West Bank Settlement and the Transformation of the Zionist Housing Ethos from Shelter to Act of Violence

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In March 2011 West Bank settlers of Itamar formed an outpost to the settlement in response to the murder of a settler family in their home. Settlers established this outpost with simple, rectangular, plywood structures as symbols for dwellings, meant as an explicit response to the murder by way of erecting housing. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu responded to the murder with the memorable statement 'the [Palestinians] kill – we build'. Within hours Netanyahu's government announced the construction of 675 new housing units in Itamar, a 675 percent increase. The plan, approved in 2013, includes legalising the 137 housing units built without permit in Itamar since 1984 and issuing permits for 538 more units within a proper plan.[1] While framed to negate 'us' from 'them', Netanyahu's kill-build declaration places citizen housing on a par with violence and transforms violence *in* the home to violence *by* the home. This declaration makes a profound and explicit statement by which citizen housing is a retaliatory act in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, an act of violence rather than shelter.

Netanyahu's statement departs from Israel's Zionist housing project posited on an ethos of shelter. The collective national home was conceived as shelter from Jewish persecution granted to nations and individuals, posited as the raison d'etre of the State of Israel. Zionism's attempt to materialise a national home, where none existed for millennia, involved connecting subjects with a homeland in order to form a sovereign political entity legitimated

by these people, and great efforts were invested in forming a state-citizen contract via mass provision of public housing.[2] Providing housing for each citizen fulfills the right of each Jew to the ancestral homeland and serves as the material condition for accumulating future citizens and forming an independent polity. The interrelation of national home and individual house is therefore a central attribute of Zionism as ideology and – since statehood – as a regime.[3]

The historiography of Israel-Palestine is deeply focused on violence and conflict as objects of inquiry, neglecting the relationship between violence and settlement.[4] Historians identify 1929 as 'year zero' for the continuing violent struggle over Palestine, while the two iconic Zionist housing and settlement types – the kibbutz and the Hebrew City – were formed some 20 years earlier in 1909 and 1910.[5] Accounts of Israel-Palestine view architecture and planning as 'the continuation of war by other means,' namely as means exercised after overt violence has receded.[6] Yet the formation of key Zionist settlement frameworks prior to the eruption of violence marks a historiographical gap that necessitates re-evaluation of the conflict and calls into question the taken-for-granted assumption of cause and effect, marking settlement as an act of response and retaliation to violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Meanwhile, significant studies of Israel-Palestine within spatial disciplines have privileged the analysis

of geographies of violence over historical accounts, making a statement on 'the landscape as historical montage' that challenges the historical dictum of chronology-as-causality.[7] Noted is Weizman's argument for the significance of geographical principles – parallels between varieties of historical contexts that differ in many respects but hold similar spatial patterns – as key objects for architectural analysis transcending the historical.[8] Moreover, unlike the underlying assumption in literature on the settlement project, violence was neither the goal nor the practice of early settlers. Findings question the well-accepted argument that settlements were *designed* as military posts in an offensive project of territorial domination,[9] indicating instead that settlers attempted to transform the West Bank from military zone to civilian homeland in defiance of state insistence that only construction for military purposes was justifiable under international law.[10] This dynamic characterised the settlement project, starting with the first civilian resettlement of Gush Etzion, involving two opposing parties – state and settlers – now largely discussed as one. While Israel's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abba Eben resisted resettlement and declared it in the UN a military post, the returnees declared they 'came here as citizens in every sense'.[11]

Gideon Aran, who has studied Gush Emunim since the early 1970s, identified deep transformations in settler narratives and self-written historiography, stating that 'informants [have] forgotten and denied facts for a number of reasons, honest and less honest'.[12] Aran chose to publish his original study based on ideas expressed in interviews in the 1970s and 80s, rather than updating the data for current settler ideas, as he has found the forgotten facts cardinal for understanding the movement. My own focus in this article on the early formation of Gush Emunim ideology in settlement form takes a similar approach. Therefore, in attempting to locate the pivotal moment of change, I look for the change

in the movement's self-narration to pinpoint change in settlement strategy and ideology. When and how has Israel's regime come to identify citizen housing as acts of violence in a national conflict, as reflected in Netanyahu's statement quoted above? Why would the Israeli state transform a housing ethos of shelter to one of national violence? What does the deep divide between housing as violence and housing as shelter mean for Israeli society at large? This article aims to (1) examine these questions using detailed architectural history of early settlement and the pivotal change in settlement practices and (2) contribute to our theoretical understanding of spatial violence by reconceptualising 'conflict' and 'violence' as two analytical and discursive categories with different political consequences.

Violence, conflict, and housing: theoretical inquiry

The use of violence is increasingly understood spatially in the context of national conflict, as in Paul Farmer's framework of 'structural violence'.[13] The Israel-Palestine case has been significant, with architectural studies on the implications of walls, checkpoints, and barriers to movement by Michael Sorkin, Eyal Weizman, Derek Gregory and others.[14] Violence in dwelling environments has been the subject of a number of important studies, among them Teresa Caldeira's study of the 'talk of crime' and its contribution to 'solutions' like gating and urban segregation of the Brazilian city.[15] Eyal Weizman's studies demonstrate the deep entanglement of civilian and military practices in Israeli housing, producing civilian-cum-military settlements.[16] 'Suburban red-roofed single family homes replaced the tank as the basic battle unit; houses were deployed in formation across a theatre of operations to occupy hills, to encircle an enemy, or to cut its communication lines', writes Weizman.[17] Erez Tzfadia, Haim Yacobi and Oren Yiftachel point to the inherent opacity between the civilian and the military when it comes to political geography in

housing both within and outside the 'green line'.[18]

Conflict is the object of study most commonly identified for Israel-Palestine,[19] understood by scholars and the public alike in normative terms as undesirable and in need of 'solving'.[20] Liberal thought usually reads societies of conflict as deviant: 'pathological or deemed to the expression of irrational forces', politically underdeveloped, and 'on the way to becoming a proper polity'.[21] However, scholars of subaltern studies as well as scholars advocating for 'South-South relations' have pointed to the deep fallacies of the liberal-developmental perspective for the production of knowledge on these societies and political society at large.[22]

Chantal Mouffe's theory of agonism has identified conflict as central to the very formation of a polity. For her, agonism, a conflict that cannot be resolved, suggests a productive role for conflict in assembling a society, based on the object upon which the irresolvable conflict is waged. This object thereby forms a polity out of conflicted social actors by 'bringing them together because it divides them'.[23] From such a standpoint, conflicts are not seen as disturbances that unfortunately cannot be eliminated, as empirical impediments that render impossible the full realisation of harmony. Rather, Mouffe identifies the insolubility of the conflict as essential to political communities. Moreover, Mouffe has written, plural democracy is always a democracy 'to come', as conflict and agonism are at the same time its condition of possibility and the condition of the impossibility of its full realisation.[24]

The argument regarding agonism in political space is supported by a number of studies that find such spaces to be formed as a result of conflict rather than consensus, including AbdouMaliq Simone's study of African cities, Aihwa Ong's study of China's 'Special Economic Zones', and Nezar AlSayyad and Ananya Roy's study of urban informality.[25] A number of architectural studies have also identified the private-domestic space of housing as the site for continuous struggle over the identity of nation and citizens, including John Archer's study of the roots of American-dream suburban housing, Becky Nicolaides's on blue-collar suburbs, and Diane Harris's study of the construction of race in American post-war housing.[26]

The idea of agonism draws attention to an important element within conflict beyond social interaction, what Mouffe calls 'the object of agonism' over which conflict is waged and polity is formed. This object, for Mouffe, is not an obstacle to harmony but the very thing around which political society is forged.[27] Mouffe's work is complemented by Bruno Latour's work on the social significance of objects.[28] This article proposes *housing as the object of conflict* for Israel-Palestine and places significant focus on the object at stake in conflict. Rather than the site or means of violent conflict, I identify housing as the object around which conflict revolves, not merely situated in dwelling spaces but rather enacted by and directed at dwelling spaces. As such, the Israeli-Palestinian context poses a surprising theoretical contribution to understanding spaces and geographies of conflict, suggesting that violence in this struggle over homeland is directed primarily at space itself, and more specifically, at the concrete space of dwelling as emblem and building block of national homeland.

The West Bank settlement project studied here is marked by actual experimentations in housing and settlement forms, applied not by professional architects and planners, but by future dwellers for the purpose of testing out dwelling forms that would constitute viable permanent ones. The study of these experiments maintains housing studies' focus on the social issues and power mechanisms producing and distributing housing, while re-introducing to this discussion the architectural

lens for data collection and inquiry, insisting on the primary sources and disciplinary tools of architectural history, namely the 'reading' of building types, construction techniques, and materiality, along with the decision-making involved in design and construction processes.

Rebuilding civilian settlements, 1967–74

Much has been written about the experimental period of settlement in the West Bank (1967–1977), focusing primarily on the state's political manoeuvring and on the movement's political theology of 'Kookism', introducing Rabbi Kook's theology to mainstream Zionism.[29] Surprisingly few studies investigate experiments in the built environment – namely the 'design' of experimental settlement and housing – to examine how settlement was articulated and exercised by early settlers and ideologues.

The sources available for the study of this question are primarily pamphlets, historical photographs and videos, news reports, and oral testimonies, since settlement attempts were conducted via temporary structures, and all were quickly removed. Planning documents prepared by professional architects and planners can be found only for later stages, starting in 1978, of the consolidation of settlements and construction of permanent structures. Studies of West Bank settlements by leading scholars like Segal, Weizman, Tzfadia and Neuman focus on the period of state involvement and support of the settlement movement starting in 1977, as well as on formal planning by means of masterplans and detailed planning, addressing the bureaucracy and politics involved in administration.[30] Further, the historical focus of these studies zooms in on the post-Oslo period (1990s–present), a period I identify here as significantly different from earlier ones. These important studies therefore require elaboration and historical reframing that looks into the experimental phase of settlement building.

Between 1967 and 1974, Jewish settlement in the West Bank was limited to specific sites: the Jewish Quarter of Hebron, which was deserted after the 1929 massacre of Hebron Jews, an event identified by historians as 'the beginning' of the Israel-Palestine conflict, and the four Gush Etzion kibbutzim lost on the last day of the 1948 war.[31] Citizens, rather than the state, initiated the resettlement of Hebron and Gush Etzion. The Israeli government permitted limited 'return' to these sites, justifiable based on individual return home, while resisting new settlement on occupied land as determined by international law.

The 'children of Gush Etzion', who partook as young adults in the triumph of the 1967 war, organised immediately after the war to re-establish their kibbutzim. The kibbutz settlement form, the iconic building block of Zionist nation building since the 1920s, included by 1967 a network of 230 communes across the country based on a clear, proven, formulaic settlement pattern in terms of social composition and built environment. The kibbutz social-spatial structure consists of a tight commune, in which the residents share most of life's functions in places like a communal kitchen, showers, a children's house, and so forth, resulting in the perception of the entire kibbutz as one's home, with the sole private space being one's immediate dwelling space.[32]

'Kibbutz Kfar-Etzion children' debated whether to resettle in their original kibbutz framework or as a regular urban settlement. Those arguing for an urban (non-communal) settlement proclaimed their goal as 'settling as many Jews in Judea and Samaria', while others argued for the social-ethical cachet of the 'Kibbutz Movement which carried Israel's first rebirth struggles on its back and set [Israel's] borders'. These latter enjoyed the support of the kibbutz leadership of the time, who held significant positions of power in politics and intellectual life.[33] The Religious-Kibbutz Movement, a

subset of the Kibbutz Movement that was less influential during the 'first rebirth struggles', proposed itself as the new leader of the Kibbutz Movement and ideology by adding religious ideology to kibbutz socialism.

Given state resistance to civilian presence in the West Bank, returnees argued among themselves whether to seek state approval for resettlement or settle without it, disregarding the state. The 'children of Gush Etzion' met with Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, who famously said, 'well kids, if you want to – ascend'.[34] Returnees demanded a New Year's prayer at the resettled kibbutz; thus, resettlement was celebrated on 27 September 1967, four months after the 1967 conquest.

In practice, the iconic kibbutz framework made it easier to gain state support, yet restricted early ideas of Jewish settlement to the small scale of the tight communal social and physical structure of the kibbutz settlement form. Kfar-Etzion returnees refrained from conflict with the state over civilian settlement and did not produce a new housing or settlement form. Nonetheless, Kfar-Etzion fomented a new political ideology for the Kibbutz Movement and Zionist settlement at large, which would extend well beyond the kibbutz framework, and addressed the Israeli state as its ideological opponent.

Experimenting with new civilian settlement forms: Sebastia, 1974–75

The idea of forming new settlements in the West Bank was first articulated in 1974, seven years after the 1967 occupation, and at first, limited the idea of resettlement. Kfar-Etzion's secretary Hanan Porat, who was closely affiliated with Rabbi Kook, was among the first to articulate a vision for Judea and Samaria beyond the limited kibbutz format, in new (rather than returning) settlements. Judea and Samaria were held since 1967 by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) as a military zone whose only civilian population was Palestinian, administered by

the military rather than civilian state mechanism.

On 5 February 1974 in Kfar Etzion, Porat hosted the initiating meeting of the messianic activist movement known as Gush Emunim, which proposed civilian settlement as a means to resist the government's Alon Plan to withdraw from most of Judea and Samaria and allow Palestinian – rather than Israeli – civil autonomy upon it.[35] Gush Emunin demanded the inclusion of the West Bank as part and parcel of the civil homeland rather than as occupied enemy territory by allowing Israeli citizens to make it their home by settlement, enacted via a settling group called Elon Moreh.

Unlike the small-scale, government-approved resettlement of Kfar Etzion in kibbutz form, Gush Emunim attempted to form new cities and attract thousands of Israelis to the West Bank, articulating the principle of settling as many Jews in the biblical homeland as possible, in explicit defiance of state policy and IDF military governors. Starting in June 1974, Elon Moreh activists enacted eight 'ascents' involving mass mobilisation pilgrimage events and performances of full settlement, echoing the concept of 'ascent' in Jewish immigration to Zion since the 1880s, as well as the concept of ascent to holy sites, primarily Jerusalem's Temple Mount. As Elon Moreh civilians had no permit to settle in land held under martial law, they were repeatedly evacuated in clashes between settlers and the IDF. Settlers viewed the state and military, rather than the Palestinian population, as their ideological and actual opponents against which they barricaded and voiced threats of violence.

Elon Moreh's first 'ascent' took place on 5 June 1974 south of Nablus. A convoy of 20 trucks and cars carried 100 settlers, including spiritual leader Rabbi Kook, and equipment, including a generator, kitchen facilities, furniture and religious artifacts. Settlers are reported to have fenced off an area of two hectares by the Horon military base; set up

ten tents for dwelling; and designated tents for a synagogue, kitchen, and kindergarten. This settlement attempt included all elements of a 'proper' settlement relying on the kibbutz model in its 'tower' and 'stockade' iteration of the 1930s, which produced instant settlements to circumvent British restrictions on new Jewish settlements. The 'tower and stockade' strategy eluded the restrictions by performing a civilian pioneer act in defiance of the State of Israel as foreign/other.[36] Indeed, as settlers refused to leave, they were surrounded by soldiers and military police who carried them one by one to evacuation buses.[37]

Following the failure of this first attempt, which was well documented by the press, Elon Moreh published a pamphlet addressing the general public, arguing that civilian settlement is an issue of civil rather than military concern, thus pitting the Israeli regime against the Israeli public. The pamphlet proclaimed: 'We set out today to found a city in the heart of Eretz-Israel near Nablus', choosing the site of the old Ottoman train station by the Palestinian village of Sebastia, associated with biblical Samaria.[38] While declaring their goal to be 'a city' involving a large number of settlers, this settlement attempt again relied on the kibbutz model as precedent and justification for 'illegal settlement', producing the performance of settlement by including all aspects of the kibbutz model – from the kindergarten and shared kitchen to the flagpole. Tents were set up for dwelling, an infirmary, and other communal services, while the old train station served as a barricade. A group of right-wing members of parliament, writers, and intellectuals joined the settlers, as well as many reporters who documented Elon Moreh's 'renewal of Jewish settlement in Samaria'.[39] As settlers refused to leave, again military personnel removed them from the site. Elon Moreh's subsequent attempts alternated between the tower and stockade strategy of instant settlement and the mass mobilisation of the general

public in festive events, though repeatedly failed to reach the goal of civilian settlement.[40]

Elon Moreh's successful eighth attempt of 30 November 1975 meshed the two strategies of public mobilisation and tower and stockade instant settlement. Activists organised a festive march of thousands of families from Netanya to Sebastia on the Hanukah school holiday, which was complemented by the transportation of equipment and building materials to form an instant settlement occupied by these families. Facing harsh weather conditions that particularly affected the young children present, the military allowed settlers to stay for the weekend. Settlers again organised an impromptu full settlement. Settlers' supporters managed to transfer a truck full of precast elements for concrete structures, smuggled into the site and assembled there. The tent town formed by settlers remained through the weekend and attracted large crowds of additional supporters.[41]

Elon Moreh leaders used the large crowd of civilians to argue for mass civil support of their demand for civilian settlement. Resisting eviction, settler leaders posed threats of violence in the form of civil war should they be forced to evacuate Sebastia. 'We actively, purposely, contributed to generating fear of civil war […] our public was dedicated to go all the way […] with the message "we will defend this place as one defends one's home" […] we exploited the atmosphere of threat to reach a compromise'.[42] The threat of civil war marked West Bank settlement as an internal Israeli affair rather than an intra-national struggle with Palestinians, and forced the State and military to reconsider the terms of the Israeli hold on the West Bank. Negotiations between settlers, the government, and the army resulted in a compromise: in exchange for voluntary evacuation of Sebastia, the Minister of Defence in charge of martial law in the West Bank allowed a group of 30 civilian families to remain in Samaria within the

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig. 1: Elon Moreh settlement in Sebastia, 1974. Photo: Moshe Milner. Source: National Photo Collection.

Fig. 2: Elon Moreh builds in Sebastia, March 1975. Photo: Shaya Segal. Source: Midreshet Kdumim.

Fig. 3: The Samaria March, March 1975. Photo: Israel Sun.

nearby Kedum army camp.[43] The threat of violence in the form of civil war was therefore successful in gaining settlers a foothold in the West Bank in the form of civilian settlement within an army camp. [Figs. 1–3]

The compromise reached at Sebastia involved accepting 30 settler families into Kedum army base, thus maintaining the principle of a military rather than civilian hold of Samaria as far as the state and army were concerned. No alterations were made to the Kedum camp to accommodate the settlers, who had to care for their own housing and communal facilities within the camp and employed the design of a civilian-built environment as a major tool for transforming the camp into a civilian settlement. Kedum settlers successfully argued for the intro-duction of supplies from outside the camp, donated by members of the general public with varied inter-ests – from kibbutzim who viewed settlers as the ideological continuation of pioneer settlement to contractors interested in the business opportunity offered by settlement. Elon Moreh's demand for permanent dwellings in winter time was met with 45 mobile homes supplied by the Jewish Agency, a compromise between durability and temporality.[44] In addition, settlers managed to argue for civilian services such as postal services and public trans-portation. Befriending the camp commander and Nablus governor, settlers gained access to more and more camp facilities and an increased area, including a separate, civilian entrance to serve them independently from the soldiers, later closed off by the Minister of Defence. The state, settlers, and army thereby negotiated the terms of civilian presence in the military-held West Bank upon the everyday built environment of settler housing and services. 'In "basement" conditions yet "penthouse" morale […] the settlement gradually constructed itself as a separate entity […] Supporters who came here saw the making of a new form of pioneer life [… and] were sparked with the seed that fruited with more and more Elon Moreh [settlements] in Judea

and Samaria', reported Zvi Slonim, Gush Emunim secretary.[45]

Kedumim: 'communal settlement' as a typology of expansion

Upon rising to power in 1977, Menachem Begin celebrated his victory in the Kedum camp, declaring, 'there will be many more Elon Morehs'.[46] Begin's right-wing administration realised its protracted promise of support for Gush Emunim by granting Kedum settlers full legal status and permits to settle permanently, declaring 'we stand on the land of liberated Israel'.[47] The permanent Elon Moreh settlement was founded south of the Kedum camp in several prefabricated concrete houses and named Kedumim, literally 'ancients', reflecting the idea of reconnecting to biblical space-time.[48] Kedumim therefore seemed to mark the end of the conflict between settlers and the state.

As the permanent materialisation of the prac-tices experimented on in Sebastia, the Kedumim settlers mediated between two key typologies in the history of Zionist settlement – the kibbutz and the Hebrew city – to produce the first iteration of the 'communal settlement' typology. The communal settlement marked the family housing unit as its key element and unit of expansion, forming a dwelling-based landscape. Much discussion has been devoted to communal settlements' suburban political economy, a form of 'good life modernism' based on commuting to the Tel Aviv and Jerusalem metropolises rather than forming urban centers.[49] Yet the communal settlement typology is distinct from an ordinary suburb and serves as the nucleus of the future towns destined to be populated by large numbers of settlers. Based on small, highly ideological communities, the communal settlement closely resembled the kibbutz, yet the Gush Emunim aim of mass Jewish settlement had to depart from the closed community and closed typology of the kibbutz in order to form expandable settlements. It is a typology independent from scale restrictions, as

Fig. 4

Fig. 5

Fig. 4:   Elon Moreh – Kedumim, a trailer home, undated. Photo: Asher Koralik.

Fig. 5:   Kedumim, 1982. First permanent homes. Photo: Avraham Zaslavski. Source: National Photo Collection.

capable of sustaining a small one-hundred-family settlement like Itamar as a town of thousands like Efrat.

Relying on state support of the settlement movement, Elon Moreh took the opportunity to employ the state mechanism's strongest tool: planning. In 1978 Elon Moreh published their vision for regional planning for the West Bank, including cities, towns, 'garden cities', communal settlements and rural settlements. [Fig. 6] The Jewish Agency took up this civilian initiative and produced the 'Gush Emunim Master Plan' of 1978, outlining a five-year plan for settling 27,000 families in 46 new settlements and 38 existing settlements. The plan was based on the family as civilian unit and calculated two million Lira per family, which was allocated for infrastructure, temporary housing, permanent housing including public institutions, water, means of production, and 'other'.[50] The plan does not distinguish between Jewish and Palestinian settlements, which would have reflected a view of 'conflict', nor between settlements in Israel proper versus the occupied West Bank. [Fig. 7] Moreover, the plan allocated no funds for security or military purposes, reflecting Elon Moreh's insistence that the settlements were civilian rather than military.

Yet Begin's regime soon proved a disappointment to the movement, as Begin accepted the international legal dictum that only military purposes are valid in occupied territories and demanded settlements be defined as military posts. Since Elon Moreh explicitly rejected state categorisation of the settlement movement as military-purposed, its leaders went on a hunger strike.[51] 'The government has argued before the Supreme Court that settlements beyond the Green Line were erected for military purposes […] defined as temporary (until the end of occupation) – declaring all settlements temporary.'[52] Settlers were concerned about the precedent set in 1978, which involved receding from the Sinai to Egypt in the framework of a peace treaty and accepting occupied land as foreign land held temporarily rather than as an integral part of the homeland. 'Our demand', the Elon Moreh leaders stated in a pamphlet, 'is for parliament to issue a law excluding land in Eretz-Israel from categories of "occupied", "foreign", and "temporary" that can only be used for "military purposes" […] to allow for […] civilian Jewish settlement'.[53] State support for the settlement project under the conception of military purpose was for Elon Moreh ideologues a double-edged sword they feared undermined their entire enterprise. Such state initiatives as Ariel Sharon's 12-point plan for settlement strongholds on strategic West Bank hilltops were discussed at the time as explicitly countering settlement purpose and ideology, explicitly posited on being civilian rather than military.[54]

Nonetheless, settlers' struggle to transform the West Bank from military zone to civilian homeland has largely been won: by 1993 civilian 'communal settlements' based on family dwelling units already housed 116,000 settlers served by publicly-funded civil services and infrastructure.[55] Planning documents for Elon Moreh and Kedumim made as early as 1982 and as late as 1993 demonstrate formal planning for suburban layout and infrastructure that persisted even as violence erupted, starting in 1987 with the first Palestinian Intifada. [Figs. 4–7]

Locating the space-time of the turn towards violence: Kedumim stronghold

When and how has the housing-violence cause-and-effect relationship transformed? Where did the idea of housing as retaliation or offence come from? The question arising here concerns the pivotal moment of historical change in the settler mindset and settlement strategy, a shift from their consistently civilian project to the military one. An interesting lead can be found in settler-produced historiography. Starting in the 1990s, a dramatic change of tone emerged in the settler narrative in the context of the brief political move to the left with

Yitzhak Rabin's administration, after some 15 years of right-wing settlement-supporting government and Rabin's actions to 'resolve' the occupation in the Oslo Accords. New historiographic accounts of early settlement, for example by Shafat in 1995, reframed the motivations and context of early settlement. Rather than an internal struggle for civilian settlement voiced via threats of civil war, settlers' new historiography revolved around violent struggle with Palestinians, reflecting a shift towards political violence.[56]

The transformation in the settlers' housing ethos from civilian shelter to political violence began in the early 1990s in response to early negotiations over a two-state solution that would no longer consider the West Bank part of the Jewish homeland. The Oslo accords of 1993, in which the State of Israel accepted the West Bank as the Palestinian homeland, was a watershed event for the settler mindset. Settler representatives in parliament demanded more construction in order to 'make settlement a fact', so major clusters of land are left intact or swapped for other territory, and – starting in the early 2000s – explicitly intended to render the two-state solution unfeasible. These goals increasingly conceived of settlement as an act in the context of conflict, generating a transformation in the purpose and ethos of settlement, as well as its historiography.

The state-imposed settlement halt led settlers to search for new expansion strategies, resulting in the strategy of building settlement outposts, small-scale settlements formed in strategic locations that gradually accumulated to full-fledged settlements. Settlement outposts have been the subject of extensive writing concerning the creeping process of outpost building, which is initially justified by security needs like communication but then comes to include dwellings and ends up de facto settlement.[57] 'This is how it is done', writes Sasson, 'the stronghold is labeled "neighbourhood" of an existing settlement, thus "permitted".

If the stronghold-disguised-as-neighbourhood is included in the work plan for a government office, it can subsequently receive a monthly budget from the Ministry of the Interior and a special budget for construction by the Ministry of Housing'.[58] This 'system', whose architecture and geography are the subject of Weizman's work, has characterised the settlement project since the 1990s. Yet how has 'the system' formed and taken shape?

The pivotal case again can be found in Kedumim, where an illegal residential outpost named Mizpe Yishai – literally Yishai overlook – was formed at a strategic location facing Kedumim on the opposite side of arterial Road 55 linking Qalqilya to Nablus, a major throughway for the Palestinian population. Mizpe-Yishai thus transformed Road 55 into an internal road within Kedumim, consequently blocked at times during escalations of violence 'for the security' of Kedumim residents.

A video titled 'Mizpe-Yishai – History,' telling the formal history of the outpost, was produced by Etrog Studios of Kedumim for its formal inauguration in August 2003 in the presence of Housing minister Effi Eitam.[59] The video includes historical images and footage collected from the individual settlers involved, embedded within interviews with leaders and activists who recount the strategies they had employed in materialising the outpost. The historiography projected from the video clearly addresses Mizpe-Yishai area as 'the eastern hill… located on the other side of the intra-urban road', hence not an obvious extension to Kedumim. The hill was part of Ariel Sharon's much discussed hill-top or 'star' plan, which framed settlements as military outposts, to the dismay of settlers. While controversial, this state-administered plan was nonetheless an act of government and placed no burden on the settlers to act themselves to secure the West Bank as homeland.

Yet as Yitzhak Rabin took power and declared
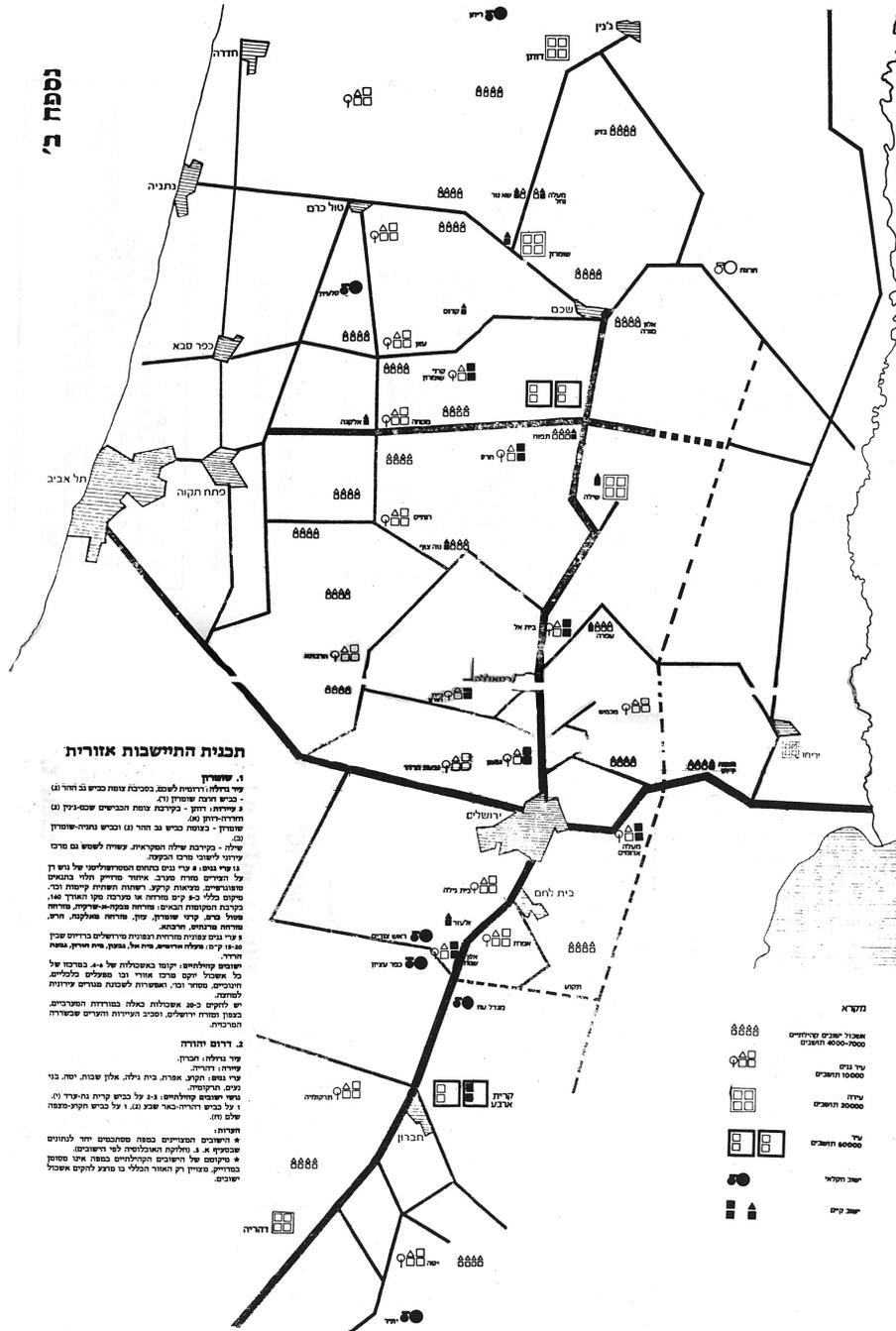
Fig. 6: Elon Moreh's 1978 regional planning for the West Bank, including cities, towns, 'garden cities', communal settlements and rural settlements across Judea and Samaria. Source: Tsvi Raanan, *Gush Emunim* (Tel Aviv: Sifriat Poalim, 1980).

Fig. 7: Jewish Agency 'Gush-Emunim master plan', 1978. Source: Tsvi Raanan, *Gush Emunim* (Tel Aviv: Sifriat Poalim, 1980).

a freeze on construction in Judea and Samaria, settlers from Kedumim carried out the first act relating them to the eastern hill by mounting a trailer home as a declarative act of future civilian settlement there. 'The trailer withstood heroically the rain and sun', states the video, 'silently facing the insults of those who did not believe a neighbourhood would be built here.' In summer 1995, as public debate over the future of the West Bank and its settlers heated, culminating in the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin on 4 November, Kedumim residents formed an impromptu youth camp at the bottom of the hill to 'demonstrate the continuity of Kedumim beyond the road'.

Despite the election of Netanyahu's right-wing government after Rabin's assassination, Kedumim settlers did not withdraw to the civilian background but assumed an active role in initiating settlements as an explicit barrier to the implementation of the Oslo peace accords, expressing their mistrust in both the state and military to prevent the receding of the national homeland. Settlers took over the hill overlooking Kedumim in 1996 in response to the escalation of violence and the IDF's stated intention to form a military post on it. 'Due to the site's strategic importance, the IDF decided to remove the trailer on the hill, and found a military post', recounts the video, 'yet the dismantling of many military posts in that period raised the concern that this site might too be deserted'. On 6 October 1996, Lieutenant Yishai Sechter, age 21, of Kedumim was killed in a battle along the Lebanese border. A Kedumim committee decided to name the eastern hill after the community's war hero to demonstrate the role assigned to this settlement stronghold in 'defending the homeland'.

Construction was conducted by the Kedumim 3000 construction firm, 'a firm which makes sure not to cross the green line – on its eastern border of course'. Nahman Zoldan, the head of Kedumim 3000, is interviewed in the Kedumim video, saying,

'once the army announced it is taking over this site, I approached Daniella [Weiss, council chairperson] for her permit to come up to this site. We came here… as you see without a plan. We built seven houses – plainly laid on the landscape, one tall, one low… We then looked for the first seven lunatics who would buy the houses.' Zoldan marketed the houses as a unique business and dwelling opportunity contravening the state-imposed construction freeze.

'Mizpe Yishai was our "departure from the walls"', declares Zoldan, referring to the identification of Jewish people stepping outside the walls of Jerusalem to settle the homeland as the beginning of Zionist settlement. Declaring Mizpe-Yishai as the settlers' 'departure from the walls' and a milestone in Zionist settlement might seem overstated at first, yet as I show here, Mizpe-Yishai initiated the transformation of the Zionist housing ethos from shelter to violence. The Kedumim takeover of the hill is situated in the context of escalating violence over the West Bank, as well as the threat posed by the Oslo accords that the West Bank would be recognised as the Palestinian homeland.

While the first iteration of Gush Emunim argued for the replacement of military hold with civilian settlement as a means to declare Judea and Samaria part of the Jewish homeland rather than enemy territory, the Kedumim settlers used Mizpe-Yishai to defy the state and military commitment to territorial resolution and to perpetuate violence within the conflict. Namely, Kedumim settlers founded Mizpe-Yishai in the explicit context of violent struggle between Palestinians and Israeli military-rule forces, marking settlement as an act of offence in the national struggle over the homeland, contravening and actively defy the accords. The settlers' mistrust of state commitment to the idea of Judea and Samaria as part of the Jewish homeland deepened to include mistrust of the ability of the IDF to hold onto the homeland – and to a sense that

the settlers need to replace the army themselves. The settlers' choices in founding Mizpe-Yishai were hence explicitly military-minded, executed in concrete and declarative tactics among them by their arranging houses in formation and naming the neighbourhood after the local war hero.

The 'Mizpe-Yishai – History' video clearly expresses the role assigned by the Kedumim settlers to housing units in marking the new settlement-stronghold in exercising offensive action in the national struggle over the homeland. Kedumim chairperson Daniella Weiss is interviewed, stating, 'this neighbourhood, Mizpe-Yishai, is not only the houses – 30 houses, 50 houses or 100 houses – it is part of a plan for 500 housing units that would extend with God's help to 5000, reaching Havat-Gilad not far from us. Construction here is an expression of continuation.'

The two key differences between the formation of Kedumim and Mizpe-Yishai include the use of housing as a means of national violence rather than civilian dwelling, and the threat of violence directed towards the Palestinians rather than towards Israeli civil society. The Kedumim logic of housing-as-outpost has eventually taken over the state rhetoric to become Israel's new housing ethos, as seen in Netanyahu's 2011 statement. [Figs. 8–9]

The turn towards violence in Israel proper: housing neoliberalisation

While most scholarly and general attention to violence in Israel-Palestine is directed at the country's contested periphery, a fascinating phenomenon of mass citizen protest identifies housing as the arena in which orchestrated state violence is exercised upon citizens, a violence which goes almost entirely unnoticed. This violence was first articulated as such in July 2011, four months after Netanyahu's kill-build statement, by the largest social movement since the 1970s. Hundreds of thousands of citizens protested the high cost of housing as a commodity

in an inflated neoliberal real estate market and demanded renewal of Israel's housing-based social contract by which housing was provided as a social right reflecting Israel's ethos as the Jewish collective home. While different classes of people define 'proper dwelling' differently and suffer the indignities and absurdities of dwelling in their own ways, discontent over access to proper dwellings is strongly shared. The neoliberalisation of Israel's housing market since the 1990s has transformed dwelling space from a right of the citizenry to a means of production for developers and the state itself, which owns 94 percent of the land.[60] Dwelling options for citizens have come to include committing oneself to high 30-year mortgages, paying up to 50 percent of one's income for housing, offsetting high costs with long commutes, or dwelling in very poor conditions. The housing protest movement acted to make state violence towards citizens evident by subjecting them to accumulation by dispossession – a phenomenon discussed in this geopolitical context as military-based and exercised on Palestinian subjects.[61]

Historian Danny Gutwein advocates studying the settlement project in the context of the neoliberalisation of Israel since the late 1970s, which has accelerated since Netanyahu's tenure as Minister of Finance. The introduction of housing-as-violence in the West Bank in the early 1990s paralleled Netanyahu's introduction of neoliberal measures to the housing market in Israel proper. While housing is provided as a public good in the occupied territories – the sole site where the principles of the Israeli welfare state prevails, the responsibility to house oneself was increasingly relegated to the market within Israel proper. Netanyahu's regime deliberately used neoliberal governmentality to distribute the risks of dwelling-based accumulation by dispossession among individuals in Israel proper, while settlers are shielded as a collective group, benefitting from a generous package of subsidised no-interest mortgages, free infrastructure (roads,

electricity, sewage), and services in a state of exception.[62]

Yet while the neoliberalisation of Israel proper has been deepening, the majority of Israelis have been refusing the generous 'benevolent state' offer of state-sponsored housing in the contested space of the territories. While the Israeli citizenry has kept Netanyahu in power, it has been 'voting with its feet' against the settlement project by individually choosing to reside within the Green Line, despite the higher cost of property and everyday living and in spite of the opportunity to be included in the privileged settler milieu.

Simon Springer suggests that neoliberalism has a role in relegating violence to certain 'irrational' and 'local' spaces where violence occurs, positioning the global market as the sole provenance of nonviolence and ostensible opposite to violence as irrationality.[63] Considering Springer's proposal, we can read Israelis' embracing of the liberalised housing market as an attempt to assign a rational, non-nationalist meaning to dwelling, distinguishing themselves from both settlers and Palestinians fighting over biblical lands 'over there' by discussing housing as real-estate rather than homeland.

The mass public protests of 2011 marked a moment of historiographical shift among the Israeli public, through which the brutality of housing neoliberalisation was first discussed and popularised as such, largely rewriting the historiography of citizen housing in popular discourse and the media. Why did the silent, complicit, Israeli public suddenly reject the neoliberal promise of normality, take to the streets, and engage in rewriting its housing history?

The mass protest made many realise the failure of the neoliberal promise to employ market rationality in Israeli housing and distinguish Israel proper from the irrational otherness of the territories. Moreover, the mass protest finally exploded the neoliberal idea

of individual governmentality and risk by demonstrating that the lack of access to housing was not their individual failure, but the result of institutional, orchestrated violence. Since 2006, Israel saw a steep hike in housing costs, the causes of which have been debated extensively with no conclusive economic theory.[64] While boom and bust periods in housing real estate and rental costs have characterised the Israeli housing market since the creeping neoliberalisation of the 1970s, by 2011 it was clear that a bust is unlikely, and that what the public believed to be an open market in housing is highly state-controlled and far from benevolent to the citizens.

While many protesters and movement leaders tried to keep the movement 'a-political', the movement was decisive in the political realisation that Netanyahu's regime has deliberately used neoliberal governmentality to distribute the risks of dwelling-based accumulation by dispossession to individuals in Israel proper. The neoliberal violence directed towards citizens who have been rejecting the 'benevolent state' of the West Bank arguably serves to turn the tide and attract as many Jewish Israelis to the settlements. As neoliberal violence within Israel increases, so – at least theoretically – would the incentive to offset neoliberal violence with political violence, thereby contributing to the national struggle over the homeland by settlement. The settlement project's dependence on mass settlement, and deepening international pressure to reach a two-state solution, required a substantial push to draw citizens to the West Bank. This process arguably reached a tipping point following Israel's 2005 disengagement from Gaza and the subsequent operation 'Summer Rains' of 2006, which provoked a mass public debate over the future of the settlement project, Israel's hold of the biblical West Bank, and settlers' protracted political leadership of the country.

Netanyahu's regime 'others' subjects living under
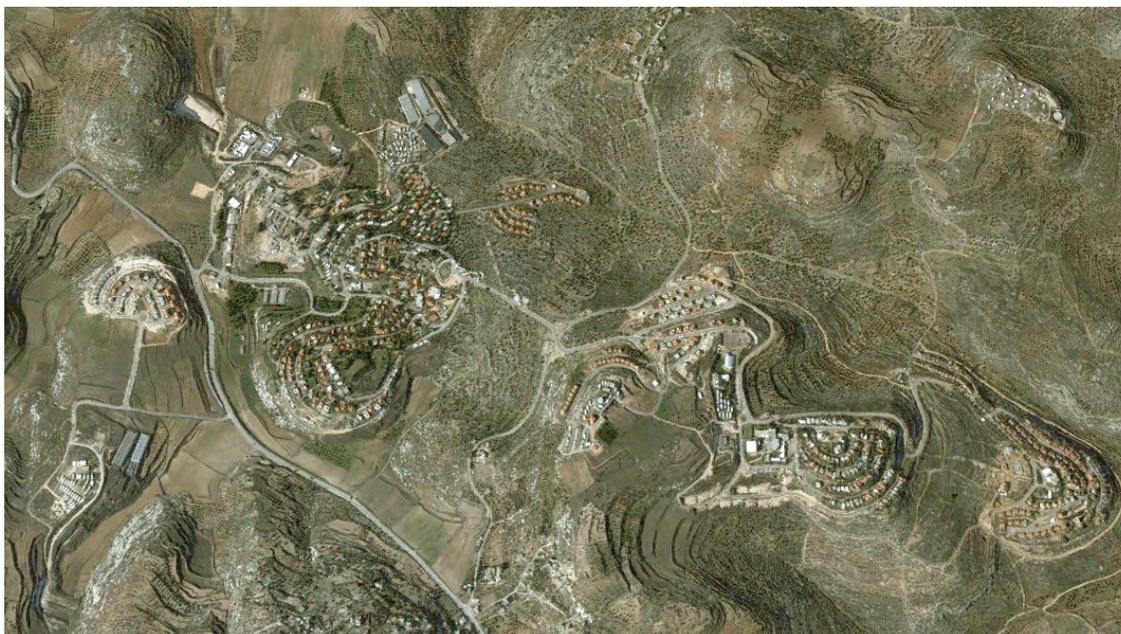
Fig. 8

Fig. 9

Fig. 8: Aerial photograph of Kedumim and Mizpe-Yishai across Road 55, 2013. Photo: Samaria settlements committee.

Fig. 9: First trailer home of Mizpe-Yishai. Screenshot: 'Mizpe-Yishai – History', 2011.

the neoliberal regime of housing in Israel proper from the collective national body, which he identified with the settlement project in his 'kill-build' statement. The present regime thus subjects the majority of its citizens to increasing levels of market violence by stripping them of state provision of subsidised housing, once a staple of Israeli citizenship. Pitting segments of society against each other based on the deep inequalities in access to housing, Netanyahu's regime benefits from social erosion, curbing the opposition against him. To protest their lack of access to housing, protesters set up tent camps across the country, claiming that housing was 'a right rather than a commodity'.[65] Forming an alternative built environment no one could disregard, protesters employed the object through which violence was inflicted on them – namely housing and settlement – to protest their condition as lesser citizens.[66]

The neoliberalism of the housing market has eventually turned against citizens living in Israel proper and exposed itself as a violent – rather than rational – measure. Neoliberal violence disrupts the idea of neoliberalism as rational and disinterested, as well as of the idea of 'home' as a real estate commodity, a traded object of investment capital. Neoliberal violence therefore suggests that housing has deeper meanings, re-invoking Israel's housing ethos of shelter and nation building. Rather than resisting neoliberal violence as individuals, the housing movement formed surprising, encompassing solidarity among conflicted segments of society, rearticulating it as a polity based on the right to housing. The protest movement attempted to restore the social contract and reverse the change in housing ethos – a struggle yet to materialise in real politics. [Figs. 10–11]

Conclusion: Israel proper and the West Bank as separate sites of housing-as-violence
This article identifies a transformation in Israel's housing ethos from an ethos of shelter, which has

served Zionism both pre- and post-statehood, to an ethos of national violence. Employing detailed study of settlement housing practices since 1967, I identify the tipping point – Netanyahu's 2011 'kill-build' statement – at which the settlement project transformed its housing ethos from civil to offensive, taking housing from meaning 'a place of shelter' to serving as an act of violent retaliation. The year 2011 exposed the two key means by which citizen housing is employed as political violence in the context of national conflict over homeland: as political violence directed at the Palestinian opponent, and as neoliberal violence directed at most of Israeli society. 2011 therefore saw housing explicitly declared – and publicly realised – as an object of violence.

While settlement housing is assumed to have always served as an object of conflict in the national struggle over the West Bank, this article shows that settlers used housing to challenge the state and army and argue for civilian Israeli hold of land as homeland (rather than military hold of foreign land), invoking the Israeli ethos of housing as stand-in and building block for the nation. The settlers' transformation of the housing strategy and ethos to an offensive act and object of conflict over the homeland was a response to the Oslo Accords, employing housing as a proxy for military posts and strategic appropriation of territorial homeland. The 'benevolent' State's support of settlements by providing housing, infrastructure and services is complemented with the neoliberalisation of the housing market in Israel proper.

Since political membership in Israeli society is tied to dwelling in the homeland, the struggle over Israel's housing ethos is central to the very identity of the nation and its citizens. The transformation since the 1990s of the Israeli housing ethos to one of violence leaves Israeli citizens between the proverbial rock and hard place: either they are left to the mercy of Israel's inflated real estate

Fig. 10

Fig. 11

Fig. 10: Housing protest, July 2011, Tel Aviv. Photo: Author.

Fig. 11: Housing protest tent city, Tel Aviv, August 2011. Photo: Activestills.

housing market, or they comply with Netanyahu's doctrine and enjoy the public provision of housing as an act of violence in the West Bank. The theoretical implications of housing-as-violence suggest the actual material space of houses as the object of conflict, rather than the site or means for it, and invokes Mouffe's discussion of the object of conflict as forming a polity around it. Rather than resisting neoliberal violence as individuals, the housing movement formed a surprising, encompassing solidarity to resist the consequences of neoliberal violence, rearticulating the Israeli polity as based on the right to housing. The movement rejected the transformation of housing to act of violence and demanded restoration of Israel's housing ethos as shelter – a struggle yet to materialise in real politics.[67]

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Biography

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