

THERE'S A NEW LEFT IN TOWN:
THE POLITICS OF SOLIDARITY IN OCCUPIED JERUSALEM

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In November 2009 a small group of Jewish Israelis initiated a protest in *Sheikh Jarrah*, a Palestinian neighborhood in East Jerusalem, in response to the forced eviction of more than sixty Palestinians from their houses and the establishment of a Jewish settlement in the neighborhood. The group grew rapidly and for almost three years thousands of people protested in Sheikh Jarrah against Israel's occupation in the Palestinian Territories. In the media this struggle was portrayed as the birth of a new Israeli Left, as a true collaboration between Israelis and Palestinians. However, in September 2012 Jewish Israeli activists decided to end the struggle and a few months later their political movement, Sheikh Jarrah Solidarity, ceased to exist.

This study is an ethnographic exploration of particular dynamics related to the Sheikh Jarrah struggle and its collapse. Through a critical analysis of this case study I develop a theoretical framework for the analysis of political protest in general. I argue that in order to provide a nuanced analysis of political dissent one has to account for the dialectical relationships among socio-cultural structures, people's subjectivities, and their agency. Instead of developing a structural cause-and-effect analysis, as different studies of social movements aim to do, my objective is illuminate a system of interactions in which subjectivities, forms of agency, and socio-cultural structures are co-produced.

Drawing from practice theory, psychoanalysis, and postcolonial theory, and based on rich ethnographic data, this work reveals the ways in which particular forms of political agency and subjectivity both challenge and reinforce the socio-cultural structures they aim to change. Focusing

on the conscious and unconscious meaning of political practices in the circles of the Israeli Left, I argue that many social justice struggles, and especially joint struggles between privileged and oppressed, strengthen and unsettle power structures simultaneously. A close analysis of these struggles which accounts for the dialectical relationships among agency, subjectivity, and socio-cultural structures reveals the desires, interests, and perceptions behind particular forms of protest and allows a better understanding of their contradicting effects.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Adi Grabiner Keinan received a Bachelor of Arts in History from Tel Aviv University in 2005 and a Master of Arts in Cultural Production from Brandeis University in 2008.

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PREFACE

On March 23, 2012, Daniel Dukarevitch-Argo, a Russian-born Israeli physician and one of the founders of the Shaikh Jarrah Solidarity Movement, published a short article online, reflecting on the struggle in the Palestinian neighborhood *Sheikh Jarrah* in East Jerusalem (Dukarevitch-Argo 2012). Only a few months earlier, in September 2011, Jewish-Israeli activists decided to end the two years long protest in the neighborhood and to seek new ways to challenge the Israeli occupation in the Palestinian Territories. “Before one specific myth becomes cemented in general public opinion,” Dukarevitch-Argo wrote, “I promised myself to try to describe what events looked like then and now from the point of view of an activist. This is merely an attempt, because at the end of the day those who make history on the ground are rarely the ones who write it, Israelis and Palestinians alike.”

The myth he referred to was the assumption within the circles of the Israeli Left (including activists, journalists, politicians, and scholars) that “all the problems of the world would be solved if only enough people came to demonstrate in Sheikh Jarrah on Friday,” to use his words. Indeed, during the two years of struggle, members of the movement and the thousands of people who attended the weekly Friday demonstrations in the neighborhood have contributed to the development of a romantic image of the protest in Sheikh Jarrah, while underplaying its complex dynamics and contradicting effects. In both social and conventional media channels the struggle has been portrayed as a “true collaboration” or a “joint struggle” between Israelis and Palestinians, as the birth of a “new Israeli Left,” and as a battle between oppressors and victims, powerful and powerless.

“But we have not yet learned to tell the full story.” Dukarevitch-Argo wrote in the conclusion to his short piece. “In a way, the Solidarity movement has become the victim of the

myth it helped create...Just like it took us time to realize the impact of this myth ourselves, it will take time to persuade the thousands who demonstrated with us on Fridays at the playground in Sheikh Jarrah” (2012). Although I assume Dukarevitch-Argo had an honest intention to demystify common perceptions regarding the struggle, his description of “what events looked like” reinforces the myth by emphasizing the successes of the protest while ignoring the processes that have led to its end. In March 2012 it was still difficult for committed and involved activists such as Dukarevitch-Argo to examine their practices in a critical manner and to challenge their perceptions and practices.

I arrived in Jerusalem in February 2012 and realized that the transformative struggle in Sheikh Jarrah which I intended to study had come to an end. Thus, instead of joining energetic protests in the neighborhood and participating in crucial meetings with excited Israeli and Palestinian activists, I found myself conducting long, reflective interviews with confused, angry, and in some cases devastated Jewish-Israeli activists who tried to explain and to decipher their experiences to themselves and to me. As an anthropologist studying protest and resistance I had a sense of obligation to tell a particular story about the Sheikh Jarrah movement, and like many other scholars focusing on such issues, I experienced the desire to find hope and optimism in the field. But the activists I met following the decline of the movement forced me to re-examine my own perceptions, and to challenge my liberal-academic tendency to “read all forms of resistance as signs of the ineffectiveness of systems of power and of the resilience and creativity of the human spirit in its refusal to be dominated,” as anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod’s adequately describes (Abu-Lughod 1990, 42). They did that unconsciously. For most of them it was difficult to reflect on their inner desires, their perception of the Palestinian “other”, their ideas of “the Left”, and their interests; it was difficult for them to challenge the myth they worked so hard to create, both

consciously and unconsciously. But their reflections conveyed a complex narrative that they could no longer ignore nor simplify. In moments of honest contemplation they described their experiences in the neighborhood in ways that contested the romantic image of a “joint struggle” and raised questions about the meanings and implications of particular practices and processes.

After a few weeks in the field I came to an understanding that my ethnography should break away from the perceived academic duty to represent and analyze social justice struggles in a positive, sometimes uncritical way, as practices that necessarily carry the promise of hope and freedom. I wanted to enable activists to reflect on their experiences in Sheikh Jarrah, to offer a critical narrative based on their personal stories and other sources, and to demystify the image of the Sheikh Jarrah struggle. I realized that the protest in the neighborhood and other processes associated with it have had profound effects on individuals and institutions. However, these effects both challenged and reproduced structures of oppression in Israel/Palestine, and reflected the complex and contradicting dynamics, perceptions, and relations behind them. Moreover, I realized that my narrative about the Shaikh Jarrah protest is, in many ways, a narrative about the Israeli Left. The intense political activity in the Palestinian neighborhood was a microcosm of Jewish-Israeli leftist activism and a manifestation of both its strengths and weaknesses.

One of the main arguments I develop in this study is that in order to provide a nuanced analysis of political dissent, one has to account for the dialectical relationships among socio-cultural structures, people’s subjectivities, and their agency. I understand subjectivity as individuals’ complex modes of perception, emotion, desire, and aspiration; agency as individuals’ capacity to produce, reproduce, and challenge the socio-cultural frameworks in which they live; and socio-cultural structures as both the products of agents and their producer. My work examines political agency as socio-culturally mediated capacity to act (Ahearn 2001; Ortner 2006); it

challenges the perception of agency as an a-priori guarantee or as a direct opposition to socio-cultural structures. Moreover, it is bound up with the assumption that subjectivity is the basis for agency; that in order to understand how people act one should ask questions about the ways in which their subjectivity is constituted, about their modes of perception, emotion and desire, and about the socio-cultural conditions in which they are produced. Another crucial element of my argument is the assumption that political agency both challenges and maintains socio-cultural structures and particular forms of agency and subjectivity; I assert that political agency is always a product of ongoing negotiations, through which some elements are reproduced and some are changed.

This study should be seen as an attempt to contribute to, further develop, and challenge what has become to be known as Practice Theory. Although this school of thought has been developed by a variety of scholars (such as Pierre Bourdieu, Anthony Giddens, and Sherry Ortner to name a few), I shall focus on Bourdieu's understanding of the objectives of a "total science of society" as a way to explain my argument and its contribution. As Loic Wacquant explains (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992), Bourdieu's theoretical enterprise aimed to unsettle both "objectivist" and "subjectivist" approaches towards practice and the relations between agents and structures. Objectivist approaches are based on the perception of socio-cultural frameworks as external to the individual, as an objective structure, grasped from the outside. They subject freedoms and wills to an external, mechanical determinism and examine society and its articulations independently of those who live in it. This way they reify social structures, constructing them as autonomous entities capable of acting as historical agents, and portray individuals as passive constructs of abstract forces. Subjective approaches, on the other hand, are based on the perception of reality as a contingent, ongoing project of rational actors who construct

their social world based on their free will and interests. They conceptualize social agents as fully conscious subjects ‘without interiority’, who create the meaning of the world “de novo, at every moment...” (Bourdieu 1990, 46). According to Bourdieu, a total science of society must jettison both approaches. It must transcend dualities such as objectivism and subjectivism, structural necessity and individual agency, and to develop a dialectical approach that accounts for the relationships between agents and their social world.

Bourdieu’s work was an outcome of complex debates in the social sciences and the humanities, and it generated further debates focusing on similar questions. Thus, his concept “habitus” (Bourdieu 1990) which aims to capture the ways in which individual and collective processes are intertwined can be seen as a rival candidate to other concepts such as hegemony (Gramsci 1992), interpellation (Althusser 2014), discourse (Foucault 1980; 1982; 1990), or performativity (Butler 1990; 1993), aiming to achieve similar or intimately related objectives. Each of these terms has its unique theoretical meaning and genealogy, but examined together they can be viewed as attempts to decipher the ways in which the subject and the systems in which he/she lives are co-produced.

Against this theoretical backdrop, my argument about the dialectical relationships among agency, subjectivity, and socio-cultural structures aims to address the main pitfalls of the works mentioned above, and to contribute to the attempt to develop a “total science of society.” As I explain in chapters one and three, although the projects I mentioned have had profound contributions, they do not explain crucial aspects of the relationships between individuals and the frameworks in which they live. Thus, for example, trying to challenge theories of free will and rational actors, some of these works deny knowledge and consciousness from social actors, and do not leave much space for their (potential) ability to reflect on the conditions of their existence or

to understand their socio-cultural world. Furthermore, notions such as habitus, interpellation, or discourse limit individuals' ability to develop thoughts and practices that are different from or challenge the particular conditions of the habitus/interpellation/discourse production. Acknowledgement and analysis of differences in subjectivity and agency, and in the modes of perception, desire, and feeling that animate acting subjects are missing from some of these works. Furthermore, the lack of analysis of everyday practices and the focus on abstract notions and concepts further limit our understanding of the productive capacity of practices, and the ways in which they influence both social actors and social structures.

Focusing on the inner desires of members of the Israeli Left, my work follows Henrietta Moore's call (2007) to take the imaginary seriously. In the next chapters I analyze both conscious and unconscious perceptions of Jewish-Israeli activists, and examine the ways in which they influence political practices; I explore the ongoing processes through which individuals' engagement with the social constitute them as non-unitary subjects with paradoxical beliefs and perceptions; I ask questions about inner processes of the self and how they correspond to and influence social life; furthermore, I develop ideas related to the social meanings of mental states such as anxiety, desire, fantasy, and familiarity, and by doing so I aim to complicate philosophical and socio-cultural perspectives of the relations between the subject and his/her society.

Drawing on studies that destabilize legal and structural understandings of political concepts, my objective is to unsettle the seemingly natural, fixed and self-explained character of notions such as sovereignty, domination, the Left, and democracy, and to examine the ways in which these political ideas are produced, maintained and negotiated by groups and individuals. Focusing on the site of everyday life as the main "window" through which to examine the creation

and negotiation of these notions I intend to develop a culturally grounded analysis that accounts for the multiplicity and relationality of political ideas.

In addition to broad theoretical issues, this study engages with crucial questions related to the Israeli/Palestinian reality. In this context one of my main objectives is to challenge the mainstream idea that analyses of the Israeli occupation or the Israeli/Palestinian “conflict” should mark 1967 (the Six Days War) as the beginning of the conflict or the occupation. As I clarify in chapter two, this idea allows Zionist Israelis and Americans (including leftists) to maintain their privileged position in the Israeli/Palestinian space and to strengthen Jewish sovereignty in certain areas. It enables them to underplay crucial issues and to focus on those that do not challenge their status radically. An ideological maneuver, this attempt aims to “obfuscate the fact that Israel itself is nothing short of a huge settlement project that was founded upon the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and the systematic expropriation of the land they left behind,” Lama Abu Odeh, a Palestinian-American scholar explains (Abu Odeh 2012, VII).

The analysis developed in this dissertation starts from 1948 and evokes crucial moments that have led, eventually, to the creation of current forms of space and the people inhabiting and expelled from it. It is not just a moral or political decision to start the story of Sheikh Jarrah from 1948 – this project aims to show that studies focusing on issues related to the occupation and the struggle against it should examine 1948 (and in some cases the 1930s), as a series of events that have had profound influence on the present and future of the Israeli/Palestinian space and its inhabitants. Challenging the perception of 1967 as Year Zero (Shenhav 2012) in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict enables a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the key issues at stake and the ways in which people in this area understand themselves, the other, and the reality in which they live. Furthermore, in the context of this project, a discussion about 1948 and the attempts of

the Israeli Zionist Left to erase it from the Israeli and Jewish-American collective memory is crucial for the study of certain dynamics in the Sheikh Jarrah protest.

Another objective I have is to unsettle the dichotomy between Left and Right. Through a careful and deep examination of particular processes and dynamics in the Sheikh Jarrah protest, I reveal Jewish-Israeli activists' perceptions regarding "the other", "solidarity", and "justice", and expose the inner desires and interests that have led them to join the struggle and to define themselves as "leftists" or as "solidarity activists." Although different individuals revealed different aspects, they shared similar perceptions, desires and interests. A close analysis of these similarities, as well as of divergences from mainstream positions within the circle of Sheikh Jarrah activists, unsettles the seemingly clear dichotomy between Left and Right, and suggests a different "political map."

Although this study focuses on a particular case study in Israel/Palestine, my intention is to develop theoretical and political frameworks that would enable a better understanding of political struggles in other places, as well as particular dynamics integral to social life in general. The following chapters are based on personal narratives of individuals who live in a specific socio-cultural framework, and who struggle against particular forms of injustice and oppression. My hope is that the analysis of their experiences would go beyond the particular, and would allow a broader discussion about the questions I explore.

CHAPTER 1

HOW TO WRITE A PROTEST?

“There is no Sanctity in an Occupied City”

On a rainy Friday afternoon in November 2009, a group of nearly twenty Jewish Israelis in their early twenties marched from the center of West Jerusalem to Sheikh Jarrah, a Palestinian neighborhood in East Jerusalem. “It was cold...Nobody was sitting in the cafes,” CO recalled in our conversation almost three years later. “We decided that each one of us would bring at least two friends...and just like that, it started.”¹ It was less than a two miles march, but for most of them, who grew up in the city, it was one of the first times to enter “Palestinian Jerusalem”, the “backyard” of the Jewish capital city, as they describe it. “I have never thought that I grew up in a segregated city. Never thought about that” one activist explained to me. Some held signs, others brought drums, while others chanted against the Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem. Such a political walk in the streets of 2009 Jerusalem was a rare phenomenon. As another activists, AH, told me: “people did not want to hear about the occupation, about Palestinians...the Left in Jerusalem was crashed, hopeless”; “we wanted to politicize the streets”; “people ‘bought’ this story...of unified Jerusalem. What kind of unification is this? This is a segregated city and the occupation is here, five minutes away from the [Hebrew] University [of Jerusalem].” On that Friday afternoon little did they know that in the next three years their struggle would attract

¹ All interviews and conversations with informants were conducted in Hebrew. The English translation of these interviews and conversations is mine. Informants are cited in this work by initials of their pseudonyms. The only exception is Gilad Baram, cited in this chapter and in chapter four. Baram’s photography which has been presented publically is analyzed in these chapters, and he agreed to expose his identity.

thousands of people, and that Sheikh Jarrah would become a vibrant political space and a symbol of the struggle against Israel's occupation in the Palestinian Territories.

The march was organized as a protest against the forced evictions of four Palestinian families from their houses in Sheikh Jarrah by Israeli authorities between 2008 and 2009 and the imminent threat of eviction of additional Palestinian families. Backed by Israeli court rulings, private settler organizations, and Israeli authorities, religious Jewish settlers invaded the homes of the Al-Kurd, Hanoun, Al-Ghawi, and Rfhqa Al-Kurd families, breaking ground for a new Jewish settlement in Sheikh Jarrah.² Thrown to the streets violently, more than sixty Palestinian residents of Sheikh Jarrah found themselves homeless, with no protection. "Late at night...massive police forces blocked extensive parts of East Jerusalem and forcefully evicted both the Hanoun and the [Al-] Ghawi families. Private contractors removed their possessions and threw them out to the street," activists describe the eviction of the Hanoun and Al-Ghawi families on August 2, 2009 in a collection of photographs and poems from Sheikh Jarrah (Yedaya, Shemoelof, and Guthman 2010). According to testimonies, they claim, "the keys to the houses were ceremoniously handed to settlers by the police officers...The evicted families did not receive any alternative housing and, for the first two months following their eviction, lived in the street in makeshift tent in front of their homes. The tent has been evicted 17 times by Jerusalem municipal inspectors, until finally it was abandoned" (Yedaya, Shemoelof, and Guthman 2010, 2). "The eviction has destroyed our lives. To live on the street is so hard. It kills my family to watch strange faces living in the home in which we spent our lives," Maher Hanoun explained the emotional and physical state of his family following their eviction. "We are all so worried for the children, they are afraid; they jump

² See chapter two for a review of the legal processes that enabled the evictions.

if they hear a loud noise or someone yell. They were removed from their home by force and watched their father get arrested” (Hughes, Derejko, and Mahajna 2009, 24).

The evictions in 2008 and 2009 and the presence of new neighbors in Sheikh Jarrah have changed daily life in the neighborhood dramatically. “Jewish settlers, with guest reinforcements, harass and attack Palestinian residents of the neighborhood on a daily basis, and particularly on weekends,” activists explain. “Israeli police consistently back up the settlers and consider it their duty to allow the settler presence in Sheikh Jarrah ignoring their violent demeanor...Palestinian complaints of violence are rarely dealt with. In every clash within the neighborhood Palestinians are arrested, jailed, and often restricted from entering Sheikh Jarrah...” (Yedaya, Shemoelof, and Guthman 2010, 2). ML, a Jewish Israeli activist, told me about her experiences in the neighborhood: “It reached to a peak on Fridays, when hundreds of Orthodox Jews came [to the neighborhood] and sang *V’Shavu Banim L’Gvulam*³ in the houses, making a provocation.” American journalist Max Blumenthal who visited the neighborhood in 2010 spoke with a young Palestinian woman, who told him that she was attacked by teenage settlers in the neighborhood:

The attack began when the boys shouted curses at her, prompting her to shout back. Then they surrounded her, punching and kicking her until she fell to the ground. After she screamed for help, some neighbors rushed from their homes and chased her assailants away. “Every day the settlers curse at us and make rude gestures,” the woman told me. “The reason they do it is obvious: they are trying to scare us so that we leave” (Blumenthal 2010).

³ *V’Shavu Banim L’Gvulam*: And the Boys Have Returned to their Land (in Hebrew). A song based on the prophecy of Jeremiah to one of the four biblical mothers, Rachel, promising that the children of Israel would return home, to Zion.

The events in Sheikh Jarrah should be analyzed in the context of an ongoing, broader project to Judaize East Jerusalem and to secure Jewish sovereignty over the “unified” city. After the 1967 Six Days War in which Israeli military captured East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip⁴, Israeli authorities annexed East Jerusalem de-facto, and declared “unified Jerusalem” as the capital city of the Jewish People. Aiming to strengthen Jewish control in the area and to create a territorial contiguity between East and West Jerusalem, Israeli authorities have led and supported a variety of initiatives, such as the physical isolation of East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank, house demolitions and forced evictions of Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem, planning and carrying out discriminative policies related to land expropriation, building, infrastructure, and services (such as health and education), and developing Jewish settlement enclaves in the heart of Palestinian neighborhoods.

Located between the Old City and Mount Scopus, on the unmarked border that separates East and West Jerusalem, Sheikh Jarrah has a crucial territorial role in a project aiming to create an undisputed and undivided Jewish capital. Saleh Diab, a Palestinian resident of Sheikh Jarrah, explains this role clearly: “Sheikh Jarrah is the key to Jerusalem...First it is Sheikh Jarrah. Then it is Wadi Joz, Issawiya, Al Sawana, A-Tur, Silwan⁵...Finally, it’s the Old City and then lastly, Al-Aqsa Mosque” (Miller 2013). Indeed, as clearly indicated in Town Plan Scheme (TPS) 12705 filed by *Nachlat Shimon International*, a settler-related real estate company, to the Jerusalem Local Planning Commission, the 2008-2009 Sheikh Jarrah evictions were only a first step in a more comprehensive plan to Judaize the area. The objective of settler groups involved in Sheikh Jarrah

⁴ Between 1949 and 1967 East Jerusalem and the West Bank were under Jordanian rule, whereas the Gaza Strip was under Egyptian rule.

⁵ Palestinian neighborhoods of East Jerusalem being encroached upon by Jewish settlements.

was to demolish existing Palestinian houses in different areas in the neighborhood and to build two hundred housing units for the new settlement. The goal was to connect this settlement to others in the area, as well as to national parks, yeshivas and other Jewish institutions.

A report published by *Ir Amim* (an Israeli non-profit organization focusing on Jerusalem in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict), clarifies the rationale behind the Sheikh Jarrah plan:

Such a plan would advance the creation of Israeli and Jewish strongholds in the historic basin surrounding the Old City. In Sheikh Jarrah to the north, the Mount of Olives to the east and Silwan to the south, development plans aim to ring the Old City with Jewish settlements and public projects, cutting off Palestinian territorial contiguity with the Old City. These developments unilaterally create an integral population link between the Old city and West Jerusalem, strengthen Israeli control of this sensitive area, and thwart the feasibility of future agreed-upon borders for Jerusalem in the context of a two state resolution (Ir Amim “Evictions and Settlement Plans in Sheikh Jarrah: The Case of Shimon HaTzadik” 2009, 2).

As I will discuss in the following chapter, such attempts to cleanse Jerusalem ethnically and to create an urban space with indisputable Jewish sovereignty reflect particular Zionist perceptions of “us” and “the other”, and are strongly connected to ideological, religious, and national desires. Such perceptions and desires represent mainstream public opinion in Israel; however, they have been challenged by alternate imaginations of space and the people inhabiting it throughout the years. A Jewish, large, unified Jerusalem is thus a dominant perception of space which is negotiated, produced, and reproduced vis-à-vis other imaginations of space and people, such as the idea of a divided city – Western Jewish Jerusalem and Eastern Palestinian Jerusalem, as well as the alternative idea of a shared, open city with shared sovereignty. In this sense (and many

others), Jerusalem should be examined as a microcosms of the entire Israeli/Palestinian space, and Sheikh Jarrah as a case study of these ongoing negotiations, productions, and reproductions.

“There’s a New Left in Town” (?)

In 2009 most Jewish Israelis were not exposed to the story of Sheikh Jarrah and to that of many other neighborhoods in East Jerusalem. Despite their profound potential effects on the future of Israel/Palestine, people were unaware of the developments in the backyard of the Holy City as well as of their complex political context. As different activists explained to me, 2009 Western Jerusalem, like most of the country, was indifferent to the occupation, to the Palestinians, and to injustice. The streets of the city were depoliticized, and people preferred living their lives in “a bubble.” “In Jerusalem there was no real political activism since the end of the 1980s.” AH, a young Jewish Israeli activist, clarified at the beginning of our conversation in summer 2012. “Everything was centered in Tel Aviv, and even in Tel Aviv it wasn’t that impressive. And then there was the Intifada and everybody had to shut their mouth.”

Moreover, in general, up until 2009 the eastern neighborhoods of the capital city were not included on the agenda of the Israeli Left. Several groups and individuals were very well aware of the developments in Sheikh Jarrah and other Palestinian neighborhoods, and understood their crucial effects. Organizations such as Peace Now, Ir Amim, Rabbis for Human Rights, The Israeli Committee against House Demolitions (ICAHD) and the international organization International Solidarity Movement tried to bring the issue of Jerusalem to the public’s attention and to challenge the rapid transformations on the ground. However, their activity was focused merely on collecting and publishing information, assisting some Palestinians in their struggle with Israeli authorities,

and organizing small demonstrations. The impact of their political practices was relatively small and they did not manage to bring about a profound change.

In April 2009 a small group of young women of the ages of 19-21 who worked in one of these organizations started to visit Sheikh Jarrah on a daily basis and developed strong ties with individuals who were already evicted from their homes, as well as with those who were facing eviction. These young women refused to serve in the Israeli military and some of them had to serve time in prison due to their refusal.⁶ They volunteered in human rights organizations while most of their peers were in the military. In my first meeting with her, ML told me about her early days in the neighborhood: “They [the organization] started sending me to Silwan and Sheikh Jarrah...and slowly...it was an anthropological experience, slowly I understood how to approach people there, how to talk, what exactly they want, when to speak, when to wait for them to speak with me...and I developed relations in these communities.” Aiming to protect Palestinian residents from settlers’ violence, as well as from police forces, ML and others organized shifts of Jewish-Israelis and international volunteers who spent the nights in houses and tents in the neighborhood: “We had meetings with the Hanoun and Al-Ghawi families together with other organizations, and I became more involved and interested in doing things...We took upon ourselves to bring people there at nights...we tried to keep it on twenty to thirty activists per night depending on when we thought an eviction might take place.”

CO, another Jewish Israeli women who worked with ML shared similar experiences with me. She talked about the close relationships they developed with the Palestinian families, explained how their story motivated her to become more active, and described the night shifts as

⁶ From the age of 18 every Israeli male and female is required to serve three and two years, respectively, of compulsory military service.

an influential experience. One of the main things she emphasized was the long process through which the young Israeli women gained the Palestinians' trust:

It was very difficult for them to deal with our presence there ...there was a feeling that they didn't want us to dictate anything, that they felt that even this collaboration is dangerous for them. There was this hesitation, they didn't really explain this...We erected tents and M and I started to come at nights...and we became so close with the families...it was very complicated and it took a long time to build this trust but overall some kind of a relationship was created there. They saw us every day and it had an effect of trust.

Soon enough the small circle of young activists realized that a constant Jewish-Israeli presence in the neighborhood would not change the reality in Sheikh Jarrah. In the summer of 2009 the Hanoun and Al-Ghawi families were evicted, new settlers moved into the neighborhood, and many other families were facing threats of eviction. KS, a young Jewish-Israeli male who took part in the Israeli shifts in the neighborhood, described the feeling of despair he had: "It looked the same, we went there, spent the night there. But it didn't do anything. It was this ritual...there was a pretty bad feeling. We were very few leftist activists in Jerusalem...and we tried to find a way to do something because the feeling was that everything was falling apart and nobody really talked about that." CO expressed similar thoughts, emphasizing her belief at the time that the problem was that Jewish-Israelis were unaware of this reality; that an exposure of people to the Sheikh Jarrah story would necessarily lead to their involvement: "At nights we were there, ML, me, and DV. Three young Israeli women...nobody else was there. And I had this thing...Israelis must see. If only they would know."

Aiming to expose Jewish-Israelis to the reality in Sheikh Jarrah and to support the Palestinian families in their struggle, the small group of women realized that they needed to bring Israelis physically to the neighborhood. CO explains the logic behind their idea to march from downtown Jerusalem to Sheikh Jarrah: “We asked ourselves how we could bring them [Jewish-Israelis] along, and we came up with the idea to actually bring them...we said, well, if we would take them by the hand and bring them there it might be less intimidating.” When they shared their idea with other activists in Jerusalem they did not receive strong support. KS admitted that at first he did not think the marches were a smart idea: “Towards the end of 2009 we held a meeting, all the familiar faces came. There was this idea that I wasn’t that excited about, to march from downtown [Jerusalem] to Sheikh Jarrah.” MKI, a young Jewish-Israeli man who refused to serve in the military and was active in different leftist organizations explained his hesitation:

I remember a gathering that was relatively big, there were approximately 30 people, and they [CO and another young women activist from Jerusalem] came [to the Hebrew University of Jerusalem] and talked about weekly demonstrations in Sheikh Jarrah that they wanted to organize. It sounded a bit ridiculous to us...here it’s not Bil’in⁷...Bil’in and all the things that happened in the Territories⁸, these were things that only very very committed people went to, and they went to act, they went every Friday, took the bus, took the car, to do this thing. And Sheikh

⁷ The Palestinian village of Bil’in is located in the central West Bank. Construction of the Israeli “security barrier” in the Bil’in area began in 2005, and since then approximately 55 percent of Bil’in’s former land has been confiscated for the construction of Modi’in Illit, a Jewish settlement. Every Friday since 2005, Palestinian, Israeli and international protesters have been gathering in Bil’in to demonstrate against the barrier’s route, making the village a symbol of resistance against the Israeli occupation.

⁸ i.e., the West Bank

Jarrah it was here, down the hill, we were not really going to demonstrate next to a house every week. It sounded a bit strange.

Whereas MKI and others kept imagining the struggle of the Israeli Left based on the two models they knew in 2009 – either an heroic, sometimes dangerous struggle of a few radical activists who joined Palestinians as their allies and protested on the ground, in the heart of the West Bank, where injustice actually took place, or a more mainstream Jewish-Israeli struggle within Israeli territory, aiming at changing the political map in Israel and reviving the Left and its role in Israeli society – CO, ML, and their partners started to imagine another type of protest. They wanted to fight against particular forms of injustice, on the ground, and to help the families to gain their properties back; they understood that the local struggle should be connected to a broader structural injustice; and they believed that the proximity of the Palestinian space to a Jewish one (and not a settlers space, such as in the West Bank, but rather the Jewish capital city), as well as the “nature” of the place (an affluent, quiet Palestinian neighborhood) could serve as an advantage in their attempt to attract large numbers of Jewish-Israelis and to develop a struggle that would penetrate into the mainstream consciousness.

When I asked CO whether she believed that their initiative would attract Jewish-Israelis, she explained that although she never imagined that thousands of people would join the struggle, she did have a strong positive feeling due to the particular location:

What helped my political vision was the fact that I had one foot in the mainstream and I knew that it was not easy to go to the Territories, to Bil’in. It was very scary for me too. I knew that Jerusalem, where there was no teargas...only twenty minutes away...I felt that it had a potential that the Territories didn’t, simply because of that. I had a feeling that we could move things from here.

On the one hand, it was clear to her and others that another quiet mainstream leftist demonstration in a central square or park would only replicate the failed practices of the Israeli Left, but on the other hand, they understood that collaborating and protesting with Palestinians in the West Bank was perceived too radical and dangerous within the circles of the mainstream Left. Furthermore, CO emphasized that she believed that the story of the families, their tragic fate and the processes that led to it, would open people's eyes and hearts.

Twenty Four people participated in the first march that took place in November 2009. The small group of young Jewish-Israelis decided to march on Friday afternoon, time laden with cultural meanings for the people living in Israel/Palestine – for Muslims, Friday is considered a holy day, and for Jews, who welcome their holy day, the Shabbat, on Friday afternoon, this time symbolizes the boundary between the profane and the sacred, between work and rest. But there are crucial political meanings to this time as well – on Friday afternoons Palestinians in the West Bank, joined by Israeli and international activists, protest against the occupation. The decision to march on Friday, as many activists emphasized in our conversations, was an attempt to connect the struggles. Last, in Sheikh Jarrah Friday afternoon was time of violence and hatred: “after the prayer, every Friday, they were making a mess, the settlers...so we said, we will have a demonstration there, stay till very late at night...to make sure that they [the Palestinians] are not left alone after the Friday prayer,” CO explained.

The marches drew more and more people quickly. “Within two weeks,” CO recalled in excitement, our numbers reached ninety people or so...I remember that we were in such a high. I said, that's it, we reached our peak, we would never reach over ninety...what a dizzying success.” AH explained the crucial and quick impact of the first marches: “These marches...it was the hottest thing in town...It started to be cool, the Left started to be a cool thing in Jerusalem again.” In a

depoliticized urban reality such as in 2009 Jerusalem, high numbers and the “trendy” image of the protest were crucial criteria of success.

The marches that started in November 2009 were replaced by weekly demonstrations in the neighborhood that attracted thousands of individuals from different backgrounds – Jewish Israelis, Palestinian residents of Sheikh Jarrah, anarchists, politicians, Zionists and post-Zionists, students, workers of human rights organizations, veterans, people who refused to serve in the military, religious and secular people, feminists, activists from different movements, intellectuals, people who had never been politically active before, and so forth – as well as journalists and heavy police forces. Trying to develop a new form of struggle for the Israeli Left, the core group focused on practices of cultural jamming and joyful resistance, such as samba drumming circles, performances of army of clowns, catchy slogans and creative designs, colorful outfits, and songs. Aiming to use the neighborhood as a performative terrain in which the effects and meanings of the occupation would be exposed, protesters used civil disobedience techniques and created public spaces in which different voices could be expressed. Defending, in Israeli courts, their right to protest, developing online forms of activism, working closely with mainstream media, organizing cultural events, and establishing political clubs in universities, protesters tried to broaden their struggle and to influence the Israeli mainstream public opinion. Attempting to lead the protest through open assemblies, to work closely with Palestinians, and to create safe spaces for self and group reflection, some activists aimed to develop forms of grassroots participatory democracy that challenge power structures and systems of class, gender, and ethnicity in Israel/Palestine.

Within a few months, a local initiative had become a transformative struggle against Israel’s occupation and other structures of domination related to it, aiming to form new alliances that challenge traditional boundaries between political groups and communities. For many, the

group of young Jewish Israelis who joined the Palestinians of Sheikh Jarrah were a sign for the revival of the Israeli Left. They were seen as the hope and promise of the defeated and confused Left, as the young political generation that can bring about change on the ground, through innovative grassroots practices; as a true possibility to develop strong collaborations between “us” the Israelis, and them, the Palestinians.

In a large demonstration in the neighborhood in March 2010 in which approximately 5000 people participated, one of the dominant Jewish-Israeli activists in the Sheikh Jarrah protest gave a speech entitled There’s a New Left in Town. Trying to enhance the image already developed in mainstream and social media, she portrayed the protest in the neighborhood as the new Israeli Left, as an antithesis to the Zionist Left that focuses on peace talks and negotiations while deepening the gaps between Israelis and Palestinians on the ground and ignoring other issues of injustice:

There is a New Left, and it is not a left that is content with peace talks; it is a left of struggle... There’s a New Left that knows that this struggle will not be decided on paper, but on the ground, on the hills, in the vineyards, in the olive groves... This left does not want to be loved, does not dream of filling town squares and does not bask in the memories of 400,000 demonstrators. This left is a partnership of Palestinians who understand that the occupation will not be stopped by missiles and bombs, and of Israelis who understand that the Palestinian struggle is their own. The New Left links arms with Palestinians in a cloud of tear-gas in Bili’in, and with them, bears the brunt of settler violence in the South Hebron Hills... All those who came here tonight; all those who dared to cross the imaginary line separating West and East Jerusalem despite the threats and intimidation – we are all the New Left that is rising in Israel and Palestine... we believe that injustice is the main obstacle

to peace. Until the Ghawis, the Hanouns and the El-Kurds return to their homes, there will be no peace.

For many, the March demonstration marked the transition from an “activist group” to a “political movement” as activists defined it in our conversations. The goal of the individuals who promoted the idea of a movement was to influence power structures in Israeli society and to bring about a profound political change. They wanted to go beyond the one-issue political activity (in this case, Sheikh Jarrah and the evicted families), and to challenge broader political and social systems. In general, their ambition was to bring back the Left to the center of the Israeli political map. For them, such objectives demanded charismatic and innovative leadership, organized institutions, well-planned events, practices, and reactions, and a clear agenda. In spring 2010 people started talking about Sheikh Jarrah Solidarity, the new leftist movement that plans to change politics in Israel.

In January 2011, when I started developing my doctoral research proposal I read Akiva Eldar’s article that was published in the daily *Haaretz* that month – “Two Doctoral Students’ Journey to Revive the Israeli Left.” The article tells the story of the Sheikh Jarrah protest, which in January 2011 was in its prime, focusing on the leaders of the new project to “revive the Israeli Left,” Avner Inbar and Assaf Sharon, and their journey from academic life in the US to political activism in Jerusalem. The two PhD students in political philosophy (Sharon at Stanford University and Inbar at the University of Chicago) returned to Israel in 2009 “to write their doctoral theses, on the way to quiet academic careers,” Eldar writes. However, “the sight of the Palestinian families from Sheikh Jarrah who were thrown out of their homes onto the street changed the two young men’s lives” (Eldar 2011). Their involvement in Sheikh Jarrah and their analysis of the vacuum created in the Israeli political map due to the failure of the Left parties, Eldar explains,

have led them to believe that this struggle has the capacity to revive the Israeli Left and to connect Jews and Arabs. Inbar and Sharon's success in Sheikh Jarrah, thus according to the article, attracted much attention: "veteran politicians and peace activists are keeping track of them with a mix of envy and concern. They're storming the campuses, and their friends say they wouldn't be surprised if next year Sharon and Inbar stormed the Knesset."

Eldar's piece portrays the struggle in Sheikh Jarrah as a struggle of an organized political movement with official leaders and agenda. The leaders, according to the article, were two Jewish-Israeli males, PhD students in prestigious American universities, who managed to analyze the political map in Israel accurately and to utilize a grassroots opportunity for a broader struggle to revive the Israeli Left. Although Eldar emphasizes that for the two a Jewish-Arab collaboration is a basic condition for such a revival, he does not discuss the role of Palestinians in this protest (or the role of other Jewish-Israelis), nor the complex meanings of an Israeli-Arab collaboration in a Palestinian territory.

I was still in the US when Eldar's piece was published, trying to collect materials online as background for my proposal that focused on Sheikh Jarrah. I discovered that although Eldar was one of the first journalists to write about the "leaders" of the Sheikh Jarrah movement, many other sources in social and mainstream media conveyed similar images of the protest, images that most Zionist Israelis in the Left could accept and support – organized protest, collaboration between Israelis and "Arabs" aiming to bring back the white Zionist Left to the center of the Israeli political map, Jewish-Israeli, masculine, elitist leadership, a new, young image for the Left. Like many others, I did not know about the first stages of the protest I described above, and was not aware of the fact that the individuals who initiated the protest and developed strong relationships with the Palestinians in the neighborhood – a group of Jewish Israeli women in their early twenties who

refused to serve in the military – were missing from the narratives that appeared in mainstream and social media.

When I arrived in Israel to start my fieldwork, Sheikh Jarrah Solidarity was on the verge of its final collapse. In fall 2012 the movement’s assembly, which included only Jewish-Israeli activists, decided to leave the neighborhood and to end its political activity there. The decision both reflected and intensified the complex dynamics, tensions, and challenges within the movement and between Jewish Israeli and Palestinian activists. Only after a few weeks in the field I realized that the story of Sheikh Jarrah is the story of the Israeli Left – a representation of the multiple, sometimes contradictory, desires, interests and beliefs that compose this seemingly monolithic category called Left; a reflection of the variety of perceptions of “we” and “the other” and the relations between them that influence contemporary leftist activity in Israel; and a manifestation of the inability of people holding such varied perceptions to work together, in concert, as a political public. Several activists agreed to speak with me and to share different narratives than the ones conveyed in newspapers, blogs, and social media. In the interviews I conducted with them they analyzed dynamics, relations, ideologies, and practices that Eldar, and many others, underplayed or ignored.

Beyond and Against the Cliché

I met Gilad Baram, a young Jewish-Israeli photographer, in summer 2012, several months after Sheikh Jarrah Solidarity decided to end its activity in the neighborhood, a decision that eventually led to its final decline. The “hope of the Israeli Left,” the possibility of its “revival” and “victory,” as many described and imagined the Sheikh Jarrah protest, now seemed like a failure, an unavoidable loss. At the beginning of our conversation Baram shared his frustration as a

photographer trying to represent the Sheikh Jarrah protest visually. For him it was almost impossible to produce images within the (expected) framework of hope, victory, and optimism.

...I look at it in a visual way, this place has always been very difficult for me. This square, it was so problematic to represent it...it always seemed like a too big of a place to produce a visibility of multitude...something there just didn't work. It was too community-centery, too playgroundy...it didn't send a serious message...It was always so difficult to put things in a frame...[a] frame that contains a story...In general these demonstrations are so difficult, so difficult...to produce a representation which is not a cliché.



The main Square in Sheikh Jarrah



The playground behind the main square

Baram felt obligated to convey a story with a “serious message” – a story that reflects the creativity, strength, and bravery of the human spirit; a story that shows how influential and effective political protest can be. But at the same time he felt that it was impossible to produce such a story without falling into the cliché trap. The cliché, for him, is inherent, a-priori, to any story of protest in democratic societies. Beyond what he saw as a local amateur image of protesters in a square next to a playground, there was, he clarified, an unavoidable sense of cliché in all political struggles taking place in democratic societies. The limited ways through which individuals in Western liberal countries can express frustration or resistance, along with the fact that the failure of their struggles is predetermined, he explained, lead to their perception and representation as a cliché. “Because if everything is predetermined, if the results are already known, then why are we doing this? If I know...that any such form of protest would eventually die without reaping any benefits, then why should I start from the first place? It is totally emasculating. All these forms of action emasculate themselves...”

Moreover, Baram explained that the practice itself, i.e., demonstration, has become a too well orchestrated performance in liberal societies, a fact that contributes to the sense of cliché and senselessness:

I have always had this tearing feeling of ambivalence regarding demonstrations. I have always felt that they had their social role, that they had a role with some effect, but at the same time they always seemed to me like a fixed game; like a show with actors that...rehearsed their role 500 times, and each one of them knows exactly what to do and what his cue is, and how it is going to end...it is very theatrical.

As a photographer who sees both himself and his camera as actors in this performance, Baram tried to break away from the obligation to follow the crowd and to convey images that romanticize

and glorify leftist protest. He tried to find a role that would not make him feel that he is “being used,” as he put it, by the practice of demonstration. He attempted to say something about what he saw and how he felt, and the narratives he had in mind did not follow the framework of the well-orchestrated play of the protest.

I shared similar thoughts and was struggling to find or to develop forms of representation that would go beyond the cliché that most protests in Western liberal societies, as well as their portrayals in research, media, and art, usually produce. In summer 2012 it was difficult not to think about images of protesters in the neighborhood’s playground along the lines of Baram’s description. The sense of cliché became even stronger in light of earlier attempts of both mainstream and social media to portray the protest in Sheikh Jarrah as a revival of the Israeli Left or as a successful and hopeful collaboration between Israelis and Palestinians. Furthermore, the inability or unwillingness of journalists and activists to explain the state of the protest after the movement left the neighborhood, as well as their attempts to underplay or ignore particular dynamics, strengthened the image of leftist protest as a romantic, naïve and futile practice.

These thoughts of “heresy” that challenge most representations of protests have been articulated in several scholarly writings as well. Twenty-five years ago anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod wrote her essay “The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power through Bedouin Women,” in which she warned the scholarly community against what she saw as growing attempts to romanticize resistance and its effects in different studies. Such studies, including her own, she argues, “read all forms of resistance as signs of the ineffectiveness of systems of power and of the resilience and creativity of the human spirit in its refusal to be dominated” (Abu-Lughod 1990, 42). According to Abu-Lughod, reading resistance in such a way leads to the collapse of distinctions between different forms of resistance and forecloses certain questions about the

workings of power. Abu-Lughod's main argument is that scholars should start analyzing resistance as a diagnostic of power. For her one of the most interesting things to emerge from works on resistance is "a greater sense of the complexity of the nature and forms of domination" (1990, 41).

Although Abu-Lughod poses the dichotomy resistance/power in the center of her argument, she is very well aware of the pitfalls in analyzing socio-cultural phenomena through this framework. Calling for the examination of power through resistance she emphasizes the relational "nature" of the two concepts, and their ongoing mutual production. She argues that power should not be seen as a monolithic, natural force, but rather as a complex web of relations that are produced, reproduced, and challenged; that scholars should explore the ways in which varied forms of power "may actually be working simultaneously, in concert or at cross- purposes" (1990, 48). Abu-Lughod clarifies that resisters usually both challenge and maintain power relations, and that writings that romanticize resistance and resisters fail to recognize and unpack this complexity of human action.

Abu-Lughod concludes her discussion arguing that "the problem has been that those of us who have sensed that there is something admirable about resistance have tended to look to it for hopeful confirmation of the failure-or partial failure-of systems of oppression" (1990, 53). Twenty-five years later, and Abu-Lughod's arguments are still relevant and thought-provoking. In the context of my conversation with Baram, it seems that nowadays people trying to represent protest or resistance, may they be artists, scholars, bloggers, or journalists, are more aware of the relational dynamics of power and dissent, and the multilayered narratives that can be told and analyzed. The influence of modes of thought and practice such as feminism, queerism, and post-colonialism is evident in many of their works, and they try to shed light on more complex issues and questions. But still, one of the main points raised in my conversation with Baram was the need – or more

accurately, obligation – to tell a story of hope and victory that highlights the strength and creativity of the human spirit and the ability of political agents to fight oppression and domination successfully. Baram’s frustration is an outcome of his inability to fulfill this task in light of the dynamics he experienced and witnessed in Sheikh Jarrah. This sense of obligation that stems from both personal-internal and social-external desires, is reflected in other representations of Sheikh Jarrah, especially the ones produced when the protest was still taking place. The same obligation is also reflected in the silence of bloggers, artists, journalists, and scholars in the months after the movement left the neighborhood. The few who expressed their thoughts after the protest ended display an attempt to free themselves from this obligation and, in different ways, to produce materials that echo Abu-Lughod’s arguments.

As an anthropologist studying protest and resistance I felt the duty to tell a particular story, and experienced the desire to find hope and optimism in the field. But the many activists I met in the weeks and months following the fall of Sheikh Jarrah Solidarity, conveyed, between the lines and through side comments, a more complex narrative. In our conversations Sheikh Jarrah was told as a space, an event, an encounter, a process, a community, and a practice that encompassed a variety of states, simultaneously – occupation, struggle, solidarity, negotiation, and tension. It was analyzed as a practice that attracted different individuals and organizations, some can be included under the rubric movement/protest, whereas others would not like to be categorized as such; as an encounter, process, and event leading to both transformation and maintenance; as a space that influenced people’s subjectivity and agency, and thus functioned as a particular place for them, a place fraught with meanings and desires.

The following sections of this introduction provide a framework for analyzing the Sheikh Jarrah protest in particular, and other forms of struggle in general. It is an attempt to break away

from the perceived duty to represent these struggles in a positive, sometimes uncritical, way, as practices that necessarily carry the promise of hope and freedom. It seems to me that although the perception of some scholars of themselves as activists has had a profound influence on the accessibility and effect of scholarly studies, it has also “forced” them to underplay or ignore crucial issues related to activism and its contradictory outcomes. And as Abu-Lughod explains, scholars, like activists, project their personal desires and sincere hopes on their assessment and analysis of cases of struggle.

In “Thick Resistance: Death and the Cultural Construction of Agency in Himalayan Mountaineering,” Sherry Ortner calls for the production of thick descriptions of resistance that account for the meaning of practices and perceptions and shed light on the complexities associated with agency. “If questions of power tend to be split off from questions of meaning,” she argues, “so too do discussions of resistance, which appear in many studies-as I have argued at some length elsewhere-to be culturally “thin,” insufficiently grounded in local views of the meaning of morality, justice, subjecthood, and agency” (Ortner 1997, 145–146). Like Abu Lughod she emphasizes the relations between agency and power (as it operates through socio-cultural systems) and argues that agency is always developed in the context of power, and that the social sciences should focus on the socio-cultural meanings of power and agency, as well as of their relations.

This study is an attempt to produce the kind of knowledge both Ortner and Abu Lughod envision. A multilayered analysis of the discourses, representations, practices, and interactions that have been developed through the Sheikh Jarrah struggle exposes a complex picture of the dialectical relationships among socio-cultural structures, people’s subjectivities (i.e, their complex modes of perception, emotion, desire, aspiration and so forth) and agency (i.e, their capacity to produce, reproduce, and challenge the socio-cultural frameworks in which they live). It reveals the

connections between the occupation and other socio-cultural systems (such as identity, gender, race, mental and physical borders) and enables an exploration of the ways in which these structures and forms of subjectivity associated with them are developed, maintained, negotiated, and challenged through political activism. Aiming to provide a thick description of resistance, this study produces new knowledge built on everyday experiences. It does not tell the “entire” story, but rather focuses on several issues that shed light on the complexities, contradictions, and relations associated with processes of protest.

Towards a Thick Description – Research Objectives and Questions

This study analyzes the Sheikh Jarrah struggle as a case study of political protest that involves practices of solidarity and collaborations between different privileged and underprivileged groups. Furthermore, it examines this struggle as a microcosm of the Israeli Left, as a reflection of its main characteristics, challenges, and internal dynamics. Its main objective is to produce a multilayered analysis of the relationships among socio-cultural structures (as both enabling and oppressing systems), subjectivity (individuals’ complex modes of perception, emotion, desire, aspiration and so forth) and agency (individuals’ capacity to produce, reproduce, and challenge the socio-cultural frameworks in which they live), as they are reflected through processes of protest. Based on this objective, my work engages with the following questions:

- (1) What are the relations between the occupation as a structure and other socio cultural systems/constructs (such as identity, division of space, inclusion and exclusion) as they are reflected, contested, and reproduced through Sheikh Jarrah activists’ practices and perceptions?

- (2) What are the conditions and possibilities produced within the framework of the occupation that enable the development of forms of agency and subjectivity that both challenge and maintain this very framework?
- (3) What might be the effects of different forms of political agency on socio-cultural structures and activists themselves? How might such forms unsettle and/or reinforce the occupation and other socio-cultural structures associated with it?

As further explained later in this chapter, to answer these questions I examine two key “themes” in the Sheikh Jarrah protest: space and solidarity. Focusing on ideas of space and solidarity as they are manifested in the practices, reflections, and products of Sheikh Jarrah activists, this study provides a culturally grounded theory of the dialectical relations among structure, agency, and subjectivity.

Theories in Practice

The ethnographic research presented in this study is informed by several theoretical debates. These debates and their implications are echoed in the questions I asked activists, journalists, and politicians; in the representations I chose to examine and analyze, in the events I decided to attend; and in the voices I tried to expose. In my attempt to produce new understandings on protest, my aim has been to put into conversation the scholarship described below and the practices I witnessed and analyzed in the field. Everyday experiences and detailed recollections of my interviewees strengthened some of the theoretical arguments that informed my project and challenged others. I discussed the following theoretical debates with many of the individuals who participated in this project, in the context of their experiences. Their insights and questions allowed me to think about

scholarly analyses of protest, agency, solidarity, and domination more critically, and to produce a study which is based on a conversation between theory and practice.

Denaturalizing Political Concepts

In their essay “Sovereignty Revisited,” Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat call for a reconceptualization of the category ‘sovereignty’ and advocate an ethnographic approach to sovereignty in practice. An anthropological study of sovereignty, they explain, “may turn out to be every bit as destabilizing to formal and legal notions of sovereignty as ethnography has been with respect to the idea of religion, the state, and the market” (2006, 297). The approach presented in Hansen’s and Stepputat’s article follows recent attempts of scholars from different disciplines, but especially from anthropology, to challenge legal and structural understandings of political concepts which serve as ontological ground for hegemonic orders and authority (Abrams 1988; Aretxaga 2003; Ferguson and Gupta 2002; Mongia 2007; Navaro-Yashin 2002). Their studies aim to unsettle the natural, fixed and abstract character of notions such as sovereignty, state, and power, as well as their function as all-inclusive structures that legitimize particular legal and socio-cultural systems. Analyzing political constructs as forms of ideology, cultural projects, or products of desire, such studies challenge their seemingly natural, self-explained character and examine the ways in which these political ideas are produced, reproduced, maintained and negotiated by groups and individuals.

For many of these scholars the site of everyday life is the main “window” through which the production, reproduction and negotiation of political ideas should be examined (Aretxaga 2003; Hansen and Stepputat 2006; Navaro-Yashin 2002; Tarlo 2003; Yurchak 2006). Their objective is to produce culturally grounded analyses that account for the multiplicity, relationality,

and complexity of political ideas. This way they go beyond fixed, reified categories, and reveal their historical and cultural development as (seemingly) natural and unified notions. Furthermore, their ethnographic approach challenges the perception of these notions as totalizing forces or structures that have the capacity to dictate people's subjectivities and lives. Their analyses reveal the ways in which these notions are produced and reproduced by people as "acting forces."

Drawing on this literature I study domination, the Left, solidarity and democracy as socio-cultural, relational and dynamic ideas that are produced, reproduced, and challenged through everyday practices and by different players. I examine multiple perceptions of these ideas and the role of such perceptions in subjective, cultural and political life. By doing so I aim to expose the processes through which conceptions of political ideas come to be and the ways in which they enable the creation of our complex political present. In particular, this research attempts to reveal the ways in which domination and power structures are developed, maintained, and challenged within the context of political protest. One of the main arguments of this study is that dynamics of struggle do not exist in a separate, contradictory epistemological space to that of power or domination; different understandings of domination and resistance come to be through ongoing relational practices and what seems to be contradictory and isolated is, in fact, co-produced. The following chapters offer a nuanced analysis of political life in which political categories are unpacked in a way that highlights their creation, authorization, and subversion.

Agency, Subjectivity, and Socio-Cultural Structures

Since the 1970s scholars from different disciplines, including anthropology, have been engaged with questions of human agency. The works of practice theorists, when analyzed as a collective intellectual effort, reflect an attempt to study human action as producing, reproducing, and

challenging society (Bourdieu 1990; Giddens 1979; Ortner 1984). Different scholars claim that this project failed to provide a comprehensive explanation of the dialectical relationships between structure and agency, mainly due to the lack of analysis of the productive capacities of practices (Fajans 1997; Ortner 2006).

Studies of resistance examine agency as a capacity to realize one's own will and desires against different forms of domination (Comaroff 1985; Guha 1999; Scott 1985; Scott 1990; Wolf 1973). The main critique on some of these studies emphasizes their reproduction of the agency/structure or resistance/domination dichotomy, their analysis of resistance as the only form of agency, and the lack of discussion on the ambivalence and complexity of resistance (Abu-Lughod 1990; Ahearn 2001; Mahmood 2001; Mbembe 1992a; Mbembe 1992b). The perception of agency as opposition has been contested by several anthropologists. Influenced by Practice Theory, some analyze the agency of individuals in producing and reproducing the structures that govern their reality and identities (Myers 1986; Sangren 1995). Others, influenced by works on culturally enabled subjectivities (Geertz 1973), as well as by Foucault's notion of the subject (Foucault 1980, 1982, 1990), emphasize that agency is socio-culturally enabled, and cannot be analyzed as an a-priori guarantee or as a direct opposition to socio-cultural structures. They call for the study of agency as a socio-culturally mediated capacity to act (Ahearn 2001; Ortner 2006), or as a capacity for action that specific relations of subordination create (Mahmood 2001). Such perceptions are bound up with the assumption that subjectivity is the basis for agency; that in order to understand how people act one should ask questions about their modes of perception, emotion, and desire, and the socio-cultural conditions in which they are produced.

This project is based on the assumption that there are dialectical relationships among agency, subjectivity and socio-cultural frameworks, and that any analysis of protest or political

struggle should take into account these relationships, the ways in which they are developed, and their effects. The following chapters analyze the Sheikh Jarrah protest through the prism of this dialectical approach and examine both local and broader meanings of the relationships among agency, subjectivity, and socio-cultural structures – I study the relations among the framework of the occupation and individuals’ modes of perception, emotion, desire, and agency; the possibilities produced within and through socio-cultural frameworks and relations of domination that enable forms of agency and subjectivity that challenge these very frameworks and relations; the ways in which activists reimagine and reshape themselves and their reality through their struggle; and following the idea that practices are “moments” of both production and reproduction (Marx 1967, 1970), the ways in which political protest might both challenge and reinforce existing socio-cultural structures and the conditions that enable them.

Moreover, drawing on the psychoanalytic notions of “desire” and “fantasy” and their role in the formation of the subject and the social (Freud 1962, 2010; Moore 2007; Žižek 1994a, 1994b), my research aims to analyze both conscious and unconscious aspects of the subject, the ways in which unconscious tendencies, beliefs, and perceptions become conscious, and the desires that influence particular socio-cultural forms. Last, focusing on the meaning of experiences, narratives, reflections, different forms of representation, and so forth, this research aims to show that the relationships among socio-cultural frameworks, subjectivity, and agency should be examined not just in abstract terms, but within particular historical and socio-cultural context.

Solidarity

In the months after the protest in Sheikh Jarrah ended, “solidarity” became a key concept or idea through which activists expressed different political perceptions, marked their “location” within

the complex field called the Israeli Left, voiced their criticism and frustration, articulated their visions for change, and tried to develop their symbolic capital as political figures. Through this concept activists told the story of the protest in Sheikh Jarrah to themselves and to others, and negotiated the narrative of its long development. Thus, a term that was used at the beginning to (seemingly) emphasize collaboration between Israelis and Palestinians and between groups within the Israeli Left, has gone through a process of unpacking that exposed its different meanings on the ground and how it served different, sometimes conflicting, practices and visions.

In this sense Sheikh Jarrah activists follow or contribute to a trend in the Israeli and global Left to categorize, explain, and justify different forms of struggle as solidarity. In the last few years solidarity has become a key concept in activist communities and in many cases it is used as a buzzword to indicate a membership in a collective of individuals fighting for human rights. However, a deep analysis of the ways in which people perceive and practice this idea reveals a complex picture of perceptions, interests, and understandings, and highlights the crucial role it has in our political life; just as the multilayered history of the term in political thought and practice, so too its contemporary usage and effects.

Drawing on both historical and contemporary understandings of this concept, the following chapters examine several issues related to the practice of solidarity. However, for the purpose of this review it is important to emphasize that I examine solidarity as a way to better explain how people perceive themselves (i.e., I), their group of affiliation (i.e., we/us), and “the other,” as well as the relationships between these categories. As Mihnea Panu argues in his essay “The Politics of ‘Us’: On the Possibility of Solidarity without Substance,” “our conceptualizations of solidarity are directly related to our understandings of the other, and thus to the visibility and relevance the events involving those others have for us” (Panu 2007, 94). Panu assesses solidarity from the

perspective of the “I,” and this way he responds to different imaginations of the self. His analysis of the self takes into account the ways in which the self understands “the other” and the relationships between the self and the other. Moreover, his analysis also examines the connections between both the self and the other and the unit of analysis called “we” or “us.” The “us” of solidarity can be universal and broad (e.g., humanity), or more specific/local (e.g., nationality, gender, sexuality, culture, political party). In Panu’s analytical map of solidarity all three categories are examined as emergent, dynamic, and relational products.

Focusing on perceptions and practices of solidarity my research aims to reveal both conscious and unconscious understandings of “I,” “us,” and “the other,” as well as the relationships among them. I argue that at the core of these perceptions and practices stand a variety of imaginations of activists regarding who they are, who the other is, and what is the essence of their groups of affiliation. These imaginations influence their agency (as both a practice of change and reproduction), their practices of inclusion and exclusion, and their political visions. In the context of my attempt to show how forms of resistance both maintain and challenge forms of domination, my analysis through the I/us/other prism reveals how solidarity is used both to reproduce and subvert existing socio-cultural structures.

Space

“Representations of space in the social sciences are remarkably dependent on images of break, rupture, and disjunction” Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson explain (1992, 6). They argue that “the distinctiveness of societies, nations, and cultures is based upon a seemingly unproblematic division of space, on the fact that they occupy “naturally” discontinuous spaces. The premise of discontinuity forms the starting point from which to theorize contact, conflict, and contradiction

between cultures and societies” (1992, 6). Aiming to denaturalize imaginary, physical, and visible borders, this study reveals the historical, political, and socio-cultural processes through which the Israeli/Palestinian space has been divided, united, ruptured, and defined. More particularly, it examines such processes in Jerusalem since 1948 and explores how contemporary spatial forms of inclusion and exclusion in the city have been developed. Following Achille Mbembe’s discussion of the production of boundaries as a way to domesticate and mobilize space (2000), the following chapters aim to clarify how both state institutions and ordinary people take part in the Zionist project to Judaize Israel/Palestine in general, and Jerusalem in particular, as well as how boundaries fulfill certain roles in particular times.

But beyond this task, which is crucial for understanding the particular case study, this research also intend to explain how space, as a social product, functions as a structure that both influence and is influenced by individuals’ subjectivity and agency. As Manuel Castells argues:

Space is not...a reflection of society but one of society’s fundamental material dimensions and to consider it independently from social relationships, even with the intention of studying their interaction, is to separate nature from culture and thus to destroy the first principle of any social science: that matter and consciousness are interrelated and that this fusion is the essence of history and science. Therefore spatial forms, at least on our planet, will be produced by human action, as are all other objects, and will express and perform the interests of the dominant class according to a given mode of production and to a specific mode of development. They will express and implement the power relationships of the state in a historically defined society. They will be realized and shaped by gender domination and by state-enforced family life. At the same time spatial forms will

also be marked by resistance from exploited classes, oppressed subjects, and abused women. And the work of this contradictory historical process on space will be accomplished on an already inherited spatial form, the product of history and support of new interests, projects, protests, and dreams. Finally, from time to time social movements will arise, challenging the meaning of a social structure and therefore attempting new functions and new forms (1983, 311–312).

Individuals and institutions create and recreate particular spaces as a way to realize their desires, hopes, and interests. But in the process of negotiating and realizing their imaginations of space, individuals also recreate themselves and others. Their conscious and unconscious ideas of space and the people inhabiting it, as well as their agentic practices to realize their ideas, reveal the dialectical relationship among structure, agency, and subjectivity, and in particular, how people both maintain and challenge their socio-cultural structures. My work attempts to examine different perceptions of the Israeli/Palestinian space, and the ways in which these perceptions both reflect and create forms of agency and subjectivity.

Materials and Methods

When I arrived in Jerusalem in winter 2012 Sheikh Jarrah Solidarity was on a verge of decline. Like many others I did not know how and why the movement had collapsed, but it was clear that the demonstrations and events I witnessed when I visited in summer 2011 would not happen again. The sincere feelings of hope, excitement, and belonging that filled the people who took part in- or followed different phases of the struggle, were replaced by feelings of frustration, alienation, and despair. Some of the tensions within the movement were exposed on Facebook and online blogs,

but it was difficult to understand the full picture and to identify crucial developments and processes.

After a few days in the field I realized that my ethnographic research plan would have to change. I could not be a participant observer in demonstrations and other related events and I assumed that many activists would not be interested in sharing their thoughts and feelings in such a sensitive and complicated time. Moreover, being aware of the inevitable tensions involved in any joint struggle of privileged and underprivileged groups, as well as of my own identity as a privileged Jewish-Israeli, I knew that I should avoid an ethnographic research in the neighborhood itself in the first few months after the movement decided to end its activity there. Thus, I faced two options – either to study another contemporary protest in Israel/Palestine, or to continue working on the Sheikh Jarrah struggle, based on a new research plan.

My decision to focus on Sheikh Jarrah as a way to answer the questions I pose in this study stems from several reasons: First, this struggle attracted a variety of movements, groups, and individuals, both Jewish Israelis and Palestinians, and thus provided a space for unique interactions and practices of solidarity and resistance. Second, the protest in Sheikh Jarrah exposed the usually hidden effects of the Israeli occupation in East Jerusalem and the ways in which East Jerusalem can be seen as a microcosm of the Israeli occupation in the Palestinian Territories. Third, as most of my interviewees claim, and as I will explain in the following chapters, this ongoing protest has been one of the most crucial political “events” in Israel/Palestine in the last decade. Its dynamics and effects should be analyzed as a case study of solidarity struggles in Israel/Palestine and beyond. Fourth, the neighborhood was not the only place in which the struggle took place. Virtual spaces, the media, courts and so forth functioned as spaces of protest through which different perceptions were produced, legitimized, challenged and negotiated. Moreover, Sheikh Jarrah activists

produced a variety of representations (graphics, poetry, blogs, photography, etc.) that allow rich engagement with the questions of this research. Last, the fact that I conducted my ethnographic research after the protest ended enabled me and the people I worked with to examine it in retrospect and to analyze long and interrelated processes.

Based on my research of online spaces in which Sheikh Jarrah activists wrote, interacted, and negotiated their visions, as well as on my connections in the circles of the Israeli Left, I contacted a few activists in the first weeks of my field work. I told them about my research via email message, phone conversation, or Facebook message, and asked to meet with them. Much to my surprise most of them were eager to meet and to share their stories. Soon I learned that one of the main things political activists need the most, is an opportunity to reflect on their experiences in a safe space. For many of them our meetings in their homes, in the Hebrew University or Tel Aviv University, and in cafes in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv were a way to contemplate and to unpack their thoughts and emotions; they were an opportunity to process a complex experience and to explain, to themselves, the effects this experience had on them and the frameworks in which they live. The small group of activists I met at the beginning of my field research connected me with many others, as well as with journalists and politicians. Their narratives are at the core of this research, and in the following chapters I attempt to focus on crucial themes and issues they raised in our conversations.

This study is focused on the Sheikh Jarrah protest as it has been experienced, analyzed, and represented by Jewish Israelis. Based on the interviews I conducted I decided that my work should tell the story of the Israeli Left – its internal dynamics and tensions and its complex attempts to join the Palestinian struggle. To better understand this unit of analysis called the Israeli Left, and especially in the context of a joint struggle, I spent much time in Sheikh Jarrah, and had informal

conversations with some of its Palestinian residents. They knew that I was a Jewish Israeli graduate student in an American university, and they knew about my research and the issues I was interested in. Fearing the Israeli military and police, as well as Palestinian groups and individuals that oppose any collaboration with Jewish Israelis, the East Jerusalem Palestinians I talked to refused to be recorded or quoted. Their thoughts helped me to form my research questions and agenda, and to choose the materials for this study. Two young Palestinian activists who live in Jerusalem and participated in the Sheikh Jarrah protest agreed to be interviewed and recorded.

In summer 2011 I participated in demonstrations in the neighborhood, and observed the main practices and dynamics developed through this struggle. Between February and July 2012 I participated in weekly political vigils held in the neighborhood, organized by Palestinians after most Jewish-Israelis left the neighborhood. To familiarize myself better with the broader field of leftist political activism in Israel/Palestine, I joined different political activities such as demonstrations, seminars, and political tours. Furthermore, I participated in political activities that were influenced by the unique political practices and discourses developed through the struggle in Sheikh Jarrah; last, as an ethnographer I have spent most of my time within the circles of Jewish Israeli activists and with Palestinian residents of Sheikh Jarrah, aiming to understand their socio-cultural world and their lives in Jerusalem and in Israel/Palestine. Being a participant observer in these interactions, events, and practices allowed me to deepen my analysis and to challenge simplistic understandings of political life in general, and resistance in particular.

Another crucial source of materials for this study are virtual spaces in which activists express, negotiate, defend, and develop their views and relations. Prior, during, and following my ethnographic research in Israel/Palestine, I conducted extensive ethnographic research online, aiming to collect and analyze virtual forms of protest that supported daily practices on the ground,

interactions between activists, representations of the Sheikh Jarrah protest, etc. I focused on materials such as reports, testimonies, pamphlets, images, articles, blog entries, audio and visual recordings, talkbacks, comment threads, graphics, Facebook statuses, and announcements. The main virtual spaces I examined were the Sheikh Jarrah Solidarity website, activists' blogs, Facebook, YouTube, Flickr, and websites of other organizations that were involved in the protest. Studying virtual spaces, interactions, and products through ethnographic lens allowed me to collect valuable data that further contributed to the development of thick descriptions of protest and solidarity.

Last, as a background for this work I collected transcripts of Israeli Parliament debates regarding the situation in East Jerusalem, leftist Jewish-Israeli activism, and initiatives aiming to restrict the activity of leftist organizations through legislative procedures; court records related to the evictions in Sheikh Jarrah and the arrests of Sheikh Jarrah activists; and interviews, reports, and articles focusing on the struggle in Sheikh Jarrah, published in Israeli newspapers and news websites.

Survey of Chapters

As a background for the Sheikh Jarrah protest and for the perceptions that influenced it, chapter two analyzes the processes through which physical and imaginary borders came to be in the Israeli/Palestinian space in general, and in Jerusalem and Sheikh Jarrah in particular. Through this historical analysis that highlights crucial events and transformations in the area since the 1930s, I attempt to explain contemporary efforts to secure Jewish sovereignty in Israel/Palestine and Jerusalem, and the ways in which territories and people are both divided and united. Such explanations enable a better understanding of the conditions and possibilities that allow certain

forms of solidarity and political struggle, as well as forms of subjectivity associated with them, and, at the same time, (almost) foreclose others. At the center of this chapter is the assumption that in order to understand forms of political agency and subjectivity in the Israeli Left, it is crucial to go back to the 1930s and 1940s and to examine fundamental events at that time period. Whereas most studies focusing on the Israeli occupation or the struggle against it start their historical analysis in 1967 and the Six Days War, I argue that events that took place twenty to thirty years earlier are crucial for our understanding of these issues.

Chapter three further examines perceptions of space, but through practices and reflections of Jewish Israeli activists. Analyzing how activists see the Israeli/Palestinian space, and in particular how they see Jerusalem, this chapter reveals a variety of understandings of I/us/the other, and explains certain modes of agency and subjectivity that were produced, reproduced and negotiated in the Sheikh Jarrah protest. One of the main assumptions of this chapter is that perceptions of space and visions of space, as socio-cultural and political products, reveal deep, sometimes unconscious desires and views related to our relations with the other and our group of belonging, as well as to our political activism. Focusing on the complex ways in which Jewish Israeli activists see their space of struggle (Sheikh Jarrah, Jerusalem, Israel/Palestine), its roles, and the boundaries and opportunities that have been developed in it, this chapter exposes crucial contradictions within the Israeli Left and clarifies how political struggles both challenge and strengthen socio-cultural structures.

Focusing on several events that took place during the three years of protest, chapter four aims to answer a question many Jewish-Israeli activists engage with – whose struggle is this? Is it a Palestinian struggle? Is it a joint protest? Or is it a Jewish-Israeli one? Exploring the purposes, practices, and people involved in the events described in this chapter, my aim is to build on the

conclusions discussed in chapter 3 and to further unpack the complex and contradicting forces within the Left, the dynamics that enable them, and their possible effects.

Chapter five examines two post-struggle reflections on the concept of ‘solidarity’ written by Jewish-Israeli activists several months after Sheikh Jarrah Solidarity left the neighborhood. One was written by Avner Inbar, one of the “official” leaders of the movement, and was presented by him in June 2012 in a conference on political concepts organized by The Lexicon Group in Tel Aviv University. The other, a poem, was written by Almog Behar, a Jewish Israeli writer and activist. The analysis of these materials, reveal other perceptions, desires, and interests that are crucial for an engagement with the questions posed in this study. A comparative analysis of these texts allow an engagement with alternative, more marginal perceptions of identity and solidarity in Israel/Palestine.

The conclusion revisits the main questions of this study and summarizes its key arguments. Moreover, it offers a short discussion on the state of the contemporary Israeli left and further questions that should be examined.

CHAPTER 2

SETTING THE STAGE – ON THE PRODUCTION OF SPACES AND POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS THROUGH TIME

Jerusalem was the focus of many poems by Yehuda Amichai, one of Israel's greatest modern poets. In an early work, he depicts the countless layers of separation and connection in the city, layers that carry long history of conflict. With his well-known sense of irony and humor he both unpacks and complicates everyday images of a divided city:

On a roof in the Old City
laundry hanging in the late afternoon sunlight
the white sheet of a woman who is my enemy,
the towel of a man who is my enemy,
to wipe off the sweat of his brow.

In the sky of the Old City
a kite
At the other end of the string,
a child
I can't see
because of the wall.

We have put up many flags,
they have put up many flags.

To make us think that they're happy

To make them think that we're happy.

“Jerusalem is certainly smiling when she reads this poem” Israeli literary scholar Ariel Hirschfeld writes. “Because he looks at her the way she really is, in a look that contains high altitude enclosing all times and places, as well as the low, blind spots that can see only till the wall, till the blocking...the spot of enmity which is manifested in the wall. She is smiling because he talks like her, in an authentic straightforwardness and in simplicity...” (Hirschfeld 2004). Towel and sheet, a kite, flags – all these are used by all of us, and they are visible, hovering in the sky, above walls and obstacles. But they also carry the state of separation and division; they carry a mental wall that cannot be easily recognized in space. They are the visible and invisible, the clarity and blindness; they represent shared experiences and, at the same time, the inability to share everyday life. The physical and symbolic walls that divide this troubled city enclose a long history of conflict and hope. They fragment the land and its people, and create a reality of suffering, separation, and longing.

Aiming to provide a background for a political struggle that took place in an urban neighborhood that marks a blurry border between West and East, legitimate and illegitimate, Israel and Palestine, Jewish and Muslim, liberated and occupied, this chapter centers on ‘space’ as a political concept and a cultural product; as a structure that is both produced by people and producing them as subjects and agents. It examines Jerusalem (and Sheikh Jarrah) in the broader context of the Israeli/Palestinian space, but focuses on the unique historical and political

developments in the city that have led to its contemporary spatial structure. It examines the processes through which the layers of separation and connection Amichai depicts came to be, and tries to look at the city in a way that accounts for the “high altitude enclosing all times and places, as well as the low, blind spots that can see only till the wall.” Thus, whereas the next chapter examines how separation and connection are realized, negotiated, and legitimized, in space, through everyday experiences of activists, this chapter reveals the broader processes that have been producing and reproducing physical and symbolic boundaries.

But space is not the only political concept examined in this chapter. Time, too, has a crucial role in any analysis of the Israeli/Palestinian reality in general, and the one in Jerusalem, in particular. In the introduction to his book *Beyond the Two-State Solution* Israeli sociologist and political activists Yehouda Shenhav explains what he sees as the major shortcoming of the Israeli and Jewish American Left, as well as of the majority of academic studies focusing on Israel/Palestine:

For the majority of Israelis, 1967, the year of the “Six-Day War,” is the watershed around which they shape their memory of the conflict as well as the vista for its resolution. On the other hand, the majority of Palestinians – including those who support the two-state principle – interpret the conflict and define the political horizon for its resolution through the lens of the 1948 war. Examining the solution through the language of 1967, whilst denying the 1948 question, eliminates the chances for sincere dialogue with the Palestinians and does not offer a genuine solution to the Israelis, denying as it does the core issues pertaining to the conflict (Shenhav 2012, 1).

The marking of 1967 as Year Zero, as the beginning of the conflict or occupation, with the different forms of injustice associated with it, enables Zionist Israelis (including leftists) to maintain their privileged position in the Israeli/Palestinian space and to strengthen their Jewish sovereignty in certain areas. It enables them to underplay crucial issues and to focus only on those that do not challenge their status. An ideological maneuver, this attempt aims to “obfuscate the fact that Israel itself is nothing short of a huge settlement project that was founded upon the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and the systematic expropriation of the land they left behind,” Lama Abu Odeh, a Palestinian-American scholar explains in her Foreword to Shenhav’s book (2012, VII). Abu Odeh emphasizes that it is not just the Israeli left that refuses to “touch” 1948 and its effects:

The Jewish left and its allies in the US also insist, often vociferously, on dating Israel’s injustice to 1967. Any Palestinian who has attempted to enter coalition politics with the progressive forces in the US on the question of Israel and Palestine feels the heavy handed, almost authoritarian manner in which such moral distinctions are made. There is a demand by one’s allies that one should forget 1948, that one should split one’s own diasporic experience, one’s uprooting, one’s trajectory over time, so that it tracks that of the moral judgement of the Israeli left. Many of us Palestinians, who have attempted (and stubbornly refuse to despair of) such coalition politics, whether on the streets, in activist organizations, in media interventions, in academia as activist students or professors, have had the experience of “stepping on someone’s toe” by evoking 1948 (2012, VIII).

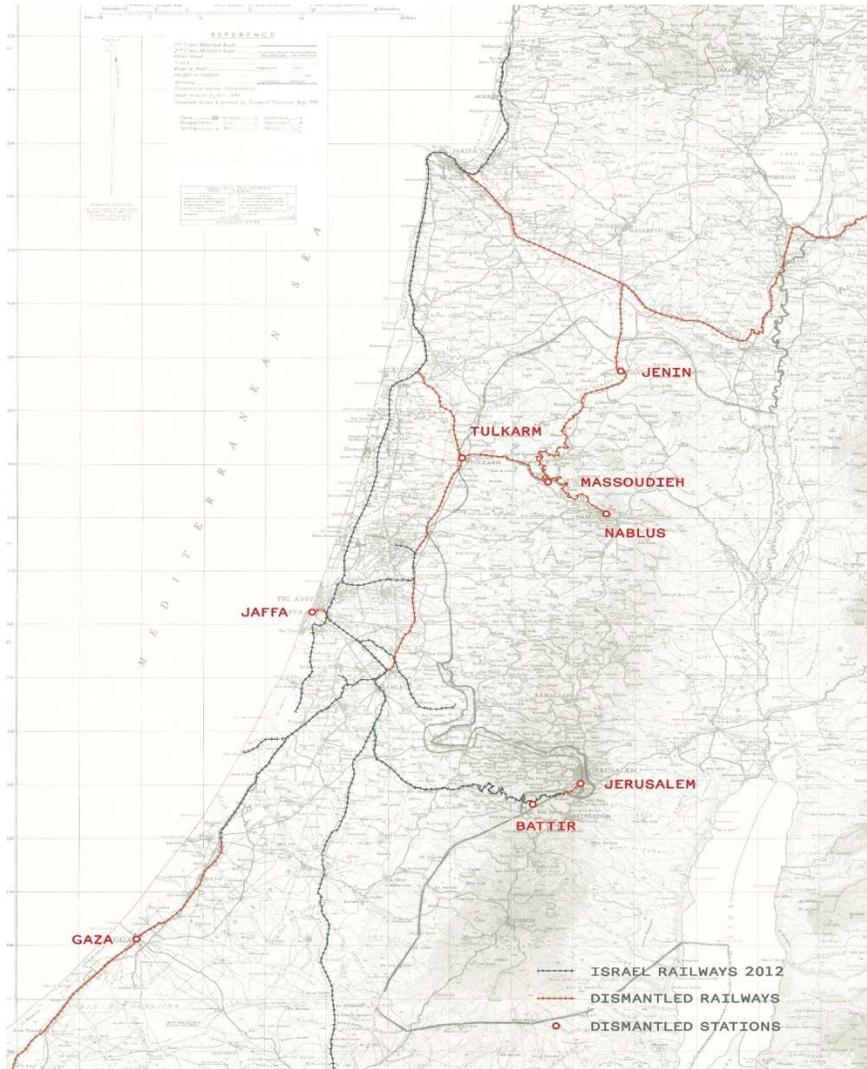
The analysis developed in this chapter starts from 1948 and evokes crucial moments that have led, eventually, to the production of current forms of space and the people inhabiting and expelled from

it. It is not just a moral or political decision to start the story of Sheikh Jarrah from 1948 – this project aims to show that studies focusing on issues related to the occupation and the struggle against it should examine 1948 (and in some cases the 1930s), as a series of events that have had profound influence on the present and future of the Israeli/Palestinian space and its inhabitants. Challenging the perception of 1967 as Year Zero in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict enables a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the key issues at stake and the ways in which people in this area understand themselves, the other, and the reality in which they live. Furthermore, in the context of this project, a discussion about 1948 and the attempts of the Israeli Zionist Left to erase it from the Israeli and Jewish-American collective memory is crucial for the study of certain dynamics in the Sheikh Jarrah protest.

Past Possibilities – Pre-1948 Spaces and People

Maps depicting the Ottoman railway network in early 20th century portray an image of space that seems inconceivable today. The dots and lines that connect Gaza with Haifa, Beirut with Jerusalem, Nablus with Jaffa seem like a sketch of an imaginary Middle East; an unrealized possibility of movement, relations, and connectivity. Contemporary divisions, boundaries, and limitations, with their physical markings on the ground, do not exist in these sketches. Instead, the maps tell a story of a shared space that raises questions about identities, relationships, and the potential of coexistence; a story that denaturalizes these divisions, boundaries, and limitations, and challenges their perception as an unquestionable necessity. And more specifically, these pre-1948 maps destabilize contemporary conceptualizations of Israel/Palestine and call for a subversive imagination of this space, an imagination that goes beyond national and cultural dichotomies.

Maps and memoirs of early 20th century Jerusalem raise similar thoughts of unrealized possibilities. In many ways pre-1948 Jerusalem seem like a microcosm of the space depicted in the Ottoman railway network maps, and as both a reflection of- and a stimulant for connections across spaces and identities. The not-yet divided city is reflected in maps and memoirs as a space quite different from the one we know today. First, it is important to note that for 500 years, under the Ottoman rule in Jerusalem, the Jewish community was a small minority in the city. Only in the final decades of Ottoman rule did the number of Jewish residents in the city start to grow. Thus, at the beginning of the 19th century the number of Jews in the city did not exceed 2000, but in 1870 it was already 11,000. At the beginning of the British mandate 34,400 Jews lived in the city, comparing to 13,500 Muslims and 14,770 Christians (Amirav 2007, 192–193). Second, as described in the following, pre-1948 Jerusalem was a space in which different types of encounters and relations could develop. Instead of rigid separation and segregation that define contemporary Jerusalem, different sources show that Jews and Arabs had a variety of possibilities to connect with each other, even in times of tension and struggle.



Map 1. Former and present railways in Israel-Palestine. Source: Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency.⁹

⁹ The Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency is an architectural studio and art residency program based in Beit Sahour, Palestine. The map can be accessed on the program's website: <http://www.decolonizing.ps/site/return-to-the-sea/> (accessed December 29, 2015).

In his study on shared spaces in pre-1948 Jerusalem (late Ottoman and British Mandate Jerusalem), Yair Wallach (2011) examines spaces of encounter and inter-group dynamics, focusing on residential, civic, and work places through the memories of Jewish Justice Gad Frumkin¹⁰. As for residential places, Wallach differentiates between the Old City and the new neighborhoods that were built outside the walls, and suggests that “contrary to the common image of Jerusalem as a "mosaic city," in which confessional groups resided in segregated enclaves, it is clear that residential patterns of late Ottoman Jerusalem involved high levels of mixing, while the development of the new city led to greater segregation, especially during the late-Mandate period” (2011, 21–22). Yet, although the new neighborhoods established a greater division between cultures, and despite the fact that during the years of the British Mandate both Palestinian and Zionist identities have become stronger and more separate, residential areas outside the walls allowed higher levels of interaction across spaces and identities than the level we witness nowadays. As Wallach himself notes, in addition to separate Jewish and Arab neighborhoods, the new city offered its residents mixed neighborhoods in which Jews, Arabs, and Christian Europeans shared the same space.

According to Wallach, in order to better understand the dynamics of encounter in a city, one has to move away from the focus on residential patterns and to examine civic spaces and workplaces “as sites of encounter which did not conform to a territorial parceling of the city to ‘Arab’ and ‘Jewish’” (2011, 22). Thus, civic spaces such as municipal gardens, archeological museum, theater, a municipal hospital, and cafes emerging in late 19th century allowed certain

¹⁰ Frumkin was born to a Jewish Orthodox family in the “Muslim Quarter” of the Old City, studied law in Istanbul, and became a judge in Palestine’s Supreme Court under British rule.

forms of interaction that contributed to the development of an inclusive Ottoman identity. Developed as part of a profound re-organization of the late-Ottoman city and the creation of civic institutions and public places, “These spaces allowed Jews and Christians to think of themselves as equal members of an Ottoman political community alongside the Muslim citizens,” Wallach explains. “These abstract notions were embodied in events such as celebrations, concerts, and political demonstrations that took place in the late-Ottoman town center” (2011, 22).

However, the arrival of the British occupying forces in 1917 marked a new era in Israel/Palestine and in Jerusalem. The city became the center of the British administration, and both Jews and Arabs living in Palestine came to see it as their natural capital (Cohen 2011, 1). The intentions of Britain to “make Palestine into a “Jewish National Home” opened a rift between local Jews and the Muslim and Christian population – increasingly defining themselves in national terms...” Wallach explains. “The very same civic spaces that were used during the late-Ottoman period for popular celebrations, became battle grounds between nascent ethno-national visions” (Wallach 2011, 17). Hence, with the establishment of the British Mandate such civic-public spaces had gradually lost their function and meaning as sites of encounter. The political and cultural vision they represented did not cease to exist, but its dominant influence had been eroded.

While the political developments during the years of the British Mandate led to a gradual segregation between Jews and Arabs in residential and civil spaces in Jerusalem, spaces of work and business maintained their role as zones of encounter, collaboration, and negotiation. Challenging studies that focus merely on residential patterns when analyzing issues of segregation and integration in polarized cities (and thus underplay the role of labor and trade in enabling encounters), Wallach argues that in British Mandate Palestine arenas of labor and commerce enabled both competition and cooperation between Jews and Arabs. In Jerusalem, he notes,

economic ties were stronger than in other cities, and many workspaces allowed Jews and Arabs to develop meaningful relations.

One of the main issues to emerge through Wallach's study, as well as from different memoirs and maps of the area prior to the 1948 War, is the great importance of free movement to the existence of encounters and relations across spaces and identities. Wallach concludes:

Discussions of urban polarization often neglect patterns of flow through the city. Urban movement is transitory and ephemeral, and yet it plays an important part in the daily reproduction of the urban experience. These movements inevitably bring together people from different groups, thus creating a far more complex picture than simple dichotomies. Movement through the city is rarely random, but is rather predicated on a set of conditions - from urban layout, to economic opportunities and political rights. Within this given framework, motion can nonetheless create new possibilities within space and society: it can open new routes, both literally and metaphorically (2011, 22).

As I will show in the following discussions, movement and encounter are also predicated on physical and mental boundaries. The pre-1948 general perception of Jerusalemite Jews and Palestinians of themselves as inhabitants of a shared space (even in times of tension and struggle), allowed them to establish different forms of relations and life-together that are difficult to comprehend in the context of contemporary life in Jerusalem. One should avoid attempts to romanticize shared life in the city pre-1948 – throughout the years Jews and Palestinians experienced profound difficulties in maintaining their relations – but the reality reflected through different sources show that mental boundaries between “us” and “them” were not as rigid and definite as the ones I witnessed and analyzed in contemporary Jerusalem. More flexible divisions

that are both the product and the cause of free movement in the city in particular, and the entire region in general, allowed the creation of a different urban reality.

Nakba and Independence – The 1948 War

Edward Said, who was born in Jerusalem in 1935, visited the city in 1992 for the first time after his family had to leave in 1947. Since his US passport indicated that he was born in the city, one of the routine questions Said was asked by Israeli officials was when exactly after his birth he had left Israel. He writes:

I responded by saying that I left *Palestine* in December 1947, accenting the word “Palestine.” “Do you have any relatives here?” was the next question, to which I answered, “No one,” and this triggered a sensation of such sadness and loss as I had not expected. For by the early spring of 1948 my entire extended family had been swept out of the place, and has remained in exile ever since. In 1992, however, I was able for the first time since our departure...to visit the family-owned house where I was born in West Jerusalem, as well as the house in Nazareth that my mother grew up in, and my uncle’s house in Safad, and so on. All of them had new occupants now, which for tremendously inhibiting and unspecifiable emotional reasons made it very hard and actually impossible for me to enter them once again, even for a cursory look (1999, xii).

The 1948 War that enabled the final establishment of a Jewish independent country is considered by Palestinians a disaster, catastrophe. The Arabic term al-Nakba (the Catastrophe), which appeared first in a book by Constantin Zureiq, published in Beirut in August 1948, refers to the destruction of Palestinian society by Israeli-Zionist troops during the war, as well as to the trauma

that is still present in personal and collective Palestinian life. The number of Palestinians who fled or were expelled from the territory now considered Israel and became refugees varies between 520,000– 650,000 according to Jewish sources, 800,000 according to Palestinian sources, and 710,000 according to the British. Palestinian refugees were uprooted from approximately 400 cities, towns, neighborhoods and villages, most of which were demolished while others were populated by Jewish citizens of the new country (approximately 160,000 Palestinians remained in Israel after the 1948 war and received its citizenship. Many of them were internally uprooted and expelled from their land). Testimonies of Palestinian refugees, as well as of several Israeli-Zionist veterans, reveal acts of massacre, forced expulsions, rape, and abuse led by Israeli-Zionist soldiers and commanders.¹¹ The property of the refugees was confiscated by the Custodian of Absentee Properties, and they were not allowed to return to their homeland or to demand compensation for their loss. During and following the war approximately 700,000 Jewish refugees and immigrants fleeing from Europe (mainly Holocaust survivors) and Islamic countries arrived to Israel. Many of them were settled on Palestinian land and in Palestinian houses.

Memoires of Palestinians who experienced the Nakba in Jerusalem and elsewhere reveal both personal and collective effects of this event. Said's description of his visit to Jerusalem in the 1990s provides a glimpse into this intimate and national trauma. The paralyzing emotional state triggered by the site of old houses and their new occupants, the sense of loss that still, even after several decades, has a profound presence, the state of separation and displacement, and, at the same time, a feeling of belonging and attachment – all these are dominant elements in other written

¹¹ For detailed testimonies see Zochrot website: <http://zochrot.org/>. Zochrot ("remembering" in Hebrew) is an Israeli NGO working since 2002 to promote acknowledgement and accountability for the ongoing injustices of the Nakba.

accounts of Palestinians who were uprooted in 1947 and 1948. For instance, Serene Husseini Shahid, a member of the prestigious Husseini family who was born in Jerusalem in 1920 and became a refugee in 1948, tells about her visit to Jerusalem in 1972 and the difficult encounter with her family's past. Husseini Shahid arrived to Jerusalem with her mother and three sisters. Driving around the city, they passed by her school in Sheikh Jarrah (now a hotel), the Arab neighborhoods in West Jerusalem that were now occupied by Jewish residents, and old houses of friends and family. "None of us mentioned going to look at our own house in Musrara," she writes. But eventually her mother asked to go there. The reaction of the four sisters was unanimous: "We four sisters...objected...Spontaneously, without having discussed the matter, we had each felt that we could not bear to see our home, which was no longer ours, again...but mother...insisted on her wish to go" (1999, 196). Daunted by the site of their house, Husseini Shahid and her sisters stayed in the car, while their mother went up the stairs and knocked on the door. A middle-aged Jewish woman opened the door. "...we heard Mother say politely but firmly 'May I have your permission to see the inside of my house?' 'Your house?' the woman gasped. 'But we bought it!' Mother said: 'I did not sell it'" (1999, 197).

The territorial agreements between the state of Israel and its Arab neighbors — Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Egypt that were signed after the war were perceived as a great Jewish achievement – they secured Israeli sovereignty over 79 percent of Mandatory Palestine, as opposed to the 55 percent allotted to the new state in the UN Partition Plan in November 29 1949 (Resolution 181). Moreover, Israel gained full sovereignty over West Jerusalem, and the UN's plan to keep Jerusalem under international control as a *corpus separatum* failed. The well-known Green Line that was sketched with a green pencil on the Rhodes Agreements maps in 1949

reflected these agreements and served “as an administrative borderline of cease-fire and a snapshot of the status quo at the end of the 1948 war” Shenhav explains (2012, 3).

In Jerusalem the war and the new border led to the creation of a different urban reality from the one described in the previous section. At the end of the war the city was divided between the new State of Israel and Jordan. West Jerusalem went under Israeli rule, whereas its eastern part, including the Old City, became a Jordanian territory. Palestinians of West Jerusalem and the Arab villages west of the city left or were forced to leave. Their property in the city was confiscated, and most of their villages were destroyed. The double effort of Zionist leadership and military forces to clear W. Jerusalem of Arabs and to settle their houses with Jews during the war was well planned and executed. The goal was to cleanse West Jerusalem ethnically and to prepare the ground for the establishment of a Jewish capital. According to Nathan Krystall, in February 1948 David Ben Gurion ordered the new Haganah commander of Jerusalem, David Shaltiel, to conquer and settle Jews in Arab districts of the city. Appearing before the MAPAI Party Council two days later, he reported: “From your entry into Jerusalem, through Lifta, Romema,...there are no Arabs. One hundred percent Jews. Since Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, it has not been so Jewish as it is now...I do not assume that this will change...What has happened in Jerusalem ... is likely to happen in many parts of the country” (Krystall 1998, 9). It is crucial to note that MAPAI, the “Workers' Party of the Land of Israel” was a left-wing political party and was the dominant force in Israeli politics until its merger into the modern-day Israeli Labor Party in 1968.

Immediately after the war ended, the state used the Absentee Property Regulations of 1948 to confiscate all Arab homes, lands and businesses. These regulations, later codified as the Absentee Property Law of 1950, allowed all property belonging to an “absentee” to be transferred to the Custodian of Absentee Property. An “absentee,” Krystall clarifies, is “defined as a person

who, at any time between 29 November 1947 and the day on which the state of emergency declared in 1948 ceased to exist, became a national or citizen of an Arab country, visited an Arab country, or left his ordinary place of residence in Palestine ‘for a place outside Palestine before 1 September 1948’” (Krystall 1998, 15). According to the law, the status of the custodian is the same as an owner of the property.

Although the housing committee began settling Jews in Jerusalem Arab houses even before the first cease-fire in June 1948, it was only in September that the policy was implemented systematically. New immigrants were settled in houses located in neighborhoods such as the German Colony, Qatamon, Baq'a, Musrara, Dayr Abu Tur, and Talbiyya. According to Arnon Golan (quoted in Krystall), this policy should be seen as a political strategy rather than as a solution for housing problems. He explains that “the population by Jews of former Arab neighborhoods was supposed to create facts on the ground, after which it would be difficult to alter them in the framework of a political agreement. New immigrants, so very dependent, were the government's and the Jewish Agency's primary reserve for housing these neighborhoods” (Krystall 1998, 15). Internal politics also played a role in the project of resettlement – the ruling MAPAI party, which had weak support among the Jewish population of Jerusalem, was eager to settle immigrants in the city and thus to strengthen its position there. According to Krystall, as the new immigrants flooded into West Jerusalem, an acute housing crisis developed:

Many of those lacking housing grew impatient and broke into and squatted in empty houses in Qatamon. Other squatters had housing elsewhere but simply wanted to improve their living conditions by moving into the more spacious Arab homes. According to Golan, among the squatters were Israeli officers who broke into Arab buildings and arbitrarily took apartments for themselves. Some soldiers had two

apartments: one in the city center and one in Arab neighborhoods, which they rented out for considerable sums. By early 1950, the Israeli housing authorities authorized almost all the squatters, soldier and civilian, to remain in the Palestinian homes they had broken into (Krystall 1998, 16).

Thus, by way of a relatively quick process West Jerusalem was cleansed ethnically and the number of its Jewish population grew dramatically. The city that was inhabited by individuals from different cultures and religions and that allowed free movement to its residents, was now divided both physically and mentally. West Jerusalem was for Jews and East Jerusalem for Palestinians who were now under Jordanian rule. Whereas West Jerusalem was officially announced as Israel's capital in December 5, 1949, and was developed as such by Israeli leadership, the Jordanians were not interested in promoting or supporting Palestinian nationalism, nor in allowing East Jerusalem to become a center of Palestinian national activity. The original Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem, and Palestinian refugees from nearby villages who settled in the city, suffered from political and psychological crisis. According to Hillel Cohen, "The level of basic services – such as water and electricity – suffered, because until then they had been part of a joint network including the western neighborhoods. Moreover, from being part of a capital city, East Jerusalem became a border city of secondary importance. In parallel, the Jordanians entrenched Amman as their sole capital at the expense of Jerusalem..." (2011, 4).

Returning to the broader picture, it is important to note that the inferior status of Palestinians and the refusal of the countries involved in the war to acknowledge Palestinian existence and connection to this space was not just in relation to Jerusalem. The Palestinians were not involved in the armistice agreements and as argued by Shenhav, the Green Line "ignored the existence of a Palestinian society, overlooked its political, urban and social infrastructure, cruelly

dismembered its villages, towns and urban societies, separated families and sentenced the history of the conflict between Jews and Palestinians before the 1948 war to oblivion” (Shenhav 2012, 5).

For Zionist Israelis the new border marked the beginning of statehood and the events that led to the new reality were casted as a long battle for freedom and independence. The Palestinian villages were destroyed, beautiful Arab houses in Jerusalem and other cities were inhabited by Jewish citizens, new communities were established on confiscated land by the State of Israel, new traditions of ceremonies and national holidays focused on celebrating freedom, independence, and justice for the Jewish people, new maps were created, Arab names of places were erased and new Hebrew names were adopted. Thus, whereas for Palestinians the Nakba is a central aspect of their collective identity and memory, most Israelis do not know the term and/or the events it represents. The Nakba is denied in the Israeli discourse, and any attempt to confront the catastrophe of 1948 is rejected, in many cases violently.

Following the 1967 War and the occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip, the arbitrary 1948 border, the Green Line, was labeled the “1967 borders,” and became a signifier for the “legitimate” (or “proper”) Israel. The attempts of “liberal” groups and parties in Israel (considered the Israeli Left) to produce the 1948 space west to the Green Line as legitimate Israel, as opposed to “illegal” Israel beyond the Green Line that was occupied in 1967, enhanced the erasure of the Nakba from Israeli (and international) discourse, and strengthened the image of 1948 Israel as a just, “legal,” and democratic space and society. As clarified by Abu Odeh “This transmutation in sign from ‘Green Line’ to ‘1967 borders’ in the language of the left is premised on a moral distinction: the 1948 war and the outcome it yielded was legitimate – not so with 1967 and the occupation/settlement in its aftermath” (2012, VIII). Thus, in the political consciousness of the Israeli liberal left the term “occupation” refers only to the territories that were occupied

during the 1967 War, and in most cases, only to the West Bank and Gaza Strip. East Jerusalem, which was annexed *de facto* to Israel, is usually not categorized as an occupied space. Since 1948, and especially after 1967, the Zionist “Left” has been extremely active in normalizing and legitimizing the immorality of Green Line Israel. Within the circles of the Left, only radical (and in most cases marginal) groups that question Zionism and the existence of a Jewish state offer a meaningful engagement with questions related to the Nakba and the connection between 1948 and 1967.

In the following chapters I aim to unpack this particular political consciousness and to show how it is both challenged and reproduced on the ground, through practices of protest led by leftist groups. What I also intend to decipher are the reasons (or in other words, desires and anxieties) that lead to the development of this form of political consciousness. For the purposes of this review it is important to mention several interrelated issues. First, the left-wing of the Zionist movement have been profiting from Palestinian land and property it received or actively appropriated after the 1948 war (for a further discussion on this issue see the following section). An acknowledgement of the Nakba that might lead to a different organization of space, land, capital, and people would challenge the privileged position of the liberal Ashkenazi¹² Left in Israel and would expose its responsibility for the ongoing injustice associated with “Green Line” Israel. Second, the focus on 1967 and the Jewish settlements beyond the Green Line allows the liberal Left to develop and maintain the figure of the “Jewish settler” and his/her supporters as a prototype of the immoral occupier who is responsible for all forms of injustice inflicted on the Palestinians; as a signifier for immorality, racism, and brutality. By doing so, in many cases unconsciously, the

¹² Ashkenazi Jews are Central and Eastern European descent Jews.

liberal Left succeeds in maintaining its moral image and symbolic capital (in the eyes of itself, the American Jewish community, and others). The fact that governments led by the Zionist Left supported the settlement project following the 1967 war is usually underplayed, and the right is portrayed as the sole responsible “entity.” Third, as revealed through my ethnographic research, the liberal Zionist Left perceives Palestinians as “the other” that cannot be included in the Israeli “we.” Aiming to strengthen the idea of a Jewish state while allowing Palestinians to achieve independence, the Zionist Left is interested in developing and implementing the two state solution and to divide the Israeli/Palestinian space in a way that would allow separation. An acknowledgement of the Nakba and its effects has the capacity to challenge the idea of separation and to open the possibility of one shared space.

In his analysis of the Israeli elections that took place in March 2015 and the loss of the Zionist Left, Gal Katz clarifies that the Israeli Left never really lost:

The reason for the confusion is in the word “Left.” This word usually marks a political subject who is expected to follow particular standards: promoting human rights, legal and economic equality, social justice, and so forth. If the Israeli “Left” is a Left in this sense, than it definitely failed and there are many things that should be fixed. But it is not. When people talk about the “Left” in Israel they usually talk about a certain social group that managed to achieve enormous political, cultural, and economic power since the beginning of the 20th century. This achievement was based on the displacement of Palestinians on the one hand, and the marginalization

of Jews from Arab countries on the other hand, and all that under a universal “official” guise (Katz 2015).¹³

The creation of 1948 Israel as a Jewish country ruled by “liberal” groups within the Zionist movement enabled this ruling elite to develop and maintain its privileges and to gain control over symbolic and physical resources. The arbitrary border that was marked with a green pencil after the war ended, has become, throughout the years, a “natural” barrier between good and bad, moral and immoral, legitimate and illegitimate, Israeli and Palestinian, Left and Right, independent and occupied. But this seemingly natural division in space is a product of ongoing practices and processes that started in 1948 and even earlier. The passive and active refusal to acknowledge the Nakba and its implications is a dominant element in contemporary Zionist perceptions of space, occupation, and the struggle against it. One of my arguments is that we cannot fully understand certain dynamics in the protest in Sheikh Jarrah, as well as broader dynamics in the Israeli Left, without going back to 1948, the Nakba, and the ways in which it exists or is suppressed in Israeli-Zionist imagination.

The struggle – emotional, legal, and on the ground – on land and property rights, is the center of the Sheikh Jarrah case. As mentioned, many choose to tell the story of Sheikh Jarrah starting in the 1967 War. To better understand the tensions, injustice, and desires involved in this case and many others in East Jerusalem, one should focus on 1948 as a starting point. This would enable not only a deeper apprehension of the roots of the Sheikh Jarrah protest, but also of the tensions, negotiations, and relations between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians trying to work together in 2009-2012 Jerusalem. In many instances, different imaginations and understandings of

¹³ Katz’s text was published in Hebrew. The translation is mine.

space and the people inhabiting it (or missing from it), that stem from different experiences in 1948 onwards, did not allow the development of influential forms of solidarity and protest.

A Short Note on Ethnic Structures and Space Division

To better understand my arguments about the “liberal” Zionist Left and its role in legitimizing injustice against Palestinians, it is important to clarify the relations between space divisions and ethnic structures in Israel. The profound demographic and spatial changes during the first years of the State of Israel have led to the development of a particular “ethnic structure,” to use Alexander Kedar and Oren Yiftachel’s term (2006). Kedar and Yiftachel accurately identify three major groups in this “structure.” The first group is that of the “founders,” Ashkenazi Jews – Jews who immigrated to Palestine before the establishment of the State of Israel from European countries. Many Jews arriving after the creation of Israel from similar backgrounds were better integrated into this “social layer,” which for reasons described below is considered dominant and privileged. The second group is the one of Mizrahi Jews who immigrated to Israel from Arab countries following the 1948 war. This group is economically, politically, and geographically inferior. The third group consists of the Palestinians that remained in Israel and became its citizens. This group occupied (and still does) the peripheries of Israeli space and society.

The social, economic and cultural hierarchies among these groups have been enabled by an uneven division of space. The privileged position of Ashkenazi Jews has been maintained by the allocation of 64% more land per capita in Ashkenazi dominated agricultural areas (*kibbutzim* and “veteran” *moshavim*, being different types of Jewish collective settlements), than in Mizrahi ones (*moshavim*). Moreover, as Kedar and Yiftachel highlight, new Mizrahi immigrants were settled mainly at peripheral areas, hence reducing their potential property value. The size of

agricultural land held by Israeli Palestinians is even smaller, covering only half the size of the per capita allocation of Mizrahi moshavim. “The uneven allocation, which was formed mostly in the 1950s,” Kedar and Yiftachel clarifies, “has remained largely unchanged to date” (2006, 135). Similar inequalities are also notable in urban areas, highlighted mainly by the superior legal rights, dwelling size, and location of Ashkenazi Jews’ housing stock (2006, 135). These disparities are also reflected in socio-cultural arenas, where Ashkenazi Jews and their descendants hold dominant positions in the legal system, academia, military, government, and so forth. Thus, inequalities related to space division go hand in hand with other forms of privilege.

Like Shenhav and Katz, Kedar and Yiftachel argue that in the context of such structures of inequality in the State of Israel, the political dichotomy Left and Right should be challenged:

Yet, despite these problematic consequences, the Judaization project has enjoyed a hegemonic status within Jewish-Israeli society, with very few voices speaking out against it. Notably the divisions between the “left” and “right” in Israel, or between the secular and religious, tend to address mainly regime features, refraining from challenging its overall ethnocentric structure (Kedar and Yiftachel 2006, 137).

Greater Israel and Unified Jewish Jerusalem – The 1967 War

In June 1967, during six days of bitter battles between Israel and its neighboring countries, Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, the Israeli military captured the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem, which were part of Palestine under British rule, as well as the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula. Although the Zionist Left and its allies in the US see the 1967 war as a Year Zero in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and as a historical accident or rapture in the otherwise “normal,” “legitimate,” and “moral” development of a Jewish-democratic country, one of the main argument

of this chapter is that 1967 and its effects are products of political, cultural, and social Zionist perceptions that have been developed since the 1940s and even earlier. Moreover, I argue that it was the Israeli Zionist Left that enabled the post-1967 occupation of the Palestinian Territories, and that it is the Zionist Left that is responsible for the ongoing production of the “1967 paradigm” which is based on the dichotomy between moral and legitimate 1948/Green Line Israel, and immoral and illegitimate 1967/Greater Israel.

In *Beyond the Two-State Solution* Shenhav analyze evidence that clearly show that many of the Israelis who fought in the 1948 War (the 1948 Generation) perceived the conquests of 1967 as a “natural” and just continuation of their war. Thus, for example, he quotes Yigal Allon, one of the key generals in the 1948 War who later joined the Israeli labor party: “I’ve never forgiven the Ben Gurion government – it didn’t let us finish the job in 1948– 49.” Finishing the job, Shenhav clarifies, “meant expelling all Palestinians from ‘proper’ Israel” (2012, 56). As another example Shenhav uses an article published in the daily newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth* in June 1966 entitled *A Weeping for Generations*, in which Ben Gurion’s biographer and historian Michael Bar-Zohar revealed that Ben Gurion had suggested the Occupation of the West Bank before 1967, but the proposal was rejected by the Cabinet. In May 1959, Shenhav continues to provide more examples, IDF Chief Education Officer “distributed blue plastic folders among the troops, containing materials entitled ‘Israel from Dan to Eilat’ (both are places within the Green Line). Yet two of the booklets were concerned with the Gaza Strip, and a third with...the West Bank. The folder also contained 20 photographs of Jerusalem, only two of them taken in the Israeli Western side of the city” (Shenhav 2012, 57). What Shenhav’s analysis reveals is the ongoing, lived desire of different Zionist players to realize the idea of Greater Israel through the conquering of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, for both geopolitical and cultural-religious reasons.

The varied evidence analyzed in Shenhav's book are reinforced by the rapid developments that took place following the 1967 War, as well as by the many comments, speeches, and explanations made by Zionist politicians, military officers, and cultural figures, both from the Left and the Right. Moreover, the vast excitement about the occupied territories expressed in the Israeli public (again, both Left and Right), strengthens the argument that the Zionist consciousness was "ready" for the establishment of biblical Greater Israel and especially for the creation of unified Jewish Jerusalem. The reopening of the space and the collapse of borders and barriers enhanced messianic-militant sentiments within Israeli society and its leadership, and allowed Israelis to start realizing their desire to establish a strong Jewish country "from sea to river." In his article published in *The New Yorker* in May 2007, David Remnick accurately describes the national sentiments following the war:

So profound was the Israeli national delirium in the days and weeks after the war that it was impossible for most Israelis to think straight about the long-term consequences of retaining conquered territory. After being told that the state was in mortal danger, Israel was now in possession of Biblical Israel—the Western Wall, the Temple Mount, all of Jerusalem, the Tomb of the Patriarchs, in Hebron, and many other such sites scattered throughout the West Bank. Once the Old City was secured...Dayan, the most theatrical of all Israeli commanders, flew by helicopter to Jerusalem and staged his arrival in the manner of General Allenby, the British general who took Jerusalem from the Turks in 1917. "We have returned to the most holy of our places," Dayan declared. "We have returned, never to part from them again"... A photograph of a weeping I.D.F. soldier at the Western Wall was published all over the world and seemed to embody the new conflation, for many

Israelis, of the state and the sacred, the military and the messianic. The song “Jerusalem of Gold” displaced, for a time, the traditional anthem “Hatikvah.” In the daily *Ma’ariv*, the journalist Gabriel Tzifroni described the “liberation” of the capital in terms rarely used in traditional news reporting: “The Messiah came to Jerusalem yesterday—he was tired and gray, and he rode in on a tank” (Remnick 2007).

Among the voices that called for the establishment of Greater Israel after the war were not just politicians and military officials, but also intellectuals and artists from Left and Right. In September 1967 a group of over 50 such intellectuals and artists, led by the poet Nathan Alterman, established the Movement for Greater Israel, claiming that no Israeli government has the authority to give up the commitment to the Land of Israel. In their petition they wrote that “the IDF’s victory in the Six Days War led the people and the country to a new and critical era. Greater Israel is now in the hands of the Jewish People, just as we don’t have the authority to give up the State of Israel, we are obliged to fulfill what we received from this country: the Land of Israel. We have to be loyal to the wholeness of our country, to both the past and future of our people” (Beer 2007)¹⁴

Although all occupied territories had a profound importance, it was the capturing of East Jerusalem and the Old City that spurred the strongest emotions and desires. “Throughout the 2000 years of exile, the Old City, the Temple Mount, and the Wailing Wall were perceived by the Jewish people as an unreachable place” Amirav explains (2007, 47).¹⁵ The image of utopic, inaccessible, almost imaginary “Jerusalem of above” was strengthened and further developed during the nineteen years that followed the 1948 War. “The unification of the city in the Six Days War led

¹⁴ Beer’s text was published in Hebrew. The translation is mine.

¹⁵ Amirav’s book was published in Hebrew. The translation is mine.

many to believe that the unification between ‘earthly Jerusalem’ and ‘Jerusalem of above’ is the beginning of Perilous Times. The unification of Jerusalem was perceived by the public in a deterministic way, as a prophecy that has come true” (Amirav 2007, 47). Thus, in 1968, after the Six Days War ended and the Israeli government began the project of “unifying” Jerusalem, Levi Eshkol, the Israeli prime minister, explained, clearly and proudly, the crucial importance of this project and what stood behind it. “The unification of Jerusalem is a recognition of the life and heart of the nation” he said. “It is not bound by any rational consideration, not to a political consideration, not to a military consideration, not to an economic one. It is the unification of Jerusalem that dictates all other considerations” (Amirav 2007, 45). Eshkol, one of the most pragmatic, and practical politician in the history of Israel, and a member of the “Left” MAPAI party, expressed a messianic perception of “unified Jerusalem.” For him, the liberation of the Old City and the creation of one city under Jewish rule was a fundamental event that preceded any other event, interest, or desire. It was the source and cause of all, and most importantly, a guarantee for the creation of Greater Israel “in its historical borders as it is anchored in the Israeli people’s collective consciousness throughout generations” (Amirav 2007, 45). Emphasizing the strong link between the conquest of Jerusalem and the conquest of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Eshkol, like many other politicians and public figures at the time, clarified that Israel was determined to hold on to the territories occupied during the war and highlighted the crucial role Jerusalem had in the Zionist imagination.

What is clearly revealed through these examples (and many others not discussed here), is that the Zionist Left is very much responsible for the production and reproduction of a certain form of Jewish political theology that enabled the development of the occupation in the first months after the war ended. According to Shenhav, “if we look at Zionist history from a theological

perspective, we should remember that it was the “secular” Labor movement that carried the messianic spirit of the conquest of the land and cemented it onto political theology” (2012, 61). Later, the Zionist Left would successfully detach itself from this form of Jewish political theology, and would develop a seemingly strong position against the occupation. Through this process the Left would separate itself from the Israeli mainstream and would focus on purifying itself and developing its moral, liberal, and secular image. However, to better understand contemporary positions of the Israeli Left one should unsettle the seemingly “natural” moral image of the Left, and explore the ways it has been legitimizing power structures and enabled their effects.

In their attempts to revive the idea of Greater Israel, Israeli Zionists faced the same “problem” they faced in 1948 – the land captured had a considerable number of people already living in it. But unlike 1948, this time Israel did not cleanse these areas ethnically during the war. As noted by Neve Gordon, Levi Eshkol’s government treated the captured areas differently “suggesting that from the outset Israel had distinct intentions regarding each area” (2008, 4). The West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Sinai Peninsula were placed under military rule and there was no intention to incorporate the residents of these regions into Israel. In 1967 Israel forcefully expelled the residents of two West Bank areas: the Jordan Valley (excluding Jericho) and the Latrun enclave.¹⁶ Overall between 200,000 and 250,000 Palestinians fled the West Bank during the war and only about 17,000 were allowed to return. However, about one million Palestinians remained in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and due to demographic concerns Israel refused to grant them citizenship. In 1979, Egypt and Israel signed a peace treaty in which Israel agreed to withdraw

¹⁶ According to Gordon “the Jordan Valley was partially cleansed because Israel wanted to secure the border with Jordan. The Latrun enclave was depopulated of Palestinians because the Israeli military did not want any Palestinian villages to be in position to threaten the highway leading to Jerusalem” (2008, 5–6).

from the Sinai Peninsula and to vacate the Israeli settlements that were established in this region. The Golan Heights was declared occupied territory, but as opposed to the West Bank, Gaza, and Sinai, Israeli law was applied in this region from the very beginning. Most of the Golan Heights residents either fled or were forced to leave during the war and the 6500 residents that remained were subsequently made Israeli citizens.

In Jerusalem the developments were quite different. Under the influence of the religious, ideological, and historical excitement described earlier, Israeli government approved two major decisions that have had a profound effect on the future of the city: first, the annexation of all the holy places and the Old City to Israel; second, the creation of new boundaries to the city – following the war Israel annexed 70 square kilometers to the municipal boundaries of West Jerusalem, and applied Israeli law in these territories. The annexed land included not only the part of Jerusalem that had been under Jordanian rule, but also an additional 64 square kilometers, which included 28 Palestinian villages in the West Bank, as well as territories that were part of the municipalities of Bethlehem and Beit Jala. In June 1967 40,000 Palestinians lived in the territory that was under Jordanian rule before the war, and additional 30,000 Palestinians lived in the 28 West Bank villages that were annexed to the new city. The new city also included refugee camp Shuafat, in which 4,000 Palestinian refugees lived. After the annexation the size of the city tripled and Jerusalem became the largest city in Israel.

In his book *The Jerusalem Syndrome* Amirav closely analyzes the complex yet quick process through which these decisions were made. The most dominant person in the committee that examined issues related to the annexation in 1967 was Rehavam Ze'evi, the military representative to the committee that later founded the right-wing nationalist party, Moledet. Ze'evi promoted the idea of Greater Jerusalem, and proposed to annex the additional 70 square kilometers

from the West Bank to the city. In a conversation with Amirav, many years after the annexation took place, Ze'evi admitted that his main purpose was to create geographic facts on the ground that would prevent the existence of a Palestinian state or entity in proximity to Jerusalem or even prevent its very existence altogether. Ze'evi managed to recruit other members to support his idea, and the rest of the committee did not succeed in offering a strong alternative. The government approved the suggestion without examining maps of the area and without knowing how many Palestinians were now included in the new territory of Jerusalem. The decision to include all the holy sites of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism in Greater Jerusalem and to put them under full Israeli-Jewish sovereignty was a sharp contrast to the position supported by the Zionist movement and the Israeli State until 1967, according to which the holy sites should be under international sovereignty and open to the public. According to Amirav, in the euphoric atmosphere after the war the Israeli government needed only a two-hour discussion to approve such a historical and crucial decision. The Prime minister Eshkol and the majority of the government assumed that the international community would accept the facts created on the ground, and that a Jewish sovereignty over the holy sites would not harm the chances for peace with the Arabs in the future (2007, 53).

As for the legal status of the Palestinian inhabitants of the annexed territory, according to *B'Tselem*, The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, “after the annexation, Israel conducted a census in these areas and granted permanent residency status to residents in the annexed areas present at the time the census was taken. Persons not present in the city for whatever reason forever lost their right to reside in Jerusalem” (2010). Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem (in 1967, there were approximately 70,000 Palestinian residents in the city) were

given the option to become Israeli citizens. However, the offer was not *carte blanche*. An Ir Amim position paper clarifies the 1967 offer:

...it was an invitation to apply for citizenship through regular administrative channels. Acceptance of the offer of citizenship would have meant, among other things, forfeiting the Jordanian passport most residents possessed. For Jerusalem's Palestinian residents, possessing an Israeli passport would have prohibited their entrance into every country in the Arab world. In keeping with their opposition to Israeli rule, most Palestinian residents of Jerusalem declined to apply for citizenship and were given instead an Israeli identity card that conferred permanent residency status – a status unique among Palestinian residents of the West Bank (Yanai 2007, 2).

Moreover, unlike citizenship, permanent residency can be revoked at any time. And indeed, B'Tselem's report clarifies, "since 1967, more than 14,000 Palestinians in East Jerusalem have had their status as permanent residents of Israel revoked by the state. The revocation is part of Israel's overall policy in East Jerusalem, which is geared towards the political goal of maintaining a "demographic balance" in Jerusalem, i.e., of ensuring a 70% Jewish majority in the city."

The national effort to unify Jerusalem under Israeli-Jewish sovereignty has been one of the major projects led by the State of Israel after the 1967 War. Although most people see the settlement project in the West Bank as the fundamental outcome of the war and the occupation, a close analysis of the processes that took place in Jerusalem reveals the influential and ongoing impact of the effort to unify the city in the broader context of the conflict. The de facto annexation of the new territory to West Jerusalem forced the Israeli leadership and public to redevelop the "urban meaning" (Castells 1983) of the city. Its unique status as the capital city of the Jewish

people entailed a very particular meaning and led to the production of a particular space as described below.

Judaizing “Unified” Jerusalem – Post 1967

Between 1967 and 1970 the Israeli government and the Jerusalem municipality tried to complete the unification of the city and to prevent any future division by surrounding the Old City with new Jewish neighborhoods. Israeli Prime Minister, Eshkol, gave this project high priority and oversaw its development personally. A new team for “populating and developing East Jerusalem” was established, and its work was influenced by enormous political pressures from different groups and individuals to create facts on the ground by settling thousands of Jews in East Jerusalem. In his book Amirav quotes Ben Gurion who claimed that “Jews should be brought to East Jerusalem at all costs. There is a need to settle tens of thousands of Jews in a short time. Jews would agree to settle in East Jerusalem even in sheds. There is no need to wait for the establishment of proper neighborhoods, the most important thing is that Jews will be there” (Amirav 2007, 153). To prevent a division of the city, the “Program for the Development of East Jerusalem 1967” aimed to connect the old and the new city by settling 40,000 Jews in key areas: the Jewish quarter in the Old City, Mount Scopus (to which the Hebrew University and Hadassah Hospital were relocated), and three new Jewish neighborhoods located between Mount Scopus and the city. The accomplishments of the program were outstanding, and towards the end of the 1960s the Old City was surrounded by Jewish neighborhoods that created a territorial continuity between East and West Jerusalem.

In December 1969, United States Secretary of State William P. Rogers proposed a plan aiming to end the Israeli-Arab conflict. It was the first American plan for the Middle East, and its main purpose was to achieve peace between Jordan, Egypt and Israel based on the principle

“territories for peace.” Jerusalem was the focus of only a few paragraphs in a document that was sent to the Israeli government, however, these paragraphs reflected a vision of the city that different Israeli politicians found alarming. For Israeli Prime minister, Golda Meir (MAPAI party), the following statements of Rogers were a clear indication that Israel should further Judaize Jerusalem and prevent any attempt to develop a form of shared sovereignty over the city:

The question of the future status of Jerusalem, because it touches deep emotional, historical and religious well-springs, is particularly complicated. We have made clear repeatedly in the past two and a half years that we cannot accept unilateral actions by any party to decide the final status of the city. We believe its status can be determined only through the agreement of the parties concerned, which in practical terms means primarily the Governments of Israel and Jordan, taking into account the interests of other countries in the area and the international community. We do, however, support certain principles which we believe would provide an equitable framework for a Jerusalem settlement. Specifically, we believe Jerusalem should be a unified city within which there would no longer be restrictions on the movement of persons and goods. There should be open access to the unified city for persons of all faiths and nationalities. Arrangements for the administration of the unified city should take into account the interests of all its inhabitants and of the Jewish, Islamic and Christian communities. And there should be roles for both Israel and Jordan in the civic, economic and religious life of the City (Rogers 1969).

The Israeli government firmly rejected the Rogers Plan, and adopted new policies aiming to prevent any territorial compromises in Jerusalem. Whereas in the first two years after the 1967 War Israel built Jewish neighborhoods only around the Old City, in 1970 the ministers approved

the development of new Jewish neighborhoods in areas in northern Jerusalem which were originally designated for Arab neighborhoods, as well as in “green areas” in the periphery of East Jerusalem. Furthermore, the government approved steps for decreasing the expansion of construction projects in Arab neighborhoods, such as land expropriation, delaying the development of local urban plans, reducing percentage of building capacity, reducing the numbers of building permits, preventing infrastructure development, preventing illegal construction (Amirav 2007, 173).

According to Amirav, since the beginning of the 1970s, the urban plans for Jerusalem have been based on two major interrelated principles: seizing territorial control over maximum space and achieving demographic hegemony that would create a one-nation city. The first principle is realized through the establishment of as many Jewish neighborhoods as possible in areas that are not populated by Jews, i.e., areas in the eastern part of the city. Thus, Israel expropriated approximately one third of Palestinian land holdings in East Jerusalem to build large Israeli neighborhoods such as *Gilo*, French Hill, *Ramat Eshkol*, *Pisgat Ze’ev* and *Neve Yaakov*. In addition, it located important Israeli institutions in East Jerusalem, such as the Israeli National Police Headquarters, the District Court of Jerusalem, and the National Border Police Headquarters. Israel zoned another third of Palestinian land holdings in the city for “preservation,” thereby restricting their development (Yanai 2007). To achieve the second principle Israeli authorities have been trying to ensure a steady demographic balance between Jews (70%) and Arabs (30%) in the city by encouraging and in many cases forcing Palestinians to leave the city. As explained earlier, a variety of practices aiming at restricting construction in Palestinian neighborhoods have been pushing Palestinians outside the city’s municipal boundaries. According to Ir-Amim,

Palestinian development inside Jerusalem is severely limited. The result has been overcrowding inside the city, combined with an exodus of tens of thousands of Palestinian residents to the eastern suburbs where land was cheaper and more plentiful, and, being outside the Jerusalem municipal boundaries, there were no municipal taxes and the same planning restrictions did not apply (Yanai 2007, 4).

The fact that the city of Jerusalem consistently allocates, on average, less than 10% of the city budget to Palestinian neighborhoods, in which today a third of the city's population lives, only contributes to this immigration outside the city, mainly to the West Bank.

Since the onset of the *Al-Aqsa intifada* in September 2000, Israeli authorities have been reinforcing and further developing their discriminative policies, aiming to deepen and strengthen Jewish sovereignty over the city. "From construction of the security barrier to the tacit support of Jewish settlement in Palestinian neighborhoods in and around the Old City, Israel has gone further than ever towards the creation of "Greater Jerusalem," an entity whose growing Jewish population stands in contrast to the fractured Palestinian community inside it" Ir Amim's report clarifies (Yanai 2007, 2). While each of the different practices described below do not represent a radical departure from previous policies, their cumulative effect on the ground is unprecedented.

In 2002 the Israeli government decided to construct a wall, on, as well as east of, the Green Line, between Israel and parts of the West Bank. In Jerusalem the Separation Wall largely follows the Jerusalem municipal line as it was decided by Israel following the 1967 War. Aiming to create facts on the ground, the wall further legitimizes the idea of Greater Jerusalem, and naturalizes the de facto annexation of East Jerusalem, the Old City, and the land of Palestinian villages that used to surround pre-1967 Jerusalem. But, as Ir-Amim explains, the principle of constructing the wall along the June 1967 municipal boundary is not without exception:

The barrier cuts inside the city line around two Palestinian neighborhoods and *de facto* removes them from Jerusalem, thereby leaving 55,000 Jerusalem residents, or nearly one quarter of Jerusalem's Palestinian population, separated from the city. The amount of land occupied by these two areas, the *Shuafat* refugee camp area and *Kafr Aqeb-Semiramis*, is small compared to their population densities. By choosing to place them outside of the barrier, Israel substantially – if unofficially – reduces the number of Palestinian residents in the city, while ceding little in the way of territory (Yanai 2007).

The Separation Wall also deviates from Jerusalem's municipal line in order to connect the city with the three Jewish settlement blocks of *Gush Etzion* in the south, *Ma'aleh Adumim* in the east, and *Givat Ze'ev* in the north. Moreover, the wall encircles large areas of undeveloped land surrounding these settlement blocks, and thus, all in all the wall encloses a total of 164 square kilometers (64 square miles) of West Bank territory in the Greater Jerusalem area. Thus, “by weakening the Palestinian metropolitan area of Jerusalem, fracturing it into enclaves and surrounding it with Israeli-controlled areas” (Yanai 2007), the wall further impairing a future division of the city and strengthening Jewish control over the city.



The Separation Wall in Jerusalem.

Jewish settlements in Palestinian neighborhoods in and around the Old City are different from the large Jewish neighborhoods established by the government in East Jerusalem. These Jewish enclaves in the heart of Palestinian areas consist of apartments, buildings, and houses, some of which were owned or inhabited by Jews before 1948, and which have been purchased or leased by Jewish individuals and settler organizations. The main enclaves are in the Muslim Quarter of the Old City, in *Silwan (Ir David)*, *Ras al-'Amud (Ma'ale Zeitim and Ma'ale David)*, *a-Tur (Beit Orot)*, *Abu Dis (Kidmat Zion)*, and *Sheikh Jarrah (Nahalat Shimon)*. It is estimated that approximately 2000 settlers live in these enclaves.

Jewish enclaves in and around the Old City have been developed since the 1970s. However, this particular project has been growing rapidly in recent years. One of the reasons for the expansion of Jewish settlements in Palestinian areas was the prospect of dividing Jerusalem that arose during the peace process of the 1990's. The Clinton Parameters, for example, that were proposed by President Bill Clinton in December 2000 as a proposal for a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, suggested a clear solution in Jerusalem, based on demographic criteria – Palestinians will get full sovereignty over Arab-inhabited areas in the city, whereas Israelis will get full sovereignty over Jewish-inhabited areas. Although the plan has never been carried out, the parameters for Jerusalem have become a status-quo principle for any future agreement in Israel/Palestine. In such a political framework, different Jewish groups and individuals, as well as state authorities, aim to challenge or restrict future attempts to divide sovereignty over the city. The creation of Jewish enclaves in Palestinian areas makes such a solution far more difficult. Locating them in proximity to the Temple Mount is meant to guarantee that this area in particular will stay in Israeli hands.

While the initiative to establish Jewish enclaves usually comes from private settler organizations, these organizations are extensively supported and strongly connected to Israeli authorities. Thus B'Tselem:

The organizations have gained control of Palestinian property with the assistance of authorities such as the Custodian of Absentee Property, have purchased from Palestinians, sometimes by questionable means, and have demanded that control of property that was Jewish-owned before 1948 be transferred to them. The government and the Jerusalem Municipality support the settlement efforts in the heart of Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem and in the Old City by allocating private security guards, paid for by taxes, to protect the enclaves; by sending security forces to accompany takeover of Palestinian assets and houses; by funding and promoting building and development projects in the enclaves; and by transferring government assets, such as the Archeological Garden around the Old City, to the control of the organization (2011).

There are several key actors that stand behind the many settler organizations that are involved in the settlement project in East Jerusalem. In the last few years some of these individuals were the focus of journalistic investigations that exposed the ideology behind this project and the ways in which East Jerusalem settlements come to be. In 2012 Uri Blau published in *Haaretz* a thorough investigation on Tzahi Mamo, one of the most influential individuals in the settlement project: “The most prominent man in the effort to buy up Palestinian land is also the most secretive: Tzahi Mamo, a man unknown to the public but whose name crops up with every new settlement.” Blau’s investigation portrays a complex structure of operation aiming to “redeem” land and to transfer it, in different ways, from Palestinian hands to Jewish ones. Mamo, who refuses to speak with

journalist, is considered a protégé of former tourism minister Rabbi Benny Elon, who is known as a strong supporter of what the Greater Israel advocates call “land redemption.” In a written response to *Haaretz* Elon explains that “Mamo has been a student and friend for many years. He works devotedly and very successfully at the complex and complicated task of redeeming lands in Jerusalem and other meaningful places. He has faced many legal and juridical tests and endured them all successfully. I hope he continues to work and to succeed in this dangerous and important task” (Blau 2012). Working with existing real estate companies and establishing new ones, Mamo aims to purchase or seize property in crucial areas. One of the lawyers who worked with him and one of his partners in the past describes their work as ideologically driven: “They are people with visions and dreams. They believe in the Bible and that this land was given to the Jewish people and we have an interest in redeeming the lands...Legally speaking they have justifications, and religiously speaking they have documentation. They are focused solely on the question of how to redeem land” (Blau 2012).

Unlike Mamo who refuses to speak with the media, Aryeh King, the director and founder of the Israel Land Fund (ILF) and a member of the Jerusalem City Council, is an outspoken figure, willingly sharing his vision for Jewish Jerusalem both in social and mainstream media. His organization, the ILF, is an ideological real-estate company, settling Jews in Israel and the Palestinian occupied territories, but especially in East Jerusalem. A key donor to the organization is Irving Moskowitz, the wealthy Florida resident who funnels millions of dollars to settle Jews in the heart of Palestinian areas. The ILF’s mission is clearly described on the organization’s website:

The Jewish People have always held the land of Israel as their eternal homeland.

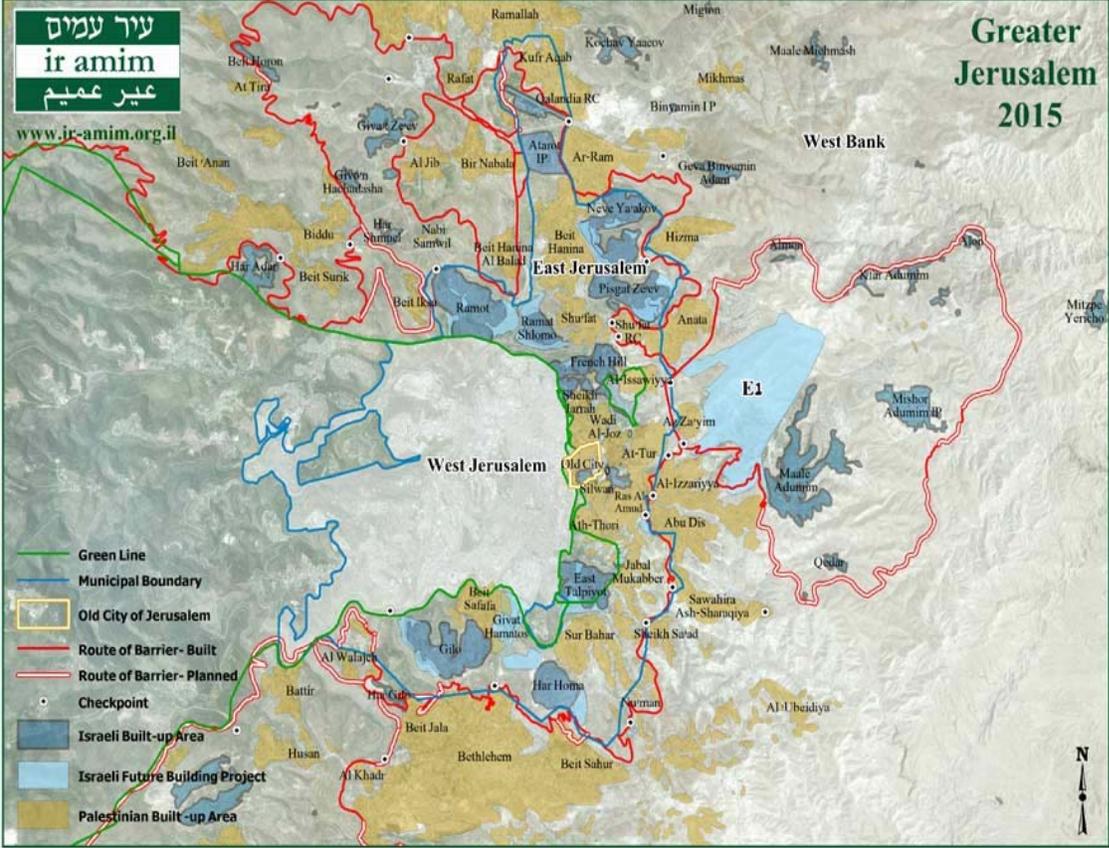
The relevance and importance of Jews to purchase property in Israel has not diminished in one hundred, five hundred, or even a thousand years. Today, the

Israel Land Fund is continuing what the pioneers of the State of Israel set out to do. It believes that all the land of Israel belongs, not just to a Jewish organization or to a government body, but to each and every Jew... The Israel Land Fund was founded after realizing a need to disrupt the purchase of Jewish owned land in Israel by hostile, non-Jewish and enemy sources... more and more Arabs and non-Jews are living and owning land all over Israel, from West Jerusalem, to Tel Aviv and beyond... The Israel Land Fund is dedicated to enable all Jews (Israeli and non-Israeli citizens) to own a part of Israel. It strives to ensure that Jewish land is once again reclaimed and in Jewish hands... House by house, lot by lot, the Israel Land Fund is ensuring the land of Israel stays in the hands of the Jewish people forever.

Based on his interview with King, Alex Kane writes in Mondoweiss that “To King, Israel (and Jerusalem and the West Bank) is Jewish land invaded by many “squatters,” in his words...” His vision for Jerusalem is clear, Kane explains – “maximum Jews on maximum land” (Kane 2014). To further emphasize this view, in an interview with Ilene Prusher published in *Haaretz* King explains that “to Judaize Jerusalem... means that it will forever be a city with a Jewish majority, and it won’t happen if the municipality won’t help us” (Prusher 2013b). For him, a true unification of the city entails its Judaization.

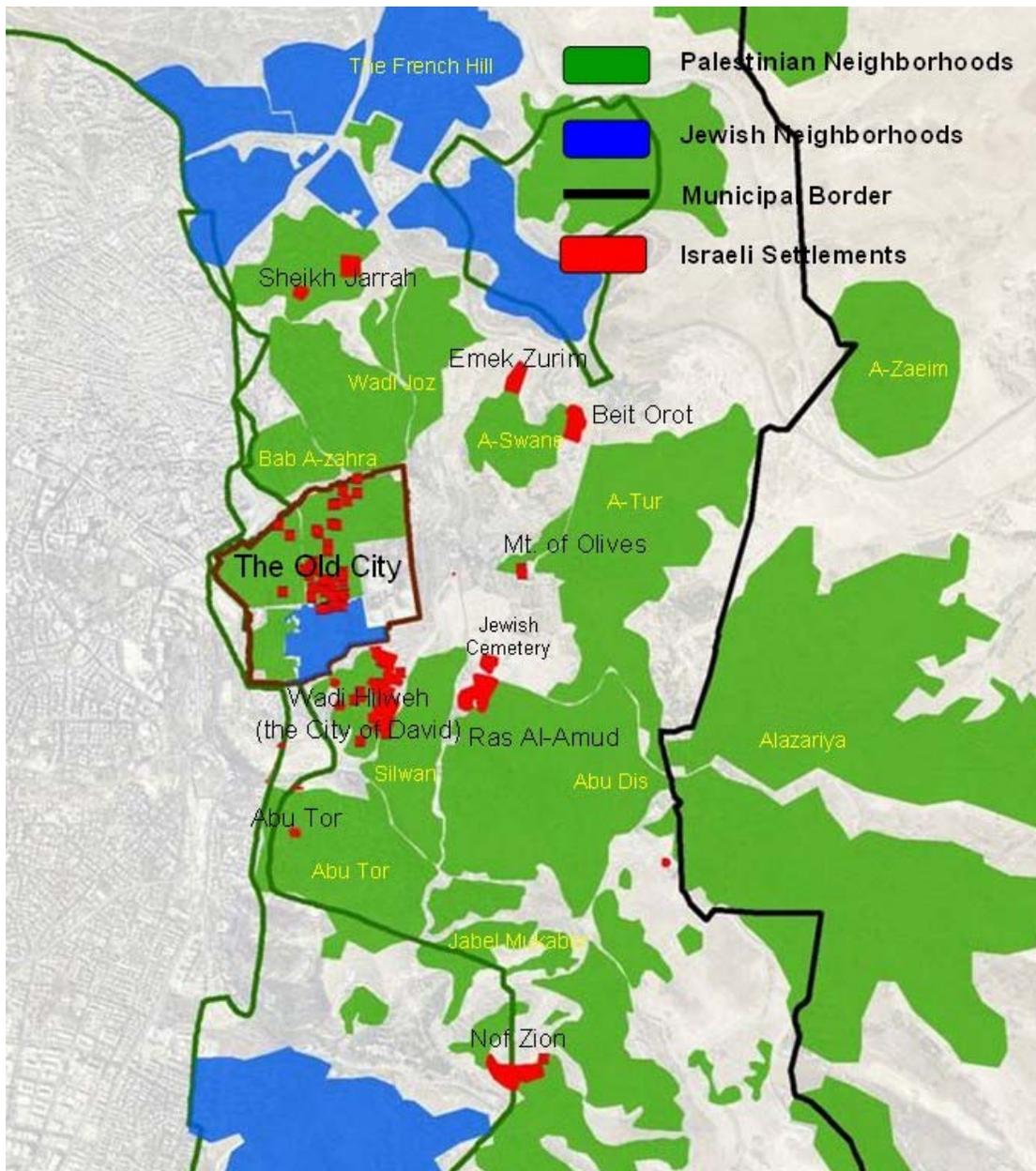
In the case of Israel/Palestine, the opening of space in 1967 and the reshaping of boundaries in a way that “includes” the Palestinian “others” in this space only reinforced and further strengthened symbolic and mental boundaries. The “unification” of Jerusalem and the creation of a big capital city has been enabled through an extreme exclusion of the Palestinian population and a clear definition of “the whole” based on ethnic and religious criteria. In the following I focus on Sheikh Jarrah as a space located on a crucial imaginary urban boundary, as a liminal space in which

clear separation becomes an impossible challenge; I examine its development within the unique Jerusalem political context and expose the layers of separation and connection that are its essence



Map 2. Greater Jerusalem, 2015. Source: Ir Amim.¹⁷

¹⁷ The map can be accessed on the organization’s website: <http://www.ir-amim.org.il/en/maps/greater-jerusalem-2013> (last accessed December 29, 2015).



Map 3. Jewish settlements in the holy basin, 2010. Source: Peace Now.¹⁸

¹⁸ The map can be accessed on the organization's website: <http://peacenow.org.il/eng/content/map-settlements-holy-basin> (last accessed December 29, 2015).

Sheikh Jarrah – Snapshots from an East Jerusalem Neighborhood

“I have known Sheikh Jarrah for many years, twenty years or so. Twenty years ago as a pilgrimage site, a rabbi’s tomb that one goes to, to participate in strange rituals. I was an Ultra-Orthodox Jew till the age of 18. I remember it, vaguely, but I remember this place, this space, as related to these dubious rituals.” AJ, a young graduate student in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem who at the age of 18 decided to abandon the Ultra-Orthodox world in which he grew up, told me about his first memories from *Sheikh Jarrah* as a child, going to the tomb of *Shimon HaTzadik* (Simeon the Just) with his family. The tomb, located in the western part of the neighborhood, has been an important religious site at least since the 19th century. *Shimon HaTzadik*, who is believed to be buried there, was a Jewish High Priest who lived in Jerusalem during the Hellenic period of the Second Temple. Next to his tomb there is the Small Cave of Sanhedrin, where, according to tradition, members of the Small Sanhedrin (a judicial body of the Second Temple) that operated in Jerusalem are buried. In their report on The Sheikh Jarrah Affair, Yitzhak Reiter and Lior Lehrs write that “testimonies from the 19th century...reveal that the tomb was a pilgrimage destination, particularly for Jews from eastern communities. Popular, well-attended celebrations would take place annually on the holiday of Lag Ba’Omer, simultaneous to the celebrations that took place at the tomb of Rabbi Shimon Bar-Yochai on Mount Meron” (2010, 16).¹⁹

¹⁹ Lag Ba’Omer is a Jewish holiday marking the 33rd day of the Omer count as well as the anniversary of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai’s death. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, who lived in the second century, was the first to publicly teach the mystical dimension of the Torah known as the “Kabbalah,” and is the author of the basic work of Kabbalah, the Zohar. Whereas the counting of the Omer is a semi-mourning period, all restrictions of mourning are lifted on this 33rd day of the Omer. As a result, weddings, parties, listening to music, and haircuts are commonly scheduled to coincide with this day among Ashkenazi Jews. Most people light bonfires and many visit the tomb of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in Meron (northern Israel) and mark the day with different ceremonies.



The Small Cave of Sanhedrin

Nowadays religious Jews, mostly Ultra-Orthodox, visit the tomb and the cave on Friday afternoons to pray and welcome the Jewish holy day, the Shabbat, as well as in *Lag Ba'Omer* and on the anniversary of *Shimon Ha'Tzadik's* death. AJ who joined the protests in the neighborhood in 2009 had different first memories from Sheikh Jarrah than those of his activist friends. For him it was not just a place of protest or Zionist occupation, but a place from his past as an Ultra-Orthodox Jew. Almost twenty years after his first encounter he came back to the neighborhood to find another form of Judaism aiming to influence and control this space. He told me that back then the place was “more Ultra-Orthodox” whereas nowadays the Jewish presence in the neighborhood “is national-religious, settler-based.” Trying to explain the two main forms of “settlement or occupation in [Jewish] religious society” that have been present in Sheikh Jarrah, AJ clarified that the “Ultra-Orthodox society focuses more on moral, ideological occupation, more dynamic. [An occupation] that arrives, carries out its practice...and leaves...[it] requires a movement in space, but does not like to settle in, more exilic. The national religious aims to expel, to evict. Both of them try to expel, to evict, each in its own way...”

On Fridays I could see Ultra-Orthodox man and women, some of them with their kids, walking down the road and entering the tomb. Some stopped to take a quick look at the Israelis and Palestinians demonstrating in the playground, others hurried into the tomb, trying to make a good use of the last few hours before the entrance of the Shabbat. In the tomb one can easily forget the political reality outside. Candles, prayer pages For a Women on her Modesty and A Prayer on the Tomb of Simeon the Just, booklets of chapters from Psalms, printed lectures of Rabies, Torah ark, people wearing Ultra-Orthodox outfits, praying quietly in devotion – all these help to create a

different sphere of life and practice which is both detached and highly connected to the politically charged everyday experiences in the neighborhood.

Outside, above the site of the tomb there is a large billboard of EFRAT association calling Jewish women to avoid abortion and thus to support the Jewish people. From the entrance to the site it is easy to identify some of the Palestinian houses that were seized by Jewish settlers. The others can be seen from the main road. They are decorated with large Israeli flags and sprayed paint Stars of David. On the roof of one of the houses the settlers built a large-scale menorah decoration with an inscription reading *V'Shavu Banim L'Gvulam*. Next to another house located on a hill behind the site of the tomb, there is a watchtower manned by Israeli security forces, aiming to protect the settler minority in the neighborhood and to physically demonstrate Jewish superiority. In light of AJ's explanation, it is clear how these symbolic practices mark Jewish-Israeli enclaves in the heart of the Palestinian neighborhood and highlight the purpose of the new Jewish Israelis in the neighborhood – to settle in, to conquer, and to establish control on the ground.

There are other marks of Jewish-Israeli control in the neighborhood. One of them I discovered only after spending a few months in the field. Along the main road, not far from the main square and the play-ground in which the weekly demonstrations took place, I noticed a large stone memorial commemorating Israeli soldiers who were killed during the 1967 War. A persistent reminder of the war in which East Jerusalem (and *Sheikh Jarrah*) was occupied and annexed to Israel, this still signifier planted in the heart of a disputed area, marks Jewish control over this land and its people. Another memorial on the same road commemorates the medical convoy that was attacked on its way to the Haddasah Hospital in 1948.



Stone memorial commemorating fallen Israeli soldiers.



Houses in the Jewish settlement in Sheikh Jarrah.



Houses in the Jewish settlement in Sheikh Jarrah



Sprayed paint Stars of David in Sheikh Jarrah.



Houses in the Jewish Settelement in Sheikh Jarrah

(Margalit 2010, 97). A large building not far along the road, called the Shepherds Hotel, as well as the area of olive trees across the street, known as *Kerem el Mufti*, were also handed over to the settlers, though they are not yet permitted to build in this area. Offices of the Ministry of Interior were opened in 2006 next to Kerem el Mufti. As Meir Margalit clarifies: “The government offices and the police headquarters that are linked to the Western portion of the city are located at the end of the road; the territorial contiguity of Jewish land between West and Arab North is thereby completed” (Margalit 2010, 97).

Off the main road one can notice the entrance to the beautiful American Colony Hotel. What many know as one of the luxurious hotels in Jerusalem, in which international diplomats, public figures, and intellectuals stay when they visit the city, is a historical site that witnessed crucial events in the city since the 19th century. The building was built by Rabbah Daoud Amin Effendi al-Husseini, who lived there with his four wives. In 1895, it was sold to a group of American and Swedish Christians who arrived in Jerusalem from the US in 1881 and set up a commune, aiming to live like the first Christians. This Christian utopian society became known as the American Colony. The American Colony first started taking in guests in 1902 when Baron Plato Von Ustinov needed a place in Jerusalem to house his visitors from Europe and America. In her memoir *Husseini Shahid*, who was sent to the private nursery school at the American Colony, describes the close relationship between members of this community and her family: “The leading families of the American Colony...had, over the years of their long residence, become true Jerusalemites. They had bought the first and main house of the neighborhood from one of my Husseini grandfathers...and since then had become neighbors and friends of the family” (Husseini Shahid 1999, 4). Husseini Shahid writes vividly about her childhood experiences in the nursery school. Towards the end of her memoir she writes again about the American Colony in Sheikh

Jarrah, but this time she focuses on her experience as a Palestinian refugee visiting Jerusalem and her old school in the 1970s, almost thirty years after her family was forced to leave. “Malak and I decided to spend a few days at the American Colony, which had become a hotel, and which was so full of memories for me. My room, with its polished stone floor, its wide window sills, its balcony in the shade of a tall pine tree, gave me the feeling of naturally belonging” (1999, 201). During her stay at the hotel she finds her nursery school room “I broke down then. It was some time before I was able to compose myself, and leave the privacy of that room, and its memories. At last I walked out, and, shutting the door behind me, locked it, and returned the key to the front desk” (1999, 203).

The Sheikh Jarrah Mosque is located near the hotel. It was built in the late 19th century on the site of another tomb, in which Hussam al-Din al-Jarrahi is believed to be buried. Al-Jarrahi was the personal physician of Saladin, the Muslim military leader whose army liberated Jerusalem from the Crusaders in the 12th century (the title “Jarrah” means healer/surgeon in Arabic). A *zawiya* – a Sufi monument of worship – was constructed at the burial site and it became a destination for worshippers and visitors. In late 19th century members of the Muslim community in the Old City began moving outside the walls, and the affluent and respected Muslim families of the city constructed buildings that became the core of the neighborhood of *Sheikh Jarrah*, which was named after Hussam al-Din al-Jarrahi.

Not far from the mosque and the hotel is the well-known Orient House which served as the headquarters of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in East Jerusalem during the 1980s and 1990s. In 2001, during the second Intifada, Israel closed the Orient House as well as other Palestinian political and social institutions in Jerusalem. The Orient House website provides details about the 2001 events:

On the 10th of August 2001 Israeli Authorities again illegally occupied and closed the Orient House. The Israeli army and police have confiscated all the computer equipment, files, data and valuable confidential information regarding issues on Jerusalem, which were intended to be used in negotiations with the Israeli government. Until the closure, Orient House was the official body in charge of negotiating the final status of Jerusalem and headquarters for multilateral negotiations.

The Orient House was built in 1897 by Ismail Bey Hakki Musa al-Husseini and has been owned by the al-Husseini family since. Originally intended to serve as a family villa, it served, at times, to host distinguished guests such as the German Emperor, Kaiser Wilhelm (1898), King Abdallah, King Ali and Prince Zaid (1930), and Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia and Empress Minan of Abyssinia (1936-1937). In her memoir Husseini Shahid describes the family's villa. "The house turned out to be one of the most beautiful in the city of Jerusalem" she writes. "Dignitaries were often invited by one or another member of the family, and they came to admire the house" (1999, 209). Although the Orient House is still closed, there are attempts to reopen it and renew its activity. Thus according to the Orient House website: "As the PLO Headquarters in the occupied city, the Orient House aspires to develop Arab East Jerusalem as the capital of the emerging Palestinian state and is today the only Palestinian establishment in the city to wave the Palestinian flag... Efforts are now being launched to re-open the Orient House..."

And there is Sheikh Jarrah of the demonstrations. Sheikh Jarrah of Friday afternoons, after the prayer in the mosque ends. "It is a beautiful time of the day, the Shabbat is almost here, everybody is done running their errands. The city is getting ready for the big quiet," MA, an

activists I interviewed, wrote in a participant observation exercise for her anthropology class in the Hebrew University.

But on our way we can see signs for the mess and noise of Sheikh Jarrah, which subvert this deceiving quiet of the Shabbat. Along many tourists who came to visit the neighborhood, and busy Palestinians coming back from work, here and there I could notice one individual or two, Jewish, with a typical Bezalely²⁰-activist look ... An appearance that says: We are leftists, we came to demonstrate. All these people were heading toward the square in front of the settlement *Nachlat Shimon* in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood.

This square has become the symbol of the Sheikh Jarrah demonstration, as well as of the struggle against the occupation. A usually empty space, next to a playground, has been occupied by protesters, trying to create a public arena in which voices of protest could be heard and developed. “Still quiet. The muezzin starts calling. After the prayer the demonstration will begin,” MA writes:

In the meantime, getting ready: media people, Israeli and international, are preparing the cameras. Police officers are already standing in a row...they are scared, looking like they were taken out of a movie: wearing black, a huge device on their back...helmets. A few ultra-orthodox are coming from the settlement...they are looking at the gathering that has become an integral part of the neighborhood’s routine on Fridays. Palestinian kids open their stands: orange juice, coffee...many many kids. They seem excited...The celebrities arrive, they

²⁰ Many of the protesters were students in Bezalel Academy of Art and Design or had the “Bezalel look” (i.e. the look of trendy urban artists and designers).

start talking with the media...The demonstration begin. The young organizers hand out the signs they wrote earlier and stand in a circle. Everybody carries huge drums. Sheikh Jarrah. A space that encompasses long history and many different people. The layers are countless, the meanings are thick and complex.

Sheikh Jarrah – The Legal Battle

In the center of the legal (and political) battle in Sheikh Jarrah is an area of approximately seventy acres which is located in the Western part of the neighborhood, near the site believed to be the tomb of Simeon the Just. In the second half of the 19th century, a small Jewish community settled around the tomb, but it gradually dispersed between the 1920s and the 1940s. In 1956, twenty eight Palestinian refugee families who lost their homes in what became Israeli territory following the 1948 War were resettled in a compound that was built around the tomb by the Jordanian government and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). In exchange for resettlement the families agreed to forfeit their refugee status and accompanying financial aid. Three independent contractual agreements described the project's goals and stated the legal status of the families' residency in the area – The Custodian of Enemy Property released the property to the Jordanian Minister of Public Works to a period of 33 years, and allowed the leasing of the land to the Palestinian refugees; in a second agreement between the Minister for Public Works and Housing and UNRWA, the latter committed to fund the construction of houses in the area allocated; the last agreement, signed by The Minister of Public Works, UNRWA, and the Palestinian families, “stipulated that in exchange for nominal rental payments, adherence to various conditions, and the forfeiture of their refugee ration cards, the families would lease the

homes for three years at which point they would then receive legal title to the property,” thus according to The Civic Coalition’s report (Hughes, Derejko, and Mahajna 2009, 10).

In one of these agreements the project is described as:

(1) An urban housing project consisting of housing accommodation for twenty eight families now in receipt of Agency relief will be undertaken as a means of enabling these refugees through savings in rent to become self-supporting members of the community. (2) Two single and thirteen twin housing units will be constructed in Sheikh Jarrah Quarter of Jerusalem on formerly Jewish property leased by the custodian of Enemy property to the Ministry of Development, for the purpose of this project... (4) A nominal rent of one Jordan Dinar per year shall be paid to the lessor which is the Ministry of Economy and Development...by each refugee family to be used to cover maintenance expenses or other charges connected with improvements made to the project by the Ministry (Reiter and Lehrs 2010, 79–80).

Despite keeping the terms and conditions of the agreement, the tenants did not receive legal title to their homes. The Jordanian government did not register them as the owners of the properties and they remained in their original status.

Following the 1967 War Sheikh Jarrah was annexed *de facto* to Israel along with other Palestinian neighborhoods, and came under the authority of the Israeli General Custodian within the Ministry of Justice. In 1972, as part of ongoing processes aiming to Judaize East Jerusalem, two Jewish organizations, the Sephardic Community Committee and the Knesset Israel Committee, initiated legal proceedings attempting to claim ownership rights over the compound

surrounding the tomb. Based on an 1886 *koshan*, a form of legal title used to convey ownership during the Ottoman era, the committees proved ownership of this land, and in September 1972 the property was registered as a religious endowment (*heqdes*) in the names of the two Committees, in equal parts, at the Israeli Land Registry Office in Jerusalem (Hughes, Derejko, and Mahajna 2009, 11). The Committees' claim was based on an affinity to the tomb of *Shimon HaTzadik* and an ownership of the area in which the small Jewish community settled in the late 19th century. Allegedly, in 1875 there was a transaction between members of the Jewish community (associated with the two committees) and an Arab landowner who owned much of the land in the area. The committees managed to prove that the *koshan* was the resulting contract of this transaction and that it was amended and finalized in 1886.

Questions concerning the authenticity and accuracy of the *koshan* have been raised in different court hearings focusing on issues related to legal ownership over this land, but they have been dismissed²¹. However, In accordance with common practice regarding the establishment of legal rights derived from *koshan*, the Committees' claims were approved for "primary purposes" by the Israeli Land Registry, rather for final registration. "Primary registration (also referred to as deed registration)," the Civic Coalition's report explains, "only allows for an initial form of ownership and contains safeguards to protect against the truncated nature of the process...it was established that the Committees' *koshan* should not carry any effect on the rights of third parties who inhabit the land and, significantly, the registration was deemed not to be proof of ownership or the purpose of subsequent land disputes" (Hughes, Derejko, and Mahajna 2009, 12).

²¹ Jerusalem Magistrate Court (*Beit Mishpat Ha-Mehoz*) 1465/97: Suleiman Darwish Hijazi vs. Sephardic Community.

Despite explicit understanding that the initial registration should not affect the rights of third parties, most of the Palestinian families in the neighborhood began receiving a succession of correspondence from the Committees demanding rent payments. In 1982 the committees filed a joint civil suit for eviction against these families. During the legal proceedings, Yitzhak Toussia-Cohen, an attorney representing seventeen of the families, reached an out-of-court agreement which did not contest the Committees' claim to the property, but instead granted the families the status of protected tenants. The agreement ensured that the families would not be evicted as long as they pay their rent fees to the Committees and adhere to regulations restricting their ability to renovate or change the property. This agreement was confirmed by the court, and thus has become the basis for all subsequent legal in the context of contemporary developments in the neighborhood. As the Civic Coalition's report emphasizes,

The...agreement underpins much of the contemporary controversy surrounding Sheikh Jarrah. Its failure to address the legitimacy of the Committees' property claim was a significant omission. In addition it also appears to have been reached without the knowledge or consent of the 17 families represented by Toussia-Cohen. The terms of the agreement did not confer any additional benefit to the 17 families to which they were not previously legally entitled. Protected tenancy is a statutory status derived from the Tenant Protection Law of 1972. It is intended to provide, inter alia, protection from evictions and was applied to residents of East Jerusalem after the imposition of Israeli law (Hughes, Derejko, and Mahajna 2009, 6).

According to the families, only after the court approved the agreement did they learn of its implications and the obligation to pay rent fees to the Committees which entails a recognition in the Committees' ownership of the land. Unwilling to accept this ownership, and for various other

reasons, most families in Sheikh Jarrah refused to follow the conditions of the agreement and did not pay rent to the committees.

In the 1990s the committees initiated a series of legal proceedings against three families, aiming to evict them from their houses. The proceedings were based on accusations related to rent delinquency and unauthorized renovations according to the 1982 agreement. These legal actions resulted in court rulings ordering the sealing of a newly built section in the house of the Rfqha Al-Kurd family and the eviction of the family from this section of the house, as well as the eviction of another branch of the Al-Kurd family and the Al-Ghawi and Hanoun families from their homes.

In November 2008 the Al-Kurd family was evicted from their house. After a long legal struggle, the court accepted the Committees' position that based on the 1982 Toussia-Cohen agreement, the Al-Kurds renovated their house illegally and refused to pay rent. The Hanoun and Al-Ghawi families were evicted in August 2009, as a result of similar legal proceedings. Based on the 1982 agreement, and through two separate lawsuits filed against each of the families, the committees asked the court to convict the families for rent delinquency and illegal renovations, and to order dispossession and eviction. The Magistrate Court accepted both suits, and in August 2009 both families were forced out from their homes.

The case of the Rfqha Al-Kurd family is slightly different. In 1999 the Jerusalem Municipality and the Sephardic Community Committee initiated legal proceedings against the family, claiming that a new extension to the existing property was built without a permit and thus constituted a violation of the 1982 Toussia-Cohen agreement. The Court imposed a substantial fine on the family and ordered to seal the renovated section of the home. Over the following years the family tried to challenge this ruling, until finally, in 2007, the Magistrate Court ruled that the Rfqha Al-Kurd family could not use the renovated rooms. Subsequent appeals to the District Court

were dismissed and in 2009 a group of settlers forcibly occupied the renovated section of the home. As the extension had been declared illegal, the lawyer representing the Al-Kurd family asked the court to rule to demolish it. However, instead of destroying the extension it was given to the settlers (*Nachalat Shimon*). Edmund Sanders describes this case in his *Los Angeles Times* article:

Since December, Israelis have resided in the front part of a house where Palestinians have long lived. All that separates them is a bedroom wall, a sealed door and, lately, the police, who visit regularly to break up the fights...Even in a city like Jerusalem, where people of different faiths have lived side by side, often uncomfortably, for millenniums, the battle of wills and square footage at House No. 13 Othman Ibn Afan frames the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in almost unbearable close-up (Sanders 2010).

The developments in Sheikh Jarrah reflect the complex reality of the occupation. They embody the tragedy of occupied land and people, and demonstrate the constant struggle over sovereignty and authority in Israel/Palestine. More particularly, they manifest the inherent injustice and inequality in land and property rights in this space. Whereas Palestinian residents of Sheikh Jarrah cannot claim the property their families left behind when they left what is now the territory of Israel during the 1948 War, Jews are allowed to claim property that was in Jewish hands in the 19th century, even when this property was given to Palestinian based on their status as 1948 refugees. The law that allows Israel to confiscate absentee properties enables an urban reality in Jerusalem that clearly reflects the injustice and inequality. As Prusher describes in another *Haaretz* article,

Anyone who works in real estate in Jerusalem will tell you what constitutes one of the most desirable properties in town: an old Arab house. Not in East Jerusalem,

but in the West Jerusalem neighborhood where I live... Few but the most liberal of Israelis take note of this irony – Arab house equals charm and character – and are willing to acknowledge the fuzzy moral territory of the Jerusalem we now find ourselves in today. But 1948 is so long ago and peace so far away, and so we don't like to think too hard about how these lovely “vintage” homes got here (Prusher 2013a).

For liberal Jerusalemites an Arab house in the western neighborhoods of the city is, indeed, a desirable property. Many of the leftist activists I interviewed for this study live or used to live in these beautiful houses; many of my interviews took place in the yards, kitchens, and living rooms of these confiscated properties. But this study is focused on injustice on the other side of the city. Injustice that challenges Prusher's assumption regarding “undesirable” East Jerusalem. In East Jerusalem Jews take control over Palestinian property as well. These are far-right Jews, and the actual injustice happens in the present, but it reflects similar Jewish-Zionist views.

Following Gupta and Ferguson's call to denaturalize taken-for-granted spatial divisions and boundaries (1992), this chapter focused on historical and contemporary processes through which the Israeli/Palestinian space has been produced as a socio-cultural structure. While the following chapter examines everyday practices and experiences that both maintain and challenge this structure, this chapter aimed at revealing broader processes supported and led by Zionist authorities and key agents. These authorities and individuals operate in a particular framework of thought and action, of course, but they have a crucial role in developing and allowing it. The analysis and review presented here look at space and the boundaries that define and “domesticate”

(Mbembe 2000) it as emergent, dynamic phenomena that realize and create particular perceptions in different times.

The main arguments developed in this chapter are that the structure of the occupation and the Judaization project is deeply rooted in Zionist thought, and that 1967 cannot be considered an “accident” or “rapture.” Both the Zionist Left and Right have been playing an influential role in the production and reproduction of this structure, especially through the division and “reorganization” of space and people. Particular Zionist modes of perception and desire, shared by both sides of the Israeli political map, have led to particular agentive practices and to the creation of socio-cultural structures that enable the existence of Israel and Jerusalem as Jewish, Zionist spaces. As I intend to show in the following chapter, these structures continue to enable certain modes of subjectivity and agency (even in leftist, liberal circles), but, at the same time, they are challenged by other modes of subjectivity and agency.

CHAPTER 3

THE PSYCHIC LIFE OF DISSENT – ANXIETY AND DESIRE IN THE ISRAELI LEFT

Beyond Antinomies

One of the main contributions of Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical enterprise is the attempt to unsettle both "objectivist" and "subjectivist" approaches towards the social world, and to study how social and individual processes intersect. Objectivist approaches, he explains, see socio-cultural frameworks as external to the individual, as an objective structure grasped from the outside. They subject freedoms and wills to mechanical determinism and examine society and its articulations independently of those who live in it. This way they reify social structures, constructing them as autonomous entities capable of acting as historical agents, and portray individuals as passive constructs of abstract forces (Bourdieu 1990; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Subjective approaches, on the other hand, see social reality as a contingent, ongoing project of rational actors who construct their social world based on their free will and interests. They conceptualize social agents as fully conscious subjects "without inertia", who create the meaning of the world "de novo, at every moment..." (Bourdieu 1990, 46). A total science of society, Wacquant says in attempting to clarify Bourdieu's approach, must jettison both approaches. It must transcend dualities such as objectivism and subjectivism, structural necessity and individual agency, and develop a dialectical approach that accounts for the relationships between agents and their social world.

Bourdieu's work was an outcome of complex debates in the social sciences and the humanities, and it generated further debates focusing on similar questions. Thus, his concept "habitus" which aims to capture the ways in which individual and collective processes are intertwined can be seen as a rival candidate to other concepts such as hegemony (Gramsci 1992),

interpellation (Althusser 2014), discourse (Foucault 1980; 1982; 1990), or performativity (Butler 1990; Butler 1993), aiming to achieve similar or intimately related objectives. Each of these terms has its unique theoretical meaning and genealogy, but examined together they can be viewed as attempts to decipher the ways in which the subject and the systems in which he/she lives are co-produced (Ewing 1997).

Thus, Bourdieu's work is based on works of other scholars, and it has been developed and challenged by others throughout the years. His profound contribution, however, has been the clear articulation of the need to study how the social and the individual are mutually constitutive. His notion of "habitus" leaves unexplained several crucial aspects of this complex co-production but his call has had crucial theoretical implications nonetheless – it forces us to unsettle theories of power and hegemony on the one hand, and studies on free will and the rational subject on the other, and it calls for a complex synthesis between what might seem as contradictory ways of thought.

Against this theoretical backdrop, this chapter and the ones following it are based on the assumption that socio-cultural theories should account for the ways in which the subject is both the producer and the product of the structures in which he/she lives. It seeks to account for the dialectical relationships between subjects and their society, and to provide a nuanced ethnographic analysis of moments in which these relationships are produced and reproduced in different ways. However, it is also a critique of several other projects, such as Bourdieu's, that have been set to achieve similar purposes but, as I argue, do not explain important aspects in the relationship between individuals and socio-cultural systems. Focusing on the ways in which hegemonic ideologies, perceptions, and modes of being influence the development of particular subjectivity and agency, theories such as Gramsci, Althusser, Bourdieu, Foucault, and to some extent Butler underplay or not fully explore how individuals are shaped through conflicting

hegemonies/discourses/ideologies/forms of performativity, and how the perceptions, emotions, and aspirations generated by these conflicting social orders are manifested in both the conscious and unconscious of the individual (Ewing 1997). They do not explain the conscious and unconscious processes through which individuals both maintain and challenge their socio-cultural structures; the conditions that allow the development of individuals that both maintain and challenge social orders; and the ongoing processes through which the individual's engagement with the social constitutes him/her as a non-unitary subject with paradoxical beliefs and perceptions. Last, focusing mostly on the repressing aspects of structures, these theories do not ask questions about the ways in which the multiple socio-cultural systems individuals produce and reproduce fulfill their fantasies and socio-political imagination.

The following analysis takes under consideration differences in subjectivity and agency and the modes of perception, desire, and feeling that animate acting subjects; it examines both conscious and unconscious aspects and sheds light on inner processes of the self and how they correspond to and influence social life; furthermore, it develops ideas related to the social and individuals meanings of mental states such as anxiety, desire, fantasy, and familiarity, and by doing so it aims to complicate philosophical and socio-cultural perspectives of the relations between the subject and his/her society. It takes "the imaginary seriously," to use Henrietta Moore's words (2007, 14), and aims to put into conversation socio-cultural theories with psychoanalytical ones. I am interested in developing a framework that would enable us to talk about the dialectical relationships I described above. I argue that contemporary anthropology has the capacity to make a profound contribution to this discussion, and that a deep understanding of the complexity I described is essential for our understanding of human life in general, and political life in particular. Works of anthropologists such as Ortner (Ortner 1984; Ortner 2006), Saba Mahmood (Mahmood

2001), and Fred Myers (Myers 1986) have laid the foundations for this crucial discussion. My work is based on their understanding of socio-cultural life and it seeks to continue their work by focusing on a particular case study in Israel/Palestine.

Segregated City, Anxious People

The first question I asked my interviewees was when or how they were first “exposed” to Sheikh Jarrah; when they heard about or visited this place for the first time. Many of them were Jerusalemites. They grew up in the city, studied in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem or the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, and lived in the university’s dormitories or in rented apartments in one of the city’s neighborhoods. They knew Jerusalem very well – the busy, noisy streets and the small quiet alleys, the coffee shops and the restaurants, the market, the political spaces and the cultural ones, the historical sites and stories. When I met with them in the university or in one of the coffee shops it was almost impossible to disconnect them from their surroundings – they knew many other people in that particular place and had to stop our conversation several times to wave to somebody or to chat. In all these meetings Jerusalem, the largest city in Israel, seemed to me as one small village in which people were an integral part of the space they inhabited and in which everybody knew everybody. As a former resident of Tel Aviv, a city known for its urban alienation, the intimacy shared by this people and their strong connection to their city was a source of envy for me. But soon enough, through their answers to my first question, I realized that this small village was indeed very small – it was comprised of mostly Ashkenazi “liberal” or “lefty” Jews, living in West Jerusalem, who up until the Sheikh Jarrah protest had begun never crossed the imaginary border between West and East Jerusalem.

In what follows I unpack several of the answers I received to my question about their first exposure to Sheikh Jarrah or East Jerusalem. The answers I focus on echo many others and allow a nuanced analysis of the ways in which imaginary boundaries were experienced by Jewish Israeli activists prior to the Sheikh Jarrah struggle. These answers and the conversations they led to expose crucial aspects of life in a segregated city, and in particular the conditions under which paradoxical and contradictory forms of political agency and political subjectivity are developed.

PO, a young student who grew up in Jerusalem and only recently, in his mid-twenties, left to Tel Aviv, told me about the first time he heard the name Sheikh Jarrah:

After the murder in the Bar Noar²² there was an event in Zion square [in Jerusalem] and M told me that people were going to Sheikh Jarrah, that there was an eviction taking place, he didn't know what exactly had happened. I asked him, 'what is Sheikh Jarrah?' And I had been living in Jerusalem for 23 years, and Sheikh Jarrah is not that deep in East Jerusalem. Such a central place...I had no idea...I joined him and several other friends. I was very scared, I asked if it was OK to go there, if we needed to coordinate with somebody, in case we would be kidnapped, in case something would happen. When you go to the Territories, it's one thing, there is a separation; but East Jerusalem was a place in which the "rules" were unclear.

Growing up in Jerusalem in a liberal left-wing family, PO had no idea "what" Sheikh Jarrah was and how a Jewish Israeli should behave in East Jerusalem. His discovery about the existence of a "central place" in his city and the events associated with it was a disturbing surprise for him. Like all Israelis he knew East Jerusalem existed, and he knew Palestinians were living there. However,

²² Here PO refers to the 2009 shooting in Tel Aviv youth center for the LGBT community. A counselor and a teenage girl were murdered, and many others were injured. This hate crime was solved by the Israeli police only in 2013.

like most Israelis, he did not know the neighborhoods that comprised this part of the city, how they looked and who exactly lived there, and if and how Jewish residents of the city can enter them. Located only a five minute drive from downtown Jerusalem, just below the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, on “the other side” of a main road on which public transportation to and from the university and the center of the city pass frequently, Sheikh Jarrah seemed to him as an enemy territory which “rules” he did not know and could not understand.²³

How should one feel when one discovers parts of the city one does not know about, even though he/she could physically see them, notice their existence? How should one narrow the gap between “abstract” knowledge and “real” knowledge of places and people? How could one reimagine the city one had been living in for so many years? CO, one of the young female activists who initiated the protest, expressed similar thoughts and feelings: “I grew up in Jerusalem...not even once I entered its eastern side...It seemed dangerous, crazy, I have never entered...I have never thought I grew up in a segregated city. Never thought about that.” Her parents see themselves as leftists, she was educated in liberal schools and was exposed to different countries, cultures, and societies; she volunteered with human rights NGOs abroad and at the age of 18 refused to serve in the Israeli military for political reasons; she was exposed to the reality in the Occupied Territories and had extensive knowledge about the occupation and its effects. But only in her twenties, through her work in an Israeli NGO, she realized she was living in a segregated city; only then she crossed the imaginary boundary between West and East and challenged her perceptions about this part of the city and the people living in it.

²³ It is important to clarify that when activists describe the “distance” between Israel and the Territories they express a mental, cultural, and political distance, as most of the West Bank villages in which protests take place are located only fifty to sixty minute drive from Jerusalem.

To begin unpacking these reactions I suggest to examine the idea of “structured vision” – Analyzing the visual field produced by the traditional Israeli media during the 2008–2009 Gaza incursion, American anthropologist Rebecca Stein claims that

...visibility is not an inherent attribute of a particular visual field, but an extension of the ideological field itself. This is to suggest that, in the Israeli context, conditions of visibility are linked to national logics and therein vacillate depending on the demands that nation, state and occupation impose at particular moments. Visibility is not a constant. Rather, its terms are highly mobile and changeable (Stein 2012, 142).

Challenging the argument according to which the Israeli media uses techniques for duping the masses intentionally, Stein claims that the conditions of invisibility within the visual field should be examined in relation to national ideology, “an entanglement which renders certain subjects and histories unseeable even when they present within the photographic frame” (2012, 149-150). For her what can be seen and what cannot be seen are products of power relations and ideology – our vision, she argues, is formed under certain structural conditions that allow us to notice and acknowledge particular people, places, events, and stories while foreclosing others.

A somewhat similar argument is made by Judith Butler in her discussion about the ethics of photography (2007). Focusing on reactions to images from Guantanamo Bay and the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, Butler explores the question of whose lives are grievable, and whose are not; whose lives are recognizable and whose are not. In the context of my analysis of “structured vision” it is important to highlight one of her main claims:

...whether and how we respond to the suffering of others, how we formulate moral criticisms, how we articulate political analyses, depend upon a certain field of

perceptible reality already being established. This field of perceptible reality is one in which the notion of the recognizable human is formed and maintained over and against what cannot be named or regarded as the human, a figure of the nonhuman that holds the place of the human in its unrecognizability (2007, 951).

Butler tries to go beyond the field of the media and suggests that in general, certain norms have a structuring effect on what can or cannot be seen as ‘reality’. She emphasizes that these norms or frames never fully determine our vision and response, but that they do have the capacity to influence how we see “reality” and who we categorize as “human.” Such norms or frames are usually based on ideas of race and citizenship, and they establish perceptions about who and what should be included and who and what should be excluded. The excluded, in many cases, cannot be seen, recognized, or acknowledged. Some frames permit the representability of the human, she argues, while others do not.

To further develop the arguments made by Stein and Butler in the context of my case study, it is important to highlight several issues related to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem segregation, enclosure, and separation are maintained, most of the time, without using physical demarcations and barriers. AH, another young male who grew up in the city and had been active in groups and organizations that resist the occupation emphasized, at the beginning of our conversation, that one of the first things he and most of the people who were part of the core group realized, was that under the guise of unification efforts, Jewish Jerusalemites and other Israeli Jews created a segregated city divided by imaginary borders between Israeli and Palestinian, legitimate and illegitimate, good and bad, visible and invisible. “It was a sentence we repeated so many times – that ‘the city that has been compacted together’, nobody who came [to the demonstrations] regularly, every Friday, had ever crossed the line of the Old City before,” he told me. Referring to a verse from the Song of Ascents

in Psalms 122, since the 1967 War Israeli public figures, as well as ordinary people, have been describing Jerusalem as “the city that has been compacted together.” This biblical saying is repeated regularly in speeches, everyday conversations, school textbooks, touristic materials, the media, and so forth, signifying the “miracle” that happened during the 1967 War and the efforts, following the war, to unite the two parts of the city. As AH tried to clarify throughout our conversation, the modern Israeli idea of unification expressed through the verse from Psalms necessarily entails enclosure, separation, and alienation. Thus, even a group of young activists who lived in the city and were involved in different forms of protest against the occupation in the “Territories,” realized that they never crossed “the line of the Old City before.”

In her analysis Stein focuses on the most segregated and enclosed occupied space in Israel/Palestine – the Gaza Strip – as a space of visibility/invisibility. Although Gaza is located only 50 miles from Jerusalem, the siege imposed on it by Israel since 2007 has transformed it into a seemingly isolated, detached, and sealed space. The physical closure have led to a profound mental separation between Israel and Gaza/Israelis and Gazans, and further enhanced extreme nationalist ideologies. In an attempt to justify the siege as well as military “operations” led by Israel, Israeli authorities have been portraying Gaza as a center of Muslim terror, and its residents as either terrorists or potential terrorists. In such a socio-political reality Stein’s argument can be easily understood and supported – the particular form of occupation in Gaza, as a socio-cultural structure created by agents and which is connected to other structures and ideologies, influences individuals’ capacity to see or not to see certain things and people. The same holds for Butler’s case study – images from highly isolated and controlled prisons, in which those suspected or accused in “terrorism” are locked away.

However, what the answers analyzed above reveal is, in a way, a more extreme case of a partial or structured visibility comparing to the ones analyzed by Stein or Butler. In the case of Jerusalem certain people and places are rendered “unseeable” even when they are constantly present not just within “the photographic frame,” but also in everyday life, as an integral part of urban reality. Here separation under the guise of unification, supported by national-messianic ideologies, enables Jewish Israelis to imagine their city as they wish, and to ignore certain realities existing “on the other side of the road.” And whereas in her analysis Stein differentiates between left-wing Israelis who are aware of that which is not seen, and the rest of the people, the case analyzed here challenges the dichotomy Left/Right and suggests that although some left-wing individuals and groups portray themselves as free agents who can see and operate beyond power-relations, ideologies, or structures, in reality, they, too, are both the producers and products of the social and the political.

The idea of structured vision can be viewed, as clearly suggested by Stein, as an instance of the works of hegemonic ideologies in everyday life, and of the profound effects its dynamics have on our perception of the world, ourselves, and the other. Although I think that this is indeed a reflection of how ideology functions as a lived, habitual social practice, I argue that there are additional layers that should be examined here, and that might enable us to better understand the conscious and unconscious dynamics between individuals and the hegemonic ideologies they create, adopt, or reject. Butler’s and Stein’s analyses offer a deep and complex account of the ways in which hegemonic ideologies shape our view, emotions, and thinking, but they do not ask why, in this case and many others, they have such a strong hold on us, and how individuals can resist this strong hold. An analysis of other conscious and unconscious layers might provide a more nuanced answer and would allow a better understanding of how individuals can be shaped

through conflicting hegemonies. My argument is that different forms of fear and anxiety play a crucial role in the relationships between individuals and the social constructs they develop and are developed by.

Both PO and CO, and many other activists I interviewed, discussed their fear of crossing the line and interacting with East Jerusalem Palestinians. Elementary sociological theory teaches us that the creation of “others” is essential for the creation of “we.” Without a collective of “them,” the “circle” of “we” cannot be marked and the dynamics of “us” cannot be enabled. But why are “the others” feared in a way that does not allow individuals to cross the boundaries of the “circle”? what kind of anxiety blurs their vision and their ability to acknowledge the existence of something beyond these boundaries? In the case of Jerusalem there are two evident answers. First, as mentioned, the development of nationalistic, Zionist ideologies, their reproduction through everyday experiences and more institutional processes, and their ongoing effects strengthen the perception of the Palestinian “other” as a dangerous, irrational, and “barbaric” enemy that should be feared and thus excluded and locked. This way what might seem as a simple and easy physical crossing of a road, street, or neighborhood, is considered by most Jewish residents of the city an impossible mental crossing from the safe space of “us,” to an enemy territory belongs to “them.” Second, and in close relation to the first reason, everyday segregation of Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem intensifies the Jewish fear of the Palestinian “other” and in different ways supports their perception as different and intimidating. Segregated educational system, lack of citizenship status for Palestinians, visible poverty and neglect, criminalization of Palestinian political activity – all these and many others contributes to the development of fear and hatred.

However, I suggest that there are other closely related dynamics at play in the case of Jerusalem and Israel/Palestine in general, which elementary sociological theory does not fully

explore. In *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger* (2006), Arjun Appadurai examines how the anxiety of incompleteness and unacceptable levels of social uncertainty combine in ways that develop strong fear of the other and spark large-scale projects of ethnic cleansing. His ideas about incompleteness and social uncertainty allow a more nuanced understanding of the fear and other unconscious states reflected through my conversations with Jewish Israeli activists.

Attempting to explain his understanding of contemporary social uncertainty in relation to fear of the other and projects of ethnic cleansing, Appadurai provides several enlightening examples:

The forms of such uncertainty are certainly various. One kind of uncertainty is a direct reflection of census concerns: how many persons of this or that sort really exist in a given territory? Or, in the context of rapid migration or refugee movement, how many of “them” are there now among us? Another kind of uncertainty is about what some of these mega identities really mean...A further uncertainty is about whether a particular person really is what he or she claims or appears to be or has historically been. Finally, these various forms of uncertainty create intolerable anxiety about the relationship of many individuals to state-provided goods—ranging from housing and health to safety and sanitation—since these entitlements are frequently directly tied to who “you” are and thus to who “they” are (2006, 20–21).

Numbers play a crucial role in the Zionist fear of Palestinians and their “reproduction capacity.” As shown in the previous chapter, in Jerusalem this anxiety have led to the development and implementation of particular projects aiming to create a singular national ethnos city. Social

uncertainty of the city's Jewish residents that stem from "census concerns" intensifies everyday segregation and strengthens the kind of fears expressed by Jewish activists. Later in this text I analyze the ways in which some left-wing individuals and groups promote further separation and division, and how their efforts reflect a demographic anxiety. Their avoidance of East Jerusalem (up until the Sheikh Jarrah protest) can be understood, in part, by this demographic anxiety and their (conscious or unconscious) unwillingness to face their demographic fears. Appadurai's idea about incompleteness may further clarify this anxiety – the gap between "the sense of numerical majority and the fantasy of national purity and wholeness" (2006, 53) develops in certain national collectives a constant sense of incompleteness. In cases in which the idea of national peoplehood is reduced to the idea of ethnic singularity, the very existence of a minority within national boundaries is experienced as an unbearable reality.

In a text published in +972²⁴ in May 2015, Amjad Iraqi writes about the Jewish-Israeli perception of Palestinians as a "demographic threat" and the role of the Zionist Left in maintaining this perception:

The terrible irony is that in its desire to escape its history as a persecuted minority, the Israeli Jewish population became an oppressive majority obsessed with racial control. To this day, the Palestinian people — whether in refugee camps, under occupation, or minority citizens inside Israel — are viewed by the Israeli state as an existential challenge. It is not just the right wing that espouses this racial paradigm; liberal Zionists, in their attempt to advocate for a two-state solution, repeatedly warn that the Palestinian population living under Israeli control will soon

²⁴ +972 is an online news and commentary group blog that was established independently in 2010 by a group of journalists, photographers, and activists from Israel and Palestine.

surpass the Jewish population, and that Israel would be forced to abandon democracy if it wants to preserve its “Jewish character.” This obsession over the Palestinian “demographic threat” has become so normalized in both Israeli and international discourse that people have forgotten that at its core, it is both a sinister and racist concept. A Palestinian’s personal character, their advancement in society, and even their indifference to politics mean little to the state – it is their blood that determines their status and defines them as a danger. This view has served to legitimize numerous laws and policies that attempt to manipulate the state’s demographic landscape, with the aim of minimizing and containing the non-Jewish population under its control (Iraqi 2015).

As I discuss in the following chapter, the support of the liberal Zionist Left in the two-state solution and the division of Jerusalem between Israel and Palestine is animated by a collective demographic anxiety. For most Jewish Israelis in the Zionist Left a singular national ethnos is a condition for “democracy” and “freedom.” The possibility that the concept of Jewish majority in the Land of Israel would be challenged raises strong fears and encourages many to support a clear separation between Israelis and Palestinians. These fears animate a variety of practices, such as the adoption of particular policies on the one hand, and the repression of the existence of East Jerusalem and the implications of this existence on the other hand.

Moreover, as suggested by Appadurai, forms of social uncertainty may lead to an “intolerable anxiety about the relationship of many individuals to state-provided goods,” or in other words, a fear of losing state-supported privileges. One may think that a form of agency seen as “Left activism,” as well as forms of subjectivity associated with it, would work to challenge state-enabled privileges and to seek justice through a dismantling of a privilege regime. However,

towards the end of my field-research, and through different experiences, I realized that behind my interviewees' original fear to cross the boundary between West and East, as well as behind particular practices of protest I analyze later, stood this intolerable anxiety of losing their well protected Jewish-Israeli privileges. The first time I started seeing things in such an analytical frame was when EL, an undergraduate student in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem who moved to the city from the center of Israel, shared with me her first experiences in Sheikh Jarrah. In addition to the first protests in the neighborhood she talked about her realization that the place she lived in was also part of East Jerusalem that was annexed illegally to Israel: "I lived in the [Hebrew University's] dormitories in the French Hill at that time [the time of the first demonstrations in Sheikh Jarrah]. I had been living there for two years until I found out it was East Jerusalem through an Ir Amim tour to which I joined accidentally."

As explained in chapter two, as part of its attempts to block the Rogers Plan in the 1970s, Israeli government led by Golda Meir established new neighborhoods that created a Jewish territorial contiguity between East and West Jerusalem. The French Hill neighborhood which was established in 1971 connects West Jerusalem to the Hebrew University's campus on Mount Scopus, and some of the university's dormitories are located there. Unlike Sheikh Jarrah and other Palestinian neighborhoods that are considered "the other Jerusalem" or "the backyard of Jerusalem", many parts of the territory that was annexed to Jerusalem after the 1967 War had gone through "successful" processes of Judaization and naturalization that made them an integral part of "Jewish Jerusalem" or "legitimate Jerusalem." Thus, a political activists that had been involved in radical activity in the West Bank and joined the Sheikh Jarrah protest in its early stages, found out that she lived in an occupied, illegally-annexed territory through a political tour to which she joined unintentionally. Here EL exposes other layers of everyday life in an occupied city – the

experience of erasure, the naturalization of land expropriation, and the power of dichotomies, produced by people, such as legitimate and illegitimate, theirs and ours, East and West. One of the interesting aspects of her description is the realization that the occupation allows her to live in low-cost dormitories in close proximity to the Hebrew University main campus.

In the case of EL this realization encouraged her to learn more about the occupation in Jerusalem and to get involved in activism. But EL, as shown later, represents a radical, post-Zionist thought within the Israeli Left. Many of the people I interviewed exposed a true fear of losing their privileges which I believe played a crucial role in their perception of the Palestinian “other” and in their “avoidance” of East Jerusalem. As AJ, who is also a post-Zionist, said to me after I asked about related issues: “I think that the Palestinians are the demon of the Israeli Left. They see them and they see themselves losing their beautiful Arab houses in which they live, that they received based on the Absentee Property Law...they see them and they see all the things they don’t want to see.” In a piece she wrote for the daily *Haaretz* (2013) Ilene Prusher further clarifies this irony:

Anyone who works in real estate in Jerusalem will tell you what constitutes one of the most desirable properties in town: an old Arab house. Not in East Jerusalem, but in the West Jerusalem neighborhood where I live...Few but the most liberal of Israelis take note of this irony – Arab house equals charm and character – and are willing to acknowledge the fuzzy moral territory of the Jerusalem we now find ourselves in today. But 1948 is so long ago and peace so far away, and so we don’t like to think too hard about how these lovely “vintage” homes got here (Prusher 2013a).

Many of the leftist activists I interviewed for this study live or used to live in these beautiful houses in neighborhoods such as *Rehavia* or *Talbieh*; some of my interviews took place in the yards,

kitchens, and living rooms of these confiscated properties. The particular kind of occupation and segregation in Jerusalem allows liberal Jerusalemites to own such a property while preventing Palestinians from buying houses in the neighborhoods their families used to live in. As Nir Hasson, an Israeli journalist focusing on Jerusalem clearly explains,

When an Israeli citizen purchases an apartment or house, ownership of the land remains with the ILA [Israel Land Administration], which leases it to the purchaser for a period of 49 years, enabling the registration of the home ("tabu"). Article 19 of the ILA lease specifies that a foreign national cannot lease - much less own - ILA land...if a foreign national purchases an apartment they must show the ILA proof of eligibility to immigrate to Israel in accordance with the Law of Return. Non-Jewish foreigners cannot purchase apartments. This group includes Palestinians from the east of the city, who have Israeli identity cards but are residents rather than citizens of Israel. Most residences in West Jerusalem and in the Jewish neighborhoods of East Jerusalem are built on ILA land. All the neighborhoods built after 1967...are built on ILA land (Hasson 2009).

Fear of losing such profound privileges is a crucial aspect of life in this divided city. This fear is a product of the occupation and one of the main reasons for its continuation. But it is also present in the work of political activists and in their anxiety of the other and of crossing the boundaries that separate "us" from "them." The concerns of Jewish Israeli activists become stronger when the focus is Jerusalem – unlike the West Bank in which they do not enjoy extreme privileges on a daily basis (in the West Bank Jewish settlers enjoy such privileges), in Jerusalem Jewish Israeli liberals have clear interests related to their daily life in the city, their personal property, and their other rights.

In an informal conversation with HIL, a female activists who joined the Sheikh Jarrah protest at the very beginning, she told me that one of the things that frightens Jewish activists in Jerusalem the most (herself included) is the possibility of actually sharing the city with its Palestinian residents. Although Palestinian residents pay full city taxes, only 13% of the city budget is allocated for the needs of this population (37% of the city's residents are Palestinians), classroom shortage in East Jerusalem stands at 3,055, and poverty rates stands at over 75% (Tatarski 2015). A just allocation of resources, she told me, necessarily entails the dismantling of the privilege regime enabled and secured through occupation and segregation; "allowing" the Palestinians to have "the right to the city" necessarily entails a radical change to the "meaning of the city" and to the power relations that enhance its division.

Theories that view the subject as a product of discourse, ideology, or hegemony have the capacity to illuminate important aspects of the phenomena discussed above. However, in order to better understand the complexity of these phenomena one has to ask questions about the deep emotions and mental states that are associated with them. Fear and anxiety that animated modes of being and acting in the Zionist Left in the first few decades of statehood are evident in forms of subjectivity and agency of contemporary liberal leftists in Jerusalem. The individuals I interviewed were not fully or merely constructed by hegemonic ideologies and discourses. They held complex, sometimes contradicting beliefs, and in our conversations they revealed, intentionally or unintentionally, a desire to both maintain and challenge different aspects of the occupation.

In November 2009 several of these individuals decided to walk from West to East Jerusalem and to cross publically the boundaries that maintain the separation and segregation in their city. They wanted to show themselves and others that it was possible, that boundaries which were created by people could also be challenged and brought down; they wanted to prove that the

people in “other Jerusalem” should not be feared, and that a struggle for their rights should not generate anxiety and hatred. As described earlier, their attempt encouraged thousands of people to cross certain borders and to protest in East Jerusalem. In light of the analysis developed above, there are several questions I explore in the following sections: Why did a space like Sheikh Jarrah spark the interest of Jewish activists more than other spaces and other struggling communities in East Jerusalem? What can the answers to the first question further teach us about different forms of agency and subjectivity within the Israeli Left? What did Jewish Israelis hope to create in Sheikh Jarrah and what might their hopes and imagination teach us about their inner desires?

Unified Space

In our first conversation I asked MKI the “why Sheikh Jarrah” question – why such an influential protest happened there and not in other places in Israel/Palestine. “Overall, what happened here [the evictions in Sheikh Jarrah] was not worse than what happened in any other place...in East Jerusalem...in other places in the West Bank,” he told me. “But it seemed more accessible, it seemed like we could organize a struggle that would accrue momentum...People who thought about Sheikh Jarrah as ‘Sheikh Jarrah’ thought about it like that. Other than that there was no other reason for us not to go to...Mount of Olives or to Silwan.” I tried to better understand what he meant by “accessible,” why the first organizers, whom he knew very well, thought that Sheikh Jarrah had a stronger capacity to spark a protest than, for example, Silwan, an East Jerusalem Palestinian village which is located only a few minutes drive from Sheikh Jarrah and in which Jewish Israelis established a settlement. “Ultimately it was a protest inside Israel,” he said. “It wasn’t a ‘Territories demonstration’.”

It is possible to describe several reasons for the appeal Sheikh Jarrah had for Jewish Israeli protestors. However, my argument is that the main explanation for the extremely high numbers of participants (in Israeli terms), is the sense of familiarity, control, and some ways, ownership, they experienced there; “Feeling at home” in Sheikh Jarrah was a key mental aspect of this protest which allowed Jewish Israelis to “cross to the other side” gradually (or, as I show in the following chapter, in some cases not to cross at all), and enabled the creation of a Jewish Israeli community of struggle beyond an imaginary border. The perception of Sheikh Jarrah as an Israeli space was a dominant theme in the conversations I had with Jewish activists. Clearly, they knew it was an occupied neighborhood, located beyond the Green Line or “proper/legitimate” Israel, inhabited by Palestinians, and as described above, most of them did not visit the neighborhood prior to the protest. However, they insisted on categorizing it as “different” from other East Jerusalem neighborhoods to which settlers invaded, or from Palestinian villages in the West Bank; different in the sense that it was “home,” “the backyard of West Jerusalem,” or “mine/ours.”

“You are not going to a foreign place. You are going to your home,” HIL told me. “Bil’in is a foreign place. You need to develop an awareness that this [Sheikh Jarrah] is not your home...you are a guest.” Understanding, in retrospect, that many activists saw the neighborhood as theirs, as part of what belongs to “us,” HIL pointed that although this sense of familiarity encouraged Jewish Israelis to join the protest, there was a need to render it unfamiliar and to develop a position of strangers, guests. Later I will examine the need to develop such a position in the context of solidarity struggles, but for the purpose of the issue discussed here it is crucial to highlight that the “natural” or “instinctive” position of Jewish Israeli activists in Sheikh Jarrah was that of residents of the place fighting for the “meaning” and essence of their home. Thus, when I asked ARAV, a young Jewish Israeli male who grew up in Jerusalem, why the struggle attracted

Jewish Israelis, he replied: “The feeling on the ground was that something new had happened. That the status quo had been broken and it happened here, next to my home. It is not Bil’in. It is a backyard but it’s here. I go there on my way to the university. It’s mine.” For him Sheikh Jarrah is home, it is the backyard of West Jerusalem, an integral part of his city. And whereas in the West Bank injustice is the norm, when such things happen “at home,” in a “legitimate” territory, they are considered a breach of the status quo. As explained earlier, such forms of injustice have been taking place in different areas of East Jerusalem since the 1970s; I argue that the fact that Sheikh Jarrah had been perceived as “something new” is related to its perception as “ours,” as an area which is considered “proper Israel.” Thus, a neighborhood which most activists did not know and considered as part of “other Jerusalem,” was quickly embraced as “ours”; a neighborhood which was the focus of a political struggle against the occupation and the illegal annexation of territory had been experienced as “home” by Jewish Israelis.

In light of the analysis above, which focuses on the ways East Jerusalem and Sheikh Jarrah had been perceived as “the other Jerusalem,” my argument might sound surprising. What I attempt to show in the following discussion is why Sheikh Jarrah was experienced as “accessible” once people were exposed to its existence, as well as the meaning of this perception of the neighborhood. This is not to say that the neighborhood should have been categorized in such a way – the purpose is to unpack how activists imagined this space, why they imagined it as such, and what is the complexity behind these forms of imagination.

What does “accessible” mean in this context? What did MKI try to convey when he mentioned that it was a protest “in Israel”? The first and most basic aspect of the accessibility of Sheikh Jarrah and its perception as “home” was its location on the invisible line between west and

east. As IRE, a young Jewish male activist explained to me: “it was because of the geographical location. You didn’t have to go into some truck with your passport and cross some kind of border. It was so close to home for many Jerusalemites.” HIL thought the same: “You know, you just go there. It’s not South Hebron Hills. You don’t need other people to take you there, you don’t need a contact. You don’t have to depend on anyone else for attending a demonstration.” “It’s right here,” EL explained in a similar way. “On your way to the university you can stop by Sheikh Jarrah. When something happened the [Palestinian] residents just called us. We could go there a lot, make connections with people living there...” Feeling that she could not understand what “was really happening” in places located in the West Bank, EL wanted “to do things close to home, things that I can feel more connected to... simply because I live close by and can pass through.”

South Hebron Hills, Bil’in, Ni’ilin, Nabi Saleh – all these places in the West Bank were mentioned by the activists I met to explain, by way of contrast, why Sheikh Jarrah attracted such high numbers of Jewish Israelis. As opposed to the highly separated and isolated Palestinian villages in the West Bank, to which Jewish Israelis can get only with activists who know the area very well, the side roads, the “rules,” the ways to “handle” Israeli soldiers on the ground, and the dynamics of particular protests and direct actions, Sheikh Jarrah is an urban neighborhood on the other side of the road. Jewish Israelis can enter the neighborhood freely, there are no military checkpoints nor other physical barriers, there is frequent public transportation to and from the neighborhood and it is located in a short walking distance from the Hebrew University.

As the first organizers of the protest discovered quickly, the ability to demonstrate close to home, but on the ground, where injustice was actually taking place, was crucial for attracting high numbers of Jewish Israelis. But this does not explain why struggles in Silwan or other places in

East Jerusalem did not receive such strong support, as well as why these locations were not seen as “home.” As AJ emphasized in his straightforward manner, “the decision to demonstrate in Sheikh Jarrah was, first and foremost, dictated by convenience considerations. Because it’s 10 minutes away...only later they tried to also attribute values to this...Silwan, which is the same distance, nobody goes there. Well, 90% don’t go there.” Although based on the many conversations I had with the core group who initiated the protest I am confident that there were other considerations that influenced the decision to focus on Sheikh Jarrah (mainly the personal relationships that were developed between the group of Jewish young women and the neighborhood’s residents), the point made by AJ is crucial – When I asked him why nobody goes to Silwan he answered: “Because it requires crossing more boundaries. Sheikh Jarrah does not require boundary crossing...these are ‘clean’ areas of Jerusalem. Unified areas, to speak the official language.”

Sheikh Jarrah is located on a border. It is a middle-class neighborhood, in which roads are paved, trash is collected, and the streets are cleaned. Many houses have beautiful gardens or patios, and there are several public green areas. As described in the previous chapter, Sheikh Jarrah is the home for foreign consulates, offices of international organizations, and several historical and political buildings. Moreover, the many “secular” or “official” Jewish-Israeli enclaves within the neighborhood (such as government offices, memorials for fallen Israeli soldiers, and the Jerusalem district court) enable a Jewish Israeli continuity in space and strengthen the perception of Sheikh Jarrah as an Israeli space, or, to use AJ’s words, as a “clean,” “unified” space.

Other East Jerusalem neighborhoods which communities struggle against Jewish settlements, land confiscation, evictions, neglect, and so forth, cannot be imagined the way Sheikh

Jarrah is. To clarify the difference between spaces in East Jerusalem and what emotions they arouse in Jewish Israeli activists one can compare Sheikh Jarrah to Silwan, a nearby village in which the local community is dealing with and protesting against different forms of land grab and neglect. Like in Sheikh Jarrah, the Jewish attempts to gain control over land and property in Silwan are part of a broader plan to take over Palestinian land surrounding the Old City and to create a Jewish territorial contiguity between West and East Jerusalem. Like Sheikh Jarrah, Silwan is located on the border between the two parts of the city, but south to the Old City. However, unlike Sheikh Jarrah, Silwan suffers from severe deliberate neglect – the village is ranked at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder (comparing to other neighborhoods in both West and East Jerusalem); a significant number of the village roads are unpaved, there are no regular trash collection services, and some of the schools are not connected to a sewage system; there are no playgrounds, community centers, or public parks in the village. Neglect and poverty are visible in Silwan. The effects of occupation, discrimination, and segregation can be easily seen in the streets, on the outside of the houses, and in public buildings. Although it is located only a few minutes drive from Sheikh Jarrah, Silwan reflects the occupation in a more extreme and visible way, and thus it is perceived as “different Jerusalem.”

Furthermore, unlike Sheikh Jarrah’s residents who struggle against injustice in courts and through non-violent demonstrations, in Silwan some of the residents, many of whom are kids and teenagers, have adopted the symbolic Palestinian form of resistance – stone throwing. Young Palestinians in Silwan throw stones on Israeli soldiers, police officers, and Jewish settlers, usually when they drive in the neighborhood. For most Israelis, including those who see themselves as leftist liberal Zionists, stone throwing is considered a violent act of terror which should not be part of the struggle against the occupation. It is perceived an illegitimate form of protest which only

meaning is hatred and terror. For most Israelis joining a protest which includes such a form of resistance is an act of betrayal (in the State of Israel and its people). The few Jewish Israelis who cross this imaginable boundary between legitimate and illegitimate, loyalty and betrayal, occupier and occupied, can see the symbolic meaning of this act, and its role in the Palestinian resistance movement. As Amira Hass²⁵, an Israeli journalist who clearly crossed these boundaries, writes:

Throwing stones is the birthright and duty of anyone subject to foreign rule. Throwing stones is an action as well as a metaphor of resistance. Persecution of stone-throwers, including 8-year-old children, is an inseparable part – though it’s not always spelled out – of the job requirements of the foreign ruler, no less than shooting, torture, land theft, restrictions on movement, and the unequal distribution of water sources. The violence of 19-year-old soldiers, their 45-year-old commanders, and the bureaucrats, jurists and lawyers is dictated by reality. Their job is to protect the fruits of violence instilled in foreign occupation – resources, profits, power and privileges. Steadfastness (*Sumud*) and resistance against the physical, and even more so the systemic, institutionalized violence, is the core sentence in the inner syntax of Palestinians in this land. Often hurling stones is borne of boredom, excessive hormones, mimicry, boastfulness and competition. But in the inner syntax of the relationship between the occupier and the occupied, stone-throwing is the adjective attached to the subject of “We’ve

²⁵ An Israeli journalist and author, mostly known for her radical political columns in the daily Israeli newspaper Haaretz. As Haaretz’s correspondent for the Occupied Territories she spent three years living in Gaza. She has been living in the West Bank city of Ramallah since 1997.

had enough of you, occupiers.” After all, teenagers could find other ways to give vent to their hormones without risking arrests, fines, injuries and death (Hass 2013).

Most Israelis who resist the occupation cannot comprehend this conscious or unconscious state of mind of the occupied. Joining a protest taking place in such a context is considered a clear and permanent crossing of borders between identities which would mark them as “the other,” as “one of them” and would exclude them from the national circle of “we” instantly. As Albert Memmi notes in his enlightening analysis of “the colonizer who refuses” – “To refuse colonization is one thing; to adopt the colonized and be adopted by them seems to be another; and the two are far from being connected” (Memmi 1991, 22–23). Protesting in Sheikh Jarrah meant “refusing colonization,” whereas joining a protest in places such as Silwan or Bil’in meant (at least) “adopting the colonized,” and in some extreme cases, “being adopted by them.” AJ’s comment about not “really” crossing boundaries in Sheikh Jarrah refers to a radical mental crossing between “us” to “them.” As I will show in following discussions, only a few activists experienced Sheikh Jarrah as a transition space that allowed them to cross and challenge further boundaries and to join the occupied in their struggle against the occupation. For most activists Sheikh Jarrah functioned as a familiar and “friendly” space in which they could “refuse colonization” and still stay in a safe mental space.

Moreover, in Sheikh Jarrah Jewish Israeli activists could also operate in a safe physical space. Once the line between “we” and “them” is actually crossed (usually by joining demonstrations in other places in East Jerusalem and the West bank), an Israeli citizen may be perceived and dealt with by Israeli security forces or Jewish settlers as a Palestinian. Avoiding crossing such lines by protesting in Sheikh Jarrah, activists felt that they were “refusing

colonization” from within Israel, as Israelis, but still where injustice had been taking place. HIL elaborated on this issue in our conversation:

[In Sheikh Jarrah] you are not afraid for your body, you are not going to some dangerous place. It was dangerous what happened there, but you know...In Sheikh Jarrah people experienced what political repression is, when it comes to [restrictions] on the freedom of expression. In other places...it is a threat to your existence, to your body...and this is really scary...In Sheikh Jarrah we could always keep a safe place. You always had the choice whether to get arrested or not...there it was safe...There are people [demonstrating] in Nabi-Saleh who know that it is possible that they will get shot in their head. I'm afraid of death. Death in a place which is not mine...The very imagination of this possibility is very very scary...I will not go to Nabi-Saleh. I don't feel like dying.

The location of Sheikh Jarrah in close proximity to Jewish-Israeli areas, the fact that the offices of many international and national organizations/institutions are located in it, as well as the particular form of protest in the neighborhood, contributed to the relatively low-level of violence exercised by Israeli police during the demonstrations. Although a basic online search for Sheikh Jarrah shows videos and articles focusing on police brutality during the demonstrations, it is important to note that as HIL argues, the majority of the interactions between protesters and police forces involved negotiations regarding freedom of speech allowed or restricted. Many of these negotiations ended with the arrest of demonstrators, their forced eviction from the demonstration, and the commencement of legal proceedings against particular individuals as well as against the demonstration as a whole. However, as mentioned by HIL, even when police and legal authorities attempted to restrict the freedom of protesters, they never exercised life-threatening force against

them. Thus, when MKI mentioned that “Ultimately it was a protest inside Israel. It wasn’t a ‘Territories demonstration’,” he also meant that the safety of protesters was kept, they could decide whether to get arrested or not, they could negotiate particular conditions with the police, and they knew that only a few kilometers away the “rules” were different.

After years of political silencing in Jerusalem following the second Intifada, the core group of Jewish Israeli activists who crossed the boundaries before thousands of others did so, realized that there was “something” in Sheikh Jarrah that would attract Jewish Israelis to join a political struggle. In the conversations we had they analyzed their decision to focus on this neighborhood and to invest time and effort in such a protest in a way that revealed their well-planned practices and their conviction that this particular place and these particular Palestinians have the capacity to spark a solidarity struggle. When an older and more experienced male activist tried to explain one of the core group members that Jewish Israelis would never join a protest against the occupation she refused to accept his advice to lower her expectations. She was not naïve – she knew that the majority of Jewish Israelis were not interested in challenging the occupation. However, as she told me:

The only thing people knew before Sheikh Jarrah was the Territories...every time he [the older activists] arrives it’s from South Hebron Hills. And in South Hebron Hills he is right – the Israeli society couldn’t care less and everything that happens there is hell. But when you arrive to Jerusalem it’s a zero sum game and this is the new thing that started here...we understood the potential. We understood it back then. It was clear to me, I believed, I hoped, that we could bring people to Jerusalem because it’s safe, because...it’s a neighborhood it’s not intimidating.

As I attempted to clarify in this section, the imagination of Sheikh Jarrah as a ‘safe’, ‘not intimidating’ space has several meanings and implications. CO who saw herself as an activist “with one foot in the mainstream,” understood these meanings and implications and believed that Sheikh Jarrah, as a border space that may be experienced as part of familiar Jerusalem, can be a space of dissent. Whereas the Territories were considered the space of dissent of the radical, marginal, post-Zionist Left and Tel Aviv was seen as the center of the liberal Left, CO and her friends recognized that Sheikh Jarrah could function as a new space for a new type of protest. They hoped that in a space like Sheikh Jarrah, that “feels like home” and that does not require a radical border crossing, Jewish Israelis would support Palestinian residents and would start a journey from a position of refusing occupation to adopting the occupied, to use Memmi’s distinction. An important question I explore in the following section is why Jewish Israelis who oppose the occupation needed a “Sheikh Jarrah” or in other words, what conscious and unconscious desires this space had the capacity to fulfill.

Finding Home

“Sheikh Jarrah started a year after Operation Cast Lead²⁶, and during Cast Lead leftists felt very much alone,” EL told me. “It was horrible. I remember that I wanted to go to the university wearing a *keffiyeh*²⁷ so everybody will know. And this [Sheikh Jarrah] created a very strong and very influential community.” EL’s desire to wear a Palestinian keffiyeh in the university reflected her

²⁶ Israel’s 22-day offensive on the Gaza Strip which took place between December 27 2008 and January 18 2009 (an Israeli ground invasion began on January 3, 2009). Approximately 1,400 Palestinians were killed during Cast Lead, 82% of them were civilians.

²⁷ Chequered black and white or red and white scarf which has become the symbol of the Palestinian national struggle.

strong need to declare, publically, that she was part of the Left and the Palestinian solidarity movement in Israel; that the Left was still alive, and that people who supported the Palestinian struggle should not feel ashamed or ostracized. Unlike groups and parties within the Zionist Left who supported the war in Gaza, she wanted to show to herself and to others that there were other voices within the Left. She knew that adopting such a controversial Palestinian symbol in the Hebrew University may lead to her exclusion from certain circles, but an inner desire to expose her beliefs proudly in a difficult political time, as well as her hope to find others like her, pushed her to imagine herself doing that which is forbidden. However, knowing the possible implications, her idea of wearing a keffiyeh remained as an unfulfilled desire. Eventually, it was Sheikh Jarrah that enabled her to join a political community, to feel part of “something bigger” and in many ways, at least in the first few months, to realize her desires.

It is tempting to read EL’s imagination as a Freudian desire – an effect or product of the individual’s encounter with the social limitations imposed on him/her by civilization (Freud 1962; 2010); as an example for Freud’s assumptions according to which the existence and function of civilization depends on the constant control of instincts and the encounter with such restrictions leads the individual to develop a constant desire for freedom which springs from the remains of the “original” free personality. EL’s desire to wear a keffiyeh is indeed an attempt to resist social and political limitation, but I do not wish to explain it by pointing to one original source. As shown above and as I explain in the following discussion, the individuals I worked with revealed in our conversations complex cognitive and mental positions that influenced their subjectivity and agency. EL’s desire stemmed from her need to resist what most people believed, but also from her desire to find a group of belonging, from her feeling of compassion and solidarity with “the other,” from her realization that forms of behavior or experience do not correspond to some aspect of her

culture's ontological premise about the nature of being human (Moore 2007) and so forth. A crucial view in psychoanalysis that should be highlighted, though, is the understanding that there are multiple conscious and unconscious motivations that lead individuals to develop, identify with, and take up "different subject positions at different times" (Moore 2007, 17). In contrast to "subjectivist" views, the subject of psychoanalysis is not a fully conscious individual, who act on the world according to his/her free will and interest. However, this subject is neither a mere product of power/language/ideology/culture. The individual's engagement with the social constitutes him/her as a non-unitary subject who is based on splits, inconsistencies, slippages, and lacks. Both the consciousness and unconsciousness take part in his/her ongoing, dynamic development, and such a development cannot be understood as a full submission to seemingly external forces, nor as a process directed by free agency. "One need not suppose," Steven Sangren argues, "...that one must choose between discursive productivity or romantic subjectivism...Our personhood, desire, or 'subjectivity,'...is a complex process, not so much 'split' or 'shifting' as simultaneously both authentic and inauthentic, encompassing contradictory and paradoxical tendencies..." (Sangren 2004, 117).

It is interesting to examine MKI's comments on the need to create a "Sheikh Jarrah" and his perception of that particular time and the needs people in the Left had. His comments further develop the ones made by EL and reveal the complexity of political subjectivity and agency in the Left, as well as the role of desire in this context:

It was a time when a struggle was much needed, more than other times that I can remember. It was a time of a very very serious crisis in the Left. It was after Cast

Lead and after the elections to the Knesset²⁸...the Left collapsed completely...and there was this atmosphere of attempts to create new collaborations...based on a need to break the leftist framework we were used to. Sorry, not to break it. It was a need to find a new type of glue that will stick people together...and this is where the idea of a community that does such things came from.

MKI and I spent hours talking about the concept “community of struggle” and what it meant to young Jewish Jerusalemites at that time. He explained to me that the political context in 2009 developed a need, within the circles of the more liberal Left, to create a large community that fights for something. The struggle, he argued, had a crucial role in connecting individuals and allowing them to be part of a collective. As opposed to the small initiatives on the ground led by human rights organizations (such as protection of Palestinian villagers against settlers, olive harvest, agricultural workdays, and infrastructure building and rebuilding), in 2009 people who saw themselves as belonging to the complex body called the Left were interested in a large scale struggle that would define who they were and what they believed in. The framework of a struggle, he explained, “allows the subject to be who he wants to be...we always look for the big change. The organization and the struggle allow [the development] of consciousness. That, in itself, is a victory.”

In 2009 a group of Jewish Israeli activists wished to reinvent themselves as political subjects, as well as the amorphous political body they were belong to; to construct and share a particular mode of subjectivity which is intimately connected to a particular mode of agency –

²⁸ The elections were held in February 2009, following the resignation of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert as leader of the Kadima party (a centrist liberal political party that was established in 2005 by Ariel Sharon following a rift in the right-wing party, the Likud). Although Kadima won the most seats in the Knesset in the 2009 elections, the Likud leader, Benjamin Netanyahu was able to form a majority coalition government and became Israel’s prime minister.

struggle or resistance. And they wanted to do all that within the socio-cultural framework of 2009 Zionism – a powerful, hegemonic structure, produced and reproduced by people but experienced by the majority of Israelis as a natural fact, as the only possible form of being, thinking, and feeling. Many of them had experience in activism and political work; they were exposed to different aspects of the occupation and its effects on both Israeli and Palestinian society; some were members of human rights organizations and works in the West Bank and other places in East Jerusalem. However, they understood that the “language” or “discourse” they identified with had failed; that the kind of political work they were familiar with could not fulfill their needs.

RI, a humanities scholar in his late 30s who joined the Sheikh Jarrah protest over a year after it started explained to me the experience that many of the protestors were trying to create for themselves:

You start to perceive yourself as a radical, as a radical Left, which means not just to sit at home and talk [about the occupation]...but it's not just that. You are fighting against your socialization. You've been living in Jerusalem for a long time...and you see yourself as part of a milieu which almost by definition is leftist, a very amorphous Left, and suddenly it changes your reference group. Developing political consciousness, this is the most important thing that Sheikh Jarrah did to Jewish Israelis...Sheikh Jarrah not just as a physical space, but as a space that enables a sense of belonging and identification, a space with people...after all, one of the aspirations...was to create a political identity.

Frustrated with the “Left” they were part of – i.e. a political camp that does not struggle on the ground, that does not offer a groundbreaking vision, and which members consider themselves

“leftist” but view this identity and what it symbolizes as a fixed and simplified collection of beliefs – as well as with the seemingly all-inclusive Zionist system in which they lived, individuals who joined the protest in different stages tried to fulfill a desire-based fantasy to create new ways of being, thinking, communicating, and belonging. Their desire was an outcome of lack and dissatisfaction; it was a product of emotions and thoughts that had no place in the socio-cultural framework in which they lived.

It is important to highlight the process of identity production that RI describes in this segment. For him and for many of his partners in the struggle it was crucial to reinvent themselves as a sub-group within Israeli society. In this case “leftist” is perceived as a form of identity that allows individuals to come together and to distinguish themselves from “other” Israelis. As I show in the next chapter, this process of identity production enables “leftists” to form a desired collective and to maintain certain privileges related to their ethnicity, social-economic class, education, and symbolic status.

Drawing on Lacan’s work, Slavoj Žižek develops a theory of ideology that accounts for the role and operations of fantasy in socio-cultural institutions, as well as for the dynamic and unstable relations between the social and the subject. He proposes to examine ideology as a form of fantasy – Ideology, he argues, “resides in externalization of the result of an inner necessity” (1994b, 4). For him ideology is the construction of the “external” based on inner needs; we create circumstances that correspond to our inner desires, but create them in a way that externalize, naturalize, and reify them. He explains:

The externality of the symbolic machine is therefore not simply external: it is at the same time the place where the fate of our internal, most intimate beliefs is in advance staged and decided. When we subject ourselves to the machine of a

religious ritual, we already believe without knowing it; our belief is already materialized in the external ritual. We already believe unconsciously – it is from this external character of symbolic machine that we can explain the status of the unconscious as radically external (1994a, 321).

Žižek's ideas challenge the notion of ideology as a false consciousness or illusion. Ideology as a form of social fantasy exists to cover over lack – the incomplete nature of subjects leads them to fantasize a society with which they can identify. Such an argument can help us better understand EL's (and many other activists') yearning to be part of "something bigger" and their attempt to imagine and create a new social collective based on ideology. "The fundamental level of ideology," Žižek writes, "is not of an illusion masking the real state of things but that of an unconscious fantasy structuring our social reality itself" (1994a, 315).

Aiming to create a community of struggle that would allow them to fulfill their desires and inner necessities as political subjects, Sheikh Jarrah activists exemplify Žižek's ideas and show how social constructs are effects of individual processes. Žižek's arguments are crucial for this study – the perception of social structures as products of desire allow an analysis of these structures as reflections of modes of agency and subjectivity, and as a window through which to examine the dialectical relationships between subjectivity, agency, and structures. In the next chapters I focus on particular aspects of the community established in Sheikh Jarrah as a way to understand these relationships and the meaning of particular modes of agency and subjectivity.

However, whereas Žižek sees the process of ideology production as a form of fetishism through which structures are naturalized and reified, I examine processes of ideology and community production led by individuals who are capable of reflecting on (at least some of) the conditions of their existence and of understanding their socio-cultural world. Thus, in this case,

the study of the processes through which activists fulfilled, negotiated, and challenged their desires through social constructs is an opportunity to examine the “thick meaning” of leftist activism in Israel – the multiple desires it is based upon, the contradictions, splits, and tensions that define it, and the forms of being and acting that animate it and are produced by it. In this case social constructs developed by Jewish Israeli activists are unpacked as dynamic, ongoing processes that some of their aspects are reified and others are not, some challenge other social structures and others only reinforce them, some represent desires of dissent while others reflect desires of reproduction.

Sheikh Jarrah as a “safe” mental and physical space enabled Jewish Israeli activists to perform a “legitimate” crossing of boundaries, to declare that they oppose the occupation, and to show solidarity with Palestinians without challenging deeper divisions and separations that will be discussed in the next chapters. The neighborhood was a convenient place to form a community of struggle which is located, physically and mentally, on the border between “us” and “them.” Such a space allowed Jewish-Israeli activists to reformulate themselves as a separate sub-group, as “different” Israelis, as “leftists”; it enabled them to ask questions about their identity and to develop their self-perception as leftist Israelis. The questions explored next focus on the “content” of this identity and community, and its multiple meanings.

CHAPTER 4

NEW COLLECTIVES? – ON THE REPRODUCTION OF “US” AND “THEM”

Chic Jarrah

Shira Penn was photographed on January 22, 2010. Staring at the camera with a serious expression, the right side of her face is hidden by her long dark black bangs. Her dark black combat boots and pants create a tough look, contrasted by her white, soft sweater. Her hands are hidden in the pockets of her red puffy vest, and a dark brown bag is hanging on her right shoulder. Completing her look is what seems like a layered stringed gold necklace. In the background there are several other people, standing in groups, talking. A few buildings in the far back are also part of the scene, alluding to the urban setting in which the picture was taken. The caption next to Shira’s portrait indicates her name, the date the photograph was taken, her occupation (MA student in clinical psychology), the estimated total number of people attending the protest the day the photo was taken (400), as well as the estimated total number of arrests that took place that day (20).

Yael Saga was photographed on May 14, 2010. In one hand she holds an orange popsicle, in the other a white cardboard sign saying “MITCHELL²⁹ FREEZE THE SETTLEMENT IN SHEIKH JARRAH” written in large red capital letters. She wears black trendy sneakers, gray pants (hidden behind her sign), a gray-blue tight t-shirt, and a blue scarf. She has a stylish short haircut and she wears round fashionable blue glasses. Behind her there is a crowd of people, standing with their backs to the camera. The caption next to Yael’s portrait indicates her name, the date the photograph was taken, her occupation (student in architecture), the estimated total number of

²⁹ George J. Mitchell was appointed by President Obama as the United States Special Envoy for Middle East Peace (2009–2011).

people attending the protest the day the photo was taken (350), as well as the estimated total number of arrests that took place that day (14).

“Every Friday since summer 2009, demonstrations of support and solidarity have taken place in Sheikh Jarrah. The once quiet Palestinian neighborhood in East Jerusalem, soon turned into one of the most sensitive political ‘ticking bombs’ of the region,” Gilad Baram, an Israeli photographer based in Berlin provides background for his work, Chic Jarrah. “What started as a spontaneous joint Palestinian-Israeli protest against the eviction of local Palestinian families from their homes, became a symbol of the fight for freedom of speech following vigorous attempts by the police to put a quick end to the demonstrations. Repeated mass arrests of protestors gave these weekly vigils a certain celebrity in Israel and around the world,” he explains. Introducing his series of photos he writes:

Chic Jarrah is the result of eighteen months of photographing demonstrators in the conflicted neighborhood. As my conceptual/formal strategy I decided to adopt the practice of “street fashion photography” – in which the photographer roams the streets of the metropolis on the look-out for individuals whose appearance catches his or her eye, asks them to step out of the daily routine and submit themselves, on the street, to the act of photography. Chic Jarrah is a “demonstrator’s catalogue” that, among other things examines the demonstration as a social event.³⁰

I met Baram in summer 2012 in a café in downtown Jerusalem, a few weeks before he left Israel to start his life in Berlin. In our conversation he talked about his difficulty, as a photographer, to represent political struggles in a way that goes beyond typical visual images of protests and

³⁰ Baram’s work, Chic Jarrah, was presented in exhibitions in Israel and Europe. His images are available on his website: <http://giladbaram.net/>, as well as on Chic Jarrah website: <http://chicjarrah.com/> (accessed December 29, 2015).

resistance. Making a somewhat similar argument to that of Lila Abu-Lughod in her article *The Romance of Resistance* (1990), he explained that visual representations of protests around the world and in Israel convey a romantic image of political struggles, while underplaying, or ignoring, more complex aspects of such events and processes.

Indeed, many of these visual representations create an image of the activist as a freedom fighter and a justice hero; a portrayal of the protest as a struggle between good and bad/moral and immoral; and a depiction of a political gathering in a public space as an attempt to break free from oppression and exploitation. A quick examination of images from Sheikh Jarrah that have been circulated through a variety of traditional and new media channels reflects this tendency clearly. Determined activists surrounded, threatened, or forcefully arrested by armed police and military forces; evicted Palestinians standing with their belongings outside their houses; activists use creative practices to challenge power and domination (army of clowns, drumming circles, marches, etc.) – all these and many other images focus on the bravery, determination, and creativity of (mostly Jewish-Israeli) activists, the suffering of the evicted Palestinian families, and the cruelty and violence of state authorities and Jewish settlers.³¹

These images depict crucial aspects of the Sheikh Jarrah protest and they have had a profound role in exposing the public to injustices and the struggle against them. However, they oversimplify the dynamics of the protest, while reinforcing problematic binaries and socio-political roles. Images that we usually do not see in the media are those which have the capacity to expose other aspects of the freedom fighters (or the law breakers, as they are depicted in more conservative representations), that attempt to convey a message about both intended and

³¹ For example, see images in a photo essay published in +972 on March 18, 2012: <http://972mag.com/photo-essay-3-years-of-settlement-struggle-in-sheikh-jarrah/38493/> (accessed December 29, 2015).

unintended effects of protests, and that raise questions about the desires, interests, and dynamics that lead people to assemble in squares, streets, borders, and the virtual world.

Employing the language, or style, of street fashion photography for socio-political purposes, while purposely avoiding the usual aesthetics of political images, Baram isolates demonstrators from the cause (political demonstration), as well as from the crowd, and presents them individually, as “regular” people in an everyday moment. The appearance of Baram’s “models” attracts the viewer’s attention – they have the “right” outfits, the “right” accessories, the “right” “total-look.” As Baram explained when we first met:

So I said okay, the visibility of it [of the social gathering] is what I am going to focus on...I adopted the role of a fashion blog photographer [and looked for] people dressed in a way that attracted attention, that created some kind of dissonance with the characteristics of the scene – demonstration...violence, something messy – and their entire performance said: ‘I came to an opening of a Daniel Hill’s exhibition’...and these were the people I identified.

Baram was intrigued by what he saw as a clear contradiction between the context of the gathering and the performance of the people taking part in it. As he mentioned many times in our first interview, he realized that as a member of this collective, who participated in the demonstrations and had a similar performance, he himself embodied this contradiction every Friday afternoon. Interested in further exploring his group of belonging, as well as in documenting the dissonance between the tough political reality in Sheikh Jarrah and the trendy style of his peers, Baram decided to focus on style choices and visibility. For him it was a social issue – his initial objective was to show how a political struggle may function as a social gathering. As PO, another young activists told me about the social role of Sheikh Jarrah: “All of a sudden it became a cool place to go to.

And then people started talking about Chic Jarrah, it was a popular notion in the Jerusalemite scene. People did not use the term ‘hipster’ yet, but hipsters came [to the neighborhood] to look for dates, to interact, they came to see and to be seen. And on Facebook, if you were not tagged in Sheikh Jarrah you were not cool enough.” What Baram and PO tried to emphasize was one aspect of my argument in chapter 3 – for Jewish Israeli activists the struggle functioned as a social scene that enabled them to fulfil their desire to be part of a collective. It was only after Baram had the opportunity to examine critically his final product that he could recognize the political meanings of this particular social gathering. In our conversations he reflected on hidden layers in his work, and in an attempt to answer my questions he exposed unintended messages it carries.

Whereas in chapter three I examined the anxieties and desires that animated Jewish-Israeli political subjects in Sheikh Jaarah, in this chapter I analyze how these anxieties and desires were manifested on the ground, in the context of a protest that aimed to create a new political collective and a particular form of identity (i.e., leftist Israelis). One of my arguments is that particular political practices influenced by conscious and unconscious desires, as well as by socio-cultural structures in which we are embedded, reinforced these socio-cultural structures and forms of injustice associated with them. Thus, practices aiming to challenge oppression and separation are analyzed in this chapter as intended and unintended ways to enhance Jewish-Israeli hegemony and to ensure a division between “us” and “them.” This is not to say that the protest in Sheikh Jarrah had no role in the struggle against the occupation – I claim that the protest have had a variety of effects, and in many cases these were contradictory. Furthermore, the community of “we” that was developed in Sheikh Jarrah included multiple voices and perceptions, and each one of them played a crucial role in the protest. However, in this chapter I am interested in exploring the role of political dissent in maintaining socio-cultural structures and the forms of agency and subjectivity

associated with them. In an attempt to portray a romantic image of political struggles, the literature on social movements and resistance does not engage with such questions. I believe that the analysis developed in this chapter is important for understanding contemporary political developments, but also for developing an analytical framework for the study of the dialectical relationships among structures, agency, and subjectivity.

A crucial aspect of this analysis is an examination of the ways in which the Sheikh Jarrah struggle enabled individuals to develop their identity as leftist Israelis, as well as the meanings of this identity. I argue that in their attempt to reimagine and redefine themselves as leftist Israelis, Jewish Israeli activists distinguished themselves from both Palestinians and “other” Israelis, and aimed to maintain privileges related to their ethnicity, socio-economic class, education, and symbolic status. Through my analysis I intend to reveal the conscious and unconscious processes through which seemingly natural identities are constituted and developed.

I will begin this chapter by exploring some of the “hidden” meanings in Baram’s work, and the ways in which these meanings might contribute to our understanding of the political collective that was developed in the neighborhood. Next I will examine key issues that enable a deep exploration of the questions I raise – numerical advantage and its effects, the conscious and unconscious goals of the struggle as they were perceived in the Jewish-Israeli activist community, and the reasons that attracted Jewish-Israelis to the neighborhood.

Style and Privilege

To begin unpacking the unintended messages in Chic Jarrah, I would like to first focus on the similarities in style choices depicted in the pictures – vintage outfits, androgynous designs, tight jeans and cords, 1960s dresses, chunky jewelry, retro sneakers, round glasses, and so forth. In the

context of Israeli urban culture, these particular fashion choices function as clear socio-political codes. They mark the protagonists as liberals, leftists, critics of popular, mainstream culture, and consumers of what they see as creative and alternative art and culture; the "Bezalely³²-activist look," as some of my interviewees defined it when they tried to explain its meaning, highlights a membership in a particular social and political milieu, and make specific identities visible and recognizable. Thus, in her participant observation exercise for an anthropology class in the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, MA described her experience in a Friday protest in the neighborhood. Illustrating her walk to the neighborhood, prior to the beginning of the demonstration, she wrote:

Along many tourists who came to visit the neighborhood, and busy Palestinians coming back from work, here and there I could notice one individual or two, Jewish, with a typical Bezalely-activist look: worn out, button-down plaid shirt, on top of a t-shirt, casquette hat, too much pose, sun glasses. An appearance that says: We are leftists, we came to demonstrate. All these people were heading toward the square in front of the settlement *nachlat shimon* in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood.

Another young Jerusalemite activists, EL, highlighted the relations among fashion, political identity, and socio-economic status (SES) in a blog entry she posted online, a few weeks after the movement Sheikh Jarrah Solidarity had left the neighborhood. Her text was published, along with other blog entries, in an online collection entitled *Solidarity against Solidarity*, which attempted to reflect on forms of exclusion and sexism in the Israeli Left.³³ "Once upon a time," she wrote, "there was this perception that the entire world should visit Sheikh Jarrah. Tel Aviv, of course,

³² As mentioned in chapter two, many of the protesters were students in Bezalel Academy of Art and Design or had the "Bezalel look" (i.e. the look of trendy urban artists and designers).

³³ The website in which these blogs were published was hacked and deleted. I accessed the website in April 2012 and printed out several blog entries.

was the natural place to organize an event that would generate feelings of guilt and regret among potential activists, for every cup of coffee they order, and would convince them about the social prestige that the demonstrations offer.” She explained that for the Left in Jerusalem it was very important “somewhere deep in [our] subconscious, to maintain a demographic majority of middle-class, intellectual protesters,” and Tel Aviv was the ideal place to recruit such individuals. She was asked by the male leaders of the movement to host the event: “That day...I put on my Tel Aviv uniform...black vintage dress with white polka dots...yellow sandals; I went on the stage and I read in a convinced voice the convincing lines the organizers of the event had written for me.”

Connecting style choices with political views and SES, this activists revealed important meanings of the dominant visibility in Sheikh Jarrah on Friday afternoons. Similar connections can be seen in Baram’s work – Based on their appearance, and even more so, based on their names and their occupations, it is clear that the members of this collective are Jewish Israelis, leftists, (or at least what is perceived in Israel as leftist), most of them are Ashkenazi, educated, and they work in particular fields (humanities, arts, society). As Baram clarified in our first conversation, “I mostly had different kinds of students, university professors, and artists...There were three types of occupation...and it became part of the project. It is clear what the population is and its type of visibility is [also] very clear. Suddenly you realize...that the population is mostly Ashkenazi, from a very particular socioeconomic status, with a visibility which is...these glasses...like me.” By focusing on fashion choices and on visibility in space, Chic Jarrah brings to light the homogeneity of this community, the exclusive togetherness on which it is based, and the clear privileges of its members – European descent, middle class and upper-middle class Jewish citizens of the State of Israel.

To better understand the essence of the connection among occupation, SES, ethnicity, social privileges, and certain style choices, as they are reflected in Chic Jarrah and the texts I quoted, it might be helpful to recount some of Bourdieu's main arguments in his seminal work, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1986a). Based on rich ethnographic data, Bourdieu claimed that taste, style, or "the economy of cultural goods" has a particular sociocultural logic. Taste, he argued, is a cultural product, which should be associated with socio-economic class, beliefs, and education. As opposed to the assumption that taste and style are individual/personal "tendencies" or "characteristics," Bourdieu claimed that people's preferences in fashion, art, food, music, sport, literature, and so forth are a result of socio-cultural structures. Following that, he argued that not only that taste is a cultural product, it is also used to demark social boundaries and social groups, and it functions as a means of competition and exclusion. Dominant or privileged groups use particular forms of taste and style to exclude others and to structure the relations between economic superiority and moral/aesthetic superiority.

The case of Sheikh Jarrah is not identical to the cases examined in Bourdieu's work, but it shares several aspects of the sociocultural logic he analyzed. Whereas Bourdieu's analysis shows how particular forms of style and culture are produced by particular groups as a way to define, maintain, and reinforce social divisions based on class, in Sheikh Jarrah we see an example of how a particular style serves as a way to demark and maintain a political group. But it is more than that – this political group is also defined by particular SES, ethnicity, and occupations. Thus, both in Bourdieu's cases and in Sheikh Jarrah there is an intended attempt to create a closed group, marked by certain style choices, occupations, and SES, and through these practices to preserve privilege and dominancy (some aspects of this attempt are unconscious, or enabled through repetition, but overall there is an intended tendency to mark boundaries and to preserve domination). What Chic

Jarrah and the narratives I quoted point to is how in the context of Israel/Palestine, style, SES, and occupation are also intimately connected to a political world view and to what is seen in Israel as “liberal,” “Left,” “critical,” or “intellectual.” In the previous chapter I argued that the leftist Israelis in Sheikh Jarrah tried to create a community of struggle that would allow them to “fulfill their desires and inner necessities as political subjects.” My objective in this chapter is to reveal some of these inner necessities and to point to the ways in which they seek to maintain homogeneity, separation, and exclusion.

Chic Jarrah depicts Jewish-Israeli, leftist visibility. It focuses on the “looks” of white, intellectual, liberal activists. In the context of a protest that was presented and framed as a “joint struggle,” an outsider observer might find it strange that the catalogue does not include the kind of visibility associated with Palestinians. When I asked Baram whether he photographed Palestinians he replied: “No. Because this was not what I was interested in. Well, there is one Palestinian here actually, because she fitted into the rubric that I was looking for, but most of them did not. It is not the same visibility...” The catalogue does not include “others” that might be perceived different from the Jewish-Israeli, leftist “model,” and especially, it does not include Palestinians. The one Palestinian Baram photographed “matched” the stereotype he tried to highlight, and she was not a resident of the neighborhood.

A stranger might think that the lack of other forms of visibility is a result of the artistic “exercise” Baram practiced. The protest in Sheikh Jarrah has been portrayed in mainstream and social media, by activists, journalists, politicians, and scholars, as a collaborative struggle between Palestinians and Jewish-Israelis, as an ideal form of solidarity and cooperation. Why, then, are there no Palestinians in Baram’s work? Why does Chic Jarrah portray only one type of visibility, that of the dominant, privileged group? I argue that behind the images of trendy, beautiful people,

stand a political “truth”: The “we” of the protest that presented itself as a collaboration between Jews and Palestinians, the community that adopted the term “solidarity” as one of its central identifications, the association of people that was developed in a Palestinian neighborhood in East Jerusalem following an eviction of Palestinian families – this group of belonging was essentially Jewish-Israeli. Baram’s “we” is defined, clear, and exclusive. Despite the attempts of his models to create a performance of difference and uniqueness, the visibility of this collective is homogenous and reproduced. Palestinians were not part of this “we,” and their role in the protest was defined, limited, and controlled.

“I did not try to ridicule,” Baram told me. “These are my friends, these are the people I eventually photographed.” Listening to our first interview soon after I came back to the U.S., and again several times during the writing process, this statement enabled me to better understand particular dynamics that I would further analyze in this chapter. There are crucial parallels between Baram’s mode of creation and the practices of Jewish Israelis in Sheikh Jarrah, parallels that Baram himself pointed to, with great sensitivity and deep awareness of his and his friends’ state of being and thinking. Baram decided to represent “himself,” to create, through images of his peers, a self-portrait; to say something about a group of people to which he belonged; to focus on certain forms of visibility as a way to expose dynamics he was part of. In a somewhat similar way, Jewish liberals “used” the space created in Sheikh Jarrah to focus on themselves, as a community and as individuals who belonged to this community; to fulfill their desires and to realize their imaginations about who they want to be and how they want to be seen. Baram did not photograph Palestinians since they do not have “the same visibility,” or in other words, they are not “him,” they are different, and they are not part of the collective he is interested in. The desire of Jewish-Israeli liberals to form a community of struggle in space was based on a particular imagination of

such a collective. In reality, the perception of “us” was extremely narrow and exclusive. Although Sheikh Jarrah is a Palestinian neighborhood and the protest has been initiated in response to the eviction of Palestinian families from their houses, the community that was created in this context was mainly for and of Jewish Israelis from a particular background.

The image of “we” portrayed in Chic Jarrah is at the center of this chapter. I claim that the struggle in the neighborhood was essentially Jewish and Zionist. The diverse and complex circle of activists in Sheikh Jarrah included different forms of thought and practice; however, the dominant tendency was to use the neighborhood as a space as well as a symbol to revive the same Left I analyzed in the second chapter of this work. Thus, notions such as “the New Left,” “joint struggle,” or “solidarity” should be critically examined. I assert that structures of power and privilege are produced and reproduced by individuals, actively and passively, consciously and unconsciously. The issues I examine in this chapter reveal this work of production and reproduction, as well as the contradicting dynamics that allow it.

Numerical Issues and Beyond

People who attended a Friday demonstrations in Sheikh Jarrah when the protest was at its peak could easily notice the dominant presence of Jewish-Israelis in space. In the most basic level, this dominancy was reflected in numbers. Every Friday afternoon hundreds, and on some weeks thousands of Jewish-Israelis “swamped” (to use some of my interviewees’ term) the neighborhood’s main square, next to the playground, the small grocery store where they bought colorful popsicles, and the streets of the houses that were evicted, when the police allowed them to do so, or when they practiced civil disobedience. Many of them looked like Baram’s models, they had the Bezalely-activist look; and in a similar way to Chic Jarrah, it was difficult to identify

Palestinians in the crowd. Although in Baram's work this reality is purposely radicalized (his catalogue includes only one "type" of people and it ignores other forms of visibility that were part of this protest), it points to an important issue – the dominant visibility in space was a Jewish-Israeli, leftist one. Palestinian activists, residents of the neighborhood or residents of other neighborhoods and nearby villages, joined the demonstrations, but their numbers were low and their visibility in space was profoundly less dominant.

As explained in previous chapters, in the first weeks of the struggle only a few Jewish-Israelis were involved. "We did not think it would reach thousands of people. We had no idea. The goal was to bring close friends," ML, one of the young Jewish-Israeli women who initiated the protest told me. "People that if they knew about this, they would get upset. These were the people we were looking for. Not the Israeli consensus...and no Israeli Left and no discourse of Left and Right," she explained to me. In the first few stages of the struggle, this small group of Israeli activists was focused on the four families who were evicted, and their objective was to expose their story and to recruit other Jewish-Israelis who might be able, as a collective, to influence Israeli authorities and to help the families to return to their homes. Broad political questions regarding East Jerusalem and the occupation in general were not included on their agenda. "I was interested in the personal story, the private people," ML clarified. It is important to mention that the evicted Palestinian families were involved in the decision to march from West to East Jerusalem, and that most of them were interested in collaborating with this core group of Jewish-Israeli women.

However, realizing that the story of the families and the marches had the capacity to attract Jewish-Israelis to the neighborhood and to expose them to structural forms of injustice in East Jerusalem, the core group, which grew rapidly, started working on attracting "mainstream Jewish-

Israelis” and expanding the circle of Jewish-Israeli activists. PO who joined the core group of women in the early stages of the protest, explained:

Even before the marches started...I wanted to focus on Israeli society. Not from a self-righteous position, but because I could communicate with the Israeli side, and it was not like that with the Palestinian side...It is enough to influence a small percentage of the population to create a change. And against this [idea] there was the anti-Zionist discourse that some of the anarchists promoted, and it came from a place of despair and frustration with Israeli society. Their struggle comes from the most desperate place – “there’s nobody to talk to, the only thing that can be done is to give ourselves away fully, and to struggle with the Palestinian, under their terms.”

Activists such as PO, CO, and AH, believed that it was possible to influence Israeli society and to attract Jewish-Israeli individuals to the neighborhood. They did not talk nor think in terms of “movement” or “the Israeli Left.” Their goal was to help the four evicted families to return to their houses, and they believed that exposing Jewish-Israelis to the local story, as well as to broader processes in East Jerusalem, would enable them to make a change. However, I argue that in addition to these objectives and perspectives, these young activists acted based on inner desires to create a space for themselves and to develop a community of struggle. Unlike “the anarchists” who sought to redefine the “we” of the struggle and their role in it, the core group, although they developed strong connections with the Palestinians, believed that they could still influence Israeli society and they saw themselves as part of this society. Their perception of “we” was Jewish-Israeli – a “we” that collaborates with “the other,” but as two separate groups. As I showed in chapter 3, Sheikh Jarrah as a “border space” that was seen by Jewish Israelis as the “backyard” of

West Jerusalem, functioned as an ideal space for high numbers of Jewish-Israelis who sought to differentiate themselves from other Jewish-Israelis who are not “like them,” but were not ready to challenge physical and mental boundaries radically.

Some may argue that the profound difference in numbers reflects a “problem” or a “complexity” within Palestinian society, and that the dominant presence of Jewish-Israelis in the neighborhood is a hopeful sign of support and solidarity. KS, one of the leaders of Sheikh Jarrah Solidarity, conveyed this logic in our conversation:

...our model was that we were always trying to work with a community. We did not go [to a Palestinian space] if we were not invited. We tried to create a collaboration. In sheikh Jarrah it was a bit problematic...middle-upper class neighborhood, alienated from Palestinian political activity, and with no presence of parties and [no presence of] even Palestinian social clubs. Suddenly we found ourselves in a situation where the strongest Jewish activity [at that time] took place in the weakest Palestinian neighborhood in the area. We had to maintain an image of collaboration, which was simply not true. We tried working with whoever was there, but it was only a few individuals.

It was one of the few times that a central figure in the movement acknowledged the gap between the image of the struggle, and the true dynamics on the ground. But for the purpose of my analysis, another important issue is KS’ explanation for the Jewish-Israeli domination in space – according to KS, the majority of Sheikh Jarrah residents were not political agents, they did not take part in any organized activity (political or social), and comparing to the Jewish groups, they were a weak collective. Jewish Israelis, thus implied in his explanation, wanted to develop a strong

collaboration, but when they realized they could not achieve this objective they decided to continue their activity in the neighborhood while maintaining an image of “true partnership.”

The assumption that Palestinians in the neighborhood were non/less agents, as well as a weak political community comparing to their Jewish-Israeli partners, was repeated, in different ways, in many of the conversations I had with Jewish Israeli activists. Thus, when I asked RI, a dedicated activist about his relationships with Palestinians in Sheikh Jarrah he replied: “there were no relationships. Almost none. It was not my focus.” He argued that when he works with Israeli Palestinians within “proper Israel” (i.e. Israeli territory before 1967) the situation is different. With them he is “emotionally involved,” because they see local activism “as an aspect of a broad political agenda. “We have much in common with these people, politically. We could work together...as real partners in a struggle.” When I asked him how he saw the difference between Israeli Palestinians and Palestinians in East Jerusalem he said:

I don't think that I share a similar political agenda with representatives of the Popular Committees of East Jerusalem, except for very particular issues. For example opposing the transformation of East Jerusalem into [Jewish] settlements...But I do not think that in East Jerusalem, among ordinary people, messages such as two states or a divided city with East Jerusalem as a Palestinian capital are that strong...it is not something that comes up in conversations with ordinary people. It does come up with people who are politically active, but not with ordinary people. Because what they want is to make a living and to move [freely], they have no connection to the Palestinian authority, really. They want to stay in their houses...and they want to get connected to electricity and water, [they want] that their houses will not be demolished, and to have enough classrooms and

things like that. For Israeli leftist groups to say something like that is very complicated. Because what you really say is let's complete the annexation.

According to RI, one of the main reasons he could not develop meaningful relationships with residents of the neighborhood (and that most of them did not attend the demonstrations) was that their view of the struggle was less political than his and other Jewish Israelis in the Left. Here he expresses a somewhat similar argument to that of KS, although he reveals additional layers of the dynamics. I will further analyze his response in the following paragraphs, but I want to point to his distinction between political people (the Jewish Israeli Left and Israeli Palestinians) and ordinary people (Palestinians of East Jerusalem), his definition of "political" (fighting for a two-state solution and refusing to accept the 1967 occupation) and "a-political" (fighting for basic civil rights and for "reasonable" life conditions, even if that entails an acceptance of Israel's rule), as well as his argument about his inability to form relationships with people who see things differently, even when it is clear which side is oppressed and which is more privileged.

Although the common reactions to my questions regarding the clear Jewish-Israeli demographic advantage in the demonstrations emphasized "problems" within the Palestinian community, there were several responses that challenged this perspective. To unsettle KS and RI's arguments I focus on several claims made by another activists in an interview I conducted with her in the neighborhood. TI is a Palestinian activists, in her late twenties. She has an Israeli citizenship, and she lives in Jerusalem but not in Sheikh Jarrah. She has been working with several social justice organizations and she has experience in organizing grassroots struggles in Israel/Palestine. She completed her undergraduate and graduate studies abroad, and she has done research on activism and social justice. At the beginning of my interview with her, TI told me that when she joined the demonstrations in January 2010 she had a "bad feeling" about the relationship

between Israelis and Palestinians: “it was strange...I remember that from the very beginning I looked at all the people involved...and I said, something would go wrong, it would fall apart...something with the dynamics did not feel right...the dynamics with the Palestinians and the dynamics within the group, with new people that tried to join.” I asked her to explain what she meant, what exactly did not “feel right” to her. First she focused on numbers and on the marginal presence of Palestinian residents of Sheikh Jarrah in the struggle: “...not the entire neighborhood was there. You went to the protest and the [residents of the] neighborhood were not there. There were two, three, ten people from the neighborhood.” I asked her what the low numbers reflected. She argued that Israeli activists “did not do the right thing” when they initiated the protest. Instead of visiting all the families in the neighborhood and asking them about their needs as well as about ways to work together, the Israeli activists, she asserted,

...were selective, they chose who to talk to...this happens in the villages [in the West Bank] as well, not just here. But the result here was different. Here it’s Jerusalem, not a Palestinian village, so it’s easier for Israelis to take control, because these are their neighborhoods too. In Bil’in they cannot organize a demonstration of their own...I think that from the very beginning there was a mistake in how they communicated with people from the neighborhood. They had to invest more effort in really talking with everybody and bringing everybody, in creating some kind of unity...Maybe if they had brought more Palestinian activists to do this work, it would have worked...

She agreed that there have been complex dynamics in the neighborhood, between its Palestinian residents, and that old rivalries and lack of collaboration on everyday issues have influenced the residents’ willingness to work together and to collaborate with “external” groups, especially

Jewish-Israeli ones. However, she insisted that there were additional explanations for this reality, and that Jewish-Israeli activists should not “blame” the neighborhood for the lack of collaboration. She pointed to the strong connection between the Jewish-Israeli activists’ perception of the neighborhood as “their home,” and their comfort in swamping its streets every Friday afternoon and controlling the struggle. She repeated the argument that Jewish-Israeli activists developed a protest “of their own” in a Palestinian neighborhood, and that they were not interested in understanding the life and desires of their “partners.”

AJ expressed a similar views. I asked him how he perceived the name of the movement Sheikh Jarrah Solidarity; if for him it meant solidarity between Israelis and Palestinians or something else. His response was unequivocal:

No no! It was not solidarity with Palestinians...I thought it was solidarity among ourselves [Jewish-Israelis]. It is interesting that there are people who think that they [members of the movement Sheikh Jarrah Solidarity] had any solidarity with the Palestinians. Look at this struggle from the very beginning. How many Palestinians were there?...So few, and even those ran away as fast as they could. That was not coincidental. There was no space there for Palestinians. So they chanted a little bit in Hebrew and Arabic. Yay...And from the neighborhood almost nobody was there.

The argument that “there was no space there for Palestinians” was expressed in different ways by individuals who, at some point of the struggle, realized that its exclusive “character” did not allow them to be part of it, or by individuals who acknowledged this situation in retrospect, in their conversations with me. I was interested in exploring why this space was not available and how dynamics of exclusion looked like. “It was a Jewish Israeli struggle” many told me. As TI continued to clarify:

For me, as a Palestinian activist, it felt strange. I was very active and I wanted to be part of this, but it felt like it was not my arena. There was no space for me at all, I did not know how to get in. There was no possibility, there was not even a small door left open. And at some point it stopped being about the neighborhood, and started to be about the movement...It felt like a massive Israeli force invaded into the neighborhood...

The “force” was not just numerical. In the context of collaborative struggles, the strong connection between high numbers of activists from the privileged group and their domination in space, action, and planning is a crucial issue which is rarely discussed nor analyzed. On July 10 2012, Linah Alsaafin, a Palestinian writer based in Ramallah, published an editorial in the online magazine *The Electronic Intifada*, which stirred profound reactions in the press as well as among activists in Israel/Palestine. Her claims shed light on some of the ways in which a “joint” struggle transforms into a Jewish-Israeli one. Entitled “How Obsession with ‘Nonviolence’ Harms the Palestinian Cause,” one of the article’s main arguments was that in the context of Israel/Palestine there is no such thing as a “joint struggle” between occupiers and occupied. The term “joint struggle,” Alsaafin clarified, “implies a degree of equality or at least symmetry, and that is definitely not the case between Israelis and Palestinians, even if they are dodging the same rubber bullets and inhaling the same tear gas” (2012). According to Alsaafin, Israeli activists should be seen, by themselves and by others, as solidarity activists, “just like their international counterparts.” She argued that the fact that there is no “Palestinian leadership able to lay out a strategy for resistance and mass mobilization,” makes it difficult to clarify what the objectives of the Palestinian struggle are, and how solidarity activists should support it. However, for her there are clear boundaries that should be kept – Israeli activists should not take a decision making or leadership role in the

Palestinian struggle; they should stay in the periphery and follow the agenda dictated by Palestinians.

Criticizing what is seen as “popular” Palestinian demonstrations in West Bank villages, supported by Israeli and international activists, Alsaafin called Israelis to avoid “swamping weekly protests that don’t hold much credibility with Palestinians in the first place” (2012). As happens many times, Israelis outnumber the Palestinian participants in these demonstrations, and even when they are aware of their problematic position in the struggle, their dominant presence reinforces the power relations they aim to challenge. In her article Alsaafin quoted Eltezam Morrar from the Palestinian village *Budrus*, who led the women in her village to protest against the occupation. Morrar shared her fear that Palestinian struggles are not fully led by Palestinians: “Any international or Israeli who wants to join us in our demos is welcomed, she told me. But as my father once said, we are the ones who put the agendas for the resistance and the Israeli or international supporters follow it. Nowadays I am not really sure if the agendas are 100 percent Palestinian” (Alsaafin 2012). Alsaafin clarified that many of the Israeli activists who join the demonstrations in the West Bank understand their position and role as occupiers, and are aware of the complexities associated with their presence in such demonstrations. However, as she adequately explained, “simply calling yourself an anti-Zionist, and even coming to protests is not enough. Israeli activists who do so claim...to understand the privileges they enjoy due to being white and Jewish in a colonial situation. But it is not always clear that they understand in practice how these privileges continue to manifest themselves in their interactions with Palestinians” (2012).

Alsaafin’s text reveals unspoken dynamics within “joint” movements and struggles, and purposely avoids any romantic or idealistic descriptions of collaborations between Jewish-Israelis

and Palestinians. In the context of this chapter it is important to highlight the concerns both she and Morrar express towards a Jewish-Israeli “swamping,” as well as the clear connection they make between this phenomenon and other ways through which Jewish-Israeli privilege is maintained. In the long interview I had with CO, she exemplified some of the “tendencies” Alsaafin and Morrar explain in this controversial article. She told me about her experiences volunteering with NGOs in third-world countries, emphasizing how she realized, for the first time, the implications of “white” social justice work in a colonial setting, and the ways in which privileged people might be perceived by underprivileged or oppressed communities. This experience, she explained, enabled her to better understand the complexities associated with “joint” struggles between occupiers and occupied, colonizers and colonized, and influenced the ways in which she communicated with Palestinians in the neighborhood.

[I realized] that in the context of Israel/Palestine I had so much privilege, as a white Jew who entered their neighborhood. What kind of privilege and what kind of problematic power relations. I felt that I had power that they did not have. The fear from soldiers that I did not experience, and the fear from police, and how [police and military officials] talked to me and how they talked to them [the Palestinians]. It was very clear that I was in a different place...and obviously it was a very uncomfortable position to be at...And although they did not say that, I understood [their suspicion].

Acknowledging the unavoidable power relations and the suspicion some residents of the neighborhood had towards the “Jewish-Israeli young women,” CO attempted to develop strong personal relationships with the families and to create a meaningful collaboration:

We worked on their terms and there was some kind of openness towards us...it took some time, at the beginning, to gain trust. There were specific people...from the neighborhood, who were suspicious towards the Jewish young women who wonder around the neighborhood...You probably heard about normalization³⁴...There were a few people...It was very difficult for them to deal with our presence there ...there was a feeling that they didn't want us to dictate anything, that they felt that even this collaboration is dangerous for them. There was this hesitation, they didn't really explain this.

However, as explained earlier, the high numbers of Jewish-Israelis who attended the demonstrations on a weekly basis, coupled with the strong desire of many of them to find a new space so as to establish a community that would enable them to interact with others “like them,” led to what ML described as a “takeover of the neighborhood” by Jewish Israelis. As explained in

³⁴ As Aziz Abu Sarah argues, “since the Oslo Accords ‘normalization’ has become an out-moded term, a catch-all argument against Israeli-Arab cooperative efforts and a cover for character assassination in Palestinian politics” (Abu Sarah 2011). However, its meaning is vague, and different individuals and groups use it in different ways and for different purposes. In an attempt to clarify the crucial political idea behind the term, the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott published a nuanced analysis of the term and its usages. Thus, the group argues that “It is helpful to think of normalization as a ‘colonization of the mind, whereby the oppressed subject comes to believe that the oppressor’s reality is the only “normal” reality that must be subscribed to, and that the oppression is a fact of life that must be coped with. Those who engage in normalization either ignore this oppression, or accept it as the status quo that can be lived with.” In their text normalization is broken down into three categories. (1) Normalization in the context of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the Arab world: “For Palestinians in the occupied West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and Gaza, any project with Israelis that is not based on a resistance framework serves to normalize relations. We define this resistance framework as one that is based on recognition of the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people *and* on the commitment to resist, in diverse ways, all forms of oppression against Palestinians”; (2) Normalization in the context of the Palestinian citizens of Israel: “The second form of normalization is that in which Palestinian citizens of Israel do not have to engage as a requirement of survival. Such normalization might include participation in international forums as representatives of Israel...or in Israeli events directed at an international audience....when Palestinians engage in such activities without placing them within the same resistance framework mentioned above, they contribute...to a deceptive appearance of tolerance, democracy, and normal life in Israel.”; (3) Normalization in the international context: participation in events that “morally or politically equates the oppressor and oppressed, and presents the relationship between Palestinians and Israelis as symmetrical.”

the previous chapter, Sheikh Jarrah was the ideal space and story for such a takeover (which was not necessarily a conscious one).

AH, who joined the interview with CO tried to explain to me the complexities and tensions associated with this “takeover” (he agreed with ML’s perception). Responding to CO’s arguments about her privilege he said: “There was this confusion when you started working in the neighborhood, and this confusion would be part of this struggle, till the very end. And it [the struggle] would also fall apart because of this confusion...confusion of power relations.” CO affirmed his argument: “Exactly...I don’t know if to call it confusion. It is lack of awareness. Very problematic lack of awareness about power relations between Israelis and Palestinians. When we work together we simply don’t come from an equal place...We go to their neighborhood, it’s their life. We go back to our home in *Rehavia* at the end of the day, we would not be evicted tomorrow.”

Confusion, or lack of awareness, was, indeed, a dominant aspect of the dynamics in Sheikh Jarrah. However, as CO, AH, and many of the other “players” I interviewed revealed to me and to themselves in our conversations, explaining some of the processes in the neighborhood as merely a “confusion” or “lack of awareness,” would be too simplistic. The following sections focus on particular examples that further reveal the complex and interrelated dynamics behind what might seem as isolated cases of confusion or lack of awareness.

Political Action across Difference

In his response I quoted in the previous section, RI pointed to what he saw as a profound difference between Palestinians of East Jerusalem, and Israeli Palestinians with whom he collaborated in the past. Whereas the Israeli Left and its Israeli Palestinian partners promoted a two-state solution agenda, thus he argued, Palestinians of East Jerusalem were not interested in “big issues” such as

a permanent solution to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. According to RI the main objectives of East Jerusalem Palestinians was to secure basic civil rights and to improve their living conditions, even if that entailed an acknowledgement of Israel's control over East Jerusalem. As a member of the Israeli Left who perceived his political duty to work towards a clear separation between Palestinians and Israelis, RI found the communication with East Jerusalem Palestinians difficult and challenging. In a similar way to other Jewish Israeli activists in the neighborhood, RI chose not to communicate with "the other side," and to focus on issues and messages he found appropriate, within the context of his political cognitive map. Thus, although he argued that the residents of the neighborhood were less interested in ideas such as two states, he was a dominant activists in a movement that called for the division of Jerusalem between Palestinians and Israelis based on the Green Line.

MKI's understanding of the lack of communication and "true" collaboration with East Jerusalem Palestinians has the capacity to shed more light on these issues, and to unsettle some of RI's claims. In our second interview MKI clarified that "the other" in this struggle (i.e. the Palestinians on the other side of the Green Line that separates East and West Jerusalem) was radically different from what he and his friends imagined; that the assumptions that Sheikh Jarrah was "home" and that the Palestinians who lived there were similar to "us" in their interests and political perceptions, was inherently biased. For him the struggle in Sheikh Jarrah was not a "partnership"; at best it was a "collaboration", and most of the time it was merely a Jewish-Israeli project. Instead of developing a radical protest based on a strong partnership that explores people's different ideas, beliefs, and interests, the struggle in Sheikh Jarrah was a collaboration between Jewish Israelis and an "external" group, or a struggle of the privileged "side." Trying to explain the reason for the deep separation between "us" and "them," MKI mentioned the deep mental

division between the two sides of the Green Line. He insisted that the reason for the lack of communication and understanding was the symbolic border that was created in 1948 and challenged by Israel in 1967. “Eventually these are two sides,” he said. “And even though there is no agreement on two states between us and the Palestinians, it is still very...much present. It is present mentally, in a very deep way. The line that separates East and West Jerusalem is not the same line that separates Jaffa and Tel Aviv, or even Tira and Ra’anana³⁵, [in the sense of] history of collaboration and other aspects of Israeliness.”

Whereas in RI’s response the idea of two-states is evoked as a way to differentiate between political people and ordinary people, the Israeli Left and people “who want to make a living,” in MKI’s response it is provoked as a way to explain the mental divisions that separates “us” from “the other.” According the MKI the dominant role of the two-state solution in the discourse of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict have led to profound effects on the ground that limit individuals’ capacity to communicate and to act politically, across differences. MKI argued that in the case of Sheikh Jarrah, as well as in other instances, there was a clear necessity to form meaningful partnership with “the other,” based on a true desire to understand “the other side” and to explore a variety of interests and ideologies:

There is something new here, a necessity to develop partnership when we don’t really understand each other politically. I remember that in the big demonstration suddenly RB [a Palestinian resident of the neighborhood] brought Fatah flags from the car. I couldn’t understand where it came from. Really?! Fatah?!³⁶ As Israelis

³⁵ Tel Aviv and Ra’anana are “Jewish” spaces in the center of Israel. Tira and Jaffa are “Palestinian” spaces, also located in the center of “proper” Israel.

³⁶ Fatah, the Palestinian National Liberation Movement, the dominant member of the greater Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), is perceived by many Israelis as a radical political organization.

we know very well the organizations that operate within the Israeli Left, whether it is a Jewish-Arab Left, Arab only, or Jewish only...Another example, Israeli activists from our groups had no idea that a large group from the Palestinian People's Party joined the protests in Sheikh Jarrah. Nobody knew what groups operated on the ground. Eventually, we had no idea who we worked with. We knew specific people...the connection was on a personal level, which was great, but it did not promote a political struggle in a profound way. With the Palestinians, the main people [involved] were residents of the neighborhood. These things meant a lot to them, it was their struggle. And with the Israelis it was people who led a political movement that at some point started to have a national role. There is a big difference here.

The way in which most Jewish-Israeli activists addressed these dynamics was to establish a movement based on their interests and ideologies, and which operated in a way that enforced their privilege. Thus, after the establishment of the movement Sheikh Jarrah Solidarity in March 2010, discussions regarding the goals of the movement, ways of operation, particular issues related to the protest, negotiations with the police, and so forth took place in the Jerusalem Assembly (the members of which usually held their meetings in West, Jewish Jerusalem) and later in both the Jerusalem and the Tel Aviv assembly, political collectives the members of which were Jewish-Israeli only. Representatives of these Jewish-Israeli assemblies met with Palestinian residents of the neighborhood on a weekly basis to discuss particular issues and to coordinate events, processes, and decisions; however, it was perceived by both Israeli and Palestinian activists that Solidarity Sheikh Jarrah was a Jewish-Israeli movement, aiming to revive the Left in Israel, and led by Jewish Israeli individuals as well as Jewish Israeli assemblies. Many of the individuals involved were

interested in a collaboration with Palestinians, but this collaboration had to serve the goals of the Israeli Left.

An example that might clarify how these perspectives were manifested on the ground is the ways in which decisions regarding the “big demonstration” in March 2010 were made. I quote here AH and CO, but similar sentiments were shared with me by other individuals. According to CO, the idea to organize a large-scale demonstration in the neighborhood was initiated by a Palestinian resident of the neighborhood. JI, one of the dominant leaders of what soon would become a movement was invited to a meeting of the joint committee to start planning the event. The Palestinians were interested in recruiting Bedouin and Palestinian organizations to participate in the event, and their suggestion was to hold it on a Friday afternoon, after the Muslim Friday prayer. Friday afternoon, they argued, would be an ideal time for Palestinians, and an opportunity to connect different protests that usually take place on Friday afternoons.³⁷ JI refused – Friday, he argued, was inconvenient for Jewish Israelis. On Friday afternoons Jewish Israelis are busy with preparations for the weekend, the Israeli media would not show up on Friday, and usually demonstrations of the Israeli Left take place on Saturday evenings, after the Shabbat ends. Moreover, one of the arguments that was made in this conversation was that Saturday evening was a symbolic time in the tradition of the Israeli Left, since Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (Labor party and the “architect” of the Oslo agreements) was murdered on a Saturday evening in a big demonstration of the Left that took place in Tel Aviv on November 4 2005. “At some point in the conversation,” CO told me, “JI simply said ‘I bring the money. I’ve just received money from Peres Center for Peace, around 50,000NIS...I’m not going to do the demonstration on Friday. Not

³⁷ For a more detailed explanation of the importance of Friday afternoon in Israel/Palestine, see chapter one.

going to do it.’ He simply vetoed the idea.” The same evening JI organized a meeting in West Jerusalem with dominant Jewish-Israeli activists “without the Palestinians,” CO clarified.

And he said, “listen, no way. I understand [the political situation], they don’t.” But some of us argued with him. We told him “you can’t. They say that they want to do this on a Friday then we have to do this on a Friday. And it is important to bring Palestinians.” And he replied “I bring the money. They don’t bring people [Palestinians]. They promise and they don’t bring people. For now we are the ones who bring people [Jewish-Israelis].”

There was this sense of patronization – ‘we know what works, politically,’” AH added.

But what SJ was basically saying was “I can connect you [JI] with many important [Palestinian] struggles,” and JI refused. But six months later JI would make the same connections. And what JI was basically saying was “as long as we control the struggle, we will connect these Arabs, and these Arabs, and these Arabs. You [SJ] cannot tell me [JI] that you can make the connection.” By the way, it was exactly like Oslo, divide and rule, and then to also claim that we work in full collaboration. That was exactly what [generally] happened there [in the Sheikh Jarrah struggle], but that was the first time it was so apparent. And in the same conversation JI also told you [CO and her friends] that you had nothing to do in East Jerusalem, because all the decisions were made here, in West Jerusalem.

As a way to conclude this section, I would like to point to several important issues in this description. First, this example and the way it was analyzed by AH, CO and other activists highlights the perception of Palestinians by dominant Jewish-Israeli activists as politically and intellectually inferior to them. It reflects the hegemonic view within the circles of the Jewish-

Israeli Left, according to which Jewish Israelis have greater ability to analyze political situations, to think and act strategically, and to develop complex collaborations. Furthermore it emphasizes the premise that overall Jewish-Israeli leftists are more committed to end the occupation than their Palestinian “partners.” Second, this example reveals the priorities that guided many of the Jewish Israeli activists in the movement. For them it was crucial to attract as many Jewish Israelis as possible and to use the struggle as a way to expand the circles of the Jewish Israeli Left. The initial goal of the struggle, i.e. to help the evicted families to gain ownership over their houses, was no longer the main objective. As I shall explain in the following section, the (conscious or unconscious) “focus on the movement for the sake of the movement,” to use TI’s words, is what clearly exposed here. Third, the narrative described above exposes a key pattern in the relationships between mainstream Jewish-Israeli leftists and Palestinians – an inability to communicate and work through difference due to mental and physical boundaries, feeds into a desire to enhance these boundaries, as well as the structures of oppression and privilege associated with them.

Fourth, the narrative points to another crucial pattern in the dynamics between Jewish-Israelis and Palestinians, “divide and rule,” which has been a dominant “principle” in Israeli/Palestinian relationships since the development of the Oslo Accords³⁸ in the 1990s. The Oslo agreement, which was portrayed as a “peace agreement,” enabled the Israeli government to pass all the civil institutions in the West Bank and Gaza to the hands of the PA, without renouncing its sovereign authority over the two regions. As Neve Gordon claims, “Israel transferred responsibility for the occupied inhabitants and in this way dramatically reduced the occupation’s political and economic cost, while continuing to hold on to most of the territory” (2008, 20-21).

³⁸ The Oslo Accords are a set of agreements between the State of Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA), which were signed in 1993 and 1995.

Instead of reaching an agreement regarding the withdrawal of Israeli rule in these areas and the end of the Israeli occupation, the Oslo Accords reorganized and restructured Palestinian space in a way that enabled Israeli authorities to continue controlling the space and the resources within this space, without “managing” the population. A crucial argument in Gordon’s book *Israel’s Occupation* in the context of this discussion, focuses on the illusion of democracy enabled by the Oslo agreement. Gordon argues:

The reorganization of power and the division of the occupied space into small archipelagoes whose external borders were controlled by Israel ensured that the PA would not be sovereign...the raptured space of the OT [Occupied Territories] was simulated as a coherent state...The January 1996 elections, whereby the Palestinians chose both a president and legislative council were also part and parcel of Oslo’s controlling apparatus...Their [the elections] goal...was to create among Palestinians, Israelis, and outside spectators, a sense that the OT had been freed from foreign rule and that consequently the Palestinians could determine their own destiny (2008, 180-181).

What AH alluded to in his analysis of the “big demonstration” case is that the influence of these dynamics of “divide and rule” and “illusion of freedom,” which have been constructed and reinforced by agents operating in different levels and in both “sides” (Israeli and Palestinian), can be seen in everyday practices of individuals. Based on such conversations with activists, as well as on my own observations, I argue that some of the practices of Jewish Israeli activists both reflected and continued to develop these structures of relationships and control. Dominant figures within the movement, who grew up in this framework and developed their political consciousness in the years after the Oslo agreement, tried to create an illusion of collaboration and equality (after

all, they were educated to believe that Palestinians deserve independence and freedom), while maintaining their full control over the protest, its goals, and its main practices. It is important to mention that the Oslo agreement was developed by the Israeli Zionist Left, and more specifically, by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin from the Labor Party. For some of the activists in Sheikh Jarrah Oslo was the model for positive collaboration and communication between Israelis and Palestinians.

Last, this example reveals more critical and radical voices within the circles of the Israeli Left. Although they were silenced and pushed to the margins, several Jewish Israeli activists expressed alternative perceptions and discourses, and aimed to unsettle the structures in which they grew up and lived. They were exposed to critical texts, conversations, and interactions that unsettled hegemonic views in the Left, and were involved in political activity that radicalized their thought and practice. Unlike more “traditional” activists they were more open to “the other” and were capable to recognize, if not to fully understand, complex situations and interactions on the ground.

Reviving the Left for the Sake of the Left

In the first chapter of this work I discussed two texts that focused on the main objective of the struggle – the revival of the Israeli Left. The first is a speech entitled “There’s a New Left in Town,” given by a dominant female activists in March 2010, in the “big demonstration.”³⁹ The second is the article “Two Doctoral Students' Journey to Revive the Israeli Left” (2011), published by Akiva Eldar in the daily newspaper *Haaretz* almost a year after the “big demonstration.” Through these texts, dominant figures in the movement expressed their vision of the New Left in

³⁹ Approximately 5000 people participated in what later was labeled “the big demonstration” in the neighborhood.

Israel, and the conditions that would allow its success in the political arena. Two interrelated ideas were presented in both texts. The first, which I discussed in the previous section, focused on the need to collaborate with Palestinians and to form strong partnership. The second idea was that the New Left should be based on dialectical relationships between local, grassroots social justice work on the ground, where injustice takes place, and more broad politics, aiming to challenge structural injustice or structures of power on a national level.

As emphasized in the speech:

This left is a partnership of Palestinians who understand that the occupation will not be stopped by missiles and bombs, and of Israelis who understand that the Palestinian struggle is their own. The New Left links arms with Palestinians in a cloud of tear-gas in Bili'in, and with them, bears the brunt of settler violence in the South Hebron Hills...All those who came here tonight...despite the threats and intimidation – we are all the New Left that is rising in Israel and Palestine...we believe that injustice is the main obstacle to peace. Until the Ghawis, the Hanouns and the El-Kurds return to their homes, there will be no peace.

Similar ideas were echoed in Eldar's text, which was based on an interview with Inbar and Sharon. "The two doctoral students, the religious Tel Avivian and the secular Jerusalemite," Eldar wrote, "have discovered that the struggle over Sheikh Jarrah has become the way to revive the Israeli left and build a bridge connecting Jews and Arabs" (2011). In his concluding sentence Eldar quoted the two: "We are not romantics, an aid organization or a human rights organization...We aren't coming to help, but to work together. We go to Taibeh or Dahmash, an unrecognized village next to Lod, in the belief that practical, ethical and political Jewish-Arab cooperation is Israeli society's only life preserver."

Within the circles of Sheikh Jarrah activists, the March demonstration marked the transition from an “activist group” to a “political movement.” The goal of the individuals who promoted the idea of a movement was to influence power structures in Israeli society and to bring about a profound political change. They wanted to go beyond the one-issue political activity (in this case, Sheikh Jarrah and the evicted families), and to challenge broader political and social systems. However, as declared in what has become to be known as the founding speech of Sheikh Jarrah Solidarity, the movement aimed to develop a strong partnership between Israelis and Palestinians, and although it sought to challenge broader structures of injustice, its members clarified that the “one-issue” that sparked the struggle is at the center of their activity. They promoted a bottom-up politics, initiated and centered around particular cases of injustice, and argued that “moving” back and forth from the particular to the general would enable them to challenge the occupation and to resist institutional and structural discrimination. Eldar’s article (2011) further emphasized the idea that a local struggle has the capacity to revive and redefine the Left, based on a “true” collaboration between Israelis and Palestinians, as well as on dialectical relationships between particular and broad issues. In this section I am interested in exploring the ways in which the second idea (regarding the relationships between local and broad issues) was manifested on the ground, and how it “served” the goal to revive a Jewish-Israeli political collective.

When I asked CO about her original objectives when she initiated the struggle she replied:

I had this context [challenging the structure of occupation] in my head, but overall I was motivated by personal feelings. I loved these families very much, I felt very connected to them, their story tore me apart...I wanted to see them going back to their homes, I did not want to see other families getting evicted. But of course, I knew...that it wasn’t just in Sheikh Jarrah. I mainly wanted that Jerusalemites from

the West would get to know East Jerusalem. I wanted Israelis to come here and see, and that the Israeli media would cover that, and that there would be some Israeli resistance. That was my dream.

AH, who joined the interview, was eager to further clarify this point. For him it was one of the crucial “lessons” one could learn from the Sheikh Jarrah struggle, and one of the main reasons for what he saw as the failure of this movement. “You asked if for her it was about these four houses and preventing other evictions, or that it had a broader political context...I joined this struggle holding a perception that there was a need to connect struggles, that in Jerusalem one could see things that were also happening in Hebron.” AH believed that new leftist initiatives had to expose the structural connections between local events and transformations. Against the perception of Israeli society that these were isolated, unrelated “happenings,” as well as against the tendency of the Left at that time to avoid “broad politics” and to focus on specific places and people, AH and others believed that radical political activity in Israel/Palestine should reveal the similarities between these places and the forms of injustice taking place in them; they were convinced that an “inductive approach” to politics would enable them to highlight the similarities between different “elements,” and to point to the policies, beliefs, laws, ideologies, and so forth, that stand behind these seemingly isolated cases.

However, this attempt, thus according to AH, has had contradicting effects:

This concept was one of the best things that came out of this protest, but at the same time, it destroyed it...For these families the stakes were too high...[after the protest ended] they were left even more exposed, more hurt, their lives became a circus, the [Jewish] settlement [in the neighborhood] became stronger...What happened was that instead of talking about these four houses and the evictions, people started

thinking in a political, much broader way, and it became very cool. I also believed in that, the idea was to connect all the struggles and it led to a crazy transformation in Jerusalem...East Jerusalem became an issue...They raised awareness and developed broad politics and created more activists...but the victims of this big politics were not the Jewish activists. All the victims were these families. [Jewish activists] practiced media work on them, practiced political work...There was something wonderful in that, but it was on the expense of someone else. And because of that, the ending of our interview would have to be sad...The interview would end...with a group of men that sit in a room and simply decide to stop coming [to the neighborhood], that politically the struggle in the neighborhood was no longer beneficial. And this is the entire story. It is right to do broad politics, but it is also very right to remember what the specific story is. When the politics became the only thing important here, with whom to mingle on Friday, what demonstrations can be connected...people forgot the details...The dismantling was processual but so severe that nowadays there are Palestinians... that say “were you with the Sheikh Jarrah group? No no, we don’t want anything with you.” That was the normalization. To transform it into Israeli demonstrations, for Israeli audience, based on Israeli decisions.

This long excerpt from our conversation is fraught with meanings and crucial insights. There are several issues that should be emphasized. First, AH acknowledged that the attempt to develop and practice “broad politics” that connected seemingly isolated cases and pointed to the similar processes that stand behind them, have led to a profound change in Jerusalem. As explained in chapter one, prior to the protest in Sheikh Jarrah the streets of Jerusalem were depoliticized, the

Left in the city did not do much on the ground, and there was no awareness, in the media as well as among ordinary people, to the profound transformations taking place in East Jerusalem. Weekly demonstrations in the neighborhood, materials produced by the movement, appearances of activists in courts, and messages conveyed by activists through a variety of media channels – all these served a broad political goal and enabled people to see the “bigger picture” and to move beyond perceptions of interpersonal oppression to ideas of institutional or structural oppression.

However, the second issue I am interested in is AH’s argument regarding the forms of exploitation, conscious or unconscious, that were integral part of the “big politics” Sheikh Jarrah Solidarity was interested in developing. The argument behind his fruitful examples is that instead of basing their political work on the complex relationships between local events and broader developments, and insisting on transformations on all levels, the local was “used” as a tool or means. As such, the neighborhood and its residents were seen, by the dominant activists in the movements, as means that should serve bigger, more important causes. In many ways, they were instrumental in this process of struggle.

To further analyze this phenomenon, the third issue I would like to point to is AH’s assumption that the “bigger more important cause” was not necessarily the dismantling of the occupation or even particular aspects of it. The main goal, although for some it was unconscious, was to revive the Israeli Left, as a social collective which is based on mainstream national and political divisions. As AH emphasized, these were “Israeli demonstrations, for Israeli audience, based on Israeli decisions.” In her narrative TI alluded to the same argument. “At some point,” she said, “it stopped being about the neighborhood, and started to be about the movement.” She talked about the possible tension between particular issues and the larger picture: “It’s completely right, it needs to be connected to the rest of East Jerusalem and to the issue of the occupation. But that

not what happened. It became larger but it became around the movement as a movement. The movement became a movement for the sake of a movement...they became stickers, they became a tag, a brand name.” For key figures in the movement, as well as for many Jewish Israelis who attended the Friday demonstrations, the protest was a way to fulfill their social needs (i.e. a space where they could be with others “like them”) and/or an opportunity to gain political power in Jewish-Israeli society. In their attempt to fulfill these goals they neglected or abandoned the initial objectives of the protest, and most importantly, reinforced power relations between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians. They focused on practices that enabled them to attract more Jewish-Israelis to the neighborhood, the Israeli media, as well as mainstream public figures that could help them legitimize the struggle and make it more appealing to the Zionist Left and Center; they invested much time and effort in “branding” the struggle as a trendy liberal gathering that had the capacity to bestow its participants with social capital, to use Bourdieu’s notion (1986b). Although they claimed that their objective was to fight the occupation, I argue that their focus on such practices and sub-goals changed the essence of the struggle dramatically, but it also reflected a deeply rooted desire in the Israeli Left – a desire to be part of an exclusive, superior and privileged community. The following short discussion on the self-perception of Jewish Israeli activists as the main victims in the struggle further unpacks these internal desires and mechanisms.

The Left as a Victim

As noted, the images of Jewish-Israeli activists in Baram’s catalogue, Chic Jarrah, were accompanied with a caption indicating the number of arrests that took place the day the picture was taken. The emphasis on this detail, rather than on details related to the neighborhood and its Palestinian residents, highlights the “real” focus of the struggle. As Baram himself clarifies in the

introduction to his work, “what started as a spontaneous joint Palestinian-Israeli protest against the eviction of local Palestinian families from their homes, became a symbol of the fight for freedom of speech following vigorous attempts by the police to put a quick end to the demonstrations.”

In April 2011 Mairav Zonszein, a Jewish-Israeli writer and activist, published an article in the daily *Haaretz*, entitled “Signs of Authoritarianism.” Examining arrests of Jewish-Israeli activists in Sheikh Jarrah by Jerusalem police she wrote: “Arrests of Israeli protesters on the rise; This is a tactic often used by the police to keep activists away from demonstrations for a substantial period of time, effectively stripping them of their right to protest, weakening the entire movement.” Violent arrests of non-violent activists attracted the media to Sheikh Jarrah and led to the publication of many articles and blog entries online such as Zonszein’s, focusing on police brutality and its ongoing attempts to limit Jewish-Israeli activists’ freedom of speech and their right of assembly. I argue that although Israeli authorities indeed practiced severe violence against Jewish-Israeli activists in Sheikh Jarrah, such forms of brutality benefited the struggle and allowed many Jewish Israeli activists to present themselves as the victims of this struggle and to appropriate the protest for strengthening their social capital and their privileges. I claim that the struggle in Sheikh Jarrah enabled the “New Left” to create an image of itself as an oppressed collective. I argue that this image reflected inner beliefs of individuals who saw themselves as members of this collective; their perception of themselves as an oppressed group that needed protection and justice allowed Jewish-Israeli activists in Sheikh Jarrah to develop a movement focused on themselves as a marginalized group, and to advance their privileges on the expense of their Palestinian partners.

When I asked KS about the presence of police forces in the first marches from West to East Jerusalem he told me that in the third march he and some of his friends, who later would become the leaders of Sheikh Jarrah Solidarity, noticed that the police was “on a verge of losing control.”

Facing with new political activity that aimed to unsettle the depoliticized “character” of the city the police was not prepared to respond appropriately, in a way that would enable it to control the events. Unlike other situations in which the police used extensive force against protesters and they did not use it for their benefit, this time a few activists decided “to fight back.” Fighting back meant releasing strong statements to the media, but also being more “proactive” on the ground and leading the police to conduct more arrests – “We decided to be braver,” KS explained, “we invited experienced activists...anarchists” – these activists “knew what to do” in order to trigger the police and the outcome served them well. The police arrested over 15 protesters and held them in custody for the night. It is important to mention that from that moment the police did not need much encouragement in order to use extensive force against protesters, as well as illegal practices aiming to keep specific activists away from the neighborhood. However, what should be emphasized is the strategic planning behind the first incident of massive arrests, and the understanding of activists that clashes with the police have the capacity to promote the struggle and to expand the circles of activists. Thus, although they purposely presented conflicts with the police as an attack of the powerful on the powerless, and as a way to reinforce their moral character, many activists clearly understood the profound role of these conflicts in the success of the struggle. A clear evidence to that is their acknowledgement that one of the reasons for their decision to leave the neighborhood and to end the protest in winter 2012 was the disappearance of police forces from the neighborhood, after two and a half years of struggle.

After hearing from several Jewish-Israeli activists that the violence exercised by the police, as well as the struggle of activists on the ground and in courts against the police attracted more Jewish-Israelis to the neighborhood, I began asking specific questions about these dynamics. I became even more curious after my conversation with AJ, who described the ways in which

activists triggered the police and argued that Sheikh Jarrah became a “sexy place” that attracted “people who were looking for such things [clashes with the police].”

I realized that although all the Jewish-Israeli individuals I interviewed emphasized that they joined the struggle to protest against the injustice implicated on Palestinians, one of the crucial reasons that attracted them to the neighborhood and/or transformed them into committed “Sheikh Jarrah activists” was their feeling that their rights, as liberal leftists, were under attack; that it was them who were the victim of police brutality; that one of the main things they share with other protesters is the experience of oppression due to their political views and practices. Thus, for example, when I asked AP, a young male Jewish-Israeli activist, about his motivations to join the protest he replied honestly:

I believe that if I hadn't been arrested, I would have never come back [to the neighborhood] again and again and again...When I talked about Bi'lin I said that the [Palestinian] residents have an acute interest because it is theirs. I think that here [the arrests] that was the case. Once it was mine, [the struggle] became much more important. It became something I had to devote my Fridays for, repetitively. I was never too involved in the neighborhood...in relationships with its residents. I think that, really, honestly, that was a secondary reason [for participating every week].

When I asked several activists about high moments in the struggle, events that changed something in their perception or practice, all of them mentioned their arrests. Along with descriptions of police brutality, their fears, and their realization that state authorities are not necessarily interested in justice, they emphasized that the arrests made them feel part of the collective, that they contributed to their commitment, and that they made them realize that their political freedom was in danger.

Using the discourse of civil and human rights in the media and in courts in order to fight for their “freedom of speech” and their “right of assembly,” Jewish-Israeli activists have led to the transformation of a protest against the occupation into a struggle for the rights of the Israeli Left. In her blog Radical bi, Israeli writer and activists, Shiri Eisner wrote about this phenomenon in the Israeli Left in a text she published on January 20, 2013:

I don't know any other country in the world in which the focus of the Left is the rights of the Left. However, in Israel this is exactly the case. Unlike Left movements abroad, which focus on solidarity with oppressed groups, here [in Israel] the Left is the oppressed group for which the Left fights. Behind a thin rhetoric cover of a talk about different groups (women, gays and lesbians [but not bi and trans], poor [but not Mizrahi] and of course – the Palestinians), what is usually revealed is the intense concern of the Israeli Left only to itself, while other groups and issues – and especially the occupation – are used as both a lip service and a smoke screen behind which the “real” issue is hidden...recently there has been a development of an approach according to which the Left is an *oppressed minority group* that needs rights and protection (Eisner 2013).⁴⁰

I argue that the phenomenon Eisner described in 2013 can be seen clearly in the dynamics in Sheikh Jarrah a few years earlier. What motivated many of the Jewish-Israeli activists in the neighborhood was the opportunity to focus on their interests as Jewish Israelis and to build a community of struggle that aims to protect their rights. In her text Eisner explains why she intends to vote for an Israeli Palestinian party, Balad (National Democratic Assembly), in the next elections for the Israeli Parliament. For her, a party that calls for the transformation of the State of

⁴⁰ Eisner's text was published in Hebrew. The translation is mine.

Israel into a “democracy for all its citizens” and that opposes the idea of Israel as a Jewish state offers a “real” challenge to the Zionist Left. “Unlike the narcissist Left, which is occupied with itself only,” Eisner writes, “my purpose in voting for Balad is to put my interests as a Jewish woman and as an ally in a marginal place. To vote according the interests of the oppressed group...the way this group defined them, and not the way the Jews decided. I believe that if we manage to free the space for Palestinians, we will all leave with a profit” (Eisner 2013).

On Sameness and Difference in Political Work

In *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963) Hannah Arendt discusses the opposition of the Danish government and people to the Nazis during the Second World War and their refusal to follow anti-Jew measures. “One is tempted to recommend the story as required reading in political science for all students who wish to learn something about the enormous power potential inherent in non-violent action and in resistance to an opponent possessing vastly superior means of violence,” Arendt writes (1963, 171). In her article “Solidarity after Identity Politics: Hannah Arendt and the Power of Feminist Theory” (1999), American philosopher Amy Allen points to several interesting aspects in Arendt’s discussion about the Danish resistance. For my purposes three aspects seem particularly important. First, Allan argues that in her account Arendt emphasizes that the Danes resisted the Nazis in terms of the Jewish identity that was under attack. Allan clarifies:

...when the Nazis approached them about distributing the yellow star, the King of Denmark vowed to be the first to wear it, even though he himself was not a Jew. Thus, it is possible to resist *in terms of* the identity that is under attack without being a member of the group whose identity is under attack. One does not need to ‘be’ a Jew to resist in terms of a Jewish identity under attack. Thus, Arendt’s view is that

collective political movements are held together not by a shared identity, but by the shared commitment of distinct individuals to work together for the attainment of a common goal (1999, 112).

Unlike many of her humanist colleagues who tried to blur identity difference and to promote assimilation, Arendt refused to ignore the crucial political role of identities of oppressed and marginalized people. For example, in her address on accepting the Lessing Prize of the Free City of Hamburg, Arendt wrote: "...the basically simple principle in question here is one that is particularly hard to understand in times of defamation and persecution: the principle that one can resist only in terms of the identity that is under attack" (Arendt 1968, 18). For Arendt resistance is a response to an attack on a certain identity, and as such, it must be executed in terms of this identity. Rejecting identity categories, or prioritizing privileged identities, is an anti-political act which renders resistance against oppression impossible. Arendt's observations provide an analytical framework through which we can better understand the dynamics in Sheikh Jarrah. For her, oppressed identity is not predicated on shared social characteristics, shared history, or a shared experience of oppression; an oppressed identity is a political fact "through which my being a member of this group outweighed all other questions of personal identity or rather had decided them in favor of anonymity, of namelessness" (Arendt 1968, 18). And as a political fact that has a productive role in socio-political life, as well as clear effects on the lives of individuals who are part of a particular identity group, it can be resisted. However, the only way to resist this role and these effects, is in terms of the identity under attack.

Another important aspect is Arendt's analysis of Danish solidarity with Jews is her framing of this case as an instance of power. As Allen writes: "indeed, she indicates that it is a textbook case of her own conception of power as the ability to act in concert. Thus, it is clear that, according

to the account that we might glean from Arendt's work, solidarity is based not on a community of feelings, but on a community of action. But, in Arendtian terms, this is the same as saying that solidarity is an expression or a modality of power" (1999, 112). For Allen, Arendt's perception of solidarity as a form of power enables us to see solidarity as "the collective power that grows out of action in concert" (1999, 112) binds members of a particular struggle together, and allows them to build coalitions with other movements. According to Allen, this conception of solidarity is not predicated on an exclusionary and repressive conception of identity. It is based on inclusion and action, as well as on the basic understanding that particular forms of identity, as a political fact, necessitate more protection than others.

Last, the story of the Danish people exemplifies Arendt's idea of "plurality," and its role in political work. In her seminal work *The Human Condition* (1958), Arendt argues that "while all aspects of the human condition are somehow related to politics," she writes, "this plurality is specifically the condition – not only the *conditio sine qua non*, but the *conditio per quam* – of all political life. . . . Plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live. (1958, 7–8). For Allen, Arendt's notion of plurality reflects the idea that "we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live" (1999, 105). Its essence is a dialectical tension between identity and non-identity, between sameness and difference. Since plurality is the condition for political life, this tension is at the core of Arendt's perception of politics as well. One of Allen's main arguments is that Arendt's ideas allow us to better understand how individuals who belong to different political collectives can be united in a way that protects, embraces, and explores difference. In her writings Arendt opposes the idea that group solidarity is a product of shared identity "if that identity is

understood as resting on an inherent sameness, be it a shared essence, a shared experience of oppression, or what have you (Allen 1999, 107). For Arendt the unitedness of many into one is inherently anti-political. However, on the other side, action in concert would be impossible if individuals had no commonalities. Thus, radical political action is based on the dialectical relationships between difference and sameness. Or as Allen puts it, “action in the political sphere always involves both appearing before our equals and revealing ourselves as unique, distinct persons; action both individuates and establishes relationships; it sets us apart and binds us together” (1999, 106).

This short discussion about Arendt’s ideas is used here as a way to conclude a chapter that focused on the ways in which particular forms of political agency, which were developed in the context of the occupation, both challenged and reproduced hegemonic socio-cultural systems; a chapter that aimed to further explore the complex interaction between structures, forms of agency, and forms of subjectivity. Through the examples I analyzed in this chapter I aimed to reveal how particular desires, anxieties, and perspectives influence our perception of ourselves and the other, as well as our capacity to challenge these perceptions. In this analytical context Arendt’s ideas offer an alternative political thinking, and “force” us to ask critical questions about the socio-political collective that was developed in Sheikh Jarrah. Against attempts to reinforce divisions between “us” and “them” and to underplay the role of oppressed identities in a political struggle, Arendt argues that a radical and meaningful political practice must be based on difference, and must challenge social, cultural, and political divisions. Moreover, she claims that in solidarity struggles only one form of identity, as a social construct and a political fact, should be at the center – the identity which is under attack. I shall conclude this discussion with Arendt’s words:

. . . politically and psychologically, the most interesting aspect of this incident [the Danish resistance]. . . [is that] it is the only case we know of in which the Nazis met with open native resistance, and the result seems to have been that those exposed to it changed their minds. They themselves apparently no longer looked upon the extermination of a whole people as a matter of course. They had met resistance based on principle, and their 'toughness' had melted like butter in the sun. (1963, 175).

CHAPTER 5

NEW MIDDLE EAST – CROSSING BOUNDARIES, UNSETTLING DIVISIONS

In June 2012, a few months after Sheikh Jarrah solidarity had left the neighborhood and its leaders, Avner Inbar and Assaf Sharon had announced their “resignation” from their leadership position, Inbar participated in an academic conference in Tel Aviv University where he lectured on the concept “solidarity.” It was the 8th meeting of The Lexicon Group, an interdisciplinary group of scholars led by Israeli philosopher Adi Ophir. As stated on their website, the Lexicon project attempts to reintroduce a series of basic questions focusing on “the reciprocal relations between mechanisms of the state, and the market; political theology and religious politics; the institution of citizenship and the distinction between citizens and non-citizens; the global political order and the new forms of rule it engenders; and more.” The group emphasizes that a theoretical exploration of these issues has a particular importance in the context of the State of Israel “whose establishment was never anchored in a strong tradition either of political theory or of constitutional law, and in which still today there is hardly any critical thinking about the most basic foundational political questions and assumptions.” Returning to the most ancient philosophical question – “What is X,” the group invites scholars from different fields to explore particular political concepts (such as ‘state’, ‘sovereignty’, ‘democracy’, ‘refugees’, ‘testimony’, ‘equality’, and so forth), and to present their analysis in publications and/or oral presentations.

I was surprised to see Inbar’s name and the title of his talk on the program for the groups’ 8th meeting. In the months after the protest ended Inbar and Sharon could not be reached by their former political partners, and attempts to confer with them on issues related to Sheikh Jarrah Solidarity were met with disregard or rejection. For me it was an important opportunity to better

understand Inbar's view on the political events in Sheikh Jarrah. Although the talk was presented as a theoretical analysis of the concept, it was clear to me that it would not be based solely on an abstract, philosophical examination. Inbar was a PhD student in political philosophy at the time, but his motivations to talk about this concept soon after the controversial ending of the struggle in the neighborhood could not be entirely theoretical.⁴¹

When I arrived to the room in the humanities building in Tel Aviv University it was already very crowded, and I could identify several individuals who were involved, in some way or another, with the struggle in Sheikh Jarrah. The type of "visibility" in the room was that of Chic Jarrah – most of the attendees were Jewish, white scholar-activists, and many of them were dressed in trendy outfits that signified their social and intellectual status. "Solidarity is a popular political term, yet highly neglected theoretically" Inbar stated at the beginning of his lecture. "Despite its dominant role in political ideology and practice, both in the Left and in the Right, the concept of solidarity has received very little systematic attention in political thought." Although, as I will discuss soon, Inbar offered a theoretical framework for the analysis of the concept, his discussion was an attempt to articulate a new agenda or vision for the Israeli Left, one that may enable its revival as a leading political idea and practice. Thus, through the concept of solidarity he both criticized contemporary leftist groups in Israel and offered them a new framework for thought and action. Inbar avoided any discussion about Sheikh Jarrah Solidarity. His critique was aimed towards other groups in the Left, and his recommendations seemed to be based on his personal analysis of theoretical debates, as well as of the reality in Israeli society.

⁴¹ Inbar gave his talk in Hebrew. The English translation of parts of his talk discussed in the following paragraphs is mine. A video recording of the talk is available on the Lexicon Group's website: <http://mhc.tau.ac.il/lexspace/?p=871> (accessed December 29, 2015).

At the center of Inbar's analysis was a somewhat dichotomist distinction between solidarity as a moral idea and solidarity as a political principle. "Before its transformation into a word that indicates moral support, or identification with the victim," he argued, "solidarity actually signified the effort to build, to use Arendt's words, a community of interests. A united community that aims to empower people to save the interests of the oppressed." Solidarity as it is understood and practiced by contemporary leftist groups, is focused, according to Inbar, on the oppressed "other," on the victim. However, as a principle for political action the main question that should guide solidarity is not "who seems more oppressed" or "who suffers more," but rather who has the capacity to function as an ally for an effective political action. More specifically, Inbar claimed that in some cases, the left should not collaborate with oppressed Palestinians, but rather with other groups within Israeli society.

Crucial to his understanding of solidarity as a political principle was his assumption that such a community of interests should be defined by citizenship (as opposed to nationality or religion). He rejected the idea of forced nationalistic unity that has been developed in the circles of the Right, but warned the Left from giving too much precedence to "cosmopolitan solidarity" over local, Israeli one. Thus, the interests that should be protected and fought for in the context of solidarity actions are the ones of the common good, of the local civil community. Criticizing the "reflex of groups within the Israeli and global Left to express their righteousness through almost-religious fixation with the purity which the weakness of the victim represents for them," Inbar emphasized that the Left should expand the circles of civil solidarity by recruiting groups that would enable it to challenge power relations in society. In some cases such groups do not fulfill "the moral standards of the Left," he explained, but a close collaboration with them might change the current political balance in Israel.

To better explain his idea (which made many leftist scholars in the audience to squirm uncomfortably on their seats), Inbar used an example from a demonstration that took place in Tel Aviv a few days before the talk. During the demonstration, which called for social justice and a welfare state, demonstrators tried to show that although police forces used heavy violence against them, they were actually on their side, as victims of contemporary economic and social structures in Israel. As a response, Inbar explained, a radical leftist activist tweeted “the demonstrators proclaim, ‘the policemen are with us, they do not have apartments’. They have more solidarity with policemen than with Palestinians.” Analyzing this example in light of his arguments about the meaning of solidarity as a principle for effective political action, Inbar claimed that forming solidarity with policemen rather than with Palestinians was the right thing to do. He admitted that policemen that used violence against demonstrators may not be the ideal candidates for changing power relations in society, but argued that the attempt to include them in “our” circle of solidarity “is bolder and smarter than the leftist tendency...to alienate whoever is not fulfilling our moral standards.”

According to Inbar, the tendency of the Left to show Solidarity with “the other” and to focus on the struggle against the occupation should be balanced with an attempt to build a civic Israeli community and to strengthen “solidarity within.” He argued that the revival and reorganization of the Left in Israel necessitates the development of a strong foundation for civic Israeli solidarity. Thus, trying to develop solidarity with groups that do not necessarily oppose the occupation is, in some cases, more important than protesting side by side with Palestinians. While emphasizing the need to acknowledge the suffering of “the other” and to oppose injustice, Inbar asked the Left to focus on building ties of citizenship and developing political commitment among

Israeli citizens. For him the interest of the Left should be a mutual commitment of citizens to improve their life together rather than a moral commitment towards “the other.”

When the talk ended somebody finally asked Inbar how his perception of solidarity was influenced by his experience in Sheikh Jarrah. “Son of a bitch” whispered one of Inbar’s friends in the audience, referring to the person asking the question. Inbar answered that his thoughts were very much influenced by this experience. He did not add any further details and waited for other people to ask questions. It was not the only critical question he had to face that afternoon. One of these questions focused on the essence of “we” that Inbar proposed – why do one has to form his/her “solidarity circle” based on citizenship? Why does the Israeli Left have to continue reinforcing divisions based on citizenship status? In his response Inbar made it clear that if the Israeli Left is interested in ending the occupation and challenging oppression within Israel, it has to strengthen Israeli solidarity. “Who are you to tell me to what circle of ‘we’ I should belong to?” one of the radical scholars in the room replied back. For this scholar, whose work seeks to unsettle the ideas of the Zionist Left regarding separation, division, and civil identity based on “Israeliness,” the assumptions that the Left should refrain from collaboration with Palestinians and that the victims of the occupation should not be its “natural” partners were seen as a clear contradiction to the idea of social justice.

In many ways Inbar’s talk provides explanations to some dynamics in the Sheikh Jarrah struggle. However, I argue that explaining the dynamics in Sheikh Jarrah by pointing to particular individuals’ perceptions, in this case Inbar’s, would not allow a deep understanding of the meanings of these dynamics. What is reflected in this lecture is not just a personal political view, but also the structures in which such views are developed and which such views are reproduced. As a political subject Inbar offers his personal analysis of the Israeli Left. He has the capacity to

influence this Left, to change it, or to maintain it. But he is also a product of this Left, and his ideas that are based on mainstream division between “us” and “them” echo particular perceptions in the Zionist Left, and strengthen them. In the following section I discuss other perceptions of solidarity and identity that were expressed and developed in the Sheikh Jarrah struggle. These perceptions have the capacity to challenge basic political assumptions in the Israeli Left and to further explain how certain dynamics in this struggle have led to its ending.

An Arab-Jew

Almog Behar defines himself as an Arab-Jew. He is a Mizrahi (Jew of Arab descent) writer, literary critic and activist. His fiction and poetry explore the relations between Hebrew and Arabic, Judaism and Islam, Jews and Muslims. He works with a community of Jewish and Palestinian Israeli writers, who write in both Hebrew and Arabic, and has participated in the organization of bilingual poetry readings and the compilation of Israeli and Palestinian poetry collections. Behar was involved in the struggle in Sheikh Jarrah in different ways. He joined it in its early stages, and in 2010 he wrote a poem entitled Sheikh Jarrah 2010. This poetic description of the struggle offers a unique perspective that explores the complex dynamics between activists, Palestinian residents of the neighborhood, Jewish Orthodox settlers, the police, and the Israeli military:

“There is no sanctity in an occupied city!”

Protest slogan. Sheikh Jarrah.

1.

With drums we ascended Derekh Shekhem road. Yet all the way

I worried that the noise was disturbing the neighbors’ rest,

I was reminded that I'm not happy when drums pass on my own street.

And I worried that the beat was too cheerful to express the sadness
of those who were thrown to the streets, the anger of those from the streets.

2.

I am a Jew of beards, of glasses of tea, of a messiah
who will no longer come, of many commandments that for generations I have been promising
my heart I'll fulfill but I don't succeed, of the remembrance of the sanctity of Arabic words
in the Hebrew tongue. And for a moment, from opposite sides of the barbed-wired fence
that has sprung from the doorstep of the Ghawi family who were thrown to the streets, we met,
members of two faiths—different, but sisters.

He has a beard too and memories and his face is cut by the fence into scores of
pieces, and he hurls heavy accusations at me like a brother,
that I have become exilic, he rages, riddled with self-hatred, a lover
of Arabs, a traitor, an informer on his own people in poems, more dangerous
than the anti-Semites, a Capo, and he reminds me with fierce descriptions
of the incinerators of Auschwitz and of the outstretched hand of God who promises
to return his people to his land or his land to his people.

For a moment I thought we might return to being members of the same faith,
two Jews tired of accusations. And I took his hand
and suggested that we go to the grave of Shimon
the Righteous One, and cry greatly over the righteous man and the wounds we have inflicted
on his old heart, until perhaps the righteous man will cry over us and the depth of the fracture
that is threatening to break us and the land of Israel, between Germany and Palestine.

3.

I just got to Sheikh Jarrah and already I'm looking for Jews. As if I arrived in a faraway country and am looking for nine friends for a quorum, or a corner with kosher food and Sabbath and holiday meals. I'm the distance of a ten-minute walk from my house, my synagogue, the time of Sabbath's entrance nears and I whisper to my God that it should be right in his eyes, the cry of our slogans, as if I am fixing the Sabbath before him repairing her in all her aspects, and as if I am praying the evening prayers of Shabbat before him with all of the right intentions.

4.

And I sought to pass the police barricade, to go down and pray at the grave of the righteous man with the rest of the worshippers who arrived bathed and festive. We will sing before the righteous man with great joy and greet the Sabbath queen. And I'll ask him to permit me to pray among the criminals, and to justify the actions of the protesters who desecrate the Sabbath in order to sanctify the name of the heavens in Jerusalem.

5.

And one night I dreamt: We'll come to Sheikh Jarrah for a protest, regiment by regiment of the expelled, and with us will march the Yemenites expelled from the Kineret village, the Jewish Hebron refugees of 1929, the Arabs of Ba'ka, Talbieh, Katamon, Meah Sha'arim, Lifta and Ein Karem expelled during the Nakba, the Jewish quarter refugees expelled in '48 by Jordan, and in '67 their homes were nationalized

by the government of Israel to be sold for great profit leaving them refugees, the Palestinians expelled from the villages surrounding Latrun in '67, the Mizrahim expelled from the Yemin Moshe neighborhood after years in the eye of the target, to make room for painters and artists, the residents of unknown Bedouin villages in the Negev, the mortgage defaulters expelled from their homes by eviction crews, the Jaffa and Musrara residents forced to vacate their homes to make way for the rich, and the people of Silwan, a demolition order threatening their homes.

5.

And one night the Jerusalem mayor dreamt: Sheikh Jarrah will be concrete, a giant parking lot, and whoever saw a date here, and whoever saw an olive, and whoever saw a grove will see a massive lot of cars, till the ends of the horizon, like a shopping center in a peaceful American town. All the parking problems of Jerusalem will be solved in Sheikh Jarrah, maybe the world's parking problems will be solved in Israel, all of Palestine covered in concrete, because the solution is in concrete that will finally subdue the fight over the holiness of the land, which will disappear.

6.

And we stand, hundreds of protestors, facing the barricades at the neighborhood's entrance. We are advancing and retreating, dodging the police, returning to their arms, moving in circles, nearly reaching the officers and turning to run. They strike us like angry fathers yearning to discipline, like school children craving revenge.

We don't know whether to ask them to spare the old,
the pregnant women, and the children, or to stand and receive their blows with love,
whether to turn and run again, in order to return.

7.

And we stand, hundreds of protestors, facing the barricades at the neighborhood's entrance.

The policemen, who have just returned from a course, watch us with eyes
weary of the extra shift we've forced on them, of their meager salaries,
of the cries of protestors and commanders. They worry
the protest will run into the Sabbath again this week.

And their commander orders them to clear us off the road, if they don't clear the road
he'll cancel their day off, and with every blow we hate them
and forget their commander, the mayor, the courthouse.

In my heart I wanted to cross to their side, take their commander's
megaphone and achingly ask the protesters to disperse, to cry out:

This week we won't declare the protest illegal, no,

We're just asking that you disband in exchange for our salaries

this-or-that amount of shekels for every hour of protest, because we promised our wives

we would be at Shabbat dinner, this week go protest at the mayor's house, the prime minister's
house, the house of the millionaire who buys them houses, protest

in your parents', your neighbors' living rooms, just leave us be, this week, please.

8.

On the way to the protest the muezzin sings from the mosque tower in Maqam Saba.

And I sing quietly to my God in the same note: May our eyes behold

your return to Zion, mercifully, mercifully.

9.

Shimon the Righteous was one of the last survivors of the Great Assembly,
student of Ezra the Scribe, teacher of Antigonus of Socho,
and he used to say: On three things the world stands,
on the Torah, on divine service, and on acts of loving-kindness.

And we are not his students nor his student's students,
And the fear of the heavens is no longer upon us as it was upon them,
And we do not seek to act with loving-kindness save
toward ourselves, and the world does not stand.

We forget that we were strangers in the land of Egypt, forget
that there is but one law for us and for the stranger
who lives with us, forget that the Hanoun family are not strangers
to this land, that the Al-Kurd family are not strangers
to this land, that the Ghawi family are not strangers
to this land, and we continue to forget.

10.

By the courtyard of the expelled Hanoun and Al-Kurd families a border patrol soldier
calls my name. What are you doing here? He asks me the same question
I would ask him. Only a year ago we were reading Aristotle, Maimonides,
Al-Ghazali, Zhuangzi together, and now he's guarding
the houses of the evicted from the protestors. This guy was my teacher, he says, embarrassed,
to a soldier who joins the conversation, and complains: they all hate us,

they're angrier at us than at pilots who drop bombs,
they curse us out, and in the end we have to separate between
fighting children here like babysitters, what do you have to say about that?
And I said nothing, in my mind I was still trying to connect
Maimonides and Al-Ghazali to the Sheikh Jarrah expulsion (Behar 2010).

Behar's poetry in general, and Sheikh Jarrah 2010 in particular, forces the reader to question taken-for-granted cultural and physical borders. A close reading of his poetic narrative has the capacity to destabilize seemingly fixed categories of identity, and to challenge the binaries that dictate relationships in Israel/Palestine. Although this poem carries many important messages, in my short analysis I shall focus on the ones that enable a better understanding of the issues discussed in my work and that may shed light on the main questions I raise.

"I am a Jew of beards, of glasses of tea, of a messiah," Behar writes. Against the trendy, secular, white-European visibility of the activists photographed in Chic Jarrah, Behar portrays himself as a "traditional," diaspora, or "old-fashioned" Jew, but also as an Arab-Jew. His beard has an important symbolic role in the image he creates – it is associated with images of Orthodox Jews, as well as with images of Muslims or Arabs. In an interview to *Haaretz* entitled "Faces and Interfaces" (Eliahu 2011), Behar explains his thoughts on visibility in Israel/Palestine. Describing the conversation he had with his former student, now a border patrol soldier whom he met in Sheikh Jarrah, Behar tries to unpack the complexity of appearance, "the face one shows the world," in a place where an Arab, Muslim, or traditional "look" is seen as a flaw, as a sign for danger, backwardness, or inferiority. The two Mizrahi Jews, the teacher/activist and the student/soldier, try to negotiate their Arab appearance and the need to hide their resemblance to the "enemy," the

Palestinians. In order to look more Jewish and less Arab or Muslim, the border patrol soldier shaves off his dark facial hair twice a day. “This 'solution' of course saddened me,” Behar says. “Here the man is, standing on the border, policing between settlers and Palestinians, and he's forced to shave off his Mizrahi 'shadow' again and again so he can finally be a Jew without one.” For Behar the need to shave off the shadow reveals how outward appearance survives after the “cultural erasure.” “It's impossible to hide and to erase such things even if you try, and there are many who do,” he argues. “In the end, you look in the mirror and see your grandfather and your Arab neighbor. In Jerusalem, during the time of all the terrorist attacks, I often got stopped for inspections. In this city, mistaken identification can happen easily. The desire to differentiate actually leads to more confusion” (Eliahu 2011).

Behar’s sympathy with his former student stems not just from their personal relationships and their past interactions. Behar the activists sees in the border patrol soldier, as well as in the policemen who want to go back home before the Shabbat begins, the same inner struggles he deals with; he can identify with their position in Jewish-Israeli society and with the oppression, cultural erasure, and marginalization they experience. He clarifies:

The demonstrators - leftists who come to defend the Arab residents - curse the Border Policemen who are mostly Mizrahis, Bedouin and Druze. While the policeman are unwittingly defending the Asheknazi billionaire [who owns buildings there]. And I myself on the one hand feel opposition to the injustice being done to the Palestinian families, but I also understand my student who went into the Border Police, like many Mizrahim from the weaker neighborhoods, because this is one of the only options open to him to get ahead and be part of society (Eliahu 2011).

Like Inbar in his lecture on Solidarity, Behar claims that we ought to understand the socio-cultural position of policemen (or any other oppressed group that the Israeli Left fights against), and to acknowledge the injustice they experience, along with the privileges of white, liberal leftists that are enabled through the oppression of others. Like Inbar he believes that the Israeli Left should form relations of allyship with other oppressed groups within Israeli society, even when these groups seem to work against the Left.

But Behar also feels connected to Orthodox Jews: "I feel a closeness to the worshippers who march to the grave of *Shimon Hatzaddik* - as a Jewish place where prayers for peace and justice should be offered - but not with the violent police activities that deliberately harm the Palestinians" (Eliahu 2011). As he beautifully describes in his poem, he feels the urge to go down to the grave and to pray with the rest of the worshippers. "We will sing before the righteous man/with great joy and greet the Sabbath queen. And I'll ask him to permit me/to pray among the criminals, and to justify the actions of the protesters/who desecrate the Sabbath in order to sanctify the name of the heavens in Jerusalem." He is clear about the "criminality" of Orthodox Jews in Sheikh Jarrah, but he does not want to suppress his Judaism or to divide the territory between "us" and "them." As a Jew he wants to be able to access these holy spaces, but he also does not believe that this should be on the expense of Palestinians.

Even more surprising in the context of the Israeli Left is Behar's connection to Palestinians through religion. "On the way to the protest the muezzin sings from the mosque tower in Maqam Saba" he writes in his poem. "And I sing quietly to my God in the same note: May our eyes behold/your return to Zion, mercifully, mercifully." In an interview to Chana Morgenstern (2011), Behar talks about his difficulty, as a practicing Jew, to confront with the religiosity of the settlers, to protest in front of a congregation in prayer. At one point, he recalls, he tried to create a new

prayer, Jewish and Islamic, in an attempt to unite Israeli and Palestinians protesters. As described in his poem, Behar explains that at the synagogue he goes to “we pray in the same Arabic notes that the Islamic muezzin sings in; historically and in the day to day, the music and symbols of Judaism, especially Mizrahi Judaism, have a relationship with the music and symbols of Islam, and part of my own search is about exploring this connection” (Morgenstern 2011). Seeking to overcome seemingly fixed or natural differences between Judaism and Islam, Behar argues that part of the solution to the conflict should be an attempt to recreate the historical and cultural connections between these two religions. “This may be far off because the political reality is opposed to it,” he admits. “But in the end, from my perspective, from the perspective of my faith and my belief, some of the tools for recovery exist within the potential for Jewish-Muslim connection” (Morgenstern 2011).

As I mentioned earlier, the idea of reconnecting Judaism and Islam as a way to deal with particular aspects of the conflict may seem surprising in the context of the secular Israeli Left, which throughout the years has been attempting to suppress religious characteristics and sentiments in general, and Jewish-Mizrahi characteristics and sentiments in particular. Rejecting both external and internal religious characteristics, mainstream Israeli Left reinforces mental divisions between itself and other groups in Israeli society, as well as between itself and Palestinians. “The old left or the Tel-Aviv left, at least stereotypically,” Behar asserts, “is far from this perspective because it’s far from its own religion, it identifies its Judaism with someone else: the ultra-orthodox or settlers, them and the state” (Morgenstern 2011).

For Behar, the form of Judaism that was developed after the Second Temple, Judaism which is in dialogue with Christian and Islamic practices and notions, has the capacity to function as “a vehicle for dialogue with other communities instead of a vehicle for exclusion”:

Traditionally, In Iraq, where my mother's family is from, these communities were much more intertwined. You couldn't celebrate your holidays without members of other religions...But here, in the Israeli imagination, the holidays—ours and theirs—are justifications for curfew. And in this sense we are moving farther and farther away from understanding the connections between our cultures and traditions...When Mizrahi culture in Israel disconnects itself from Arabic culture and from Islam it is in danger of becoming a caricature of itself. The moment we lock ourselves up in Hebrew and in the phobia of Arabic, we start to resemble an immigrant group that has migrated from the East to the West and is trying to assimilate to that Western culture, when in fact we forget that we are still in the East, we haven't roamed very far. Hebrew and Judaism have roots in the East and it is precisely the living connection with the Arabic language and culture and Islam that nurtures us (Morgenstern 2011).

Through a deep exploration of religious and cultural connections, Behar redefines and expands the boundaries of the “we” circle. As opposed to Inbar's solidarity, which is based on citizenship and which is motivated by the interests of a distinct identity (i.e., Israeli), Behar's solidarity is based on local cultural characteristics that transcend national, civic, and religious boundaries. Behar's “we” is a product of dialogue and interpersonal exploration, which by definition seek to understand differences and similarities, and to form new alliances based on an inclusive definition of “us.” The premise behind Inbar's idea of solidarity (and in general, the idea of solidarity within the mainstream Left), is unsettled in Behar's vision – socially and politically constructed divisions are challenged as a first step in an attempt to “find” a new “we.”

In his new “we,” the oppressed, the ones who should unite in the face of injustice, are those who experience the effects of exclusion, marginalization, and power, an experience that transcends national, civic, and religious boundaries: “We’ll come to Sheikh Jarrah for a protest,/regiment by regiment of the expelled, and with us will march the Yemenites expelled/from the Kineret village, the Jewish Hebron refugees of 1929,/the Arabs of Ba’ka, Talbieh, Katamon, Meah Sha’arim, Lifta/and Ein Karem expelled during the Nakba, the Jewish quarter refugees/expelled in '48 by Jordan, and in '67 their homes were nationalized...,” he writes in his poem. They do not necessarily share the same identity, same life experiences, same nationality, and so forth, but they understand exclusion, and they share the same locality. Behar comprehends the complex social, political, and cultural dynamics through which identities are produced and reproduced as “facts” or as “nature.” His vision is based on identity, but he acknowledges the fluidity of this social construct, and the ways it can serve to either include or exclude particular individuals.

I met ARAV in the first month of my field work. He was then in his mid-twenties, a student, a Mizrahi Jew. We developed strong relationships and met several times during my fieldwork. I was interested in his perception of his identity, and how this perception shaped his activism. He stopped attending the weekly demonstrations a few months after the grassroots struggle became a political movement. He was interested in interpersonal interactions with other Jewish Israelis and with Palestinians. Organized committees and agenda-planning meetings were not the kind of activism he was attracted to. He wanted to get to know people different from him and to break mental barriers between himself and those considered “others.” I asked him about his vision for a solution to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. He argued that in the near-future Israelis and Palestinians might have to create separate entities, but that a true solution would be a re-unification of the Middle East. “Borders carry so much meaning, historical and political, but this division is

artificial. It definitely plays a crucial role in [creating] identities, but it is artificial.” When I asked him if he feels Israeli he said: “I feel local. Many times I say that I feel Middle Eastern. I used to joke and say that I was Canaanite...or Levantine. I have a ‘discussion’ with my Israeli identity and with what it means, but I feel local...If [Israeli] means ideology or a shared perception and identity, then I’m not there. I feel less Israeli and more local.” He talked about his experience growing up in a Zionist-Israeli family, and emphasized that his Zionist-Israeli identity was an a-priori condition to which he was born. “Nowadays I am more interested in the interpersonal experience, and that what pushed me to study sociology and anthropology.” For him these fields of knowledge enable an exploration of the structures through which we think and act, but also an engagement with what makes all of us social human beings. “I feel that this is what humanism all about. To look at somebody in the eye and to see your reflection in him, and to see his humanity, no matter what. And only then to talk about culture, and where we grew up, and all that.”

Destabilizing political thinking and action that take for granted socio-cultural divisions based on constructed identities, both Behar and ARAV move back and forth from the idea of an inclusive, local, Middle Eastern identity to the idea of shared humanity. Their political work is based on a commitment to an idea of “plurality,” to use Arendt’s notion, as well as on their vision of a “new Middle East.” Within the circles of Sheikh Jarrah Behar and ARAV were not the only ones who shared such views and ideas. The interviews I conducted with many Sheikh Jarrah activists revealed a group of people who attempted to unsettle mainstream thought and practices of their partners in the Left, and to connect with Palestinians in a way that challenges seemingly fixed or “natural” divisions. However, this group was a minority, and as such it did not have a dominant influence. My objective in “revealing” the voices in this group, in this chapter and in previous chapters, is to explore alternative forms of agency and subjectivity that are enabled within the

structure of the occupation, and to point to ways of thinking, being, and acting that might offer different socio-cultural structures.

Thirdspaces

In his article “Collaboration in Struggle in Palestine: The Search for a Thirdspace” (2014), Ilan Pappé, an Israeli historian and activist based in the UK, develops the notion of a “thirdspace,” an abstract or physical space of what he perceives as a true collaboration between colonizers and colonized, oppressors and oppressed. Or in his words: “the peripheral place where people out of power challenge power or at least attempt not to succumb to power that either identifies them as the ‘Other’ or speaks in their name, as nationalism does” (Pappé 2014, 397). The idea of thirdspace was first introduced by political geographer Edward Soja who, following Henri Lefebvre’s work, developed this category as a way to open up our spatial imaginaries to ways of thinking and acting politically that respond to all binarisms, to any attempt to confine thought and political action to only two alternatives, by interjecting an-Other set of choices. “In this critical thirding,” he clarifies, “the original binary choice is not dismissed, entirely, but is subjected to a creative process of restructuring that draws selectively and strategically from the two opposing categories, to open new alternatives (Soja 1996, 5). Understanding the role of binaries in our socio-cultural life, Soja argues that one cannot (and should not) dismiss binary choices, but rather think and act through binaries, in the context of their influence, in an attempt to create alternatives.

Building on Soja’s theoretical project, Pappé invites us to examine space as a collective multilayered and complex “spot” which is defined by relations, identities, ideologies, and interactions. Influenced by Lefebvre he tries to explore the triple dialectic between history, society, and space; or as Soja suggests that Lefebvre would describe it, the triple dialectic between the

production of space, the making of history, and the composition of social relations (1996, 7). Based on that, for Pappe a thirdspace in the context of the struggle against the many forms of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land and people, is where Israelis and Palestinians de-segregate an imposed segregated reality from above, and allow themselves to cross imagined or physical boundaries between “us” and “them” while reformulating their identities and perceptions in a way that allows “true” collaboration.

Trying to clarify the meaning of thirdplace as collaboration, Pappe emphasizes the lack of such collaboration in the different attempts to conduct a dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. Almost all these attempt, he argues, were forced on these communities, and their main objective has always been “to solidify two spaces and create a buffer between them rather than seeking any collaboration” (Pappe 2014, 397). As I showed in chapter two, and as emphasized by Pappe, in most cases such attempts were initiated and led by parties, organizations, and individuals that see themselves as the Israeli Left. As Pappe claims, “the liberal Zionist historiography that depicts such dialogues as collaboration is misleading” (2014, 397). Thus, in this context, a thirdspace

is one in which Zionists forsake the...hegemonic spaces they occupy and substitute them with thirdspace realities – where they lose the hegemony. There is also a historical trajectory that eventually locates them in the space of the other, if collaboration in resistance to their own space is what motivated them. For the Palestinians...opting for a thirdspace would be a venture out of the familiar and more secure national, and in many ways, anti-colonial, space into a post-colonial discourse or visions, without yet the realization of such a reality (2014, 397).

Acknowledging the persistence of the colonization of Palestine and the fact that Palestinians are not in a position that allows them to think and act in a post-colonial mental and physical space,

Pappe claims that we should focus on the colonizers' capability to create a thirdspace of a kind. As I clarify in my introduction, I agree with the need and necessity to focus on attempts of Jewish Israelis to challenge the occupation and their hegemony, for this reason and others. Based on that, crucial questions are how these efforts look like on the ground, how they are perceived and experienced, and in what ways they lead to the creation of a new space in which hegemony is contested and, as Soja hopes, original dichotomies such as "us" and "the other" are subjected to a creative process of restructuring.

In his article Pappe examines several cases of such attempts. However, his analysis does not provide the necessary grounding and lacks an examination of the complex dynamics that define these attempts. To use Ortner's words, we need a thick description of these attempts, an ethnographic engagement that would unpack the ways in which colonizers and colonized try to challenge the binaries that define their lives. Furthermore, such an ethnographic engagement should complicate the idea that political subjects aim to challenge segregation and other forms of oppression dictated "from above," as Pappe puts it. In asserting that oppression is dictated from above, and underplaying the ways in which oppression is produced by different individuals, including the ones fighting against it, Pappe adopts the view of many activists and scholars who see themselves as agents trying to free themselves and others from the "chains of the system." By doing so he misses crucial dynamics within the context of what he sees as thirdspaces that lead to both the production and the dismantling of oppression. Finally, it is important to highlight that both Soja and Pappe are interested in the processes through which binaries are reconstructed and new meanings, identities, and alliances are created. This tendency to focus on that which is "located" beyond the dichotomies we live by is understandable and important, and as one can imagine, is very common in studies of protest and resistance. However, such a focus might

underestimate other (parallel or intertwined) dynamics that lead to the reinforcement of certain dichotomies and of a reality of oppression associated with them.

Although I criticize some of his research positions, I think that Pappé's notion of thirdspace raises crucial issues that should be considered in an analyses of collaborative struggles between privileged and oppressed, to use a simplistic binary. Pappé's idea of thirdspace in the context of Israel/Palestine is a radical perception of solidarity and collaboration. His vision asks Zionists to give away their hegemony and to understand their problematic position as allies; it asks both Zionists and Palestinians to refuse separation and to recognize the imbalanced reality and the oppressive relationship between colonizers and colonized, or invaders and invaded. He understands that individuals' identities and the relations of power associated with them cannot be dismissed entirely, and that any discussion about resistance and change must take under account the effects of these power relations and the dynamics that allow their development. He acknowledges that Zionists may have some agency in the struggle against the occupation, but clarifies that the balance of power should be transformed radically, within the context of solidarity struggles. A crucial step in this transformation is the acknowledgement of us/them divisions, and the implications of these divisions in everyday life in general, and in protest processes in particular.

I chose to focus on Behar's and ARAV's views as a way to exemplify a possible thirspace "thinking." Against the binarism of the Israeli Zionist Left, which objective is to promote a solution of separation and division, Behar and ARAV, as well as other activists analyzed in this work, explore ways to transcend these divisions and dichotomies, and to create a new shared meaning for Israelis and Palestinians. As opposed to the desire of the Israeli Zionist Left to maintain Jewish privilege in Israel/Palestine and to develop a collective of "we" based on national and civic characteristics, these activists seek to expand the circles of "we" and to redefine their group of

belonging. In this sense they offer a radical form of politics that challenges seemingly natural and fixed dichotomies between “us” and “them” and insists on an inclusive “plurality.” Some may argue that this alternative form of politics is too naïve and that it does not account for complex security and diplomatic issues; that it might be an interesting cultural “experiment” but it cannot solve the conflict. It is clear that Behar’s and ARAV’s views discussed in this chapter are not an agenda for a solution. However, as I argue throughout this work, such perspectives are based on assumptions that have the capacity to challenge the structure of the occupation in a profound way, and to lead to a “true” collaboration through differences and conflicts. Some of the activists whose views are examined in previous chapters “offer” forms of subjectivity and agency that have been developed within the structure of the occupation, but can unsettle this structure “from within.” Their direct engagement with Palestinians on the ground, their refusal to serve in the military, their exposure to radical political texts and interactions, their experience in different political organizations, and their ability to see human commonalities – all these enable them to question some of the “truths” on which they grew up, and to look for “answers” and “solutions” that do not necessarily justify these truths.

In the context of these ideas it is important to mention Giorgio Agamben’s notions “the coming community” and “whatever singularities,” to challenge the concept of identity even further and to better understand Pappé’s views. In his book *The Coming Community* (1993), Agamben discusses his idea of the “new politics” and claims that “the novelty of the coming politics is that it will no longer be a struggle for the conquest or control of the State, but a struggle between the State and the non-State (humanity), an insurmountable disjunction between whatever singularity and the State organization” (Agamben 1993, 85). He emphasizes that his notion of the coming politics has nothing to do with the recognition and affirmation of “the social” or “civil society” in

opposition to the State, an idea that many protest movements try to promote. Whatever singularities form a community without affirming an identity – a being radically devoid of any representable identity. “In the final instance,” he writes, “the state can recognize any claim for identity...What the State cannot tolerate in any way...is that the singularities form a community without affirming an identity, that humans co-belong without any representable condition of belonging” (Agamben 1993, 86). The appropriation of belonging itself, and thus the rejection of identity and every condition of belonging is, Agamben emphasizes, the principal enemy of the State. For him this is the only true and possible subversion. In order for people to fulfill their agency and to challenge the logic of sovereignty, they must constitute an alternate field of existence, located outside the world of sovereignty, as its complete negation. In this alternate space there are no identities, no boundaries between “us” and “them”, and no classifications. In the “non-state” individuals are not defined according to any socio-cultural status, and thus they can operate and form relations “freely”, without being bound to categories imposed “from above”.

Whereas Pappe argues for the development of identities that overcome dichotomies, separation, and exclusion, Agamben goes one step further and encourages us to imagine a reality without identities; a community of individuals that do not have the desire to classify, categorize, and distinguish themselves through identities. Although this vision may push us to think outside the conditions of our current social conditions and to question seemingly natural and fixed phenomenon, it raises crucial issues that should be highlighted and examined critically. First, as he does with his notion of sovereignty (Agamben 1998; 2005), Agamben’s “new politics” is developed in his texts as a philosophical paradigm. He avoids any socio-cultural or historical discussion, and does not explain how communities of whatever singularities are developed, what might be the challenges in creating such communities, how individuals might “free” themselves

from the chains of socio-cultural identities and notions of belonging, and so forth. Second, his perception of power leads him to view socio-cultural identities as constructions imposed from above, as manifestations of an all-inclusive power, as oppressive fixed categories. What he misses, or chooses to ignore, is the complex, ongoing dynamics through which identities are produced, reproduced, and challenged by a variety of social agents, the ways in which identities both enable the social and are enabled by it, and the need of individuals to belong and to define conditions of belonging. Clearly, Agamben tries to challenge this yearning for belonging and the role of identities in our lives. However, instead of challenging some of the effects and dynamics associated with these socio-cultural phenomena through the framework of their everyday “operation”, he calls for their complete elimination and for the development of a new framework of being and thinking in which whatever singularities create a political life devoid of identifications.

This leads to my third point – in Agamben’s theory of the “coming community” resistance is conceptualized as operating in a distinct epistemological field “outside” of power. As Mbembe argues in his analysis of power in the post-colony (Mbembe 1992a; 1992a), many contemporary studies on resistance are based on the assumption that practices of servility and acts of resistance constitute two separate fields and two distinct, opposed, and contradictory units of practice – “they assume, and do not demonstrate in a convincing manner, that these practices issue from opposed and irreconcilable epistemes” (Mbembe 1992a, 127). This dichotomous theoretical net, Mbembe asserts, tends to obscure a reality in which rulers and ruled co-produce their relations of power. Furthermore, as I claim throughout this study, it misrepresents a reality in which power and resistance are intertwined and co-produced. As my ethnographic material reveals, there is no, and there cannot be, an isolated epistemological field in which individuals operate with no identities,

no relations to power, no perceptions of us/I/the other. This is not to say that individuals are not capable of challenging seemingly fixed socio-cultural creations such as sovereignty, identities, and divisions between us and the other. My argument is that such creations are products of human activity and desire, and they can be challenged, in different ways, “from within”, in the context of their everyday “operation”. Such a challenge is a product of human activity and desire, but, at the same time, it is also intended to create some form of socio-cultural order. Moreover, process of change “from within” would both reproduce and threaten the frameworks in which they take place.

It seems to me that through his abstract paradigms and dichotomous theoretical framework Agamben tries to challenge our views and to expose the dark aspects of our Western notions of democracy and liberalism. One could argue that there is an important merit in thinking and writing in such a way; that Agamben’s analysis has the capacity to force us to question the values and ethics on which our societies are built, and may push us to construct an alternate reality that denounces the State. However, in his attempt to unsettle our existential comfort and to point to crucial processes in Western states, he fails to convey the complexities of power and change, as well as the relations between them.

Contrary to Agamben, Pappe understands that individuals’ identities and the relations of power associated with them cannot be dismissed entirely, and that any discussion about resistance and change must take under account the effects of these power relations and the dynamics that allow their development. He acknowledges that Zionists may have some agency in the struggle against the occupation, but clarifies that the balance of power should be transformed radically, within the context of solidarity struggles. A crucial step in this transformation is the acknowledgement of us/them divisions, and the implications of these divisions in everyday life in general, and in protest processes in particular. Although I believe visions such as Agamben’s have

the capacity to unsettle the way we perceive our social and political world and to enable us to imagine new collectives, I think that ideas such as Pappe's reflect the challenges we face more adequately. Pappe's ideas are contextualized socially, culturally, and historically, and acknowledge our social needs and tendencies as human beings, while still challenging particular structures and orders invented by us; they call for a nuanced examination of our social conditions and do not try to "escape" the frameworks in which we live.

EPILOGUE

Trying to understand “What Happened to the Protest in Sheikh Jarrah,” as the title of her article clarifies, Mairav Zonszein wrote in March 2012 that “in recent months, if you go to Sheikh Jarrah on a given Friday afternoon, you will only see at best a handful of Israelis and Palestinians standing in the Sheikh Jarrah Park... The presence there now resembles more of a vigil, like those of Women in Black in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv who have protested the occupation weekly for decades; a symbolic act instead of on-the-ground political action” (Zonszein 2012). Based on her conversations with Sheikh Jarrah residents, as well as with residents of other nearby Palestinian neighborhoods and villages, Zonszein claimed that “local residents feel that no one is talking about Sheikh Jarrah anymore.” The international and Israeli media – which up until Jewish Israeli activists decided to leave the neighborhood “were preoccupied with Israeli settlement building in East Jerusalem and putting a spotlight on the joint efforts by Israelis and Palestinians to stop them – have moved to Iran.” The struggle in Sheikh Jarrah in which Israelis took a leading role, she concluded, “seems like a long lost memory.”

In our long conversation in Jerusalem in summer 2012, AH urged me to start writing my dissertation as soon as possible. He argued that the Sheikh Jarrah struggle was a case study for both “how to do and how not to do a struggle.” Like Zonszein he expressed his fear that the protest would become “a long lost memory,” as well as his interest in analyzing the dynamics and processes that have led to both its success and decline. As I mentioned in previous chapters, this desire to reflect on experiences and to explain what seemed like a confusing and devastating failure was reflected in almost all the interviews I conducted with Jewish Israeli activists. Although I did not fulfil AH’s “request” to write his and his friends’ story quickly, I did try to achieve their and my objective to analyze crucial dynamics, processes, and practices thoroughly, and to offer several

answers to the question “what happened to the protest in Sheikh Jarrah.” Following AH’s argument that this struggle should be researched as a case study, my aim was to go beyond the local story and to engage with questions focusing on broader issues related to political dissent and “the Left.”

Attempting to challenge studies on political struggle that offer somewhat simplistic cause-and-effect analyses and that provide structural explanations for complex events, my objective was to explain a relational reality, in which a variety of socio-cultural conditions, forms of subjectivity, and “types” of agency are co-produced and interact. One of the main arguments I developed in this study is that in order to provide a nuanced analysis of political dissent, one has to account for the dialectical relationships among socio-cultural structures, people’s subjectivities (i.e., individuals’ complex modes of perception, emotion, desire, and aspiration), and their agency (i.e., individuals’ capacity to produce, reproduce, and challenge the socio-cultural frameworks in which they live). Such a theoretical framework enabled me to examine the ways in which particular forms of political agency and subjectivity both challenge and reinforce the socio-cultural structures they aim to change. Focusing on the conscious and unconscious meaning of political practices in the circles of the Israeli Left, I argue that many social justice struggles, and especially joint struggles between privileged and oppressed, strengthen and unsettle power structures simultaneously.

Instead of portraying a romantic and hopeful image of a political struggle, as many scholarly studies do, my aim was to account for the complexities associated with such struggles, and to reveal their contradictory dynamics and effects. However, I also tried to challenge contemporary tendency of academic researches to highlight mainly the negative aspects of social justice work, and to point to the ways in which they enable state power. I claim that the complexities described and examined in this study are an integral part of the relationships among socio-cultural structures, subjectivity, and agency; any attempt of political subjects to produce and

challenge the socio-cultural orders in which they live entails an engagement with such complexities. The role of the Israeli Left or the Global Left is to better understand the dynamics I examine, to become more aware of the capacity of agents to both maintain and challenge the structures they aim to change, and to examine particular practices in a critical manner. I assert that avoiding social justice work should not be the solution for the dilemmas I reveal and analyze. As political agents we have the responsibility to understand these dilemmas and the conscious and unconscious desires that animate them; we have the capacity to reflect on them and to recreate our identity and agency.

In the context of the Israeli Left, this study reveals the ways in which inner desires to maintain privileges related to ethnicity (Ashkenazy Judaism), SES (middle and higher-middle class), political identity (Jewish-Israeli Left), and culture (liberal elitism), lead to the development of particular forms of agency, subjectivity, and social organizations. The diverse circle of activists in Sheikh Jarrah included different forms of thought and practice; however, the dominant tendency was to use the neighborhood as a space as well as a symbol to revive the privileged Zionist Left and to maintain the separation and division between Israelis and Palestinians. I examined notions such as “the New Left,” “joint struggle,” or “solidarity” in a critical manner, and attempted to expose the different ways in which these notions are perceived by different people. Whereas some individuals expressed and developed “alternative” perceptions and practices that destabilized the mainstream Zionist view, others continued to strengthen it.

In conclusion to this work I would like to focus on crucial arguments made by Omar Barghouti, a Palestinian human rights activist, researcher and co-founder of the BDS (boycott, divestment and sanctions) Movement for Palestinian Rights, in his article “Opting for Justice: The Critical Role

of Anti-colonial Israelis in the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement” (2014). Barghouti’s claims further clarify some of the crucial processes and dynamics discussed in previous chapters, and emphasize possible ways through which Israelis and Palestinians, as political agents and subjects living in a particular socio-cultural framework, could work together to challenge their reality.

In July 2005, Palestinian activists issued a call for a campaign of BDS against Israel, until it complies with international law and Palestinian rights. As stated on the movement’s website, “a truly global movement against Israeli Apartheid is rapidly emerging in response to this call. Organizations, institutions, groups, and individuals from around the world, including Israel, have joined the movement and followed its call. It is difficult to assess the scope of the movement, but it is clear that it has been growing rapidly in the last few years, and that its campaigns have been generating crucial conversations and debates regarding the occupation and Israel’s rule.

I argue that the BDS movement should be seen as a clear attempt of Palestinian activists to develop a form of non-violent struggle in which they dictate the goals, agenda, and practices. As opposed to struggles on the ground, in places where injustice take place, the BDS struggle does not focus on a specific place or a particular form of injustice. Its objective is to fight against the many forms of Israel’s control over Palestinian land and people through a complex network of global boycotts, divestments, and sanctions. Such a form of protest does not necessitate an involvement of Jewish-Israelis, and it allows more freedom for Palestinians in leading their struggle. Furthermore, it enables allies from different places and communities to join the protest against the occupation, and to support it both locally and globally. I claim that this attempt is a result of many processes and dynamics, among them the ongoing failure of the Israeli Left to collaborate with Palestinians as “true” partners.

In his article, which explores the role of anti-colonialist Israelis in the BDS movement, Barghouti defines particular conditions for a collaboration with the Israeli Left. “Principled Israeli anti-colonialists committed to full Palestinian rights,” he writes, “have played a small yet significant and growing role in the struggle for Palestinian rights. Many of them, aside from their unequivocal commitment to Palestinian rights, realize that Israelis cannot possibly have normal lives without first shedding their colonial character and recognizing those Palestinian rights, paramount among which is the right to self-determination” (2014, 407). As opposed to the Zionist Left that makes the struggle Israel-centric and argues that ending the 1967 occupation “is good for Israel above everything else, as if that should be the overriding concern for anyone seeking justice and human rights” (2014, 408), anti-colonial Israelis fight both 1948 and 1967 occupations based on the interests and concerns of the Palestinians. Barghouti clarifies that the BDS movement rejects attempts of the Zionist Left to adopt only particular elements of the BDS struggle as a way to end the 1967 occupation without addressing other crucial forms of injustice against Palestinians in “proper Israel”:

The BDS movement totally rejects this ‘save Israeli apartheid’ view, for it strives to end the occupation alone without addressing the internationally recognized right of the great majority of the Palestinian people, the refugees, to return to their homes and receive reparations and omitting any mention of the need to end Israel’s legalized and institutionalized system of racial discrimination, or apartheid, against the indigenous Palestinians – i.e. ‘non-Jews’ – who hold Israeli citizenship. This tendency, therefore, cannot be interpreted except as an attempt to maintain Israeli apartheid and the structures of Zionist settler-colonialism. In fact, this school of thought seeks, often quite overtly, to strengthen apartheid, by demographically

getting rid of some four million Palestinians (in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT)), thus maintaining Israel's character as an ethno-centric, racist and exclusivist state for decades longer (2014, 408).

Barghouti rejects the Zionist Left view of the situation in Israel/Palestine as a "conflict" between relatively equal "sides." "This is a case of occupation, settler-colonialism and apartheid by one side over the other" he claims. "The struggle is one for freedom, justice, and self-determination for the oppressed, above everything else. Only by ending oppression can there be any real potential for what I call ethical coexistence, one that is based on justice and full equality for everyone, not a master-slave type of coexistence that many in the 'peace industry' advocate" (2014, 408). For him, as well as for his partners in the BDS movement, the first step towards "ethical coexistence," is an active attempt by Jewish-Israelis to understand the structure of the occupation they keep reproducing and maintaining (even in the context of "joint struggles"), and to questions the forms of subjectivity and agency that enable the existence of this structure.

Beyond its theoretical contributions, this study has particular political goals. Through my ethnographic research I intend to challenge contemporary hegemonic perceptions in the Zionist Left, and to generate a discussion about alternative ways of being, thinking, and acting in Israel/Palestine; alternative ways that might enable us to reimagine the future of this space and its people. In my work resistance is not seen as existing in a separate epistemological field to that of power, but rather as a practice developed and enabled within structures of power, and as a process that both challenges and reinforces these structures. This understanding is crucial for our understanding of the Sheikh Jarrah struggle and the Israeli Left in particular, and other struggles and leftist movements in general.

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