Jerusalem afterwards, it seemed gloomier and more traditional than ever. After some days of getting back to my regular fieldwork, I talked to Johanna, who was working at the hostel again. As we got talking about Pride, some of the other people staying at the hostel joined in. I understand as the conversation goes on that they are tourists from Germany, having been to the Pride celebration in Tel Aviv themselves. We get into how Johanna view Pride in Tel Aviv, as she says she didn't attend. She excuses herself briefly, as she was working that weekend anyway. In a more serious tone, she says that while Pride certainly is fun to attend and the people there obviously are having the time of their life, the reason Israel lets these things happen and even funds them, is just "pink-washing"¹⁵. The other tourists look at her questioningly, probably feeling a little offended by her judgement of their reasons for coming to Israel. Trying to catch up with Johanna, they ask if she is anti-Israel because she condemns Israel this way. To which she replies that while she is not a

¹⁵ The act of «pink-washing» something is derived from «white-washing» and used to describe the act of using the LGBTQ+ movement for marketing something as liberal and/or progressive, while not actually being so (Blackmer 2016).

supporter of the Israeli politics of expansion on the West Bank and the situation on the Gaza strip for that matter, the situation is too complicated to just stop Israel's security policy.

This is very much along the lines of what Hartal and Sasson-Levy argues, that Pride in Tel Aviv is used by the Israeli, because;

the marketing of gay tourism to Tel Aviv, maintains a twofold construction of Tel Aviv as a Middle Eastern global city, which we term the Progressive Orient. Reinforcing the differentiation from the Middle East and other Arab countries, while embracing Orientalist images and tastes under the guise of authenticity, this particular kind of pinkwashing also differentiates the city as other than the rest of Israel (Hartal and Sasson-Levy 2019: 1).

As we can see from this case, Pride in Tel Aviv was constructed on much of the same Orientalist picture as the Independence Day but tried to appeal to a whole different category of people. The irony is that while Pride tries to conceal those very structures that Independence Day exhibits, they both end up showcasing these very structures, just to two very different audiences. Both falling victim to the discourse of Israel as both democratic, modern and progressed, while also playing on Orientalist images on their own premises. This also applies to the family dynamics presented earlier in this chapter and together shows both a wish for safety and an ambiguity as to where one should place oneself in relation to discourses of power, gender and politics. What I would argue is that because of Israel's marginal position of not fitting in the imagined community of Western, liberal democracies nor in what is seen by themselves as "the backwards Arabs" they fervently try constructing an identity that shows this. As we've seen, this end up not only villainizing the Palestinians, but their efforts are so marred by the tendency to state loud and clear that they belong to the West, but not truly acting like it. In this sense, they are caught in a severe state of double bind that is built upon the neglect the Jewish people suffered in the Holocaust, made even worse by the creation of a "new Jewish identity" and the following neglect and colonization of the Palestinians.

By this quick look at the presentation of national symbols presented by Israelis, both at the undeniably nationalist celebration of Independence Day and the seemingly quite liberal, Western celebration of Pride we can get a glimpse into how Israel wishes to presents itself. In a way, the presentation of Israel as liberal, democratic and progressive is so exaggerated that it runs the danger of being perceived as just the opposite. The masculinity described here, along with a strong focus on what is said, coupled with sometimes doing the exact opposite gives of a picture of a sort of theater play. Now of course, that is not to say that it is all a fraud, but just that Israel is caught between two

discourses and in playing to one of them actually ending up much like what they imagine the Palestinian people to be.

Here one only needs to note for example the discord between the fact that all of the Israelis I met wanted to present themselves as “not really religious” and yet the religious has immense power in Israel, because of their coalition with Netanyahu the last years. Religion is often, as I mentioned earlier, connected to being “traditional” or “backwards” and just this stereotype is often connected to Arabs and something that separates them from Israelis. The example of masculinities could also be argued that connects to this in an interesting way. The masculinity Israeli men attributed to themselves were obviously something they saw as positive traits. Quite to the contrary is the imagining of “Arab culture” which deals with the “different sort of masculinity”, one fueled by tradition and control. While this the masculinity of Israeli men is therefore both seen as a positive trait that separates them from the “soft men” of Europe and the US but connects them unwillingly to the Arab world. This highly uncomfortable relation between presenting themselves as the same as the “Western world”, but also taking inspiration from what they see in their own past, which incidentally they see as the Arab present. Some of this I will deal with in the last chapter and how this uncomfortable position plays to Israel’s disadvantage and trouble with imagining itself.

3 Of Work and Recognition

Up to this point in the thesis, I've pointed out a lot of critical ways to look at narratives and Israeli life as it appeared to me as a novice social anthropologist on my first fieldwork. It doesn't always paint a picture of the people I met as friendly and open as they seemed to me during my stay. All the same, a critical way of looking at a particular form of fervent nationalism is essential to understanding the ways in which underlying ideologies shape our perception of reality. In this last chapter I will try to understand just how and why these narratives are so important and compelling to the people I met and even important, necessary for maintaining a sort of normality.

As we're walking home to Dan's place one Friday night, to meet up for the weekly event of beers and pizza in his garden, me and Reuven - a friend of Dan - talk about the political situation in Israel. It's early May and Benjamin Netanyahu and Benny Gantz have yet to form a Government. Nor will they for another 10 months, but we don't know that yet. This is just a normal election and Reuven is sure that it'll have the same outcome as the ones before. Not because he is overly fond of Netanyahu, but because he thinks the whole political system is so corrupt that votes have a limited effect on their actual lives. Economically Netanyahu has even done a good job for the tech companies, which in turn helps the national economy and he points to how it makes people in the rest of the world dependent on Israel, effectively tying Israel to Europe and the US. The walk to Dan's place is a short one from where we met outside mine, and I'm surprised that Reuven suggested we walk over. Until now, my fieldwork has convinced me that walking anywhere is a complete no-go for most people, no matter the distance. When I jokingly bring this up, Reuven laughs and agrees. He grew up this way and says his mother and most of the older generation in Israel still lives this way. Driving around is a sort of symbol that Israelis live in a "modern" society and don't have to walk. As he comments, moving to the US for some years changed his relationship to nature. He has learned to appreciate it, he says.

As we move on, I ask about the corruption he mentioned earlier and how it is that he doesn't believe in the political system. He looks a little surprised by my question, raising his bushy eyebrows way above his fashionable glasses and for a moment considers his response.

There's too much money, too much power involved, you know. It's like they say, 'absolute power corrupts' and all that. And I don't think it matters which side you're on. Yes, maybe Bibi has been in his office, or on his throne, for too long.

But at least he knows how to run this fucked up country and keep us as safe as anyone. So, anyone else, even Benny Gantz is a chance to take. And he will probably end up the same way anyway.

Reuven has a point, corruption and events which are the prime material of conspiracy, are quintessential parts of Israeli history, and the conspiracies I'm exploring in these chapters are in several ways' representations of or reworkings of Israeli history. Both in Yechiel's narrative of the story of settlements around Gush Etzion and earlier, the lady who adamantly defended Israel's policy against the Palestinians, the military and the security politics are seen as the rightful "rulers" or decision-makers in the conflict. This while the official, elected rulers of Israel are placed under close scrutiny. Why is that?

Sprinzak terms this thread of high-profile corruption "elite illegalism" and explains it as while not being undemocratic in principle, that there is a weak focus on "legalism" among Israeli high-ranking politicians. By this we can understand that while in principle the law applies to all, but the practice and discourse around criminal act has not had a strong focus on illegalities committed by political leaders. These illegal actions can be understood as the way Jewish settlers got things done before the state of Israel was founded in 1948, by engaging in illegal actions against the British Mandate. Political power can thus be seen as "free of constraints, to make dreams come true" (Sprinzak 1993: 174-175, 190-191). Illegal actions are thus seen by the general public as a necessary evil to achieve good, and this sort of imagining of political action it is easy to spot in both Reuven's explanation, as well as Aharon's when he explains that he doesn't care about what the world thinks about Israel's actions. If they're illegal by international standards can even be seen as Israel doing the only necessary thing that the rest of the world doesn't see. From this we can also gather that those narratives discussed in earlier chapters could be looked at as commentaries on politics that *are* in fact full of reasons for not trusting them.

When me and Reuven arrives in the garden at Dan's place, we're greeted by Dan and his wife. Like most parents of young kids, they're quite tired after a long day and say they're looking forward to some grown-up time. Some more friends are there and it looks like it's going to be a pleasant night. At this point it almost doesn't feel like fieldwork anymore, they're just my friends and I'm actually looking forward to Fridays, instead of dreading the empty streets and solitude that came with this time of the week early in my fieldwork. After sitting down and ordering pizza which doesn't exactly

fulfil the requirements of a kosher meal, I get a text from my Mum. It's a picture of her and my brothers, the middle one in military uniform and the youngest with his blue suit and red, white and blue ribbon on the collar. The text says, "Happy Constitution Day!" and I immediately look at the date and realize that I've forgotten. My face must have betrayed some emotion, because I'm soon asked what I'm doing and as I explain, they ask about how Constitution Day is celebrated and for once it's me who has to explain my background and culture while they seem to be judging the information I give them. The whole situation is reversed, and I get a glimpse into how they must feel when I ask what to them must seem like odd questions.

If one is to look at Independence in Israel, compared with Constitution Day in Norway, there are some obvious differences. As I've touched upon earlier, Independence Day is constructed on both the mythical past that in some way legitimizes Israel, but also on a sort of orientalism (Said 2003) that stresses the more unchanging characteristics of Jewish life from biblical times and up until today. Of course, on Jewish peoples own premises. It also celebrates a sort of rough war-like self-image of the state of Israel, born amidst a War for existence.

Constitution Day in Norway shares some of these characteristics. It is a celebration of chosen traits of Norwegian heritage that have been chosen to represent what the country and its people are to be seen as (Eriksen 1996: 15-18). It also carries meaning from WW2 and those who gave their life for the freedom of their country during the war. These similarities can be attributed to the fact that both these countries are relatively new and, in that way, "struggle" for independency and a clear national identity. There are still some differences. While both have made moral histories for themselves about who they are, as indeed is a big part of any nation or society, Norway has largely adopted a story of greater inclusion – of course with some more critical to this turn – while Israel is very much concerned with telling a myth about their past that excludes any other people than the Jewish. As Eriksen writes, nation states after the European model often focus on their own histories as more "objective" than those of other ethnic minorities, after a division of "traditional" and "modern" people, where the formers history is regarded as more of a myth than the latter (Eriksen 1996: 42-45). This is indeed one way of looking at myths. As we've touched upon history before, a different look at Israel's history is vital to an understanding of what lies behind narratives.

The Changing Israeli Ideology of Work

Israel has a history which can be described as being about the importance of work - the whole Zionist movement is built by long hours out in the sun, working the land. This also ties in with a focus on masculinity that connects together the two cornerstones of imagined Israeli community - the military and work. What perhaps creates this discrepancy between the expectations and the reality is that Israel was founded on a socialist tradition which was coupled with the need to defend themselves from the hostile world which didn't understand them. Now add the last 20 years of privatization, growing Neo-liberalization and the expectancy of becoming something from nothing and I believe you could explain a lot of the discontent which the people I met experienced. To break it down some more, most of the people I talked to were disappointed in themselves for not achieving what they felt they ought to in terms of work and some had not yet given up the hope of doing so. We can recognize this sort of thinking from how the American dream ideology works, in that it places the blame for the inequality between people on their lack of perseverance whilst completely ignoring social and economic factors (Ortner 1998). This weighted heavily on people and their expectations of themselves, especially when things didn't go their way.

At first glance, unemployment rates in Israel may suggest that there is not an immediate problem with employment in Israel - rather the opposite. The rate of unemployment has been steadily declining over the last 20 years and the government frequently points to it as an indicator of Israel's strength. However, as an analysis by the Jerusalem Post points at, the unemployment rates only refer to those actively enlisted as *looking* for jobs. Those who are permanently outside of the workforce, work an insufficient number of hours a week or earns too little to support a livelihood, or let alone a family, is not a part of this rate. What this means is that only a little over half of the population over the age of 15 actually goes to work and it's hard to say whether these people are making a living wage or not (Halon 2019). Adding to this, Israel is far down on the bottom end of the poverty statistics of the OECD countries. Here we come upon an interesting aspect of how some of the people I met struggled. While they worked part time or in periods, they were totally dependent on others and were often without a full-time occupation. The fact that so many faced the troubles with stability was also under-communicated and therefore the stigma that came with their positions even worse.

In David Graeber's *Bullshit Jobs: A Theory*, many of the discontents of work-life are explored and we see a side that isn't often shown in mainstream politics or media. First off, his arguments centre

around the phenomenon of bullshit jobs, which we can divide into some different definitions. The first one is the kinds of work where people literally do nothing, the second kind is the jobs in which they feel like they don't contribute with anything useful and thirdly jobs that exist *because* of these bullshit jobs but are not inherently useless in themselves. These cases are self-reported and to Graeber, this just makes them even more spectacular. Because even if you know that what you do is useless, how much of the work that is being done is *actually* useless? In a survey he had conducted for the research, up to 40% of the people asked reported that their jobs had little actual meaning for the world (Graeber 2018). Most of the people I got to know during my fieldwork were searching for some sort of purpose, much like Graeber describes, either in the workplace or elsewhere. A lot of the people were aiming for a higher paid job, because they believed their purposelessness was due to lack of status or means. While looking for work that would change their life, a lot of these young men turned to the US for a way to achieve their goals. As I described earlier, some of the older men who'd settled with their lot disapproved or looked at this practice with some contempt. Some of them had even tried to do the exact same thing once, only to return to Israel and the life they'd left behind. They would usually talk about the opportunities they had sought – money, status, freedom et cetera - which were out of their league just as much in the US as in Israel.

What can be understood from these longings towards what they saw as the "land of opportunities"? First off, the US is seen by a lot of the Israelis as the standard Israel was aiming at. I would argue this comes from an immense focus on economic value, rather than human value. As most of the people I knew were working in temporary, manual labour-oriented work, a lot of them felt disconnected to the reason they worked and either resigned or their contracts expired after a shorter rather than longer period. In between these periods of work, most of them would either get some sort of support from their parents to stay in their apartments or move home to their parents' until they could find some work. Needless to say, this process made them weary of applying to new jobs as they already felt that they didn't have a chance. I find it important to point out that most of these guys didn't have much formal education after graduating High School, although some aspired to it. The main reason being because their parents lacked the means to pay for their education. While no one tried to hide the fact that they couldn't afford the education they wanted, or blame it on their parents, there was a general consensus that they would turn this around. Somehow.

Let's take Yechiel as an example. He'd been working as a guide on the West Bank for a while, but it was not a very steady income, as most of his customers were Americans eager to discover settlements and the Israeli part of the West Bank. As he said himself, they were usually ideologically

very motivated, even more so than himself. Therefore, he often complained that perhaps he wasn't the right one to guide them. Apart from that, the job demanded too little of him. It was just showing a group of Americans around what he saw as the landscapes of his childhood. More than that, living in Jerusalem also represented a change from his life with his family. Their expectations had often weighted heavy on his decision-making and he longed for a different life. A while after I came to Israel, he got himself a job at a quite popular pub in Jerusalem and was really excited, because now he had the opportunity to perfect a particular kind of trade. Even if the wage was sub-par, he could live on it and use the days before going to work, on something that mattered to him. After he'd started, I saw little of him for some weeks, and at the time thought I'd somehow scared him away by my questions, but sometime later he showed up at Chaim's place again. His light and friendly attitude were changed so much that I immediately suspected something had happened, but as he calmly explained, he'd just quit his job. It felt wrong, doing something which he didn't have control over, he said. So instead of being bossed around, he figured he could just as well go back to his former job, in which he at least had a minimum of autonomy, however boring the actual job were.

These different examples highlight the troubles of finding a purpose that these men faced along with the general uncertainty that all of the Israelis I talked to expressed. Therefore, I would argue from these examples that when people were having trouble finding meaning in a job, they would turn their energy towards nation-building practices of ideological struggles but they certainly wanted some purpose to their lives and invested that purpose in the belief that they were the rightful people to inhabit Israel. Many of them were quite ingenious about it, conspiring about powerful Palestinian leaders making money on the conflict while their "brainwashed" countrymen suffered through years of occupation. Indeed, this was one of the most successful narratives in my opinion. It was built on the belief that some powerful group of people had everything to gain on everyone else's misery and that they were willing to exploit it in order to expand their riches. As I argued earlier, conspiracies can be seen as explaining an ill deed by what some powerful persons gain from it.

Conspiracies can be seen as effective means of making sense of something that doesn't fit into your current world view (Sunstein and Vermeule 2009). Some of the people I talked to show a pretty open critique of the Israeli government but lost a lot of credibility from the people around them. Both Moshe and Dan felt they had some credibility before, but when they started voicing opinions against the state, people either shunned them or paid little heed to what they were saying. But all the same, they were both pretty well off and felt they could take it. Chaim and the other guys who had fainter ties to the labour market did not express the same views. Of course, there could be other reasons for

that. Or just the other way around, that they didn't get well-paid jobs because of their political views, however, this seems unlikely. Both because of the fact that a lot of the people were connected to working life and held some of the same views. So, I'm not trying to argue that everybody outside the labour market held nationalist views or that all the people with steady jobs didn't. Instead, I'm arguing that nationalist ideologies were much more effectively used by people in precarious social and economic situations and that expressing opposing views were such hazardous actions that few people dared to.

I can think of several ways in which this fit with the impression I got from the people I talked to, for example, the way in which they associated more with the American dream-ideology and resented Europe for having both turned their back on them for backing Palestine through the UN and even for the Holocaust. This also contained some partially hidden resentment for their legitimized intellectual status. Here I have some rather telling conversations that could shed some light on this theme, for example, one I had with a couple that hung at Chaim's place from time to time. They were well educated and had both finished studies abroad in France, just coming back to Israel to finish their degrees. Although I didn't meet them many times, our first meeting was quite telling in some ways. When we were introduced and I presented myself as a student of anthropology from Norway, I was set upon by a lengthy explanation on how Israeli culture had nothing in common with their Arab neighbours but were a result of a mix of the very best of European culture and Hebrew as a language was used as an example here. There is definitely something to that, the early Zionist thinkers were heavily influenced by the European notion of the nation-state and the particulars of every people, their folk geist. Hebrew *is* based upon the language jiddish, which was used in the diaspora and resembled both French, German and Polish as well as the ancient Hebrew in the Torah. In that same line of thought, the Zionist dream was also founded on the very different story of the Jews of Israel which feature in the stories of the Torah. With that being said, I think the reason for his interest in explaining this to me was that he wanted to associate Israel with Europe and thus with the West and not the Arab world, which was seen as backwards in many ways, as a lot of the testimonies I've written about have stated.

Politics of Progress

A common way of seeing Israel's history is through a focus on progress from the diaspora and up until today. The State of Israel inhabits a certain moral character and an institutionalised Jewish

community, evolved from the religious one of the diasporas and even before that (Amar-Dahl 2017: 6). That way, as mentioned earlier, Israel has made its own history into an “objective” one, not merely a myth (Eriksen 1996: 42-45). This far, that has been made pretty clear by both the empirical examples and supporting literature. But to comment further, one could see this progress as a way of keeping the Jewish people defended against assimilation by institutionalising the religion, not as a substitute, but as protection (Amar-Dahl 2017: 6).

As Amar-Dahl argues, one of the most fundamental aspects of Israel’s existence is progress, and by the discussion up until now I think we can fairly see how this view influences thought and action, both towards perceived enemies within and the forces Israelis see working against them from the outside. This I discussed earlier as well and the clashing of the orientalism (Said 2003) and focus on progress present in Hartal and Sasson-Levy’s essay on Pride in Tel Aviv (Hartal and Sasson-Levy 2019). It would be fair to say that the way Israel places itself in a discourse of progress, while putting their Arab neighbours out of it, constructs them as Western and therefore superior to them.

On the note of acknowledgement of people with different background, Edward Said’s “Orientalism” and some of his other writing again comes in. As I’ve mentioned in a couple of different ways already, he argues that the way the West has imagined the Orient as eternal and mystical, distorts the way we judge the politics of the Middle East and its people, mainly the Arabic people. It also separates the world in to two categories: Those who are capable of progress and those that are not.

In the same vein, Eric Wolf argues that Europe has constructed people outside of Europe as historyless and eternal, while Europe has been the only place which makes progress and the other are constructed as eternal, desolate places which are only affected by Europe’s progress but are not able to make their own. He also argues that a focus on history that constructs itself as a moral history which builds upon itself, leads to the misconception that the winners were the “good people” and they were good mainly for winning. It also removes the complicated societies and struggles of both sides within a conflict (Wolf 1982: 40-41). I have argued from early on, that this is just what’s been done to the Israeli narrative: It’s a history of the winners (the Israelis) because that’s a logical conclusion to the biblical stories of the Torah. And really, it isn’t easy to turn back from that. Then you would have to acknowledge that you were wrong for over 70 years and that people have grown up and died in poverty because of that story. Because of the moral element of presenting history this way, winning over their enemies and being good can be seen as one and the same thing. This one could very easily fit in with Sprinzak and the “elite illegalism” that shapes views of power, where

while force and illegal means are inherently bad, they are also the only way of making progress and thereby doing good (Sprinzak 1993).

But what is an alternate way of looking at one's history? If we're to believe Antonio Gramsci, famous Italian Marxist thinker who spent the latter years of his life in prison, it is possible and even necessary to look at history from a different perspective. He argued that most humans were conformist when it came to write about and recount history. Therefore, it was the role of modern civilization to equip us with the tools to understand our own history. We also share our preferences with the group that we are part of and as a result, we are not always critical of the way that we perceive history. Gramsci gives the blame for this to societies that are "not modern" and interferes that when people have acquired the "tools" for understanding history, it will be for the better (Gramsci 1971:324).

We can interpret this as all of us existing surrounded by spheres of history and that just by being critical in our judgements of what history to adhere to, we need to know ourselves. Which also means that while it is possible to see patterns of history, not everyone does, and many will just follow the path that is taken by the people around them. This is where the concept of hegemony comes in. Which is the prevailing version of society and thus the version that most people adhere to. It is more persuasive because it is made official by Governments and therefore printed and talked about. This in turns makes people talk about it and reinforce it. As previously stated, those histories that neglect all other stories are what helps breed inequity, because of their one-dimensionality and lacking recognition of alternative versions (Eriksen 1996, Said 2003)

When this is seen together with the lack of meaningful work or some other purpose and the lack of legitimacy that follows, I've argued that most Israelis are caught in a double-bind, where either they stand outside the workforce and have to make their place in the local society by engaging in narrative-making or they're out. Interestingly, those with full-time occupations they seem to be content with, are much less invested in political issues and can even express doubts about the Israeli narrative.

So, what is the common ground in these stories? What is lacking in the narratives and what brings the need to make a story about a reality in which the Israelis, or even the Jewish people are the winner's? I think one way to answer that could be gleamed through Charles Taylor's "The Politics of Recognition". He simply argues that recognition, or the lack of it, is one of the driving forces behind

identity, both on an individual level as well as on state levels. Not only does it hurt to suffer misrecognition, as we all know, but Taylor argues that it distorts one's image of oneself (Taylor 1994).

Following his argument further, the need for recognition is something rather new. He argues that in former times, honour was something given to the few on top but with an individualized democratic society authenticity is found within rather than granted to you by birth right. This ideal also makes us more vulnerable to the judgements of others, because we are "at their mercy" in a sense. An example Taylor uses is how women can be seen as the prime example of this. Misrecognized by most societies, this has inflicted actual harm on what it means to be a woman. He also argues that most societies being colonized has suffered through the same lack of recognition and that in fact, this means that this lack of recognition is infused into their view of themselves. To explain it further, he distinguishes between the notion of honour, which was part of the social differentiation of the middle ages and was something reserved for the few that deserved it. Against it he puts the modern, egalitarian notion of dignity, which is the basic human decency, or recognition, deserved by everyone. But here is the catch. Since the democratic turn of society, society has also focused on individual "authenticity" as something following the fact that all of us are now equals. Since it's only our own responsibility to create our own authenticity, it's also our fault if we don't manage just that. This is part of what we often jokingly call "finding yourself" which actually can be explained as part of or indeed what makes most modern societies individual. Further he explains how this was derived from how we each have a "moral voice" inside of us, that one needs to be in touch with. This in turn is part of being authentic, as each of us owes ourselves to be. Taylor also notes how Herder, that was one of the formulators of this notion, also formulated it for both individuals and cultures (ibid.). Just by this argument, we can further say that this authenticity is best found in an environment where we aren't condemned for our actions and where we have some kind of work that lets us delve into some part of ourselves that we wish to pursue, in order to "find ourselves" or at least a way of expressing ourselves.

What could be more describing of not only my research participants and the other people I have described here, let alone Israel and the whole nationalist project? What is sought after but not necessarily given, one could say is just recognition. Both at a national level and a personal one. Both recognition of the lacking economic possibilities of both Israelis and Palestinians due to the current political situation, but also recognition of the inhuman situation of Palestinians and the fact that most Palestinians are born in Israel and have nowhere else to go. As Edward Said explained in an

interview in 1997, because of the situation of his people, throwing out the Israelis wasn't really something he saw as an option to end the bloodshed (Palestine Diary 2012).

A telling example of the importance of recognition one could say is the public views on the Oslo Processes. As I mentioned earlier, the Oslo Processes were a constant reminder of failure on both sides, both Palestinians and Israelis felt cheated by the promising deals which didn't go through in the end. As Sidsel Wold remarks in her book "Israel: Landet som lovet alt¹⁶", the politics of the conflict and the different ways of talking about it changed before, during and after the Oslo processes. Before, she described, it was hard to be accepted by both sides, either you were pro-Palestinian and anti-Israeli or the other way around. As soon as you were defending one side, getting to know anyone from the other side became virtually impossible. This changed during what she described as the hopeful days of the Oslo Process (Wold 2015).

The recognition of a Palestinian people from the Israeli government we could say is one of the things that made the Oslo Process stand out and actually have a chance at changing things. Not because the world didn't believe there wasn't a Palestinian people before the Oslo process, but perhaps because they were lifted out of a discourse of a "traditional" society which was not able to manage itself in a "democratic fashion" – or a terrorist organization - and respected as a political movement on par with Israel.

In *Nationalism and the Israeli State*, it is argued that because the term «minorities» are only used about non-Jewish groups, ethnicities only about Jewish communities and so on, being Jewish is presented as the national primary group (Handelman 2004: 44). In line with this way of seeing things I would say that the Palestinians are not only denied the same rights as Jewish citizens, but their cultural existence is not recognized. As Charles Taylor argues, *a group of people not recognized politically, socially or culturally will be harmed* (Taylor 1994) . During my fieldwork, this was one of the things that surprised me the most. I was prepared for the Palestinians to be kept out of the state, but not for the denial of their cultural identity. As horrifying this may seem, we can look at it another way as well. Yes, Palestinians suffer from a sort of misrecognition from the Israeli society as well as actually being deprived of legal rights. But Jewish Israelis also suffer from the same thing from a big part of the outside world. The sad part? Their efforts to achieve recognition has helped little and in some cases only made Israel more misrecognized.

¹⁶ English: "Israel: The country that promised everything" (author's translation)

To conclude my argument, much of the background that creates the misrecognition and following mistreatment of the Palestinian people, is based on imperialist mindsets. These can be termed as “Orientalist”, which makes the most powerful state the good one, because it brands itself as progressive, while constructing the other one as “traditional and backwards”. In the case of the Middle East, what follows is a villainised and imagined crook. The West are fostered on the image of people in turbans trying to kill them that this shape the way they view the world.

Choosing Sides

“The social world gives what is rarest, recognition, consideration, in other words, quite simply, reasons for being. It is capable of giving meaning to life, and to death itself, by consecrating it as the supreme sacrifice” (Bourdieu 2000B: 240-241).

As Bourdieu illustrates here, much like Taylor, recognition is one of those basic needs from society that makes it all worthwhile. This has also been inherent in discussions about narratives this far. Why would you need to make a reality that differed so much from others, if your existence wasn’t depending on it? And why use so much energy to construct an imagined, but at the same time very real community around you?

Some of this boils down to a theme I discussed many times with Chaim, namely the differences between living in Jerusalem and living in the many towns on the West Bank. He was very much aware of the reputation these areas had outside of Israel but held to that the reality was more complicated than that. He had relatives in the Jordan Valley¹⁷, which is in one of the contested parts of the country, now housing a good number of Israelis. He told me that they used to visit their home for some holidays because they had a nice house that was surrounded by nature. This was due to the fact that the cost of living was considerably lower and that they had secured work that paid much better, along with state subsidies for housing (Levinson 2018).

He would sometimes express a wish to live like that himself, but the city was too important to him. Not because of any religious belief, but because of family and friends, or belonging. In addition, as I

¹⁷ The Jordan Valley, while being part of the West Bank is home to some Israeli settlements. Chaim’s family being one of them.

have mentioned before, Chaim had a degree in sociology that he had yet to put to use, preferring to run his cafe even though it didn't earn him enough to support his family. He explained the choice as one of doing something he liked, instead of sitting in an office doing something he didn't want to while not having time to see his family. He was, of course, lucky, as he had a family he could live with, that could support his wife and kids for him. Not everyone I met had that opportunity.

An important essay on the (often neglected) choice to do good is David Graeber's "Army of Altruists: On the Alienated Right to do Good". It focuses on Americans serving in the US Army as what they see as the only way, they can do something good, or as he asks, "Is it possible that America is actually a nation of frustrated altruists?". Further he unfolds the main argument: People with little to no chance at gaining a degree and getting a chance to do good, opt for the Army because it's their only viable option (Graeber 2007).

They can imagine a scenario in which they might become rich but cannot possibly imagine one in which they, or any of their children, would become members of the intelligentsia. If you think about it, this is not an unreasonable assessment. A mechanic from Nebraska knows it is highly unlikely his son or daughter will ever become an Enron Executive. But it is possible. There is virtually no chance, however, that his child, no matter how talented, will ever become an international human-rights lawyer or a drama critic for the New York Times (Graeber 2007: 38).

He goes on to point out how the system works in a way that makes it nearly impossible to access this world of high-class altruism, which then rules out that possibility for people coming from other backgrounds. In the end, they join the army to be able to do good in the world, in the only way they see as an opportunity (Graeber 2007: 38).

Now if we take into account what Graeber argued about higher education and meaning, we can see that while Chaim's parents had the means to give him a higher education, he didn't find work that meant anything to him and therefore gave up the chance to use his degree. Instead, he chose a much simpler life, where he might not earn that much, but it means that he has more time to be with his family. He reflected upon this a number of times and sometimes seemed rather tempted to change this in favour of a higher salary and maybe the social capital that would come with it. But he persevered.

While some of my research participants, usually the older ones, blamed the state for their positions, this was uncommon, and they admitted to being treated as traitors because of their political views.

This one could also say was a generational aspect, as Moshe was older and still believed in the pre-neoliberal Israel of his youth. The younger guys were more precarious and had fewer expectations towards the state (Standing 2016). Every sort of opinion offered that didn't fit with the nationalist one was easily dismissed on the basis of that person's perceived credibility. This meant that both people who saw themselves as part of the left side of Israeli politics or neglected politics, in general, were kept out of the public debate. This is summed up by the maxim "if you're not with me, you're against me". Also popular in stories, usually presented as "if the Jewish doesn't have a common enemy, they fight each other". To explain the choices, and indeed lives, of Chaim, Yechiel, Dan and the rest we need to understand what sort of possibilities they really have. In most of their cases, it was mostly the army or some kind of manual labour. Yes, Chaim had an education, but was very well aware that he had little possibility of putting it to good use.

I'm not trying to say Israelis who condemn and speak out against Palestinians are in any way right to do so. But if we're following Graeber here, what is stopping Israelis from recognizing the basic human needs of Palestinians and on a more personal level, disentangling themselves from right-wing political ideas is their denied possibilities of doing good. First, this does a good job at helping to understand the differences between how Dan on the one side and Chaim and Yechiel on the other side views politics. Dan has a secure job and although it's not the best paid job, he reported himself that he feels satisfied with the work he does there. He previously had a better paid job but felt alienated and got a more meaningful job and accepted the following drop in income. It was worth it, as he felt that he did better in his new job. Chaim and Yechiel had different stories, to be sure. Chaim had an education he didn't use and owned a little café that barely made it by and offered little in terms of doing good deeds for others. But as he himself told me; it was way better for his family than moving out of Jerusalem for cheaper living expenses.

Now, it would not be fair to say that all it takes to achieve peace in the Middle East is recognizing peoples will to do good. Nor is it right to claim that Israelis have no fault in the suffering of Palestinians or that the Palestinians haven't done harm to Israelis. But by looking at the potential to do good, along with how facing misrecognition damages the sense of self in both individuals and societies, we can glimpse how things could have been. So not as much a solution or an excuse, this serves as an explanation model for how things can go wrong if people are denied basic recognition, and along with it, denied the possibility of doing good.

Closing Remarks

Texting with Yechiel in September 2020, the coronavirus has swept through the world, both causing human pain in the shape of losing your loved ones and the much-discussed economic consequences. Yechiel tells me he has started bartending again, now in the bar that we first met. In retrospect, perhaps not the most secure job? He also tells me that people are protesting against the economic insecurity they are facing because of the Governments lacking will to stand up for people who have lost their jobs (Hacohen 2020). Yechiel says he doesn't know who to trust, the protestors or the Government. After all, he has gotten himself a job. He also tells me that Chaim has closed down his café and started doing food delivery for a bigger company. When I tell him that I feel sorry for their losses, he just replies with "nothing lasts".

Maybe this brings the possibility of change - not because the pandemic in any way helps anyone, but because it tests the systems we usually rely on and questions if they really work. Often, we hear that the way the world is structured is the only possible way, but how exactly is the world structured? There are many answers to that, and no two countries have dealt with the coronavirus the same which just showcases that there are numerous of ways to structure a human society and we should question which one is the best at making sure people live lives worth living. That's the beauty of anthropology, to see the alternative ways of seeing the world and the multitude of ways that we can deal with life.

Although I felt that the situation surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its many facets were stuck before and during fieldwork, the world since then has changed profoundly. During my fieldwork, both because of the elections and the spike in violence between the Israeli and Palestinian side, things did feel as though they were changing even though most Israelis resisted. As explained earlier, this detachment from these international flows can be understood as something intrinsic to nationalism. In this line of thought, the pandemic has represented something new, that highlights just how vulnerable we all are, despite efforts to detach.

Finally, power relations are shaped through how and when narratives are expressed. Social relations are heavily tied into who gets to define reality and who doesn't have a say. One could say that being in precarious situations in life is almost an entrance ticket into joining in on who gets to define reality. It's not the cultural and social elite, most certainly, but rather the people on the ground,

questioning those on top. At the same time, enemies come from outside and inside stability is valued high.

This we can understand as a way of trying to scale down something which is moving out of one's control. Mechanisms of coping happen through placing blame on outside actors, not only on the Palestinians, which feature as the visible threat in narratives but on official legitimate organizations, such as the UN and so forth. We can see it as a way of saying to the world that they don't understand what it's like living their life. Why should someone from the outside tell us what's right or wrong to do? Even if many of us see these narratives as potentially harmful to people, it is important to understand how they work for people and why they are important to them. In the end, no matter how much one disagrees with someone, it is through explaining the reasons for their actions that we are able to see their reality.

Bibliography

Abuhav, Orit (2004). Anthropology in Israel: Professionals in Stormy Days, *History of Anthropology*

Newsletter: Vol. 31: Iss. 2, Article 4. Retrieved September 24, 2020 from

<https://repository.upenn.edu/han/vol31/iss2/4>

Abu-Lughod, Lila (1991) Writing Against Culture. In Richard G. Fox (ed.) *Recapturing*

Anthropology: Working in the Present. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.

Almond, Gabriel et al (1992). *Progress and Its Discontents*.

Berkeley: University of California Press

Anderson, Benedict (1991[1983]). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of*

Nationalism, 2nd edn. London: Verso.

Anderson, Betty (2016). *A History of the Modern Middle East: Rulers, Rebels and Rogues*.

Stanford University Press

Amar-Dahl, Tamar (2017). *Zionist Israel and the Question of Palestine: Jewish Statehood and the*

History of the Middle East Conflict. Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg

Barth, Fredrik (1969). Introduction, in Fredrik Barth (ed.) *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*.

Oslo: Universitetsforlaget

Bateson, Gregory (1972) *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*.

New York: Chandler

BBC (2017) "Profile: Hamas Palestinian movement". Retrieved November 11, 2020, from

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-13331522>

Blackmer, Corinne (2019). Pinkwashing. *Israel Studies*, 24(2), 171-181. Retrieved October 26, 2020, from

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/israelstudies.24.2.14>

Bourdieu, Pierre (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Bourdieu, Pierre (2000A). *Den maskuline dominans*.

Oslo: Pax

Bourdieu, Pierre (2000B). *Pascalian Meditations*.

Stanford: Stanford University Press

Butter, Michael (2014) *Plots, Designs and Schemes: American Conspiracy Theories from the*

Puritans to the Present. Berlin: Water de Gruyter

Bronner, Ethan and Stephen Farrell (2011). Israeli Soldier Swapped for Hundreds of Palestinians,

New York Times. Retrieved November 11, 2020, from

<https://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/19/world/middleeast/israel-and-palestinians-begin-prisoner-exchange.html>

Canaan, Taufik. 1927. *Mohammadan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine*.

London: Luzac.

Caplan, P. (1999). Anthropology, History and Personal Narratives: Reflections on Writing 'African Voices, African Lives'. *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 9, 283-290.

Connell, Raewyn (2006). *Masculinities*.

Cambridge: Polity Press

Ehrlich, A (1987). Israel: Conflict, War and Social Change, in Colin Creighton and Martin Shaw (Ed.), *The Sociology of War and Peace*. London: MacMillan Press

Eriksen, Thomas Hylland (1996). *Kampen om fortiden: et essay om myter, identitet og politikk*.

Oslo: Aschehoug

Eriksen, Thomas Hylland (2010). *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*.

London: Pluto Press

Eriksen, Thomas Hylland (2016). *Overheating: An Anthropology of Accelerated Change*.

London: Pluto Press

Eriksen, Thomas Hylland (2018). Public ritual in Mauritius, in Morten Nielsen and Nigel Rapport (ed.) *The Composition of Anthropology: How Anthropological Texts are Written*.

London: Routledge

Fenster, Mark (1999) *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture*.

Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Foucault, Michel (1971). Orders of discourse. *Social Science Information*, 10(2), 7–30.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/053901847101000201>

Gellner, Ernest (1983) *Nations and Nationalism*.

Oxford: Blackwell

Gelvin, James L. (2016). *The Modern Middle East: A History*.

New York: Oxford University Press

Goodson, Ivor F. (2013). *Developing Narrative Theory: Life histories and personal representation*

London: Routledge

Graeber, David (2007). Army of Altruists: On the Alienated Right to do Good. *Harper's Magazine*.

Retrieved September 11, 2020, from <https://harpers.org/archive/2007/01/army-of-altruists/>

Graeber, David (2018). *Bullshit Jobs: A Theory*.

London: Penguin

Gramsci, Antonio (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks by Antonio Gramsci*.

New York: International

Granquist, Hilma (1935). *Marriage Condition in a Palestinian Village*.

Helsingfors: Akademische Buchhandlung.

Hacohen, Hagay (2020). Prices stay high as unemployment soars, fueling economic crisis –

analysis, *Jerusalem Post*. Retrieved November 11, 2020, from <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/prices-stay-high-as-unemployment-soars-fueling-economic-crisis-analysis-648736>

Hage, G. (2003). “Comes a Time We Are All Enthusiasm”: Understanding Palestinian Suicide

Bombers in Times of Exiphobia. *Public Culture*, 15(1), 65-89.

Halon, Eytan (2019). Israel's low unemployment isn't the only job market indicator – analysis,

Jerusalem Post. Retrieved September 27, 2020, from <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/israels-low-employment-isnt-the-only-job-market-indicator-analysis-609074>

Handelman, Don (2004). *Nationalism and the Israeli State: Bureaucratic Logic in Public Events*.

New York: Routledge

Hartal, Gilly and Orna Sasson-Levy (2019). The progressive orient: Gay tourism to Tel Aviv and

Israeli ethnicities. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*. DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.1177/2399654419862819>

Hirschhorn, Sara Yael (2017). *City on a Hilltop: American Jews and the Israeli Settler Movement*.

Cambridge: Harvard University Press

Horvath, Ronald J. (1972). A Definition of Colonialism.

Current Anthropology, 13(1), 45-57.

Jacobs, Daniel et al (1998). *Israel and the Palestinian Territories: The Rough Guide*.

London: Rough Guides

Kapferer, Bruce (1988) *Legends of People, Myths of State: Violence, Intolerance and Political Culture in Sri Lanka and Australia*. Washington: Smithsonian Institute Press

Kapferer, Bruce (1989). Nationalist Ideology and a comparative anthropology.

Ethnos, vol. 54, 161-199)

Labov, W. (2013). *The language of life and death: The transformation of experience in oral narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Levinson, Chaim (2018). Settlement Housing Gets Third of Israeli State Funds for 'National Priority' Areas, *Haaretz*. Retrieved November 11, 2020, from

<https://www.haaretz.com/.premium-national-priority-area-funds-go-to-settlements-1.5363270>

Madden, Richard (2017). *Being Ethnographic: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Ethnography*.

London: SAGE

Mudde, Cas and Kaltwasser, Cristobal (2017). *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*

Oxford University Press

Nietzsche, Friedrich (2014) [1886]. *Beyond Good and Evil*.

London: Penguin Classics

OECD (2020). Poverty rate (indicator).

Retrieved September 27, 2020. doi: 10.1787/0fe1315d-en

Ortner, Sherry (1997). Thick Resistance: Death and the Cultural Construction of Agency in

Himalayan Mountaineering. *Representations*, (59), 135-162. Retrieved September 25, from

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2928818>

Ortner, Sherry (1998). Identities: The Hidden Life of Class. *Journal of Anthropological Research*,

54(1), 1-17. Retrieved August 23, 2020, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3631674>

Palestine Diary (2012). *Edward Said on Orientalism*. Retrieved 24 September 2020, from

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fVC8EYd_Z_g

Pappe, Ilan (2014). *The Idea of Israel: A History of Knowledge and Power*.

London: Verso

Propp, Vladimir (1997). *Theory and History of Folklore*.

Minnesota: University of Minneapolis

Rabinow, Paul (2007) [1977]. *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco*.

Berkeley: University of California Press

Rabinowitz, Ron (1997). *Overlooking Nazareth: The Ethnography of Exclusion in Galilee*.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Rabinowitz, Ron and Khawla Abu-Bakar (2005). *Coffins on Our Shoulders: The Experience of the Palestinian Citizens of Israel*. Berkeley: University of California Press

Said, Edward (2003) *Orientalism*.

London: Penguin books

Sprinzak, Ehud (1993). Elite Illegalism in Israel and the Question of Democracy. In *Israeli Democracy Under Stress*, by Ehud Sprinzak & Larry Diamond (ed.).

London: Boulder

Standing, Guy (2016). *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*.

London: Bloomsbury Academic

Sunstein, Cass R. and Adrian Vermeule (2009). Conspiracy Theories: Causes and Cures. *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 17(2), 202-227.

Taylor, Charles (1994). The Politics of Recognition. In Amy Gutman (ed.) *Multiculturalism*.

Examining the Politics of Recognition. Princeton: Princeton University Press

Thorleifsson, Cathrine (2015). *Nationalism and the Politics of Fear in Israel: Race and Identity on the Border with Lebanon*. London: I. B. Tauris

Thorleifsson, Cathrine (2016). Guarding the Frontier: On Nationalism and Nostalgia in an Israeli Border Town, in *Identity Destabilised: Living in an Overheated World* by Thomas Hylland Eriksen & Elisabeth Schober (ed.).

London: Pluto Press

Thorleifsson, Cathrine (2017). Peripheral Nationhood: Negotiating Israeliness from the Margins of the State. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 90(1), 83-106.

UNRWA (2020). *Palestine Refugees* | UNRWA.

Retrieved September 24, from <https://www.unrwa.org/palestine-refugees>

Uscinski, Jacobs and Jacobs Parent (2014). *American Conspiracy Theories*.

Oxford: Oxford University Press

Verdery, Katherine (2018). *My Life as a Spy: Investigations in a Secret Police File*.

London: Duke University Press

Vohnsen, Nina Holm (2018). Writing against Conclusion, in Morten Nielsen and Nigel Rapport (ed.)

The Composition of Anthropology: How Anthropological Text are Written.

London: Routledge

Weiss, Erica (2016). Refusal As Act, Refusal As Abstention. *Cultural Anthropology* 31 (3):351-358.

<https://doi.org/10.14506/ca31.3.05>.

Wikan, Unni (1992). Beyond the Words: The Power of Resonance. *American Ethnologist*, 19: 460-482. doi:[10.1525/ae.1992.19.3.02a00030](https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.1992.19.3.02a00030)

Wold, Sidsel (2015). *Israel – Landet som lovet alt: Min israelske reise*
Oslo: Spartacus

Wolf, Eric (1982). Introduction: Europe and the People without History. In Eric Wolf (ed.) *Europe and the People without History*. Berkeley: University of California Press

Zulfikar, Teuku (2014). Researching my own backyard: Inquiries into an ethnographic study. *Ethnography and Education*, 9 (3), 373-386.