A new storm over the Naqab

The temporality of space in Israeli settler colonialism

Johanna Adolfsson
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Abstract

How can a posthumanist conceptualization of landscape, one that embraces temporality and practice, help us to better understand contemporary settler colonialism? This thesis explores this proposition through its analyses of the desire of the Israeli state to ‘settle’ the Naqab. The Naqab, an area located in the south of modern-day Israel and within its borders, is continuously narrated as under threat of being lost to the Palestinian Bedouins. In contrast to the breadth of scholarly attention given to the occupied Palestinian Territories, there is a relative paucity of studies focusing on the Naqab and on the Palestinian citizens of Israel living therein. Inspired by the concept of taskscape and, more broadly, by a posthumanist political ecology approach, in this thesis I seek to remedy the determinist undertones quite often found in settler colonial studies.

The thesis’ empirical data draw from qualitative methods and field research in the Naqab, undertaken during multiple field visits between the 2018 and 2021. The thesis comprises a comprehensive summary (kappa) and three research papers. In Paper 1, I show how a schism between the Jewish National Fund and the civil society green movement surfaced amid land conflicts between the state and Bedouin villagers east of Beersheva. I argue that this schism offers insights into how nature is negotiated in relation to environmentalism and Zionist ideology. Further, I discuss how these negotiations point to an emerging new self-image of a post-settlement state that has abandoned pioneering, and replaced it with a planted forest (and natural) landscape as an emblem for Zionist nature. In Paper 2, I focus my attention on a network of Jewish villages in the Naqab. Based on a discourse analysis of YouTube videos produced by two Zionist organizations, I show how the narrative of Jewish relocation to the Naqab encompasses a modern re-enactment of the pioneering ideal, one mediated by a new neoliberal ethos of Israel as a ‘start-up nation’ and the Naqab as a new Israeli tech-hub. Finally, in Paper 3, I trace the cultural and political context of forest grazing in the Naqab. I argue that while the state uses afforestation as a proxy for territorialization, the irony is that it is the Bedouins who are largely responsible for everyday management of these forest areas, as grazing is a cost-effective method for keeping shrubs and other undergrowth low. I argue that in trying to accommodate grazing in the forest, policy makers struggle to juggle Bedouin land claims via continuous use and cultural connection to the land. Throughout the papers I affirm the performance of Israeli settler colonialism through the making of the natural environment. I assert that the tendency towards forest and grazing regulation, also articulated in planning policy, represents a move beyond the ‘era of pioneering’ towards a more formal type of society. I conclude by contending that the multiple spaces and temporalities presented in the paper’s case studies are indicative of contradictory narratives in the portrayal of the Naqab is and thus assemble as a necessity of the settlement ambition.

Keywords: Settler colonial studies, posthumanism, political ecology, transhumance, frontier, Negev/Naqab, Israel/Palestine.

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Johanna Adolfsson
Till Emy
i dagarnas skum
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Suddenly, it is time to send the text to the printery. So many bright and wonderful people have helped me along the way and to them I am forever grateful. This five-year project has given me more experience, challenges and personal growth than I could have ever imagined. I owe it to each and every one I met in the field; from the shepherds, activists, veterinarians, foresters, planners and lawyers who took their time to talk to me, to the taxi driver who helped me put gas in my car with a plastic bottle a night on the highway, to the friends I found. It was an adventure, all of it.

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List of papers

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Adolfsson, J. Has the forest lost its crown? Nature in the settler state.
*Unpublished manuscript, submitted to Geographical Research.*

Paper II
Settler suburbia in the Negev/Naqab: the Start-Up pioneer in the desert
*Unpublished manuscript, submitted to Geographical Review.*

Paper III
Grazing the Naqab: the role of transhumance in a contested space.
*Unpublished manuscript, submitted to Political Geography.*
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Transliteration

For transliteration from Hebrew, I follow the updated (2016) system from the Academy of the Hebrew Language with some modification. For instance, Israeli names that are normally spelled in an unofficial way in the media (for instance, tz instead of the correct ts) will be spelled in the unofficial way in this thesis. This is also true for place names with an established unofficial spelling, for instance I will refer to the village Merhav Am without the diacronic mark ẖ. For transliteration from Arabic, I follow the guidelines of the International Journal of Middle East Studies, with some modifications. Unrecognized Bedouin villages will be named using Arabic letters within brackets. I have chosen to include their Arabic names, as they are not marked on most maps and as the transliteration/translation of their names differs so much between sources that it can sometimes be hard to identify the villages. I have chosen to use the formal, Hebrew names for the seven development towns constructed by the government for the Bedouins.
Introduction

“We have to bring a million Jews to the Negev in order not to lose it to the Bedouin. That is the Zionist challenge for the next 50 years” - Shmuel Rifman, head of the Ramat HaNegev Regional Council, interviewed by Haaretz journalist Vered Levy-Barzilai in 2002.¹

Where I begin to tell this story is from a position of knowing things I did not know when I first encountered them. By sharing stories and details that gradually grew to insights, I will in this comprehensive summary present the case as I see it now, but also be transparent on how the process unfolded along the way. In 1994, Cindy Katz wrote that in the contemporary condition “we are always already in the field - multiply positioned actors, aware of the partiality of all our stories and the artifice of the boundaries drawn in order to tell them” (Katz, 1994:67). Katz sought to bridge the gap between talking about the ”fieldwork” in itself and the ”doing of fieldwork”, as much as the blurred boundaries between the ”field” and the ”not field”. I would like to begin by taking hold of the second part of the quote, namely the boundaries we make up in order to tell a story. This thesis is built on fieldwork in the south of modern-day Israel, structured as a collection of studies. These studies all provide insights to the questions this thesis aim to address: how can we better understand contemporary settler colonialism and what characterises settler colonialism in modern-day Israel?

I noticed quickly that the Naqab/Negev² was seen as somewhat of a backwater. Among the Jewish Israelis I met in Tel Aviv, the main city of Beersheba had a reputation of being deadly boring. A city planner would later with a shaking head tell me that more people leave the city each morning than the opposite. It’s not a city! he exclaimed in a fashion that I as a foreigner, came to experience as typically Israeli. I found Beersheba to be a complicated city to dwell in. Apart from a couple of quaint streets in the Old City built by the Ottomans, to me the city appeared vast and sparse, a city for cars with

¹ The newspapers article New Frontiers was published 19 December 2002.
² Arabic versus Hebrew. I will generally refer to the area as the Naqab as this is common parlance within settler colonial studies on Israel but when the name ‘the Negev’ has specific importance or is within a title I will use this Hebrew, and official, name. I am aware of the tensions surrounding this choice and I do not deny anyone’s emotional attachment to the land by using either of the names.
broad, almost boulevard-like roads, the surfaces of which were so worn-away they appeared to shine in the sunlight. The wind was often cold and the sun was often hot, which gave me a strange feeling of coming down with the flue. The university building is spectacular, a brutalist piece from the late 1960s – a style with many masterpieces in the city including a big hospital and many military facilities. To me, the military was mostly visible through the countless teenagers doing military service, who wait in line at the central bus station. At first, I was petrified by all the guns, but I got used to it.

Among Palestinian friends, the Naqab was also a peripheral place. Many young people living in Ramallah on the West Bank were born in Arabic towns and cities within Israel’s “Green Line”, the temporary border agreed upon in the 1949 armistice agreement. The line is also referred to as the pre-1967 border, before Israel occupied or annexed East Jerusalem, the Gaza strip, the West Bank, the Golan heights and the Sinai Peninsula. Cities and places within the Green Line are very much part of everyday experience for these people, but also for many other Palestinians. The Naqab, however, seems off the map. Politically involved Palestinian friends would sometimes say something that made me think they felt a bit bad not being involved in the life and struggles of the Palestinians in the Naqab (as I will come back to, this changed in 2021 with the riots and turmoil following settler violence in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood Sheikh Jarrah and bombings of the Gaza strip). One of my friends though, stands out. His family was one of the Bedouin tribes expelled from the Naqab in the late 1940s and early 1950s. His family resettled in the Jordan valley and has never been allowed to return to their ancestral lands. As they hold a “green” identity card, a Palestinian, are they not permitted to cross the Wall.

At the same time as the Negev/Naqab is undoubtedly in a type of shadow, it is culturally and religiously important for many people. For the Bedouins, the Naqab is their ancestral home and the land where their families have lived and worked for centuries. For religious Jews, the Negev is a place where Abraham lived a period, a part of the Exodus journey and a part of the Kingdom of Solomon and the Kingdom of Judea. For Zionist settlers, like the iconic first prime minister David Ben Gurion, it is a place of Jewish redemption through Zionist settlement. And simply, for tourists, it is a desert landscape with some spectacular sights, like the big crater Mitzpe Ramon. It is, moreover, a place of important military history. Palestinian researcher Salman Abu-Sitta opens Atlas of Palestine, 1948 (Abu-Sitta, 2004:1) with the words: “On the evening on October 31, 1917, with overwhelming force, the British army over-ran the small Turkish garrison in the town of Beer Sheba in a surprise attack from the south and east”. Abu-Sitta goes on to tell the story of how the telegram reached London the following day, and how (until this moment the secret) Balfour declaration was released to the world on 2 November, changing the future of Palestine forever. And while I have been repeatedly told during my years in the Naqab that the area is out of the mental
For the last centuries, the Naqab has been home to Arabic speaking Muslims, whose livelihood to a significant degree was made up by partly mobile animal husbandry, including sheep, goats and camel herding. It has been estimated that about 90 000 Bedouins lived in the Naqab, mostly in the northern and north-western areas, and that they together cultivated about 2 million dunums (ca. 450 000 dunums) (Swirski and Hasson, 2006). This group of herders is referred to today as Arab Bedouins or Palestinian Bedouins.4 In 1948, with the establishment of the State of Israel, many Bedouins fled or were expelled from the area together with up to 750 000 other Palestinians. The expulsions and killings in 1948 are commemorated as the Nakba (Arabic for "catastrophe"). Most of those that remained where relocated from their lands and placed on less fertile lands in an area called the "siyaj" or the "seyag" (Arabic vs. Hebrew for "fence"), while their arable lands were handed over to Jewish

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3 Yishuv is a Hebrew term that refers to the pre-state (before 1948) Jewish presence and society in Palestine, including the pre-Zionist Jewish society in Palestine.

4 I will later on this comprehensive summary develop on how I and others relate to and use this term.
settlers (Falah, 1989; Weizman and Sheik, 2015; Meir, 1997). The remaining group soon grew, and now number approximately 240,000 individuals. Some of these families are involved in a legal process with the state over ownership of their ancestral lands (Nasasra, 2012). Meanwhile, the Israeli government is attempting to protect the land as public, claiming it as state owned. In mainstream Israeli discourse, the Naqab is narrated as a "frontier", a notion that implies a space that lies beyond the civilisation, control and full participation of the state (Shafir, 1989; Kemp, 1999; Yiftachel 1996; Yiftachel and Meir, 2019). An "internal frontier", in the words of Oren Yiftachel (1996:494), "denotes zones (physical and mental) within the spatial boundaries of existing states or cultures, into which expansion of the core society is sought". Shafir (2018) explains the perpetual expansion into areas with relative low percentage of Jewish citizens as based on a fundamental "fear of reversal", that is, the idea that territory could revert to Palestinian hands if not settled by Jews.

The State has from the onset directed resources to encourage Jewish settlement in the south, however with comparatively little result. During the last two decades the State and Zionist organizations have renewed the attention of the settlement project to the Naqab, indicated in spatial planning and economic incitements for newcomers (Cohen and Gordon, 2018), and relocation of military facilities intended to accelerate (Dekel, 2021). I conceptualize this making of a frontier as part of an overarching process of Israeli settler colonialism and thereby place myself among the burgeoning scholarship that represents the settler colonial turn in Israel/Palestine research (see for example, Yiftachel, 2008; Salamanca et al., 2012; Nasasra et al., 2014, Degani, 2016; Busbridge, 2018 and Getzoff, 2020).

The Zionist interest in the Naqab has occasionally spiked, resulting in the establishment of new Jewish villages and industrial or military areas and the simultaneous eviction of Bedouin citizens from lands either belonging to their ancestors, or from lands that they were ones placed on by the government after having been displaced from original sites of dwelling with the 1948 Nakba. In 1977, the Likud party had risen to power, with later prime minister Ariel Sharon as Minister of Agriculture. With the Likud party, settlements increased in the now occupied Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza and the territorial expansionism heightened also in the Naqab. As a politician, Sharon

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5 To accompany general political rhetoric about ‘settling the frontier’, national and regional plans have long established the settlement of Jewish population in the Naqab as a national priority, albeit with fairly little success. The first national outline plan of saw the influx of as many Jews as possible to the area as a demographic target and prepared the establishment of a concentrated area for the Bedouins (Teschner et al., 2010:86). A regional plan from 1974 set a new goal for the Naqab: the area was to be Israel’s new site of heavy petrochemical industry and other hazardous industries along with energy production. The plan also suggested the establishment of a new airfield and a new demographic target of 1 million Jews in the region until the year 2000 (Teschner et al., 2010:86).
was infamous for his anti-Palestinian and pro-settlement position. In 1977 he was in charge of the special unit called the Green Patrol (or the Green Police), created to combat Bedouin “infiltration” on Israeli land in the Naqab. Between 1977 and 1980 the Green Patrol had removed 900 Bedouin villages or other sites of dwelling and reduced the number of goats from 220,000 to 80,000 (Falah, 1985:44), by a forceful upkeeping of the Plant Protection Law of 1956 (see Paper 3). The Green Patrol remains an active agent in the Naqab, as is the mainstream discourse of stopping “illegal invasion” of state land (see Paper 1). With the 1979 peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, where Egypt regained the Sinai Peninsula, additional vast spaces were appropriated by the government and turned into military training facilities and firing zones. In addition, the establishment of a network of single-farms was initiated 1997, a phenomenon that was new to the Israeli planning nomenclature. The intention with these farms was to encourage Jewish Israelis to farm the “peripheries” and establish Jewish control over areas dominated by Palestinian Arabs (Cohen and Gordon, 2018). Between the years 1997 and 2003, 59 such individual settlements were built or in the process of being built in the Naqab (Hamdan, 2005). Moreover, the National Outline Plan 31 (prepared in the early 1990s) designates the northern Naqab as a space for “large-scale population absorption” (Kaplan, 2011:92), which is reinstated in the updated plan (NOP 35, adopted by the government in 2005). Also in 2005, the regional Strategic-National Plan for Developing the Negev (henceforth ‘Negev 2015’) was launched, with the intention of “recreating a buzz around the region” for business development and new residents alike (Teschner et al., 2010:89). This plan has been accompanied by at least two strategic visions, produced by Zionist organizations, centered around the upcoming 100-year jubilee. These plans envision the influx of half a million Jews to the Naqab, and are establishing a new Zionist discourse spun around an updated pioneer ideal (Paper 2) and the Naqab as the new frontier. Yet a significant event in 2005 was the establishment of the Ministry for the Development of the Negev and the Galilee. It was followed in 2007, by the establishment of the Bedouin Settlement Regulation Authority in the Negev, today called the Authority for the Development and Settlement of the Bedouin in the Negev. Thus, the years around the millennial turn were characterized by a significant effort to organize the Naqab. The idea was to settle the Naqab the with a new type of people, of changing it from an Arab space to a Jewish space. This idea encompassed more than housing: the years around the millennial turn also represents a significant chance in the physical landscape.

Around the same time, starting in the mid-1990s with the approval of the new national plan for afforestation (National Outline Plan 22), huge swaths of Israeli land were zoned as forest, and in fact, more areas were zoned in the Naqab than in the Galilee and Haifa region together (Tal, 2013:131). The ambition to settle the Negev was made explicit in NOP22, which states that the aridity and perceived low quality of life always has been an obstacle to
settlement, and that it, consequently, is important to create green spaces around the settlements for newcomers (Kaplan, 2011:92). In these forests, planting is the responsibility of the Jewish National Fund (a highly influential Zionist organization that is partly incorporated into the Israeli state, henceforth the JNF or the JNF-KKL). Afforestation has, since the 1950s, been used by the government and JNF-KKL to assert ownership over Palestinian land and continuous to do so both on the West Bank (Braverman, 2008) and in Israel within the "Green Line". Over the last decade, the government has continued to use afforestation as a tool to assert ownership over areas with Arab population (Tal, 2013:132). During the years 2010 and 2011, around 70% of all afforestation was done by the KKL Southern District (Rotem et al., 2014:17). Until the 1980s, forests were usually densely planted pine stands, a cultural tradition of the JNF-KKL rooted in eastern European ideals of "real forests". The large Yatir forest of the northern Naqab was planted in the late 1960s by order from the long-time leader of the JNF-KKL, Yosef Weitz (also sometimes referred to as the Father of the Forest). 40 million samplings were put in the ground between the years 1964 and 1969 (Tal, 2013:125). With an overall turn to a more biodiversity-influenced approach to afforestation, and an increasing awareness of the unsuitability of the dense, fire-prone forests in the dry climate, the technique of afforestation changed in the Naqab. From 1986, forests began to be planted with a new model in mind using run-off irrigation, developed from the Nabateans. The technique was referred to as "savannisation" as trees were planted on a wide distance from each other. Large areas of lands claimed by Bedouins were emptied, ploughed and planted in a process that also involved the establishment of Jewish-only villages (see Paper 2). Savannisation continues to be the main model of the afforestation of the south (see Paper 1).

As illustrated by the Negev 2015 plan (which the government adopted), the late 1990s and early 2000s marked a renewed interest in settling the Naqab (Swirski, 2007). The renewed focus from the state and from Zionist organisations, resulted in a new type of Bedouin resistance. The formation of the Bedouin grassroot organization Regional Council for Unrecognized Villages (RCUV) in 1997 is one such example as well as the political

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6 The full quote reads: The Negev expanses are the state’s largest land reserves. However, these areas, particularly in the northern Negev, do not have many landscape- and natural assets in comparison with the north of the country and Judea. Clearly, then, the main potential for development and population absorption lies in this region. This potential is reflected by Israel’s national outline plans, which designate the northern Negev as the main region for large-scale population absorption. However, the aridity and image of the Negev as having a low quality of life have always posed an obstacle to settlement: “One of the main problems in attracting a strong population to the southern region is the quality of life there... the northern Negev suffers from a lack of attractive areas for development for purposes of recreation and leisure...” Consequently, “it is important to cultivate green areas around the settlements” (NOP 31, development plan).  
7 The organisation is referred to in Israel as the Keren Keyemet LeIsrael (KKL).
mobilization locally and in international fora under the umbrella of *indigeneity* (for an analysis of the indigenous mobilization as a political movement of the Bedouins, see Yiftachel et al., 2016). Since just a few years, there has been a new upsurge in political awareness manifested in a renewed mobilized resistance. In the media, it has been narrated as the “Naqab uprising”, the Naqab intifada” or the “Unity Intifada” (Tatour, 2021). Largely, these protests are a result of a combination of the government intensifying its battle against what it sees as Bedouin intrusion in public land but also, importantly, evictions of Palestinians from the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in Jerusalem and the war on Gaza in 2021, which led to massive protests and violent clashes in Jerusalem and other cities like Jaffa, Lydd, Haifa and Acre. It is the displayed solidarity between Palestinians in the occupied Territories and in Israel that has given rise to the epithet "Unity" in "Unity Intifada”. In May 2021, following protests and demonstrations, the police launched a campaign called Operation Law and Order, resulting in over two thousand arrests across the country, including the Naqab. The Naqab that I encountered was a space that had regained a central position in Zionist geographic imaginations of the new "frontier". As such, it was subjected to accelerated Zionist settlement ambitions but also an area of new resistance.

These settlement ambitions have not developed in a vacuum, but are a reflection of a complex political reality in current Israel, where the most recent election (November 2022) was a victory for the ultra-nationalists. Similarly, the situation for the Bedouins in the Naqab is not separated from other spheres of Israeli politics. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to analyze the political game and the role of the Naqab Bedouin in contemporary political negotiations. I will, however, note here what the newspaper Haaretz reported in June 2020 in the story *The Bedouin Village at the Center of a Storm With Israeli Right-wingers*. After a confrontation between villagers and soldiers from a nearby army base, representatives from the right-wing political party

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8 Over the period 2019-2022, five elections have been held and at the time of writing. After the latest election, held in November 2022, Benyamin Netanyahu was reinstated as prime minister in a government supported by the Religious Zionism party, currently in coalition with the ultra-nationalists Jewish Power (Otzma Yehudit), led by Itamar Ben-Gvir. The latter is an outspoken supporter of Meir Kahane, a founder of the Kach party, which was later banned in Israel and listed as a terrorist organisation in the United States.

9 With the passing of Saeed al-Kharumi, a Naqab-born MK for the United Arab List (Ra’am), the power dynamics shifted in the region as Ra’am began losing voters in what had been their strongest voter base. At the same time, in the many re-elections, Ra’am was suddenly part of the short Bennett-Lapid government coalition 2021. In negotiations, the party leader Mansour Abbas made promises to the voters in the Naqab, which included that the Ra’am would stop the JNF-KKL afforestation and that they would push for recognition of unrecognized villages (in practice, that means preparing formal master plans which would make the houses and pens ‘legal’ in the eye of the State). At the time of writing, late September 2022, the decision has been made to recognize three villages but the afforestation has not been formally stopped. I explore this context and its impact on the furthering of our understanding of settler colonialism in Paper 1.
Yamina went on a “tour of the area, during which one of its leaders described the Negev as a no-man’s-land where there is “no sovereignty, no state, only Bedouin wilderness and grabbing of state land” (Green, 2020). Without dwelling on the topic, I argue that that this statement is an indication of the contemporary discourse making a frontier of the Naqab.

The official settlement movement on the West Bank is distinguished from settling of the Naqab, but rhetorically constructed as associated. The political depth of the links has also been beyond the scope of this thesis, but would make for an interesting study. The settler movement took form in the aftermath of the Six-Day-War in 1967, when Israel occupied the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem, the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights. This movement was characterized by religious Zionism, and Gush Emunim, which would become the main organization, was an explicitly messianic movement. There are large parts of the settler movement of today that are heirs to this extremist ideology, but the contemporary settler movement has also grown so large that it now includes the full spectrum from right-wing nationalists-Zionists, religious Zionists, secular people and not even particularity nationalist settlers (Perugini, 2019). In his 2009 book Settling in the Hearts: Jewish Fundamentalism in the Occupied Territories, anthropologist and sociologist Michael Feige described the process leading up to the establishment of the Jewish-only community village Merhav Am in the Naqab, which I will return to in Paper 2. Feige, noted how the people of the nearby kibbutz Sde Boker (famed for being the home of David Ben Gurion and Feiges home) was anxious for the consequences of the new village, fearing it could increase the tension with the Palestinian Bedouins. The people moving to Merhav Am was religious Zionist, settlers from the West Bank, and the construction was facilitated by the help of Amana. On a more personal note, Feige noted what he perceived as an irritating tone from the group, second-generation settlers, claiming to bring the pioneer spirit to the Negev, as if it was not already there. I read this slight irritation from Feige, himself a Negev resident, as an illustration of the changing, turned-up, role of the Naqab in the overarching Israeli settlement project. Moreover, not everyone was concerned with the potential of increased tension. Merhav Am was planned to be located within the territory under the Ramat HaNegev Regional Council (rural settlements like community settlements, kibbutzim and moshavim are organized in regional councils, the reginal level of administration). In a newspaper article about the Merhav Am establishment from December 2002, journalist Vered Levy-Barzilai quoted Shmuel Rifman head of the council saying: "All the land-settlement movements have gone down the tubes,"/…/ “The only movement capable of creating settlements today is Amana," the settlers' movement in the territories, and Or, its counterpart within the Green Line". He moreover went on to state that: "We have to bring a million Jews to the Negev in order not to lose it to the Bedouin. That is the Zionist challenge for the next 50 years. The Negev - and Galilee. And the only ones who come
in their masses, to live with small children in places like these, in all kinds of 'holes, in mobile homes, without minimal conditions, are the religious Zionist guys". Amana did not own land, but acted through the Settlement Division, a branch of the WZO, which is a semi-private organisation, fully funded by the Israeli State. The Settlement Division is constructed as an agency, tasked to allocate and manage land for settlements in rural parts of Israel and on the West Bank. Rifman, who was also involved with the establishment of the single farms and the Negev Wine Route, is a powerful and well-connected politician with explicit ideas of claiming lands for Jews in the Naqab. I include this quote, as it indicates the explicitly political nature of the community settlements established in the Naqab, that I explore in Paper 2, and the unclear boundaries of the West Bank and Naqab settlements. In addition, Feige (2009:280) noted, that the settlers moving to Merhav Am spoke in terms of 'return', which is a particular powerful Israeli idiom, for example found in the Law of Return (1950), guaranteeing Jewish people the right to immigrate to Israel. This too, I read as an indication of the scholarly importance of the Naqab in understanding contemporary Israeli settler colonialism.

The title of this doctoral thesis is a play on a 1978 article from the New York Times, *The Storm over the Negev: Bedouins of Israel are Victims of Progress*. In June 1978, the journalist William E. Farrell described how the land conflict between the state and the Palestinian Bedouins, as of 1948 citizens of Israel, had "simmered under the surface" but gained focus as "the Israelis set about transforming parts of the desert into farms, industrial areas and towns". In my title *A New Storm over the Naqab: a Landscape Perspective on Israeli Settler Colonialism* I suggest two things: first, I suggest a renewed political and academic interest in the Negev/Naqab, and second, that I conceptualise the events of this thesis as expressions of settler colonialism. The article from 1978 implied something different, namely that the displacements of the Bedouin was a consequence of modernisation. This perspective can lead to the favouring of analysing specific events over the analysing of a specifically, and structurally ordered, colonial condition and thereby risks seeing certain events as a consequence of development or modernisation per se, rather than of colonialism. I will refer to Dirk Moses (researcher of the Australian genocide) for this discussion later on in this comprehensive summary. No doubt modernization (and modernism!) are nonetheless central aspects of colonialism. As aesthetics and idea, the construction of Israel, or rather what would become Israel, was both part of modernity as a historical category and as artistic, architectural and social modernism; and politically, Israel's construction was characterized by modernization. See David Ohana's *Modernity, Modernism and Modernization in Zionism* for an in-depth look at this aspect of Israel's colonialism. Ohana himself makes an interesting distinction that is entirely uncommon: that between colonialism and colonization. Ohana writes: "Zionism was not a colonialist movement, although it carried out colonising projects in settlement,
industry and agriculture” (Ohana, 2012:17). And it is true, as Ohana goes on to write, that the first wave of Zionists who came in the first years of the 20th century did not represent the same type of colonialism as that in Asia, South America and Africa or as the English in India. This is true because the European Zionists who came to what was called Palestine were not ordinary colonialists – they were primarily settlers. Modernization continues to be an active narrative in the Negev/Naqab: sanitation, health, equality, education and other indicators of a society moving forward and upward, continues to be cornerstones of the State’s (and its associated Zionist organizations’) approach to the Arab Bedouins. There are of course positive effects of state funding to these areas, but hidden in this approach is also a settler-colonial perception of a local culture that should not primarily be reproduced but assimilated. This narrative is fundamentally based on an idea of an uncivilized savage who must inevitably perish with modernization (Lorenzoni, 2019). As Desiree Poets (2021, 272) writes, that kind of assimilation is a way of peeling off the Indigeneity from the person and with it the Indigenous claim to the land, or in other words, it is a way of transmitting the colonial logic of terra nullius (no man's land) to the body, making it possible to rewrite it with new meaning as assimilated into the new (settler) society.

Finally, what does it mean to use the settler colonial studies framework? Lorenzo Veracini (2013:28) has said that a common feature of settler colonial societies is the narrative that settlement is a thing of the past: the settler society "aims to supersede itself". The settler colonial approach counters this, by assuming that colonialism is an ongoing phenomenon that has not ceased to be an active process. The settler colonial approach is also distinguished from "regular" colonialism. While all cases of settler colonialism and colonialism have their own specific traits, I will throughout this thesis use a definition that separates colonialism from settler colonialism in that the former is mainly interested in resources and exhaustion of local labour and that it maintains its bonds with the sending country (often referred to as the "metropole" in this context). Settler colonialism is above all interested in the land, and, moreover, it breaks with the sending country and establishes a new identity as land winning pioneers. This secession can be a gradient in term of time and depth but what characterises settler-colonial projects is that they spin their own myths of creation around the land they claim and the endeavours they suffer in doing it. For example, for the Dutch settlers in South Africa, the Boers, "the Great Trekk" is one such story while the North American pioneers moving into the wild west is at the heart of the American identity making. Often, these stories revolve around how the settlers leave the sending nation behind and create a new identity, derived from the land in a "new" land. This story is, moreover, often partly derived from the attributes and characteristics the settlers ascribe to the Other that they encounter, the Indigenous people they meet in the land. According to this definition, the main difference is not mainly in what the initial intention was with the colonial project, but what
kind of colonialism it would turn into (for the full discussion, see page 36). A key consequence of this differentiation between resource-oriented colonialism (or "franchise colonialism" to use Patrick Wolfe’s term) and settler colonialism is in which type of relationship the settlers establish with the Indigenous population. According to current paradigm within settler colonial studies, resource-oriented colonialism results in colonizers creating a relationship for them to use local labour for as long as it is profitable, while settlers on the other hand exclude the Indigenous from labour and preference their disappearance. "Blackness" is thus reproduced, while "Indigeneity" is eliminated, erased from the person who thereby loses the Indigenous claim to land (Poets, 2021). This impulse has been referred to as "the logic of elimination" by Patrick Wolfe (2006) and is one of the most central mechanism within settler colonial theory. This logic gives rise to elimination through physical violence, racist laws and various kinds of assimilation (think, for instance, about the infamous quote "Kill the Indian, Save the Man" from the American general who supervised the first off-reserve boarding school for Indigenous children 1879-1918, or about those skeletons found in the summer of 2021 from the nearly 1000 children who had been forcibly placed at Canadian boarding schools for Indigenous children), which gradually erases local culture, if not also the people. In reality, this division has been more complex and there are examples where the Indigenous population is also incorporated into the established order of the settlers and where the absence of elimination according to the "classical" model is used as an example for argue for the particular benevolence and result of this particular colonization. Brazil is one such example (Lorenzoni, 2019). The "logic of elimination" is a challenging concept as it does invite a certain determinism. As I go on to argue, the great benefit of mediating settler colonial studies with the (posthumanist) landscape approach is that it lessens this determinism.

Seeing Israel/Palestine through the lens of settler colonialism offers some obvious differences from other cases. First, Israel do not have one sending nation. Zionism was a movement, involving a number of countries. However, Zionist identity that developed in Europe and later in Palestine related in many ways to Europe as form a sending nation; the Zionist movement grew from European anti-Semitism, and was a response to the European life (Ohana, 2012). Of more importance then, is the fact that the Jewish people have deep historical and religious roots in the region. Their identity is not derived from a new land, but from the reclamation and redemption of a lost land. I argue that the great benefit of using the settler colonial framework is that the approach is not per definition part of the debate on "actual" Indigeneity. Although it is most often used by scholars who are also interested in tying their research to decolonization, there are no such pre-defined conclusions. Rather, I argue that the great value of this approach as analytic tool is that it offers a way to conceptualize the present without getting stuck in historical (sometimes mythological) discussions about the right to the land and can
instead be a break from the question of whose roots run deepest and instead shift focus to contemporary political, ideological and in other way meaningful practices and thereby make it possible to analyze contemporary Zionism and contemporary Zionist settler colonialism. The emphasis of timing is important. Inspired by Tim Ingold, a name that will reoccur in this thesis, I want to take the opportunity to point to the difference between chronology and temporality. Chronology, Ingold writes (1993: 157), is events strung like beads on a thread while temporality is the time which hold the present, the past and the future at once. Israeli settler colonialism exists in both these forms of time. It is a project which acts in a political and cultural present but it is also a project that is equally fueled by dreams of the future and stories, myths and memories of its history.

Part of what I aim to show with this thesis is that also the Israeli settlers are spinning their identity from the Other and that this is partly done through their management of animals and natures (see also Assi, 2018 and Perugini, 2019). Departing from the statement of Veracini (2013:28) that settler societies ”aim to supersede itself”, and by viewing the associated frontier making through the lens of posthumanist geography, I make the argument that Israeli settler colonialism is spun around a narrative of a new era, ”post-settlement”, while at the same time constructing the story of the Naqab as a place where it is still possible to fulfil the pioneer ideal, performed through the attempted control and construction of a nature that turns out to be uncontrollable.

Hoping to have set the scene, I will present my thesis in the following way: I will start by going through some central concepts; where and what the Naqab is, what I mean when I say Bedouin, what Zionism is, what I mean when I say Israel, Palestine and the occupied Palestinian territories and what these concepts mean in terms of citizenship and identity. I then give a theoretical overview of the two main scholarships I am relating my own work to the key concept of taskscape which I suggest as a useful bridge between the two. I will then I turn to method and methodology before providing an historical background to the land conflict in the Naqab and contextualize the research questions by describing pastoralism in the Middle East and Israel/Palestine and the history of afforestation. Finally, I will present the main findings and conclusions of this thesis. Therein I propose a theorization of the mechanisms of the frontier through the combined lens of settler colonial studies and posthumanist political ecology.
Figure 1 The study site. Illustration: author, 2022.
Aim and research questions

The aim of this thesis is to identify and nuance the mechanisms of contemporary settler colonialism. More specifically, by situating key processes historically, ideologically and politically, this thesis aims to critically explore what characterizes contemporary Israeli settler colonialism. To address this aim, I place these processes in relation to the settler-colonial logic, as it has been described by Patrick Wolfe in the current paradigm of settler colonial studies, and in relation to posthumanist inspired political ecology, opening the scope to human and non-human actors. Drawing on previous research on the territorial and ideological strategy of the early Israeli state and from empirical findings from own fieldwork, I have structured the processes along the lines of three aspects of settlement: regulation of grazing and animal husbandry; forests and afforestation; and physical settlements, for example the erasure and construction of villages or other residential spaces. Finally, to address the aim, I have posed two research question:

1. What are the cultural, political and ideological contexts in which the three aspects of settlement have developed and how are the processes informing these aspects changing? What insights can be drawn from these changing processes to better understand the mechanism and condition of Israeli settler colonialism?
2. In what way is ‘nature’ invoked, created and used to territorialise and assert ownership over land? How does ‘nature’ intersect with the main processes of settler colonialism in the Naqab? How is state territorialisation upheld and countered in the landscape?

Thus, the analysis in this thesis is drawn from three aspects of the settler-colonial project, the main processes within them and their political and ideological context. These are, first, processes related to the establishment and/or erasing of residential sites of living for the Jewish and Bedouin citizens respectively; second, processes related to forest and afforestation and third, processes related to the seasonal grazing of sheep and goat. These aspects partly overlap and are often interlinked politically, ideologically and spatially. Grazing, moreover, is as a rule done on land slated for multiple land use. This arrangement makes grazing administration and practice an interesting
intersection of the changing landscape. Those familiar with the history of Zionist settlement in Palestine may recognize the triad of settlement, afforestation and agriculture from the collection of studies undertaken through the years to describe and analyse the making of the State of Israel in the intersection of landscape, national identity and territory. (Here, landscape refers to both the scenic landscape and the landscape of labour and production.) Agrarian settlement was a territorial strategy and a locus for revival of the Jewish nation and (hu)man, while forest served as the maker of a visual landscape, a space to tell a new story of a new belonging.
Figure 2 The Yatir forest and the northern Naqab. Illustration: author, 2022.
Figure 3 Afforestation along the Green Line. See also page 85. Illustration: author, 2022.
Background

Israel, Palestine and key concepts

Israel or the State of Israel refers to the state created in May 1948 in Palestine. This region was at the time part of Greater Syria or Bilad al-Sham, the Arabic name for a region corresponding to what today sometimes is referred to as the Levant: Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Israel/Palestine. In Biblical and Zionist political discourse was referred to as Eretz Yisra'el or the Land of Israel. It was at the time under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. With the establishment of the state, between 700,000 and 750,000 Palestinians were expelled from their lands, which was confiscated under the new Law of Absentee Property and distributed to Jewish settlements through Zionist organisations. The declaration of the establishment of the State of Israel proclaimed on May 14, 1948 reads:

Accordingly, we, members of the people's council, representatives of the Jewish community of Eretz-Israel and of the Zionist movement, are here assembled on the day of the termination of the British Mandate over Eretz-Israel and, by virtue of our natural and historic right and on the strength of the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz-Israel, to be known as the State of Israel.10

The geographic borders of the concept Eretz Yisra'el are ambiguous. Which exact area it refers to changes depending on religious, political and historical context. In the use of most early- and mid-20th century Zionist and British politicians, as in the declaration above, Eretz Yisra'el is a cultural-religious term, in practice referring to the land under the British Mandate for Palestine. However, in the use of the revisionist Zionist, and the political relatives of modern-day Israel (Likud and other right-wing oriented political parties, the settler movement and the Neo-Zionist ideology) it is a nationalist-expansionist term. In this discourse, it is translated to “Greater Israel”, which could refer to

10 Declaration of Independence (1948, May 14) Provisional Government of Israel. Official Gazette: Number 1; Tel Aviv.
large parts of Jordan as well, but in practice refers to Jewish dominance on the Gaza strip and the West Bank.

It is common today to distinguish between Israel within the "Green Line" and the occupied Palestinian territories. The Green Line is an armistice line drawn up between Israel and neighbouring states after the war of 1948-49. It has become Israel’s *de facto* borders but the State of Israel has never formally defined its borders. The occupied Palestinian territories refer to the areas occupied by Israel in 1967: the Gaza Strip and the West Bank including East Jerusalem. Following the first Intifada (uprising) 1987 to 1993 and the negotiations between Israel and PLO known as the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian Authority was created as a step towards a Palestinian state. Today, the Palestinian Authority governs the West Bank but not the Gaza Strip, which is governed by Hamas since 2007. As part of the Oslo Accords, the West Bank territory was divided into an ABC-system, differentiating the civil and administrative control of the Palestinian Authority. Another important aspect of the Oslo Accords, although never detailed, was that Israel would gradually withdraw from the West Bank and stop its construction of settlements. That has not happened. Because of the ABC-system, and because the Israeli state denied the legitimacy of the sovereign at the time of conquest (Jordan), Israel is not referring to the West Bank as occupied.

"Occupation" is however the common classification of the international community, making all Israeli settlements on the West Bank illegal according to the Fourth Geneva Convention article 49 which states that "The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies” and that “individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations of protected persons from occupied territory” is prohibited (see for example Amnesty international, 2019:26). The State of Israel however distinguished between (sanctioned) settlements and ‘illegal outposts’ (in other words, not sanctioned settlements built post-Oslo) (Benvenisti, 2012). This distinction is seen in critical discourse as a smokescreen and a normalization of the continued illegal settlement (see for example Yesh Din, 2017). The West Bank is cut off from Israel by a barrier of shifting materialization. I refer in this thesis to this barrier as the Wall but it is in reality a combination of a high concrete wall, razor-wired trenches and tech-surveyed spaces. The Gaza Strip is also fenced off by a separation barrier (a concrete wall). Israel formally dismantled their settlements on Gaza in 2005 but the strip has been under blockage (including air and water) since 2007.
Zionism

Modern Zionism is an ideology and nationalist political movement that emerged in late 19th century Europe, when Zionist ideologists began visualized a Jewish homeland in Palestine. This homeland has been characterized as fusing of myth and history and of Messianic time with chronology (Ohana, 2012) or, differently put, the biblical land with territory (Assi, 2018:139). Bigon and Dahamashe (2014: 611) has employed Bourdieu’s “symbolic power” to argue for a particular strength of Zionism, namely that it is empowered by both the collective qualities of the ”myth” and the power of ”ideology” to portray the specific interests of a given group as the universal interests of all. In the late 1990s, Israeli sociologist Uri Ram referred to Zionism as the "unilinear and teleological national meta-narrative" of the Israeli nation (Ram, 1999:335)11. Ram argued that the coherent narrative (and thereby the role of Zionism as collective identity and memory) was changing in favour of a mixed landscape of negotiated Zionisms, spanning from liberal post-Zionism to nationalist-expansionist Zionism and all in between. Post-Zionism was a radical approach to Israeli historiography that took place in the 1980s and 1990s. The scholars (Ilan Pappé, Benny Morris, Tom Segev and others) were referred to as the “new historians” because of their new treatment of Israeli history and particular their tendency to connect pre-state Israel with post-1967 settlements on the West Bank (Ram, 1999), or more generally, question "the founding myths of Israel” (Likhovski, 2010). If there was a period of liberalisation, it was soon, however, followed by a radical turn to the right by the general public, often ascribed to the failed peace-process of the early 2000s (Peled and Peled, 2011). Nonetheless, the meta-narrative has a secure position in the Israeli society and given the position and importance of Zionism to the Israeli State, it is continuously often referred to it as Israel’s national ideology or state-ideology (Pappé, 2014a).

As an ideology, political Zionism (the idea of not only migrating to Palestine to create a cultural and spiritual revival, but to form a political state) was formulated by Theodore Herzl as a response to European antisemitism, and in particular the antisemitic laws and wave of pogroms plaguing Jewish life in late 19th century tsarist Russia. It was also formed in relation to the Haskalah intellectual movement (the Jewish Enlightenment), struggling over the future possibilities of Jewish life in Europe, contemplating the role of the Hebrew language, religiosity and assimilation. In the autobiography The World of Yesterday: Memories of a European (first published 1942) the Austrian author Stefan Zweig describes the political awakening of the Theodore Herzl, as a response to the flagrant antisemitism displayed in the Dreyfus affair in the late 19th century France. But Zionism as a political

11 Lorenzo Veracini says a similar thing about settler colonial narratives in general in his book ‘Settler Colonialism’ from 2010.
movement was also shaped by the nationalist ideas emerging in Europe. Europe at the turn of the last century was characterized by nationalist sentiments, which also added to the intellectual soil from which Zionism could grow. To this, it was part of European colonialism, all the way from its initial emergence as a political movement to the support from the British government who was governing Mandate Palestine (1921-1948) after the imperial post-First World War negotiations. Thus, a peculiar combination of secularisation and an almost religious belief in blood and soil fuelled the Zionist movement (Anderson, 2006 in Lloyd, 2012:64). Thus, while Zionism mainly was a secular project, a religious nerve has always run through it.

While it is often fiercely refuted among contemporary Zionists, the early Zionists narrated their mission as colonization (Masalha, 2012). In particular, the First Aliyah was talked about in these terms. Arthur Ruppin, head of the Palestine Office (later renamed to the Jewish Agency for Israel and acting as de facto government until 1948) and sometimes referred to as ”the Father of Settlements”, looked to California, U.S., to take explicit use of experiences of colonization of a similar landscape (Bhandar, 2018). The discourse gradually changed along with a strategic change towards the exclusion of Palestinian labour. One can, nonetheless, read in the constitution of the Jewish Agency that: “The Agency shall promote agricultural colonization based on Jewish labor” (Hope Simpson, 1930). It is common to divide the waves of pre-state Jewish settlers to Palestine, and the subsequent institutional development that Israel would be built upon, in a number of successive aliyot (pl. of aliyah). The First Aliyah (1881-1904) is also often called the ”agricultural aliyah”. It is seen as the first formation of the farmer class as it was these settlers that established collective agricultural farms (the moshav was the norm before the collective kibbutz replaced it as the symbol for Jewish agriculture). About 20 000 - 30 000 immigrants arrived in the First Aliyah, but only about 3000 stayed in agriculture, and a bit over 10 000 was absorbed by the community in Jerusalem (Halpern, 1998). About half of the arriving migrants soon left (predominantly for the U.S). The settlement strategy of the Second Aliyah (1904-1914) differed from the first, in that the new politics and strategy was centred around the practice of excluding Palestinians from land and labour (Bhandar, 2018). This strategy was referred to as the ”conquest of labour” and was launched by the powerful trade union Histadrut (Pieterberg, 2008). Related to this strategy, was a change in how the agricultural settlements were organized. If the first had the character of plantation style, the new kibbutzim would be organized around collective labour. Israeli scholar Gershon Shafir (1989) has distinguished the First from the Second Aliyah as the First being an example of plantation settlement (he calls the Palestine case ”ethnic

12 As I will show in this thesis, this way of seeing the landscape is still very much present in Zionist discourse, as evident through for instance in-passing references to the importance of a ‘national landscape’ when discussing nature management policy (see Tal, 2008).
plantation”) and the Second an example of pure settlement. The first settlers had been dependent on both Palestinian labour, knowledge and land and therefore their settlement strategy had not been exclusionist, like the second wave (Pappé, 2012). The Second Aliyah also meant the emergence of Labour Zionism, which would be the ideology of the elite until the election in 1977 when the Likud came to power and thereby marked a new era in Israeli politics and Zionism. See Paper 2 for an elaboration on the emergence of a neoliberal, expansionist Zionism and its articulation in the Naqab today.

While Zionist settler colonialism shares fundamental features of other settler projects, Bhandar (2018) has pointed to two important aspects that distinguish Zionist settlement. First, while it is common that private investments are needed to fund the colonial project, it is uncommon that these land winnings result in state-owned (public) land, as is the case in Israel where 93 percent of all lands are controlled by the State. Herzl envisioned a land purchasing company that would serve as an agreement between the WZO and the Ottoman government. This company, the Jewish-Ottoman Land Company, would be constructed like other well-known joint-stock companies, like the Dutch East India Company and the East India Company (Khalidi, 1993). This specific company was not formed, but in the end, aside from the Jewish National Fund, established by the Fifth Zionist Congress in 1901 and the Palestine Land Development Company, organized under the Zionist Organization, a number of companies, banks and trusts were established to finance the settlements in Palestine. The fact that private investment would result in collectively owned land sets differentiates Palestine from other settler-colonial projects (Bhandar, 2018, 128). Second, while settlers in South Australia and North America, treated the land as void of legal system, the colonizers arriving to Ottoman Palestine had to relate to Ottoman and British law (Bhandar, 2018, 128). The latter was brought up by Kimmerling (1983), who also pointed to the centrality of a "fear of reversal" in Israeli and Zionist land policy, that is, the fear that land could revert to Arab ownership if not fully settled (see also Shafir, 2018). This settlement strategy resulted in the creation of complicated spatio-legal spaces are created with reinterpretation of legal decision from Ottoman and British eras, that I will return to (see Kedar et al., 2018).

Citizenship and nationality
People of Palestinian ethnicity within the Green Line are referred to by the state as Arab citizens of Israel. This term also includes Bedouins, Druze and Christian Muslims. Many Palestinians colloquially refer to Israel as 1948 Palestine and therefore to Palestinians in Israel as "48-Palestinians" or more formally Palestinians in Israel. The choice between Arab or Palestinian
reflects self-identification. The term Palestinian also refers to people expelled from Palestine in 1948. Palestinians in Israel hold Israeli citizenship. However, Jewish citizens enjoy unique rights and privileges derived from their "Jewish nationality". Note that nationality is separated from citizenship and that official registers do not allow for "Israeli nationality", even after petitions to change this have been made to the Supreme Court in 1978 and 2013.

Nationality is a civil status granting certain rights separated from those granted by citizenship, for instance the Basic Law: Rights to Return law from 1950 (Aardi, n.d.). In 2018, the Israeli parliament (Knesset) passed the Basic Law: Israel – The nation state for the Jewish people, which defined ‘the right to exercise national self-determination’ as ‘unique to the Jewish people’, degraded Arabic language to official language to one of ”special status” and defined ”the establishment of Jewish settlements as a national value” (Lustig, 2020). This legislation spurred international organisations (echoing what Palestinian and Israeli human rights organisations have been saying for years) to officially call the actions of the Israeli government ”apartheid” (for example HRW in 2021, Amnesty in 2022, UN special rapporteur in 2022). HRW specify that the crime of apartheid is found on the West Bank, but that the policy uniting the political decisions, laws, actions and practices is the idea of a Jewish state from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, which includes the discriminatory treatment of Palestinians within the Green Line.

The Naqab/Negev

The Naqab/Negev is a dry to semi-dry area in south Israel (fig. 2). As a physical location, it does not have fixed borders, or as an informant working at the Nature and Parks Authority exclaimed: "Please define the Negev for me!". The question of place names is both a rich source of history (Azaryahu, 1996; Richter-Devroe, 2016) and an important illustration of the process of establishing a new dominance in a space (the ”creative destruction” of imposing a new culture and erasing a previous one, see for example, Lemkin, 2005 [1944] and Wolfe, 2006). As Robert Sack (1986) said, the act of naming a place is always connected to power. Names are possibly even more complex when they are expanded to mean a contested site of multiple locations, a region, in this case the Naqab/Negev. Nonetheless, if I am using text as a medium and if I want to write a text that is not hopelessly long and winding, I will probably have to use a set of stable names. I here refer to the region as the ”Negev/Naqab” to indicate the contested nature of the space (Arabic/Hebrew) and as the ”Naqab” in running text, except for in direct quotes or when the specific use of ”Negev” is important.
In other instances, in this thesis, I refer to places in their English terms: Jerusalem, Beersheba, the Galilee, the West Bank and so on. While it is established parlance within the critical field of settler colonial studies to refer to the space as either the Naqab or Negev/Naqab, some writing within the critical discourse refers to the space as the Bi‘r al-Saba’ metropolitan region. Bi‘r al-Saba’ is the Arabic name for the city that in Hebrew is called Be‘er Sheva and in English Beersheba. It was established as an administrative centre for the Ottoman administration on lands bought by the powerful ‘Azazme tribe around the turn of the last century and was later part of the territories slated for the Arab state in the UN Partition Plan for Palestine. The Ottomans established Bi‘r al-Saba’ as a separate jurisdiction from Gaza, distinguishing one from the other. Residents in the region had until then been referred to as “urban Ghaza” or “urban al-Saba’” (‘the Arabs of Gaza’ or of ‘Bi‘r al-Saba’). Arabic terms used in the region for the space are Bi‘r al-Saba’, the Naqab and Bilad Gaza (Nasasra, 2019:121) while Hebrew speakers and visiting tourists most likely would say ”Negev”.

Neither Naqab nor Negev are administrative terms. Within Israeli administration, the area belongs to the Southern District, bordering Egypt to the West and Jordan to the East. It does not include Gaza. As a tourist attraction, it is the hyper arid parts around the crater Mitzpe Ramon and similar ”desert looking” spaces that are most popular and that most would associate as the Negev, while the Negev as a space for ”frontier development”, as created in strategic plans for regional development produced on behalf of the state as well as similar plans produced by Zionist organisations, would be the northern parts around Beersheba (see Paper 2). Roughly, Beersheba and its northern surroundings constitute the northern limit of the Naqab/Negev. The ”aridity line”, that is, the line (isohyet) connecting points with average rainfall under 200 mm, crosses through the Bedouin city of Rahat located 20 km north of Beersheba. This line is significant, as it has been part of creating the Naqab as specific legal space in which non-irrigated cultivation is supposedly not possible, which in turn has been used to declare the area as state land (Kedar et al., 2018; Weizman and Sheikh, 2015; see also Paper 3). What constitutes cultivation is however not a natural definition, but depends on chosen crops and agricultural methods - the Bedouins have indeed cultivated these areas using dry climate run-off irrigation for centuries. As such, the aridity line is a ”climate colonial” construction of meteorological data, plant types and technology (Weizman and Sheikh, 2015:10).

I will moreover refer to all the space between Beersheba to the Wall as the ”Naqab”. This area was by tradition used for sheep and goat pasture. Since the 1950s, the norther part was the location of the Bedouin village of Umm al-Hiran (أم الاحرام) before it was demolished to rubble after the state had started to transfer people from it to a new neighbourhood in nearby Bedouin town Hura. The people in the village had been placed there in the 1950s after they had been expelled by the state from their original lands in a different part of
the Naqab (Dukium, n.d.-a). Next to the rubbles of Umm al-Hiran is the village of ‘Atir (عتير), also slated for demolition (Dukium, n.d.-a). Thus, the area has for the past decade been the focus of the state’s collective efforts of Judaizing the Naqab and “frontier expansion”. However, a respondent living in the Jewish village Har Amasa, a village in the Yatir forest a couple of kilometres from the Wall, refuted the definition of the area as Naqab/Negev, insisting the right name was the Hebron Hills as the area got more generous rainfall than the arid south. (Throughout the fieldwork, it was not unusual to hear people speak in terms of rainfall. One night, I was visiting a family in the kibbutz Mishmar HaNegev close to Rahat. “Did you find the way in the dark?”, the dad asked me, “Did you know you were driving on the aridity line?”. The village was constructed 1946 in a coup orchestrated the night before New Year’s by Zionist organisations and para-military units as part of the pre-state Zionist push to settle Jews in the Naqab, see page 81 for these “Yom Kippur settlements”). The reluctance of the respondent in Har Amasa is likely rooted in both economics and identity - the area is located close enough to Tel Aviv and Jerusalem to make commuting possible, while avoiding both the high prices close to the city and the ideological and political implications of living in a West Bank settlement. Negev, on the other hand, according to the respondent, felt distant (personal communication, October 2019).

Someone not familiar with the Israeli context might be surprised by my referral to villages and towns as “Bedouin” or “Jewish”. The issue of ethnic segregation is legally complex and has been the focus of much critique and legal debates, and partly a result of strong norms and partly legal discrimination. Cities and towns are not formally permitted to discriminate potential new residents on any basis but currently villages in the Naqab and Galilee with a maximum of 400 families are allowed to “screen” residents to make sure they fit the community socially (Charney and Palgi, 2013; Lehavi, 2016). In 2000, the Qa’adan case resulted in a law prohibiting discrimination. A Palestinian family (citizens of Israel) were denied access to a cooperative in northern Israel built on public land, which had been allocated to the Jewish Agency, which in turn had established the cooperative. (The Jewish Agency is a major Zionist organisation working with Jewish immigration to Israel. They are, like the Jewish National Fund, according to their own statutes not allowed to lease land to non-Jews). This case was prejudicial and the court ruled that it is not permitted to discriminate on religious or national grounds (HCJ 6698/95, Adel Qa'dan v, Israel Land Administration). However, instead of stopping the discriminatory practice, the system of ”pre-screening” was widely used and became permitted in law in 2011 (Lehavi, 2016). The Admission Committees Law of 2011 allows small communities to vet potential residents (Acri, 2011).
Bedouin as a concept

Political scientist Mansour Nasasra traces the use of "Bedouin" to denote the Arabs of the Beersheba region to a British report from 1933 (Nasasra, 2020:121). Before then, the common expression was Arabs of Bi’r al-Saba’. This term is still used as self-identification among the older generations. The term Bedouin is used throughout the Middle East and North Africa to denote semi-mobile or mobile pastoralists. The word derives from the Arabic word "badawe” or “badu” meaning “desert” and “desert dweller”. From conversations with friends and interviewees I learnt that the connection to the concept varied widely between individuals, with some expressing the priority of the religious identity as Muslims while others maintained that the Palestinian identity was of primary importance. Some experienced the term Bedouin as an outsider’s view and word, while others were indifferent. The use of Palestinian, Arab and Bedouin are all politicized and emotional and need to be understood in relation to the complex socio-political everyday life of each individual. Within Israeli mainstream discourse, it is common to perceive “Bedouin” as an ethnicity that can be incorporated (to some extent) in the Israeli society (the "nation-state law" of 2018 starkly demonstrates the limits, see page 23). Palestinian Bedouins can also refer to the Bedouins living on the West Bank (these families originate from the Beersheba region and was displaced in or soon after 1948). I will refer to the group in the Naqab as Palestinian Bedouins (and as Bedouins in running text) knowing that some in this area would not use this word to refer to their own identity. There is also a Bedouin community living in the Galilee. It is important to note here that I focus specifically in this thesis on the situation of the Naqab Bedouins. I draw this focal point because I am interested in how the Naqab has been turned into a frontier in Zionist discourse and how the space has been territorialized and Judaized using natural resources. The situation for the Bedouins in the Galilee differs from this specific context.  

In addition to the definitions so far, I also need to explain my use of the word tribe in this thesis. This word choice is related to the above discussion on the epithet "Palestinian” in Palestinian Bedouins and by extension is at the heart of the early Israeli political and military strategy towards the Bedouins, which focused on (and arguably still is) separating the Bedouin tribes from other Palestinian groups by expulsion and reorganization (see Nasasra, 2017 for this argument and for detailed archival research on the topic). Before 1948 there were 95 tribes (‘ashair) in the Naqab, organized in three tribal confederations (qabail) of the Tarabin, Tayaha and ‘Azazma. After 1948, nineteen tribes or parts of tribes/extended families (ruba’) formally existed. The Israeli military regime had expelled disloyal tribes and tribal leaders (sheikhs) and appointed new ones. Fourteen of the tribes were removed from

13 I have also not included other non-Jewish groups, for instance the Druze community.
their lands in the West Naqab and placed within the enclosed area (siyaj). During the time of military rule (1948-1967), it was not permitted to leave the siyaj without special permits (Nasasra, 2017:131), which meant that the Bedouin herders were not able to move their sheep and goats to their seasonal pasture lands (Lustick, 1980). When the Military Administration was abolished in the end of 1966, restrictions of movement had been gradually lifted. In 1965, for instance, the first Bedouin "development town" of Tel Sheva, had been constructed by the government (Marx and Meir, 2005). The new regime has allocated space according to tribal affiliation and it was also not permitted to move freely between the tribal areas, without permits from the military governor (Marx, 1967). This territorial and political strategy, which scattered, fractioned and remade the tribal unions, fundamentally reorganized the social structure. This "politics of notables" is found throughout the colonial politics of the Middle East and in particular so after during by the 20th century, when colonial governments began "detribalization" and sedentarization of the pastoralists (Abu-Rabia-Queder, 2017; Chatty, 2006; Scoones, 2021). In this thesis, I will use the term tribe to refer to both large tribes and to smaller sub-tribes.

Figure 4 Savannisation in the western Naqab. Photo: author, 2019
Figure 5 Behind the lone tree, new saplings are protected by barbed wire. Photo: author, 2019.

Figure 6 Savannisation up close. Photo: author, 2019.
Figure 7 Site visit on a sheep farm. Photo: author, 2019.

Figure 8 Trees planted by the JNF as windbreaker on the field. Photo: author, 2019.
Theoretical framework

This thesis draws on two main theoretical approaches that I will elaborate on in the following pages. First, this thesis and its three papers are placed within the conceptual framework of settler colonial studies, which engages in comparative studies across settler-colonial contexts in a broadly structuralist approach. I draw from Patrick Wolfe’s (2006: 388) argument that settler colonialism is “a structure, not an event”, characterized by a settler desire to replace the Indigenous population with a new society, compared to resource-oriented colonialism where the exploitation of native labour and resources are meant to continue as long as it is profitable – that leads to “the logic of elimination” and the conclusion that settler colonialism is a land-oriented, zero-sum competition over territory. In Israel, settler colonialism is interlaced with Zionism, the Israeli state-ideology (Pappé, 2014a). Secondly, political ecology informs my approach to the operations of settler colonialism in Israel/Palestine. Political ecology is a scholarly field concerned with the dynamics of power in the creation, management and use of nature and natural resources. Scholars within the field engages in the making of borders and designation of bounded spaces to specific purposes and/or social, political and ethnic groups using nature and natural resources (Peluso, 1992; Nightingale, 2018). The two main approaches of political ecology and settler colonial studies are both land-oriented and concerned with the intersection of the materiality of land and the process of creating meaningful, power-laden categories in relation to it. Finally, these approaches are mediated through Tim Ingold’s concept of taskscape. Taskscape represents a phenomenological understanding of the relationship between individuals and the environment, where life in each second unfolds through activity or “tasks” (building, ploughing, thinking, dreaming and so on). A taskscape is a temporary and everchanging collection of such tasks and it is the multiple, ongoing tasksapes in a given space shapes and creates the landscape in which we all live. With its emphasis on the continuous relationship between people and the ”nature” around them it is moreover a posthumanist influenced approach that emphasizes temporality of practice in the production of a landscape by humans and non-humans alike.
Posthumanist political ecology

Political ecology emerged in the 1970s following a general radical turn in anthropology, characterized by Marxist ideas, which came to dominate human and cultural geography throughout the 1970-1990 (Nightingale, 2014). A perceived lack of political economic perspectives in cultural ecology and human ecology prompted and shaped the development of the new field of political ecology (Blaikie, 1985). Scholars working within cultural ecology had largely been interested in local context, and the new field argued for the need to place these contexts in global political and economic processes (Blaikie and Brookfield, 1987, Watts, 1983). The field have branched out in a number of directions, but scholars working within it has the engagement in power relations of nature-society interplay as a common denominator (Basset and Peimer, 2015). To formulate the interplay as between "nature-society" is contested. The critique of the nature and society binary as a Western construction leading to the patriarchal exploitation and subjugation of both nature and women had developed within feminist theory during the 1980s (Harding, 1987; Merchant, 1982; Haraway, 1991) and has influenced the field since, in particular through the work of poststructuralist scholars (Rocheleau et al., 1996; Shiva, 1988). Scholars have argued that the use of the terms nature and society, albeit with a critical agenda to question the Cartesian divide, in fact reinstates the modernist view of nature and society as separate and stable units; Escobar (1999:3) has for example proposed a definition of political ecology as "the study of the manifold articulations of history and biology and the cultural mediations through which such articulations are necessarily established". Actor- Network- Theory (Latour, 1993) and the anti-dualist and anti-essentialist assemblage theory (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994) has also proposed new ontological approaches and terminology to erase the hierarchical divide between nature and culture. Similarly, Jones (2009) has argued for the hyphen instead of the slash, as in nature-culture as opposed to nature/culture, to ontologically reunite the spheres of the binary. For others, for instance David Harvey (1996), the use of the concepts of nature and culture has been seen as a precise and clear way of analysing the mechanisms of their interaction politically and socially. Thus, during the 1980s and onwards, political ecology became increasingly engaged with feminist and poststructuralist excavations of knowledge and power. Eventually, following this development, scholars raised concerns that the debunking of nature as a stable category and the highlighting of the unavoidable elements of politics and power embedded in the mediation through which humans make sense of their environment had led to a tendency to deny the existence of a biophysical reality, independent of discourse (Soper, 1995; Fitzsimmons, 1989).

It was within this context of academic and philosophic debate that the concept of taskscape was introduced by the anthropologist Tim Ingold. What
Ingold proposed was a practice-oriented embodied conceptualisation of anthropology and biology, drawing on Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Here, the individual unfolds in and with its environment and through direct relations between humans and non-humans. As I will elaborate in the following section, the concept of taskscape was developed in a specific time, it has now changed and merged with the more general landscape concept. I maintain, however, that the core element of taskscape, a posthumanist approach, is a helpful emphasis to the landscape concept. This emphasis proved to be useful in this is thesis through its conceptualisation of the non-human elements as destabilizing both analytical categories and territorial boundaries.

The question of how to construct a full theorization of the biophysical environment and the social without reducing the one or the other is taken up by those scholars within political ecology that I refer to as posthumanist. Nightingale (2014) has argued that for large parts of political ecology, the environment has remained a passive arena wherein political struggles are played out. A growing number of scholars are taking influence from posthumanism to explore the human and nonhuman entanglements and their situatedness in place-specific contexts and global processes (Sundberg, 2014; Watts and Scale, 2015). Posthumanist theorist Cary Wolfe (2010) has characterized the anthropocentric relationship between humans and nonhumans as one that is constantly objectifying animals and nature, leading to the use and abuse of what is perceived as the nonhuman. For human geographers, posthumanism has meant a fusion of poststructuralist queries into knowledge production with the decentraling of the human subject as the natural centre of study in favour of the inclusion of animals and ‘nature itself’ (Sundberg, 2014). This approach to posthumanism has developed in tandem with feminist critiques of modernist binaries (Haraway, 2003; Wolch and Emel, 1998; Whatmore, 2002; Lorimer, 2006; Wolfe, C., 2010). Feminist geographers (not necessarily oriented towards posthumanism per se) developed a scholarship that took seriously the co-production of gender and nature, arguing not only that gender affects access to resources but that the social understanding of gender is interlinked with practices (for example, agricultural work) in the landscape and that the categories of nature and gender shapes each other (Elmhirst, 2011, Truelove, 2011, Harris, 2006). Perspectives of intersectionality, embracing the situatedness and intersections of other central social categories (such as race and class) furthered the analysis of how nature and humans have been conceptualized as (politically and socially) “connected” in a way that has justified various forms of governmental-led interventions of dispossession (Moore et al., 2003).

Recently, Sultana (2021) argued that feminist political ecology, with its emphasis on the intersectional, embodied everyday nature-society interplay, ought to be placed at the centre of political ecology studies. Already in 1989, Donna Haraway was pioneering the field of feminist political ecology with
her work on the construction of nature in *Primate Vision: Gender, Race and Nature in the World of Modern Science* and she has continued to pioneer the theorization of nature and humans since, with her conceptualisation of the human and the cyborg in the early 1990s. This (bio)tech-oriented branch of studies fuses poststructuralist approaches with critical studies of science and technology and has developed into the field of ”more-than-human” geographies, closely related to Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network-Theory (2007). Scholars within this field are arguably more interested in the ontological and conceptual understanding of nature than on social and political practices (Nightingale, 2014). The division between ontological focus and political practice echoes through an understanding of a certain tension in the fusion of political ecology and posthumanist approaches, even those that do not go all the ontological way of the ”more-than-humanists”. This tension was outlined by Chagani (2014), who made the argument that whatever ontological ”seams” there are between political ecology (and its roots in Marxist and poststructuralist theories) and the posthumanist approach (assuming a world of entanglements and assemblages), the best procedure is to acknowledge the tension and work within it. I argue that the scholarship I draw on in this thesis, including my own work, is attempting to do precisely that. These studies (for example Alatout, 2008; Asher and Ojeda, 2009; Peluso and Vangereest, 2011, Braverman, 2015b) are exploring green rationalizations for access, exclusion and boundary making, based on an ontology where nature and social categories are co-producing and shaping each other. They call into question the stability of state, nature or citizen as analytical categories (Chagani, 2014, Nightingale, 2018; Harris, 2017) and they explore the destabilization of spatial boundaries (Heynen et al., 2006). They are eliciting the role of animals in political border-making (Michael, 2004, Sundberg, 2011, Braverman, 2013) and are bringing into focus the unpredictability of the resources itself (Harris, 2012). Similarly, Watts and Scales (2015) asked what might be the possible benefits of merging political ecology with posthumanism in agriculture research, arguing that the posthumanist emphasis on entanglements of actors that are ”not quite human and not quite nature” destabilizes taken-for-granted hierarchies, and addresses the assumption of a stable geographic *scale*. A merge, they argue, allows for local studies that are less rigidly geographically bounded and where the local is not necessarily ”nested” in the global. Posthumanism, thus, does not offer a research program but a new way of conceptualising the local. This perspective, I argue, resonates with Ingold’s *taskscape*, particularly in the later development of the concept were Ingold brings in Doreen Massey’s (2005) conceptualization of the local as open and becoming, to which I will now turn.

In this thesis, I approach the Naqab as a posthumanist landscape, informed by the concept of *taskscape*. This means decentralizing the human subject and acknowledging and taking into account unpredictability of animals and nature without disregarding the social and political structures that are attempting to
shape and mould the landscape according to the needs of the state. It also means opening up the local both in terms of space and temporality.

A landscape (and taskscape) perspective

The concept of taskscape was introduced by anthropologist Tim Ingold with the 1993 essay *The Temporality of the Landscape*. This approach emphasized practice in the making of space. It described the landscape as emerging through the process of temporality; as a composite of the actions of previous generations that merged with the sensory and existential experience of undergoing life in it (Robertson, 2014). Places, according to Ingold (2021:298), ”enfold the passage of time: they are neither of the past, present or future but all three rolled into one”.

For long, associated with the Dutch landscape painters of the 1600s, researchers insisted that the English word “landscape” came from the Greek word skopein (to see) (Ingold, 2011: 126). This meaning is similar to the two Arabic terms for landscape: al-manthar och al-mashhad which are both associated with seeing and viewing a scenery or a beautiful scenery (Nazer, 2008:47). However, Olwig (1996) has shown that the concept in fact had a premodern, agrarian meaning much closer to law and practice, derived from old English where skeppan and skyppan meant to shape (the German word shaft has the same meaning). Therefore, the Anglo-Saxon meaning of landscape as something distanced, detached and pictorial, is not the original meaning of the word but a more recent understanding. Instead, arguably, the original word “landscape”, the German ”Landschaft”, was in fact what Ingold saw to introduce with taskscape: a space shaped by practice. Ingold introduced it as a term meant to bridge what he saw as the construct of the natural and social binary and the unintended ”loss” of biophysical reality following the cultural turn. Since then, scholars from various fields have used the concept in paths of their own, freeing itself of the original intent. Often, the concept shows up in archaeological landscape studies, helping to conceptualize artifacts in a lived space, or refers to a mainly cultural dimension. Meanwhile, the concept of landscape, from which taskscape was derived, has had a development of its own, where it’s mainstream meaning has come to be something synonymous with what Ingold sought to capture (Ingold, 2017a).

In this thesis, I refer to the Naqab as a landscape, but I fill it with the emphasis of landscape and temporality.

Recently, Ingold (2017a) evaluated the context in which he developed taskscape and the inclusion of the concept of the “body” becomes an analogy for landscape. Here he argued that, as a result of the 1990s paradigmatic turn to embodiment, the concept of the body moved from the “side of the organism” to the “side of the person” (the social subject). The unintended consequence
was, thus, that the binary intended to be bridged by the embodiment paradigm (a result of post-structuralist feminist theory development) was not in fact bridged but, Ingold has argued, the main effect was that the body was repositioned and that the organism was reduced to an entity separated from its surroundings. Ingold meant that the same happened to the landscape concept, when, largely emerging from the (British) critical cultural geography, the meaning of landscape expanded to include representation and symbolism. From the cultural turn, landscape was understood as something that gave material form to something “which had previously been abstractly understood as space” (Ingold, 2017a:22). Therein, the environment (in the analogy equal to the body as an organism), was reduced to “raw physicality” and the landscape repositioned to the side of the symbolism. Taskscape was thus introduced to erase the constructed divide between the material and immaterial, and offer a conceptualisation of a continuous unity. Much more than being focused on remnant artifacts, the concept was a spatial conceptualisation of temporality. Temporality is not clock time, chronology or history, rather it is a rhythm and a relational pulse connecting each individual to past, present and future. Ingold argued that it is with this differentiation between temporality and linear time that both body and landscape potentially can be concepted and bridge the Carthesian binary.

The prefix ”task” was intended to capture how life is not something we chose but something we ”undergo”, whether we want to or not. It is an inescapable condition for the being of each living thing. However, with the emergent new understanding of landscape, taskscape as a concept is perhaps obsolete and might have even come to be a concept that upholds the binary. Instead, as Ingold argued already in the Temporality of the Landscape, “by re-placing the tasks of human dwelling in their proper context within the process of becoming of the world as a whole, we can do away with the dichotomy between taskscape and landscape – however only by recognising the fundamental temporality of the landscape itself” (Ingold 1993, 164; 2000a, 201).

In this thesis I generally refer to the Naqab as a landscape instead of a taskscape, but filling it with the emphasis of practice and temporality. When I do use taskscape, it is to signal the importance of practice and meaning. I hold that the emphasis of taskscape, produces a landscape concept that spotlights a temporality of practice in a space, which is discursively and materially produced as nature. I argue that this conceptualisation of space is suitable when studying how the imagined geography of the frontier shapes and restructures an environment, as this specific imagination works according to its own technologies of space and time, always building from past stories and promising new futures (Tsing, 2003:5102). Moreover, the frontier renders the space “of now” as empty or empty of meaningful legal structure, culture or significance. Therefore, the reiteration of a space produced through lived activities counterposes the logic of the frontier.
Ingold (2005) has directed criticism to his own concept and the little attention it has paid to politics: the “dwelling perspective” has not always dealt explicitly with the political and economic context in which it is applied and it has been too easily associated with “harmonious coexistence”. Bender (1998) has formulated similar criticism, suggesting that a stronger focus on time, that is, context, would remedy the potential lack of politics. To accommodate territorial conflicts, Ingold (2005) forged a stronger tie to political ecology, a field that strongly emphasizes the political dimension of both perceptions and creations of landscapes.

Finally, Ingold (2011) has developed the concept of the meshwork, treated by me as a development of taskscape, to name the interlaced reality of life trajectories and stories, the undergoing of time. To use his own words: “When everything tangles with everything else, the result is what I call a meshwork” (Ingold, 2015). Meshwork, built from Doreen Massey’s (2005) conceptualisation of space as always being a dimension of time-and-space, is always in becoming, always the result of “the stories so far”. I argue that this openness of space is an enriching addition to the settler colonial approach that I will outline on the upcoming pages.

Settler colonialism and settler colonial studies

Comparative settler colonialism studies crystallized as an academic field in the 1990s. I write here ”academic”, because, as has been pointed out by many, the Indigenous people across the globe dispossessed by settler societies did not need academia to identify the consequences of the projects. Indigenous knowledge and resistance have engaged with settler issues for centuries. Moreover, scholars have indeed used the concept of settler colonialism before the 1990s (for example Horvath, 1972; Good, 1974 and Shafir, 1989). However, as specific field it predominantly formed in the environment of Australian academia and around two scholars in particular, Patrick Wolfe and Lorenzo Veracini. Here, it emerged after critique formulated within postcolonial and Indigenous studies of the postcolonial paradigm and its (lack of) applicability in contexts where the colonizers ”never left” (Kauanui, 2020, Snelgrove et al., 2014). According to Pieterberg (2008), Wolfe read the theorization of colonialism as it had formed around, notably, Franz Fanon and his writings from French Algeria, as monolithic and unable to explain the cause of events in places shaped by a different form of colonialism. The field has recently been criticized for being analytically narrow in its focus on the settler and the settlement, whereas Indigenous epistemologies are more able to hold a richness of stories (Te Punga Somerville, 2020). Indeed, in Pieterberg’s (2008:57) words, settler colonial studies are ”not at all a subaltern studies project”. The field has also been critiqued for leaving little space for
resistance and possible outcomes; in its almost deterministic structuralism, there seems to be an unintended "colonial fatalism" in how colonial relations are conceived (Macoun and Strakosch, 2013). Moreover, the settler colonial model has been critiqued for oversimplifying complex histories. For instance, Poets (2021) recently argued that the land-labour divide, which is so central to settler colonial studies (I will return to it), has in the Brazilian context had the unfortunate effect of veiling how the Black population has also suffered land losses. The land-labour distinction is also a distinction between Black and Indigenous people and consequently, oversimplified settler colonial models can sometimes overlook a more complex demography. Settler colonial studies, therefore, should pay attention to particularities diverting from the norm, to avoid moving into determinism. Others have highlighted the importance in seeing settler colonialism as interwoven with other structures of power and that suggestions of decolonization have to include structures of gender, race, class, ableism, and capitalism (Snelgrove, 2014; Alfred, 2009; Coulthart, 2013; Simpson, 2011). Despite the limits of the approach, proponents have maintained the value of the structural repositioning within enduring conflicts (such as Israel/Palestine) (Busbridge, 2018). In the case of Israeli settler colonialism, Barakat (2018) has argued that native or Indigenous epistemologies suite research on the Palestinian history, whereas the structural approach of settler colonialism is suite research on the actions of the settler society.

The paradigm emerging in the 1990s sees settler colonialism as distinguishable from other forms of colonialism (see for example, Veracini, 2010; Wolfe 2006; Elkins and Pedersen, 2005). There is not one agreed upon definition of what distinguishes settler colonialism from other forms of colonization and imperialism. When Franz Fanon, during the Algerian War 1956-62, said that each colonizer is a potential settler, it marked a paradigmatic shift (Fanon, 1968). Until then, settler projects had been discursively (by words like virgin soil, empty land and pioneer) distinguished from colonization (Veracini 2013). Within the emerging field of comparative settler colonial studies, scholars tend to see settlement as a form of colonialism but with specific features (Free, 2018). For instance, Patrick Wolfe has conceptualized it as a form of colonialism but as operating under other mechanisms compared to "franchise colonialism". Instead of being primarily driven by resource extraction and the abuse of native bodies, labour and resources, settler colonialism is oriented around the displacement of the Indigenous group. In an often-cited passage, Wolfe (2006:387) has argued that instead of being driven by the extraction of surplus value, settler colonialism is a land-oriented project of permanent settlement, a "zero-sum game" over territory driven by the "logic of elimination" of the "native". This logic epitomizes the current settler colonial paradigm. Lorenzo Verachini (2011) on the other hand sees settler colonialism as separate from colonialism as the phenomena re rooted in different impulses and are creating different forms of
dominance. Where the colonizers of resource-colonies or "franchise colonies" establish a system to abuse Indigenous labour, the settler society does not want or need the Indigenous. The abusive relationship between colonizer and colonized in the franchise colony is intended to last as long as it is profitable, while the relationship between settler and indigen is intended to cease to exist (Veracini, 2010). As Wolfe (2006) argued, this is the "logic of elimination". In the Palestinian context, Ilan Pappé (2012) called for an analysis that does not see the elimination of the Indigenous as a consequence of Zionist settlement, but as a goal in itself. He argued that the elimination of the "native", he calls it ethnic cleansing, is a destination in itself and not a mere mean or intentional or unintentional consequence of settler colonialism. In Wolfe's (2006:388) words, settler colonialism is a structure, not an event. Importantly, the settler colonialism may contain elements of "classic" colonialism, particularly in the early stage (Wolfe, 2006; Pieterberg, 2008).

Veracini (2010) has argued that there is a specific settler mentality, deriving from the intention to stay. In their need to transform their relationship with the land from "we came here" to "it made us", the settler society creates new national myths of belonging and creation (Veracini, 2010:20-21). These myths are spun around the promise of a linear trajectory towards the future, and mobilize people through a "teleological expectation of irreversible transformation" (Veracini, 2010:99, see Velednitsky et al., 2020). The intention of settler colonialism is not any kind of development, but the development of a new society. Thus, settler societies are premised on moving along a linear axis of time towards final establishment. Such conceptualizations have been critiqued for assuming a non-contested development, writing out possible forms of resistance. But, to quote Kaunai (2021:293), there is nothing inherently permanent about settler colonialism, however, such societies do "make a bid for permanence". Finally, as settler societies are all constructed upon a space already imbued with Indigenous culture and belonging, traces of these have to be erased from the landscape or appropriated: new or adapted place names, new history and new mythology. Inevitably, this is "creative destruction", the simultaneous process of building and destroying (Wolfe, 2006, see also Boucher and Russell, 2015).

Indigenous studies have directed critique against a taken for granted division between labour extraction and land, inherent in the above distinctions (Kauanui, 2021: 293). Indeed, the land focus has also been critiqued for foregrounding territory over Indigenous lives, which risks veiling how the colonial violence is played out in everyday movements, homes and person-to-person interactions (Plonski, 2018; Rifkin, 2013). Here, the work of the North American scholar Ann Stoler has had significant impact on understanding the making of colonial spaces through intimate relationships; sexual, medical or otherwise (Stoler, 2006, see also Morgenstern, 2012a and Arvin, Tuck and Morrill, 2013). However, regardless of how one defines settler colonialism in relation to other forms of imperialism, the scholarly field of settler colonial
studies as it has crystallized over the past decades, is characterized by a structuralist approach, seeing displacement, dispossession and ultimately elimination as an intrinsic of the establishment of the settler societies territorialisation.

The frontier

Australian genocide scholar Dirk Moses has pointed out that to determine the character of a colonisation, the answer is rarely found in the initial intentions. Indeed, the brutal consequences of colonial projects are sometimes not only not found in official intention, but on the contrary, they can be vocally regretted and condemned (Moses, 2003). This phenomenon is an illustration of the specific role of the relationship between the sending country or the emerging settler state apparatuses and the frontier. In this context the frontier is describing the space and the people that "move beyond" both established territory and official intention, they are the front line and the most extreme. It is in the frontier that the structure is internalized through the violent encounters with both the environment and the Indigenous. Settler enterprises were often narrated as projects of development and civilisation, or at least underpinned by ideals of "human development", and it was perhaps in the frontier more than anywhere that these civilizing ideals of the settler society were confronted with a violent reality that did not fit the imaginations and high ideals. The frontier experience and the inherent contradiction of a frontier in a project narrated as democratic and honourable, has been emphasized in settler colonial studies as the reason for the "settler rage" and the "righteous fury" that the settlers unleash on the Indigenous (Memmi, [1957] 2013; Loyd, 2012).

These types of spaces, the scenes of settler Indigenous interaction, can be conceptualised in ways that lessens the focus of violence. For example, Mary Louise Pratt’s (1991) "contact zone", highlights the outcome of cultural interaction (violent sometimes, for sure) in colonial settings. The concept encompasses the multiplicity of encounters that are not always straightforward or easily mapped, the space where "cultures, meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today" (Pratt, 1991:34). Anna Tsing (2004) famously conceptualized the "friction" of the capitalist frontiers in Asia in a similar way, calling these spaces "zones of awkward engagement". Here, Tsing emphasises the collaborations that are unexpected or should not work but temporarily does anyway. Tsing, in turn, is inspired by Marianne Schmink and Charles Wood (1992), who conceptualised the frontier in Amazonas as a "series of ironic
twists”. The concept of the contact zone has been picked-up by posthumanism influenced political ecology scholars, arguably a it is able to host those multiple meetings that happens also between the human and non-human spheres while being focused on uneven relations of power (for example, Sundberg, 2015 and Isaacs and Otruba, 2019). According to Pratt (2019) herself, the concept has had an unfortunate parallel development in political spheres, where it has been applied as a apolitical, ideal solution, which was not the original intent. I do not read this concept as apolitical, on the contrary I find it to be a useful and open concept that allows for a complex analysis. However, I do read it as not quite addressing the "pioneer spirit”, which is intwined in the conceptualisation that I apply to the Naqab in this thesis.

Recent literature engaging with the Israeli occupation is using a definition of the front that instead resonates with political ecology literature on the frontier as a space of disruption (Peluso and Lund, 2011; Rasmussen and Lund, 2018). What Moses described was the frontier as a physical space, reminiscent of the “nation-making” frontier famously described by American historian Fredrick Jackson Turner in 1893. The frontier in Israeli studies, akin to that of political ecology, “subverts the Turnerian front”, meaning, the front as a geographic line and brings into focus the continuation of the settlement process even after the space is “materially settled” as the completeness of settlement instead involves the “institutionalization of the geography casted onto it” (Milner, 2020:270; Handel, 2011). I believe that this perspective adds valuable insight to the “deepness” of settlement: for example, the legalization through planning and erasure of place history and language. Others are approaching the frontier not as a physical space, but as an idea: Anna Tsing (2003:5102) wrote about the frontier that it is "not a place or even a process, but an imaginative project capable of moulding both places and process". These conceptualizations have shaped my treatment of the Naqab "frontier”.

Moreover, the frontier has a complex position in settler mythology. From the Australian context, Moses (2003) account of public and scholarly debates on the term genocide can serve as an illustration. While structuralists, epitomized by Wolfe as ”a structure, not an event”, highlight the intrinsic genocidal nature of settlement, the Australian public discourse has instead narrated certain specific, extremely violent events as genocide, but overall rejected the structural description as genocide. In this type of discourse, not exclusive to Australia, the frontier becomes cut off from the overall creation of the nation, and given a complex symbolic meaning of outcasts and of unruliness, brutality and lawlessness while symbolizing a certain deeply valued national virtue (Deloria, 1998; Braverman, 2008). This phenomenon is closely linked to what Veracini (2010) has called "indigenisation”, an identity forming process wherein the settler derives their nativity from the both admired and despised attributes ascribed to the Indigenous. Another effect of these types of discourses, as Moses (2003) points out is that the deadly consequences are re-situated from being within the causality of colonialism to
the causality of modernity or economic development, which is an abandonment of structure and a favouring of specific events.

The rationalization of the elimination of the Other

This role of the frontier for the settler society can be understood through the notion of exception. The exception has two implications in settler society logics: first, that it is characteristic of settler societies to narrate themselves as an exception to the rule and therefore not comparable to other settler cases; and, second, that the frontier is a brutal exception of an otherwise benevolent settler intention. In the Australian example, the frontier is narrated as something extreme and different from the legitimate society. In popular discourse, the unwanted stories is placed in the frontier to shelter the collective national narrative. This type of emergency or crisis legitimates the suspension of law and permits and normalizes extraordinary behaviour, famously explored by the Italian political philosopher Giorgio Agamben (2008). However, as argued by Lloyd (2012), the very existence of the settler society is that of a permanent state of exception and it is within this normality, that the elimination of the Other (the native, the Indigenous) can be rationalized. Agamben's concept of exception is built from his reading of Thomas Hobbe's *Leviathan* (from 1651) and on Hobbe's understanding of the state of nature in modern states. According to Hobbe, the state of nature represents the condition of lawlessness and anarchy that the people exchanged for order, by allowing the ruler sovereign power. But Hobbe's meant that the state of nature remains intact in the modern state, embodied in the sovereign. To Agamben, the state of nature and the exception is one and the same: both are conditions which are perceived as outside the state, while in reality constituting the core of the state power. Agamben's exception is also based in the political theorist Carl Schmitt's analysis of political sovereignty. Schmitt wrote that it was the ruler that declared the exception that had sovereignty. In other words, it is the cancellation of law, that is sovereignty, not the establishment of it. But where Schmitt sees the exception as an event, that is limited in space and time, Agamben sees a relationship that permeates the entire system of power and law. Thus, in the modern state, what we assumed to be outside of order has reinstated itself on the inside as the cancelled law (Hagmann and Korf, 2012). Claudio Minca (2007) writes about this Agambian paradox that it veils the territorialisation principle of the state and thereby leads us to see the territory of the state as an undisputed geographical unit. This valuable insight reveals the role of a frontier within an established and state controlled political territory (as the Naqab is in Israel). This is partly because it highlights the need of settler-colonial state to fill its formal territory and partly because it points
to how a structural phenomenon of state settlement is displaced to the personal experience of the settler of the frontier.

Studies of settler colonialism are engaging increasingly with the work of Agamben (Morgenstern, 2012b, Lloyd, 2012). Others are placing biopolitical (and necropolitical) interventions at centre in settler-colonial contexts, exploring how the Indigenous populations are exposed to various forms of regulations, which are restricting, constraining and shaping the conditions for life, “managed and regulated toward elimination” (Bhungalia, 2018:324, Ghantous, 2020). Foucault ([1976] 2003) described the transition from the old form of sovereign power to biopower, targeting the biological dimension of the population (health, reproduction, sexuality), as the transition from the old right of the sovereign to ”take life or let live” to a new logic of “to ‘make’ live and to let die”. Agamben’s work invoked in these studies centre around the concepts of bare life and Homo Sacer (from the book Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life from 1998), named after a strange character in Roman law that could be killed by anyone but not sacrificed in religious ritual. This figure has been used as a metaphor to explain such diverse fates as that of the artist (in a quite abstract and poetic sense) and of the social and ethnical groups that are made rightless within the society (Hansson and Mitchell, 2018). Homo Sacer represents Agamben’s idea of the “inside-outside”, that is, the Other or ”the excluded”, which constitutes the society. With his bare life concept, Agamben argues that the modern state remains concerned with who it allows to live and who it makes to die.

Further, if we follow Wolfe (2006), the nature of settlement is land-oriented and a zero-sum game of coveted land, which leads to the “logic of elimination” as the settler society inscribes themselves on the land and in the historic and mythological narrative: the very presence of the Other disturbs this pristine image and causes the settler society to experience an existential threat to their existence. This state of perceived threat is what creates the state of emergency or what Albert Memmi in the Colonizer and the Colonized (1957) conceptualized as the ”siege mentality”, causing the settlers to hide behind self-inflicted gates and inflict on the native increasingly draconian laws, circumscribing their everyday lives. Indeed, Agamben has been criticized for seeing the state of exception as a potentiality, whereas a more structuralist reading of settlement would have it as a fundamental condition of settler colonialism (see for instance Lloyd, 2012). Moses (2013) warns that the structuralists approach might be too rigid to fully comprehend the complexities played out in each case and encourages studies to pay close attention to the specific, without falling into the trap of ”exceptionalism”, that is, conceptualizing each case as unique and therefore as non-comparable.

However, neither the siege mentality and the potential fascism within it, nor the experienced existential threat posed by the presence of the ”native” (resulting in extreme rage and unproportionate violence from the settler society) can be understood without fully acknowledging the fundamental role
of racism and a racial order in legitimizing any colonial enterprise (Memmi, [1957] 2013). Within the racist imagination the Other becomes one with the conquered nature and their disappearance is not visibly included in the new national stories (this echoes back to what recent literature from political ecology has pointed to, namely the co-constructiveness of nature and groups of the population). I write here visible, as their absence is never fully an absence but rather what Lloyd, following Edward Said (1978) calls "the peculiar after-glow of the disappeared" (2012:61), always a presence to which the settler society forms. To this, Mark Rifkin (2013) theorized a "settler common sense" to comprehend the mundanely assumed absence of the native population in the U.S. society: for instance, in the national mythology around the frontier pioneers. The Indigenous, in the settler society, is thus both a frightening figure and an ever-present absence, a phenomenon which ties back to the process of indigenisation. Drawing on these insights, in this thesis I treat Israeli settler colonialism as structured by the racists hierarchies dominating 19th and 20th century imperial Europe and by the contemporary nationalism in Zionism, resulting in a settler-colonial condition, specific to Israel/Palestine but with all fundamental features of settler colonialism.

Settler colonialism in Palestine/Israel

What does it mean to frame Palestine/Israel as a settler-colonial project?

The conceptualization of colonialism in Israel has shifted over time. As already mentioned, the first settlement wave (the First Aliyah) was referred to as a colonial project, also by its proponents. Colonialism was still very much an accepted and appreciated practice in the European norm. The use of the word, however, gradually faded out with the change in settlement practice, which switched from collaborations with the Palestinians to strategic exclusion (Shafir, 1989; Bhandar, 2018).

According to Sabbagh-Khoury (2022), Fayez Sayegh (1965) was the first to conceptualise Israel as a settler-colonial project. Later, a number of Israeli scholars began conceptualizing Israel as a colonial formation (among them are Shafir, 1989; Kimmerling, 1983; Yiftachel, 1996; Pappé, 2008). However, the term fell out of fashion and it was not until the last two decades that the academic paradigm really shifted to ontological conceptualizations of the
Israeli-Palestinian conflict as settler colonialism (Sayegh, 1965; Salamanca et al., 2012). Scholars tended to, and still very much tend to, focus either on the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) or on Palestinians in Israel. Ontologically, the settler colonial paradigm as it has emerged in the past decades, has shifted research focus from instances shaped by colonialism to the structure itself. For instance, within settler colonial studies in the current form, the 1948 Nakba is not a bounded event but a continuous process that displaces and dispossess Palestinians though a variety of legal, violent and discursive practices.  

A special issue of the journal Settler Colonial Studies from 2012, was a milestone in the attempt to put the field of Palestine studies in dialogue with comparative settler colonial studies and place Palestine next to South Africa, French Algeria, Canada and the United States, to mention a few well-known examples. The applicability of the approach is contested: obviously so by those contesting the very statement of the establishment of the state as colonial (for example, Yahel, Kark and Frantzman, 2014), but also critical scholars who do not contest the colonial history of Israel have pointed to potential challenges in making comparisons to settler-colonial countries. Israel, for instance, is still expanding its borders making the process a fundamentally different object of study than in countries that have been formally decolonized (Pappé, 2012). Nonetheless, it has been argued by, among others, Pappé (2012) that there is a strong political point in comparing Israel with other contexts, as Israeli ”exceptionalism” (that Israel is a case of its own that can’t be compared) is deflecting criticism of Israeli occupation and overtly racist policies in Israel within the ”Green Line”. In fact, this denial of comparability is a tenant of settler colonialism. As Pieterberg (2008:62) has formulated it, settler narratives are built on three main features: first, ”the uniqueness of each settler nation”; second, ”the exclusive primacy accorded to the settlers’ subjectivity”; and third, ”the denial of the fact that the presence of the colonized has been the single most significant factor in determining the structure and nature of the settler society”. Moreover, it has been argued that it is the fact that Israel constantly portrays itself as both an exception to the norm which cannot be compared to anything while at the same time claiming a position as a ”normal” liberal democracy, that creates the deflection (Lloyd, 2012). Veracini (2013), arguably one of the persons who have had the largest impact on both settler colonial studies in general and on studies on Israeli settler colonialism argued for a differentiation between colonialism in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) and the ”Green Line”. He (2013) argued that the occupied Palestinian territories post-1967 occupation is in a fact a failed attempt at settlement and should be characterized as colonialism (or rather, that the relationship between the state and the Palestinians should be characterized as colonial), whereas the ”Green Line” areas remains a case of

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14 The Naqba is the Arabic word for ‘catastrophe’ and the word used to refer to the killings, expropriations and expulsions of the Palestinians with the establishment of the State of Israel.
settler colonialism. This notion has been contradicted by Barakat (2018), who argued that the differentiation is an unfortunate repetition of Zionist narratives (which separates the oPt from the "Green Line"). Barakat argued that "demographics of elimination" (a marker of settler colonialism) is still active in the oPt but only in a different form, thanks to the sheer numbers of Palestinians still left.

The framing of the Israel/Palestine condition as settler colonial also has implications for the framing of the possible solution. The settler colonial paradigm frames the Zionist project as colonial, and the Palestinian resistance as "anti-colonial", which implies a required shift in discourse from "peace process" to "decolonization" (Pappé, 2013). Thus, the settler colonial approach implies a suggested shift from a two-state paradigm to a one-state paradigm, as the approach targets the structure of Zionism, which would be left intact in a two-state solution (Busbridge, 2018). Similarly, the structural approach of settler colonialism in Israel/Palestine has moreover meant the repositioning of the problem from a liberal human-rights approach, connected to an overall "NGO:isation" of the Palestinian political movement that emerged in the 1990s, to a structural demand for decolonization (Jad, 2007; Hammami, 2000). Tuck and Yang (2007) and Byrd (2014) have, not specific to the Palestinian context, pointed to the impossibility of decolonization within civil rights projects.

Despite all the invigorating force the settler colonial turn has provided, Busbridge (2018) has argued that there are potential difficulties with working politically with the contemporary settler colonial paradigm, as it is built on a strict binary of "native" and settler and on an ontology of a "zero-sum game". This binary begs the question of how decolonization can be visualized without necessarily being faced with the option of an "all or nothing" approach which posits the full eviction of the settlers as the only option to continued settlement. Indeed, with all the benefits for the invigorated political movement in Palestine, this "native-settler" binary has been critiqued for leaving little room for political movements of Jewish-Palestinian collaboration. To illustrate the characteristics of the current settler colonial paradigm, Busbridge (2018) highlights that earlier interpretation of settler colonialism was sometimes based on a Marxist approach (for example, Hilal, 1976), which allowed for intersections of solidarity through relationship to the means of production. Similarly, Locker-Biletzki (2020) argued that a greater attention to the formation of the capitalist class within the settler -condition in Israel/Palestine could create a possible resistance through class struggle.

One question emerging from the "native-settler" binary and the ability of the approach to forge political solidarity with non-Indigenous is "who is a settler?". This question has arguably been more relevant to pose in the North and Latin American context where questions of blackness and Indigeneity has spurred debate (see for example, Morgensen, 2011; Rifkin, 2019 and Byrd, 2019 for North America, Leroy, 2016 for the role of U.S anti-blackness in the
Conceptualization of practical decolonization within the framework of settler colonialism remains an open question. The question of the settler is in many ways the question the relationship between settler and the settling: Busbridge (2018) argued that the contemporary paradigm, based on Wolfe’s structural account, is built on an assumption of a "logic of elimination" that is omnipresent and at work even when it is apparently absent (see also Veracini, 2007). She reads an ontological dimension of a "settler will" into Wolfe’s structure that seemingly works according to an intrinsic desire to eliminate the Indigenous. For Franz Fanon (1968), as expressed in The Wretched of the Earth, this desire emerged from colonization itself as a creation of the colonial system and not the opposite. In Krautwust’s (2018: 58) words, for Fanon, “the settler is the representative of the structural permanence necessary to colonial desire”. Thus, the structure lives in the settler and is performed through settler bodies, but it is inherently intrinsic to the ideas eventually materializing as colonial projects. Similarly, the Australian historian Dirk Moses (2003) described the process of settlement as placed in the consciousness of the individual settlers. The consequences of settlement, like death, dispossession, assimilation and elimination, are not necessarily found in the initial intentions of the sending country but their appearance is nonetheless “objectively intrinsic” to the process and thus eventually, “subjectively placed” in the person. Important here is to treat both the concept of "settler" and "Indigenous" as history-geographic specific and contingent categories.

The political movement of Zionism

The settler colonial turn places the colonial structure as the object of study. In the Israeli case, the settler project has from the very start, been inseparable from the governmental, non-governmental and individual performance of the Zionist ideology. The first Zionists or proto-Zionists mark a shift from what is referred to as the Old Yishuv (the Jewish community in Palestine before 1881) to the New Yishuv. The newcomers were organized either in the collection of organizations called Hovevei Zion or in Bilu, both movements emerging as responses to the erupting anti-Semitism in tsarist Russia and devoted to facilitate Jewish migration to Ottoman Palestine. The Russian branch of Hovevei Zion was registered as The Society for the Support of Jewish Farmers and Artisans in Syria and Eretz Israel and was known as the Odessa Committee. With the establishment of the Zionist Organisation in 1897, most members joined the new movement. For these newcomers in 1881-1884, the Old Yishuv represented traditional, religious life and was something the new settlers positioned themselves against (Shilo, 2021). This positioning would become a prominent feature of the Zionist movement, which was
concerned with the making of a new identity, the "new Jew", a muscular figure working the soil who was an antithesis to the stereotypical cosmopolite that was the European Jew (Presner, 2007). The making of a new, national identity derived from the ethics of cultivation, or more specifically the agrarian lifestyle. It has been conceptualized by Seraj Assi as "agro-nationalism" (2018:12). Here, agrarian livelihoods become the locus of national revival and redemption. Cultivation has a specific legal-moral position in European justification for colonialism, derived from the Lockean notion of ownership as morally achieved through improvement (cultivation) of land. With the emergence of Palestinian nationalism at the turn of the century, cultivation would eventually develop as national locus also for this movement. For a period, the Bedouins were prototyped as essentializing the Arabs’ but this gradually changed in favour of the fellah, the farmer (Assi, 2018:12, Zerubavel, 2006).

In the case of Israeli settler colonialism and Zionism, Pappé (2012) has argued that despite the fact that the world has changed entirely over the past century, the creation of Israeli Indigeneity to the land remains a constant in the ideology. Zionism was born in one historical context and while the government of today acts in a very different world, this constant has not changed. It has however adapted to other major economic, political and ideological movements of our time. The Labour Zionism that dominated the political leadership was replaced by the right-wing Likud government in 1977. Likud’s rise to power signifies a general neoliberal turn in Israeli politics accelerating towards the end of the 20th century (Ram, 2008; Charney, 2017). The Likud turn also meant a new type of aggressive expansionism resulting in acceleration of the settlement project on the occupied Palestinian territories, predominantly by the aggressively national-religious settler organisation Gush Emunim. For a brief period during the 1990s, cultural and academic discourse was influenced by Post-Zionism, a form of liberal reinterpretation of and reconciliation with Zionism. However, related to political events (for example, the failed peace process with the Palestinians), public debate soon enough shifted towards a merging of neoliberal values and nationalistic discourse (Pappé, 2014b). This political and ideological landscape continued normalizing the political characteristics of the West Bank settler movement. In Globalisation of Israel: McWorld in Tel Aviv, Jihad in Jerusalem (2008), sociologist Uri Ram described how the religious-nationalist movement for a long time represented the opposite of globalisation and transnationalism; it was seen as a protectionist, locally rooted, nationalism. However, Dayan (2019) recently noted, after representatives of the settler movement have been placed firmly in mainstream political power, an alliance has emerged between the neoliberal global elite and religious-nationalist settler groups. This movement is now working towards normalization instead of, as earlier, being seen as ideological frontrunners. According to Pappé (2014b) this Neo-Zionism, found in the political right and in the settler movement, places
nationalistic values above all (that is, territorial expansionism) while centred around neoliberal political orientation. Moreover, according to Ram (1999), Neo-Zionism, mixes Zionist and Jewish “ingredients”, and creates an ideology in which nationalist expansionism is a religious act (Ram, 1999:334). However, Jamal (2017) has argued that what is called Neo-Zionism and the particularities of it (phrased by more liberal Zionists as nationalism and expansionism) is a mere continuation of the settler colonialism of classic Zionism and that the narrative of expansionism as belonging to the settler movement or, more broadly, to Neo-Zionism, hides the actions of the less extreme. The unfolding of Neo-Zionism in Israeli settler colonialism in general and in the Naqab in particular has recently been explored by Joseph Getzoff (2020), showing how Neo-Zionism has merged with a new Israeli discourse, establishing a new national ideal for the country centred on high-tech development and transnationalism. In Paper 2 of this thesis, I explore the articulation of this new discourse in the Naqab settlement, and in particular in the frontier-making discourse of the Jewish National Fund.

A full settler colonialism approach to the conditions of the Palestinian Bedouins in the Naqab and the ongoing "Judaization" of the area emerged a decade ago as the field of Naqab Bedouin studies. Testifying to the paradigmatic - and ontological - shift to settler colonialism was a conference held in England in 2010, which scholars from a variety of disciplines (for example postcolonial studies and Palestine studies) came together, united in mutual interests in the Naqab Bedouin, placing the issues in relation to the wider Palestinian question and thereby bridging the ontological divide between the occupied Palestinian territories and the Naqab. An edited volume from the conference outlines the scholarly field of Naqab Bedouin studies, situating the field historically and politically in contemporary academia (Nasasra et al., 2014). The authors call for scholars engaging in Naqab research to situate them in the framework of settler-colonial structures (see Nasasra et al., 2015).

The Naqab Bedouin in academia

The academic treatment of the Bedouins living in the Naqab has gradually grown from an initial culture-oriented body of work (Marx, 1967, Abu-Rabia, 1994, Dineo, 1997) to include the interdisciplinary field of Naqab Bedouin Studies. Early Israeli scholarship tended to focus on cultural features and later, on the transition from traditional society to "modernity", and in particular on the pastoralist-sedentarist transition (Meir, 1997). The Bedouins were constructed as culturally distinguished but not yet as spatially bound to the Naqab. That would however change and they gradually became treated in research as "Negev Bedouins", except for a brief period of being described as "Bedouins of Negev and Sinai", (Ratcliffe, 2015:12). In the editorial
introduction to the above publication, Ratcliff (2015) makes the argument that the academic production of knowledge has not only reflected the geopolitical reality (for instance, the Bedouins were described as "Negev and Sinai Bedouins" when the Sinai was under Israeli military occupation) but also constructed it, through mapping and other descriptions of the Bedouins as a group distinct from other Palestinians, both in Israel and in the oPt. Similarly, pre-state attempts at constructing the Hebrew "Negev" as a specific region, rooted in geo-political objectives, included scientific explorations, mapping and studies of the landscape and its inhabitants (Benvenisti, 2000). Eventually, the interdisciplinary field of Naqab Bedouin studies emerged from a variety of scholarly backgrounds: settler colonial studies, Palestine studies, geography, political science, gender studies and legal studies to mention a few.

Scholars from the field criticized previous representations of Bedouins as serving state agendas by casting them as anti-modern, backwards and importantly, with no recognizable connection to the land, thus, facilitating forced relocation of the Bedouin to be replaced by a Jewish population (see for example Nasasra, 2012, 2017; Yiftachel 2006; Yiftachel et al., 2016; Abu-Rabia-Queder, 2018). Critical geography scholarship has increasingly focused on legal and historical geography (Yiftachel 2009, Kedar et al., 2018), showing how previous representations and interpretations of Bedouins as without recognizable connection to the land, has been a major element in facilitating displacements and dispossessions (see for example Yiftachel and Yacobi, 2003, Nasasra, 2012, 2015; Yiftachel et al., 2016). The dominant Zionist narrative of Bedouin lack of territoriality has been challenged and a parallel narrative has developed (Nasasra et al. 2015, Richter-Devroe, 2016), drawing on detailed accounts of title deeds and other expressions of ownership (Nasasra, 2017; Kedar et al. 2018). Broadly, the work of Yiftachel (1996), and the preceding work of Kimmerling (1983, 1989), disentangling the intersection of land, territory, citizenship and identity, has been central to the land policy aspect of the state-Bedouin relationship. In particular, Yiftachel’s (2006, 2009) analysis of the role of spatial planning in forming social and ethnic subgroups, and the linkages between space, planning and political citizenship, has been hugely influential. Yiftachel (2006) used the term creeping apartheid to define how the Israeli system slowly institutionalize a structured discrimination through a self-referencing system that gradually makes the stratifying mechanisms seem naturally given.

Drawing on the works presented above, and by approaching the Naqab through the three aspects of afforestation, settlement and pastoralism, the aim of this thesis is to contribute with nuance to the mechanisms of contemporary settler colonialism and to what characterizes contemporary Israeli settler colonialism.
Method

For this thesis I conducted fieldwork in the northern Naqab, over five visits between January 2018 and September 2021. I spent a total of seven months in the field. This fieldwork has been complemented with analysis of texts, visual media and secondary data. It has the character of a case study, an approach appropriate when the object of study is a multitude of processes within one phenomenon (Swanborn, 2010). I have used an abductive approach, characterized by an iterative movement between empirical data, theoretical framework and analysis, structured over five main themes/“cases within the case” (see more on page 52). An assemblage of research methods has framed the project: semi-structured to unstructured interviews, observation and document and media analysis have made up the main sector, next to secondary data provided by local NGOs, governmental authorities and the JNF-KKL. Additionally, countless informal conversations, car rides, sleepovers and coffees have been fundamental to my analysis. Some of these examples of informal data collection have had the formal framing of unstructured interviews, whereas others have been less structured, short and in passing.

In some ways, I view this section as the most important part. In this chapter I will present my methodology and methods and I will reflect on my positionality by sharing a couple of significant moments from the fieldwork.

Fieldwork

Let me return to the quote from Cindi Katz with which I began this thesis: in our contemporary condition of globalization and post-positivist social science “we are always already in the field”. This statement provokes the question of what the field is. The field as a concept is central to geographic research and fieldwork is a complex phenomenon that opens questions relating to imagined spaces, ethics, positionality, methods and ontology (Rouhani, 2004, Katz, 1994). The field functions as a synonym for empirical data but it is also an imagined geography of a specific place and role of the researcher in that space (Massey, 2003). Field research in the discipline has troublesome connotations, connected to male, Western scholars, seeking to explore, discover and uncover
knowledge “out there” from which they are themselves detached (Rose, 1997); a female, passive field for the male, active researcher (Massey, 2003). As argued by feminist geographers, in a masculinist tradition, going to the field has meant exploring a location from which oneself is detached (Rouhani, 2004). The concepts of exploration, investigation and discovery implies that what is found was “out there” to be found, sooner or later (Clark, 2003). Feminist epistemologies have emphasized the partial and situated nature of all forms of knowledge and the importance of being transparent in how the research was produced (McDowell, 1992). As all social spaces are marked by power and hierarchies, so are research situations. Transparency includes accounts of self-reflexivity and positionality. By being transparent with everyday experiences in which the research was produced, the reader is better equipped with shaping their idea of the context. Positionality statements and self-reflexivity is however not necessarily the same as being transparent about the structures in which the research is produced. As Rose (1997) points out, this transparency is an almost impossible endeavour and these discussions risk being tinted by an overconfidence in one’s ability to comprehend the position one holds. Providing an ever-so-deep account of self-reflexivity can in fact serve as an illustration of the impossibility of such an account. Subjectivity is not only changing between context and individuals, but these contexts and individuals also change constantly - subjectivity is simply not static in any direction. Rose maintains that if we are not aware of our limits in these accounts and pretend that they are absolute, we risk, in the name of feminism and in aversion to the God’s trick, to perform the Goddess’ trick. Bearing that in mind, self-reflexivity is necessary. In this chapter, I have weaved personal observations and anecdotes into the main text, as one way of conveying to the reader who I as a researcher encountered the field.

Moreover, the definition of the field, as Katz’s statement suggests, can vary greatly. The boundaries have been blurred. Through technology, for example, we do not exit the field in the same way when we have all our contacts on WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram or whatever other app that is used in the local context: Signal, Viber, Telegram. Perhaps our shifting epistemologies as researcher are often not constituted in the way that a stereotypical (male) researcher once was. One approach is to see the field as more akin to a structure, running all the way from interviewing to typing into the computer back home at the office, than a territorially bounded space (Latour, 1999 in Massey, 2003:83). I think this present field is a productive way to see the field, as it highlights the processual character of research.

While, hopefully, the work produced over the last decades from feminist and postcolonial research has substantially changed the approach to fieldwork, both in terms of epistemologies and ontologies of knowledge production, a fieldwork remains a form of research that requires attention to a specific set of agendas. I subscribe to an understanding of the field as constituted by a number of fundamental features. The first one, I addressed earlier, relates to
the masculinist, European, imperial tradition of going abroad, vested with all
the power hierarchies embedded in being a white European. Secondly, doing
research like I have, involved the designation, and creation, of artificially
bounded space, cut out from its surroundings and from the movement of time.
For me as researcher, it has been distinct from everyday life, but for the
“researched”, it has not (Katz, 1994:67). Thus, I treated the time-space that
became the field as characterized by a balance between distance and
immersion – a tension that produced the specific knowledge. In the following
section, I will provide an account of my field visits.

Cases and themes

The study has been informed by an abductive approach, that is, an ongoing
movement back and forth between theoretical framework, empirical data and
analysis (Dubois and Gadde, 2002). With this approach, I have allowed my
empirical experiences to shape theoretical engagements, and, in turn, how they
have shaped and changed the concepts through which I saw the field. Thus,
structuring the research as abductive allows for this continuous development
throughout not only analysis, but also the production of knowledge. This
approach arguably strengthens a compilation thesis, as I have incorporated
processes of change in the very design of the project. Also inspiring the
research designed has been the idea of overdetermination, a concept derived
from Louise Althusser’s theoretical approach to causality as a complex and
unevenly developed phenomenon. I have operationalized the concept
following Crawford (2010), and approached the phenomenon of
contemporary settler colonialism through multiple discourses and social
phenomena, allowing tensions and contradictions to remain in the text and
have tried not force the analysis to simplified cause and effect conclusions.
Moreover, I have strived to include both the obvious and the latent in my
research, all in all aiming to gather a complex and contradictory reality.

The production of empirical data for this thesis has been structured using
multiple case studies or themes, themselves developed through ongoing open
coding of the material (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The case studies were not
hermetically sealed, but themes and content overlapped. Partly, this overlap
was a consequence of the fact that one person could have many roles in the
community and therefore, the same individual may appear in overlapping
cases. Sometimes, it was through such individuals that new cases have opened
up to me. It is also partly a consequence of the fact that the content of the
themes is intertwined. What I refer to here as themes/cases have been
developed using open coding of the material, wherein concepts were
developed to fit the data. The initial open coding was followed by axial and
selective coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1990); a progressive process of creating categories, following possible leads and threads and eventually narrowing down concepts to a number of central themes became the focus of study (Williams and Moser, 2019). The process was iterative and characterized by a continuous reading and rereading of transcripts, field notes and field diary (including in my case, video material, photographs and email correspondence). Once a theme was identified, I treated it as a minor case study and conducted small studies within it. The cases were thus chosen following an idea developed after open coding of existing material. They are sites or phenomena where “the key phenomenon of the study has been likely to occur” and where the “similarities and differences across cases are likely to improve theory building” (Eisenhardt, 2021:149). I was inspired by Glaser (1978:4) to allow interpretative categories to develop from the empirics, but I have also approached my study with theory-informed preconceptions.

If I am to reflect on how the specificities of working in a conflict landscape might have played into my choice of research design and approach to production of data, I would say that the expectations (as I perceived them) in social and academic networks of positioning myself theoretically and politically has occasionally made me keen to “stick to” a theoretical framing. These positions were represented explicitly in everyday speech, for instance in how I would name places, name the process I study or refer to the conflict in general.

The main themes/cases are the following:

- **Sheep and goat farming in the Naqab.** The case study included interview studies with Jewish and Bedouin goat and sheep farmers in the Naqab, camel growers, Jewish farmers included in the Negev Wine Route and interviews with staff working at the Grazing Authority, the JNF-KKL, the Volcano research institute (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development), the Nature and Parks Authority and experts not associated to a specific institute. It involved site visits at farms and at spring and summer/autumn grazing sites (fig. 11).

- **Political context of the unrecognized villages.** The case study included interview studies with Bedouin residents living in the villages, Bedouin political activists and planners and architects involved with producing maps, surveys and planning regulations. It involved multiple visits to unrecognized villages and a 2 week stay in one of them named al-Sirra (السرة) in March-April 2019.

- **Afforestation.** The case study involved interview studies with ecologists at the KKL, with researchers conducting studies in the Yatir forests, with KKL forest engineers and other staff at the KKL southern office in Ofakim including managers, rangers and
administrative staff and with a KKL volunteer. This study was supported by a GIS analysis of heads of sheep per forest type. It involved visits to different forests, for walks, bike rides and taking of photographs and it involved a visit to a research station in the Yatir forest. Moreover, it involved me being invited to stay at the KKL southern office for a couple of days, invited to use their meeting room as an office.

- **Kibbutz reformation, establishment of community settlements and American immigration.** The case study involved interview studies with representatives from the settlement organizations the OR movement and Regavim (the latter only over the phone, the former three times at the headquarters in Beersheba), kibbutz members and expert interviews. This study also included a discourse analysis of video materials produced by the JNF-KKL and/or the OR movement and site visits to four locations: a seeding group waiting to establish the town of Chiran, Sansana (fig. 9) (part of the OR movement network but actually a West Bank settlement, built on the Green Line), Carmit (fig. 10) and the reformed kibbutz Har Amasa.

- **Tourism.** The case study involved interviews with the founder of a politically oriented tourist agency engaged in the Bedouin land conflict, the founder of from Migdal and the Darom Adom (the Red South) festival, a representative of the West Negev Council (an informal/non-administrative political unit), a number of Airbnb hosts and observation at a “speed dating” event at Wadi Attir for Jewish and Bedouin women with local tourist businesses. The reason for this study, which might seem a bit out of place, was that I imagined that the tourist sector would offer valuable insight into future visions for the region.
Figure 9 The settlement Sansana built on the Green Line. Next to the synagogue is a bomb shelter. Photo: author, 2021.

Figure 10 Part of the new Jewish suburb Carmit. Photo: author, 2021.
Figure 11 Sheep and horse at summer grazing location late in the season. Photo: author, 2019.

Figure 12 Savannisation with local species. Photo, author, 2019
Interviews

The bulk of empirical data has been produced using semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are not chosen to be representative but rather to provide insights into how people make sense of a given situation or experience (Valentine, 1997:111 in Longhurst, 2003). These interviews have been conducted using a topic guide. This guide has not been a static document but has changed along the way. Thus, the respondents have not been approached with the same topic guide.

I have conducted purposeful sampling, in which respondents are approached on the basis of their connection to the phenomenon in focus and “snowballing” (Heckathorn and Cameron, 2017). Snowballing is built on networking and referral and is a useful form of sampling for research that requires contact with informal networks or networks that are for some reason hard to reach (Parker et al., 2019). I successfully used snowball sampling to create a professional network within governmental authorities and political activists but was less successful in reaching sheep growers this way. I began this thesis with an intention of studying the remaining transhumance in the Naqab and my intention was to conduct qualitative interviews with sheep farmers and herders (these are sometimes the same). However, this group turned out to be harder for me to contact than I had anticipated. I think the main reason for this is the fact that I do not speak Arabic and therefore I needed an interpreter and that this turned out to be difficult (see more under the rubric Interpreters below). One benefit of using snowball sampling also for reaching individuals working at authorities (and therefore had their emails on the website) was that it gave me a deepened understanding of how the systems of knowledge are constructed within Israeli administration.

Other respondents were approached with what Longhurst (2003) calls cold calling: this has for instance been the case when I have investigated a network of individuals whose contact information is accessible online (for instance, tourist-oriented farms or AirBnb-hosts). In these cases, I have sent an email followed by a phone call, introducing myself and my interests. Respondents have been interviewed in a variety of places. If possible, the location has been of their choosing. One important exception was two interviews that were conducted with Bedouin sheep growers. In these cases, I got to join a KKL manager on his field visits and the sheep growers were not informed in advance that I would come along. Interviews have different characters depending on the setting of the conversation: interviews in the privacy of the home tended to be more about personal choices and opinions than interviews held at an office. However, interviews held in an open environment where people occasionally joined the conversation sometimes got the characteristic of a light-version focus group as the participants (co-workers, generally) could suddenly ask each other questions that I had never thought of.
When possible, I strived to meet more than once with respondents, which gave me a possibility to follow-up on interesting topics and pose more initiated questions. Krause (2021) recently wrote interestingly about the phenomenon of limited immersion, in ethnographic field work in conflict areas. Immersion is the act of becoming part of the place and community of study, traditionally achieved through very lengthy stays in the field. To speak about limited immersion, is, instead to acknowledge that full immersion is both impossible as the researcher is limited by a number of factors (such as gender and ethnicity) and that there are great benefits with instead working with shorter field trips and methods that vary between different groups of participants. For instance, shorter field trips allow for reflection on question and approach and it has the benefit of proving to research participants that you as a researcher are invested in the field by returning. Moreover, I believe breaks and reoccurring visits gave me time to reflect and notice changes that might otherwise have gone unnoticed. Krause (2021) also included the notion of uneven immersion in the concept, which is helpful not only when researching a conflict area but also when studying elite groups.

The phenomenon of studying the powerful, traditionally known as studying up, poses certain ethical challenges that differ from studying vulnerable groups. For instance, Souleles (2021) made the point that it might be reasonable not to give elite groups “interpretative authority”, as these groups already have the power to impact the social reality. Souleles, moreover, suggests that it is necessary to adapt research method accordingly, and, for instance, not use participatory methods in this particular type of research. Similarly, Aguiar and Schneider (2012) have argued, when “studying up”, the researcher might have to negotiate the level of disclosure, to keep research integrity.

In my own research, both meeting respondents on recurring occasions and studying powerful groups, sometimes created ethically complicated situations, which came as a result of creating closer connection to respondents. I never wanted to disclose much about my personal life in interview settings, such as my place of residence. I would often choose to simply say that I stayed outside of Jerusalem. It sometimes gave me a feeling of being dishonest and it happened that I shared more personal information after a while. Working in a conflict area is sensitive and requires respect, but also integrity and I made the judgment that after all things considered this response was a reasonable approach. Another aspect of seeing people recurrently over the years was that personal friendships developed. These relationships sometimes made me feel safe and sometimes exposed. It happened for instance that someone would ask a personal question about my private life (maybe a follow-up question of something I had shared a year earlier). This scenario sometimes gave me a feeling of being known and liked, which was a good feeling, but sometimes it made me feel vulnerable and without protection. Being on the field can be
exhaustive emotionally and a certain distance can sometimes feel like emotional security (see also Wood, 2006).

One important benefit of keeping the network alive between field visits was that I did not have to start from the beginning when a new theme had emerged in the process of open coding. One example of when it was productive is the small study of the kibbutz reform system. This aspect was important as it provided a concrete understanding of where potential newcomers to the Naqab could live. For this study, I revisited a number of respondents that I had met with for other purposes and asked them specifically about the kibbutz system, how it has changed, experienced of growing up in a kibbutz and how the older generation felt about the new demographic who is moving in (in the eyes of many old “kibbutznik” the newcomers are not idealists or interested in keeping up culture and tradition). In this way, layers could emerge from the analysis of material and the network already established worked as a first step to a new study.

Interpreters

Interviews were conducted in English, Hebrew or Arabic. I conducted the English myself but relied on the help of interpreters for the ones in Hebrew or Arabic. Interviews in Hebrew happened in two ways. It either happened when a non-English speaker wanted to join an ongoing conversation (this happened once during an interview at the JNF southern office and once at an interview with a staff member at the al-Kasom Regional Council in Beersheba (this regional council is the administrative body of recognized Bedouin villages). In these cases, the person I was doing the interview with translated what the co-worker was saying and both were Jewish Israelis. The other variant posed a more complicated situation in terms of quality of the interview. In these cases, a Jewish Israeli contact introduced me to Palestinian Bedouin respondents. This situation was the case for three interviews with sheep farmers (see Paper 3) and one visit to a Bedouin town, which involved a large number of informal conversations. In these interviews I paid close attention to the potential dynamics of power and ethnicity that could be at play and the possible ways it could have affected the response from the respondents. In these cases, the Hebrew speaker has interpreted my (English) questions to the respondent (most Palestinian Bedouins in the Naqab speak Hebrew). I tried to be attentive to dynamics of power through what Ratnam (2019) has discussed as (embodied) listening as a research method. Here the verbal and nonverbal aspects of conversation, such as body language, facial expressions and silences, are part of the experience as a listener, but also the emotional effect it has on the researcher. I recorded these interviews and transcribed them, but I did not treat the transcripts (nor any other records of interviews or
conversations) as unmediated data, but as multi-layered, relational and contextual. Interviews in Arabic with sheep farmers and political activists was conducted by Arabic speaking Palestinian Bedouins that I got to know throughout the work. These were conducted by the help of several individuals. They were akin to a gatekeeper, which means that they also introduced me to a community, a network or a family and helped me conduct interviews in Arabic. The person has then translated to English for me during the interview. These interviews have also been recorded and transcribed. The issue of ethnicity of interpreters has been discussed in qualitative methodology before. I have taken the factor into serious consideration, while acknowledging that ethnicity is one of many possible social signifiers (albeit one of great importance in Israel/Palestine) that might affect the respondent (Temple and Young, 2004).

I found it more difficult than I had expected to work with a recurring interpreter. I posted ads in groups online, I worked through my network and I got access to a student mailing list at Ben Gurion University but had little success. Instead, I got in touch with individuals who were generous enough to help me in their spare time. This outcome also affected the sampling, as the snowballing often happened through these gatekeepers (Cohen and Aiel, 2011). Four individuals helped me recurrently over the years and we developed a relationship of trust and spent some of our free time together. I am indebted to them for this thesis. Working with several different interpreters/gatekeepers made me aware that the positionality of the interpreter both allows them to move into certain areas and networks but also constrain them from others, due either to gendered norms or social relationships (Yang, 2022). The social networking involved with accessing interpreters and gatekeepers is a good example of a factor that limited my immersion in the different groups I was interviewing (Krause, 2021).

Secondary data

I have, to some extent, relied on secondary data. For example, a certain numbers of house evictions or numbers of sheep that visit a particular forest. Secondary data is often produced by government authorities or, more often in my case, by organizations of different kinds. I have been aware that using such data poses questions as to how it was produced within specific systems of knowledge and hierarchies (Davies et al., 2014). Therefore, I have used these with appropriate caution. Moreover, data in reports is often based on geographical units that might differ from those I am myself working with (White, 2003). The spatial organization is however also a source of data that can enrich the material, for instance the organization of a number of Jewish
farms, strategically placed in the Naqab as a way to cut off Bedouin spaces from each other, as the Negev Wine Route. Similarly, how the different villages in the Naqab are administratively organized into different Regional Councils offers an important insight into the racialization of space (Bedouin towns are organized in their own council, separate from the Jewish administration). Particularly in interviews or conversations with academics, activists and officials, the respondent referred to documents or websites in Hebrew or Arabic. I have translated such documents sentence by sentence using Google Translate. This procedure has allowed me to navigate the documents and gain a more direct understanding of the issue. When I have used quotes or statistics from such a document, I have always consulted someone with high level language skills (as a rule, who speaks it as their first language) to confirm that I have properly understood the context and the meaning. In other words, I have not used such source material as I would have used material in English or Swedish, but the access to the text given by the online translation service has in fact provided a sense of closeness to the topic in question.

Discourse analysis

Throughout this thesis I make repeated referrals to discourse. In these cases, I understand discourse as grounded in Foucauldian tradition and I thus see discourse as a system of language, where language, knowledge and power are connected and form reality (Low, 2016:123-124). The material in Paper 2 was analysed inspired by critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2001; Wodak, 2001) and in particular the operationalization outlined by Jäger (Jäger and Maier, 2009). Jäger builds on the theoretical insights of Michael Foucault but expands the discourse concept to include non-discursive performances, including the creation of material objects (Meyer, 2001). Key concepts in analysis include discourse fragments, discourse strands and discourse planes in combination with the notion of collective symbologies or topoi as a collecting force in linking separated discourse strands. Discourse strands refer to flows of discourses coming together to form a topic (Jäger and Mayer, 2009). The difference between discourse and discourse strands is a matter of abstraction: discourse refers to abstract statements while discourse strands refer to concrete utterances (Jäger and Mayer, 2009:16). Discourse fragments refer to pieces of texts (including images and actions) while discourse plane refers to different forms of expression with distinctive stylistic features - these could also be called genre. Underlying the analysis has been post-Marxist explorations on hegemony and articulations, where the notion of intention is prominent compared with the Foucauldian notion of discourse (Hall, 1992;
Laclau and Mouffe, 2014). Moreover, the research focuses on discourses developed within a specific time frame, giving it the character of a synchronic analysis. There was nonetheless an archaeology of each discourse and collective symbol, which require attention to historic context.

As previously mentioned, the research approach has been inspired by ideas of overdetermination (Crawford, 2010). In terms of discourse, this approach has meant that I have taken into consideration that statements made from respondents were sometimes best understood as expressions of the available or common metaphors or use of language. Practically, it has meant that I have been careful with reading too much into a statement or “locking” a respondent to a certain meaning simply for using a specific word or expression. This approach, I argue, was particularly important when conducting research using either interpreters or any language that is not my first.

Furthermore, I use the words symbol and symbolism on several occasions. The notion of the symbol as a transcendental revelation of something whole, that which lies beyond what we can name, is rooted in a neo-platonic tradition typical of Western religion and philosophy. Religious historians Gilhus and Mikaelsson (2003:152) place the theory of anthropologist Victor Turner (1970) on the other side of transcendental symbolism. The religious symbol, Turner argues, is powerful because of its connection between the sensory and the ideological, the personal experience and the societal structure. This notion connects the symbol to a tradition of performance and embodiment. Thus, Turner's notion of symbolism serves as a deepening element to the collective symbols of Jäger and one that speaks more closely to the theoretical framework of taskscape and the unavoidable being that each individual undergoes. The collective symbols of a society are part of creating a person's understanding and interpretation of the world one lives in. In the Naqab, Emily McKee (2011) has used the similar notion of environmental discourses and historical narratives as shaping a person’s understanding of his or her environment.

Positionality: fieldwork in the Naqab

I first visited Israel/Palestine in March 2016 to do field studies for my Master’s thesis. I followed up with a month-long stay in March-April 2017, the purpose of that visit was to keep my network alive and to explore possibilities for a PhD research proposal. Within the frame of my PhD project, I have visited the Naqab five separate times (2018-2021). Here, I describe this fieldwork using a collage of a few situations that had particular significance for me. My intention is to provide the possibility for a reader to create an impression of the way this research was produced and the impact of the field on my journey as a researcher of and in it. All names, except Khalil’s, are pseudonyms.
January 2018

I rented an apartment in Florentine in Tel Aviv, it was a room in a shared flat. My next-door neighbour was an Israeli actor making a living from doing voice-overs to commercials on TV. He was nice but quite intrusive. My first entry in the field diary, now a document of 101 pages, was on 21 January:

“Sherut towards Beersheba. It’s 8.30 in the morning and we are still in Tel Aviv, waiting”.

Sherut is a shared, yellow minibus/taxi. In Arabic, they are called servees. I once used the Hebrew word in Ramallah and got a stark comment from my Palestinian friend. I felt spoiled and naive that could move with such freedom without paying attention to who is not afforded the privilege. The next entry is from 22 January:

“Meeting yesterday got cancelled at the last minute. I took the bus to the kibbutz Lahav to check out the Joe Alon Museum for Bedouin Culture.”.

I had read about the museum in a couple of papers as an example of how the Naqab has been remade to a tourist attraction and how the Bedouin, in the new story, is ascribed the role of an exotic element:

“It described how the Bedouins in the 1960s built other types of structures (using the word “flimsy”) with sheet metal and wood. Nothing about the siyaj. ‘Nomads’. A lot about fire, natural medicine and spices.”.

Further down I noted that the kibbutz was abundantly green with banana plants and that a teenage girl who spoke English extremely well had said that 200 families were going to move in. I noted horses and, outside the fence (all kibbutzim are fenced), camels. The kibbutz, and later the Lahav forest, were built on lands from Bedouin villages, whose inhabitants had been expelled to the Hebron area or to Sinai in or just after 1948 (Levy, 2020). For more about the forests see Paper 1 and for more about the influx of Jewish families to the Naqab, see Paper 2.

When the evening fell, and with-it darkness and a suddenly very cold air, I misread the time table and desperately hopped on a bus, not knowing where it was headed. I had asked around the village but quickly realized that there were no hostels or other public spaces (maybe a café or a restaurant, I hoped) and that being invited inside was as likely as it would have been in any suburbia - not very likely. The bus driver looked at me with suspicion when I tried to explain my situation. I am still not sure which road the bus driver took, but we sick-sacked into a number of small Jewish villages, most of the time seeing
the Wall on our right side. My perception of the place was the kind of perception one can have before a place is known and incorporated into one’s mental map, when it still feels endless and as if it could continue forever in any direction. He asked me “What do you love, Israel or Palestine?”, I guessed he was Palestinian and I guessed right. I would certainly not be the last time someone asked for my position in the omnipresent conflict. I think he enjoyed my company, as I was the only passenger on the long ride. When we tried to drive into one village, the kids playing by the fence would not push the button that opened the gate. The bus driver sighed, saying something about Jews and Arabs. He finally dropped me at Beit Kama junction, a place that would become more than familiar over the years, I waited a while, trying to decipher the Hebrew electronic signs and finally hopped on one of the bullet-proof green Israeli Egged buses and arrived late in the evening to my apartment and the talkative neighbour.

The field trip lasted two weeks. I travelled by bus, being shocked by the number of soldiers doing military service. I could not get used to their rifles on the seat next to me and I was puzzled by their seemingly childish style of clothing, for instance it was not uncommon to see a glittering, stuffed animal bobbing from their backpacks. I made a number of important connections including the organization Dukium/the Negev Coexistence Forum, which has been of huge importance during my work, had an initial meeting the Wadi Attir project and the feminist organisation Ma’an. I also met one of my key informants, Ahmed. For more about that meeting, and its implication for the shaping of my research question, see page 69.

November 2018

My next trip was in November the same year. This time I had rented an apartment in Beersheba and a car. Through the network of a Bedouin feminist activist that I had gotten to know, I was introduced to Abed. Abed works the night shift at the railway station but was kind enough to accompany me to a group of men from a partly recognized village and interpret for me during the interview I wanted to make. The village did not have a paved road and I was worried that my rental car would be damaged from the stony off-road road. The men talked about the political situation of the village and about their daily struggles. When we left, I said to Abed that I was surprised to hear that all the men had two or three wives, I was not aware that the habit of polygamy was so common. Abed did not find it strange at all and he shared with me that he was also going to be married to a second wife, a woman named Yara from a family living on the West Bank, not very far from Hebron. This family had been expelled from the Naqab in 1948. Abed talked about the life on the West Bank as an easier life, less stressful and less expensive. He was crazy in love with his bride-to-be but struggled with his relationship with his first wife, his
high school sweetheart with whom he had a child. He explained that she had wanted to leave him for quite some time and that he had been very unhappy, but that that had all changed when he met someone new. He was not particularly interested in having two partners but saw it as a way out of a tough situation. As an outsider to the social system of polygamy, it struck me as interesting how Abed navigated his private love trouble in the social norms that allowed the option of polygamy.

It was during this trip I established most of my professional networks: I met with the settlement organization the Or Movement (see Paper 2), a number of researchers and experts in the field of pastoralism, environment and animal husbandry and JNF-KKL ecologist, including a now retired forestry expert who spearheaded the savannisation program. I asked him if he ever thought of his project as a masculine endeavour and he laughed and said that yes, that was probably partly true. Through my contact at the Or movement I got in touch with one of the families living in the temporary Yatir camp (a former military base) awaiting the construction of the town Chiran, planned to be built on the rubbles of Umm al-Hiran from where Bedouin families were in the process of being displaced to a neighbourhood in the nearby town of Hura. I drove up to the families late one night. The couple, and a neighbour dropping by, had been waiting in the camp for 9 years. They shared with me how the act of settling in the Naqab had been a topic of conversation on their very first date. It struck me as interesting how the Naqab was a place of temporality also for this group, a group which is arguably an embodiment of the whole Zionist enterprise of constructing the Naqab as a frontier and settling this frontier.

March-April 2019

A few months later I returned to the Naqab. My contact at the KKL southern office took me for a drive across the landscape and introduced me to two sheep farmers, stationed at their spring location. One had his camp near the Gaza border. I asked my contact at KKL, acting as an interpreter, to ask whether or not he was ever afraid or fires. My contact had a habit of telling me that he already knew the answer to the question I posed and I had developed a way (polite, in my mind) of saying that I am sure that is true but please ask anyway. When I asked about fear, my contact said that he already knew the answer and that is that the herder was not afraid of anything. Much to his surprise, the herder said that yes, the spring and summer season in the tent was often scary and that he was often worried about potential dangers, like scorpions and thieves.

This trip, I was staying half the time with a Jewish family in a moshav and half the time with a Bedouin family in the unrecognized village of al-Sirra. The village is located in the north-east part of the Naqab and is one of the 35 unrecognized Bedouin localities and therefore not registered on maps. My
friend Khalil Alamour, a retired teacher, volunteer community lawyer and political activist, has added his house as a destination on the popular traffic app Waze. Khalil has a bed and breakfast, which he advertises on the website Airbnb. There are archaeological remains in the village suggesting that it dates back to the time of the Ottoman empire. During one of our interviews, I asked Khalil to tell me the story of al-Sirra. I will share the story here, as I think the story of the village is an illustration of a much wider story of the Naqab:

Khalil’s great grandfather bought the land in 1921, at the time of writing exactly one hundred years ago. At the time, the land belonged to a family from another tribe, and they were reluctant to sell to an outsider. To get around the predicament, Khalil’s great grandfather reached out to a friend, a powerful sheikh from another tribe who signed a contract with the land-owning family only to then pass the land on to Khalil’s great grandfather. The family was furious at first but the two parties finally made a conciliation. The great grandfather thus ended up with three formal agreements. In the 1970s, the family registered their land with the Israeli authorities in Beersheba, as did about 3200 other Bedouin families between the years 1970 and 1979 (for historic details about the legal history of the conflict, please see Nasasra, 2017). These cases remain contested by the government and the cases have yet to be closed (Dukium, n.d-b).

In 1982, following the peace agreement with Egypt, the government expropriated large parts of the village’s agricultural and pasture land to build the military airport Nevatim. In the agreement, the Sinai Peninsula was returned to Egypt and the Naqab became the new space for most military training. Major parts of the Naqab were turned into closed military training zones as a consequence. Later, in 2006, the government issued demolition orders for all houses in the village, 55 of them. Members of the village turned to the magistrate court, the basic court in Israel, who after four years ruled to cancel the demolition orders as they did not find good enough reasons to uphold them. The government (the ILA) then appealed to the district court, which after an additional four years, in May 2014, came to the same conclusion. The villagers then waited the 45-day window before a potential appeal to the Supreme Court, but it never came. The government decided not to take it further in the court system. However, as no building permits were issued in any of the unrecognized villages, all new structures constructed in the village are subjected to demolition. In 2007 one house was demolished after the original house had been divided into two after a marriage in the family and in 2010 another house was demolished after the couple living there had changed the roof. The actions in the villages are monitored by government field inspectors and by aerial photography and software analysis (I have myself seen planners working for the Bedouin Authority working with this areal analysis and was struck by how highly-resolved the footages was). Today, people from the village cultivate about 300 dunums (ca. 74 acres), seeds are sown in the autumn and harvested in the spring.
In the autumn of 2019, I spent a lot of time in my car. I had rented a room in an apartment in Ramallah (on the West Bank) and I drove to the Naqab several times a week. One Saturday in October, I visited the Jewish village Har Amasa. I arrived later than announced, because I had gotten a flat tire on the way down and could only drive so fast on the spare. We had roasted vegetables and a glass of wine for lunch. Michael talked about how the village had been reformed during the last years, chopped up in pieces and “sold” to people from the outside, who were not part of the village (he referred to it as a kibbutz) and who didn’t share their values. The village had grown from 7 families to 50 in just over five years. A representative from the state had arrived to do the work. Michael seemed to hate him. After the lunch, we took a walk around the village and Michael pointed me to the old Roman road and to some newly constructed villas, breaking the norm of the quaint-hut-like houses that makes up the old village. A couple of families with young children were out walking too. A few of the adult had begun a loud argument and Michael told me that they disagreed on whether or not dogs must to be on leash or not. “There are three groups here, he said. The originals, they call themselves natives, like Native Americans. Then people like me and my wife, that came before the boom and that are still interested in the communal. And then the new people, they are around 25-35, have lots of children and only want to have big houses”. Michael talks about Har Amasa as a kibbutz but formally it is a moshav shitufi, a form of semi-communal living in between the moshav and the kibbutz. It was founded as an outpost in 1980 by Gush Emunim, the ultranational settler organization, and transferred to the Kibbutz movement in 1983. In 2015, it got support by the OR movement that, according to their website, helped revive the declining and bankrupt village (Or movement, n.d.). See also Paper 2.

My car had an Israeli license plate, they were yellow with black letters as opposed to the Palestinian license plate, which is white with green letters. Driving with a yellow sign, I am read by many as an Israeli West Bank settler. This positionality bothered me emotionally, but brought with it some interesting encounters. By the illegal West Bank settlement Carmel, on the West Bank side of the Yatir forest, JNF-KKL has planted a forest. I made a stop there on my way. Carmel is built on land belonging to the village of Umm al-Kheir (أم الخير) in Masafar Yatta (مسافر يطا), a rural area in the south Hebron Hills of about 20 Palestinian villages. The families in Umm al-Kheir bought land there after they were expelled by Zionist militia groups from their lands in Arad in the Naqab after 1948 (Wolfe, 2012). Many of the villages in Masafar Yatta have been threatened by expulsion by the Israeli state’s attempt at turning the land into a military firing zone and moreover, the residents have
since long been exposed to frequent and brutal settler violence (Alsaeed, 2022; 972magazine, 2022). I parked my car by the typical wooden sign of KKL, welcoming visitors to a quaint forest, showing which path to take to the picnic table. I had barely taken a step before a police car stopped and an officer approached me. He asked what I was doing in the forest and I said that I was talking a walk. Be careful, he said, there can be Palestinians here, showing me just how much these forests are above all territories of power and claim. The encounter came to mind later that autumn, when my friend, a political activist from the Naqab, drove me to a lookout point in the Lahav forest to see ongoing afforestation (fig. 13). Before driving up the hill, we passed a picnic spot with a bunch of wooden tables. It was full of people, all young soldiers doing military service. The forest, and the picnic area, was planted after my friend’s family had been displaced again in the 1970s. My friend told me some wild teenage stories of meeting the soldiers and we laughed at it and at the obvious effect of the presence of the soldiers, framing this picnic location. The countless concrete blocks along the road warning of firing zones deserves a chapter of its own. These are placed at the entrance of spaces zoned for military training and decorated with a spray-painted skull warning of danger for death. As I have mentioned earlier, huge swaths of the Naqab (and the West Bank) were expropriated this way. Sometimes these are found at the entrance to nature reserves and sometimes, as is the case with the Bedouin village across from the demolished Umm al-Hiran, at the entrance to a village.

Frequent commutes to the Naqab meant frequently passing through the military check-points controlling the entry into Green Line-Israel. While I am often read as Israeli when I am in my car, the soldiers in the check-points immediately read me as part of the international NGO crowd. They pose questions but are rarely very rude. This scenario is not the case when I exit with Palestinian friends with Israeli citizenship. These citizens are scrutinized by the check-point and we are always asked to leave the car while it is being searched. Similar, the blatant racism in everyday encounters that I witness when I for instance visit the mall with Palestinian Bedouin friends, continue to disturb me.

During the autumn of 2019, I conducted most of the interviews to the case study of the farms along the Negev Wine Route. One of these meetings made a particular impression on me in terms of the settlement process that Israel as a nation is undergoing. It was all very mundane. I was sitting with one of the farmers at his farm, having a Coca-Cola. He told me about choices that had shaped his life and how he came to stay in Israel. When he was younger his plans had been to live abroad and he was in fact living a short time outside of Israel when his wife at the time phoned him to let him know that she was pregnant. When he came home, his mother was relieved and once again repeated what she had been telling him his whole life: never leave Israel. I took it to mean, that she meant that it is by the body on the soil that Israel is
made – the territory must be upkept at all times. It made me contemplate that Israel is a nation, still young in its phase of establishment.

September-October 2021

When Covid-19 hit the world in March 2020, it meant a break to my visits to Palestine/Israel. A brief window in the pandemic restrictions made it possible for me to make a short visit in the early autumn of 2021. I revisited acquaintances and made visits to the community settlements of Paper 2. I also saw my friends from the activist network in the Naqab. The events in Sheikh Jarrah and the bombings on Gaza had sparked waves of protests in the Naqab, leading some newspapers to talk about a new uprising. These protests were largely centred around the JNF-KKL afforestation in a number of villages (I mention these in Paper 1). A few months later, in February 2022, my friend, a Naqab activist, left a voice message on my WhatsApp. He sounded tired, saying that the last month had been intense, with the police arresting over 150 people, with 35 still in custody. My friend, who is also a lawyer, was working on a petition to the Supreme Court. At the time of writing, protests are still being organized and have been included in the political game surrounding the turbulent re-elections to the Knesset.

Reflection on the research process

Where I finally ended up was far from where I started. Research, as England (1994:82) said, is a process, not just a product. The social world is dynamic, and it changed with the lives of the people I depended on in the field; the co-workers, the interpreters and the research participants. The political landscape changed, and the situation for the Naqab Bedouins was suddenly for a while part of governmental negotiations. I also changed. As a consequence, the relationship between me and the participants, and therefore, the conditions for research have not been static. Correspondingly, this also meant that my analytic frame (by frame I mean the positioned understanding of my surroundings) changed through-out the research process (see England, 1994). Here, I will briefly describe how I came to shape my project and find the right direction of my work. To use the words of Edward Said (quoted by Allen, 2003), the formulation of the question will reveal both expected answers and ideas of how to go about answering them. However, at the initial stage of the research, the process was still a much more large-scale exploration. At the very beginning, I planned a project that was in essence an extension of my Master’s thesis, which was centred around two case studies from the West
Bank. This project would deal with the land conflict between the state and the Bedouins in the Naqab but through satellite image interpretation and qualitative interviews and more specifically, the patterns and spectral signals of the extensive land use of pastoralists. The pastoralists gradually, over the years, got less of a central role, but I would argue that pastoralism and transhumance has been a hugely beneficial prism through which I have been able to explore a spectrum of interconnected actors and phenomena in the landscape. For reasons I cannot remember, probably limited technical skills, I moved further and further away from GIS and closer and closer to qualitative studies of the conflict. From previous studies, I knew that the government had demolished Bedouin villages and established both forest and Jewish villages on top of the rubble and I was intrigued by the explicit use of the landscape to both displace Palestinian Bedouins and to tell the story of the new nation (this is what is referred to as Judaization). From there on, I approached the space with a very open question in mind, almost an “what is going on?”.

I made the first “seeding” trip to the Naqab in January 2018, after a few months as a PhD student. I met with scholars and Bedouin activists, trying to get a sense of the place, what structures were already there and what I would have to investigate myself. From reading feminist literature on the situation in the Naqab I had formed an academic lens of approaching the field based on the assumption that the Bedouin women faced specific challenges that differed from those of the men. Aside from the remaining transhumance, this topic fascinated me. For some of the women, it seemed, there was a trade-off between being part of the resistance to what was perceived as a government wanting to crush an indigenous culture and their connection to the land (legal and cultural) by staying in villages and, on the other hand, considering leaving or challenging patriarchal norms. This assumption formed a first sketch of a very coarse understanding of spatiality, politics, identity and culture. Through an initial meeting with the Bedouin feminist organization Ma’an in January 2018, I became increasingly convinced that the question pointed in an interesting and important direction. In short, I was interested in what I perceived to be a tension between individual sacrifice and collective gain in the land struggle and I saw it as inherently gendered. I wanted to know how the young women growing up in unrecognized villages in the Naqab saw themselves in relation to the collective struggle. I would eventually however move away from this question, largely due to problems of finding an interpreter.

15 For instance, Tovi Fenster’s 1999 work about the spatial constraints imposed on women in the constructed townships after the Israeli government launched their sedentarization program of the Bedouins in the 1960s and onwards and Sarab Abu-Rabia-Queder’s 2017 analysis of the multiple structures that Bedouin women navigate in their professional life’s, emerging from on the one hand tribal norms and on the other from Israeli racism.
One of the activists I met was a man about my age named Ahmad. He had a wife and two children and was living in an unrecognized village. We got in touch through Airbnb, where he offered to host tourists in a traditional fashion and he agreed to meet me for an interview. When I contacted him, I did not know that he was going to be a valuable source and a sort of a friend for the upcoming years. I waited for him in a parking lot outside the bank office in the town Arad, in east Naqab and was admittedly a little bit reluctant to jump into his white van when he finally finished his bank errand. I did however jump in and we drove to his village. I had not been in an unrecognized village before and I remember being surprised over how much the house facades of corrugated sheet and concrete differed from the inside with tiled floors and fully equipped and very nice bathrooms and kitchens. Ahmad showed me around the village: I photographed a pen with a couple of camels and the rubbles of a house just recently torn down by the government bulldozers. The village was located by the foot of a rather high hill; when we drove up there Ahmed pointed to all the things we saw and contextualized the landscape for me. In comprised an excavation site to the right, another unrecognized village to the left, a Jewish village with irrigated agriculture to the front, the fields where they sometimes take their animals to graze even though they are not formally allowed anymore and on which road they could expect the police to come. After the tour, we were seated in front of his house, joined by a number of neighbours of which two were teenage girls. We drank tea (sage tea, very sweet) and I tried to explain what I was doing, getting myself lost in the paradox of feeling I should somehow already know all I wanted to ask, to ask the right things. I asked the girls what they do in the village in the evening time, slipping away I think from my position as a researcher to myself as a teenager, and they told me that they like to watch Hollywood movies. Despite being increasingly interested, sitting with them, I got a strong feeling that eventually played into my decision to change focus entirely. I felt as though I on the one hand was convinced that the tension, I had read myself to, was very much real and but I felt that without the proper connection (which I did not have at the time) the project would be intrusive. I had tried to find an interpreter to collaborate with but I had gotten the impression that it would be more difficult than I had expected (it would turn out to be the case). I did not at the time see it as an option to collaborate with a local researcher (which in retrospect would have been a good idea) because I did not see it as a possible way to do a PhD project. From here on, I shifted focus back to the landscape and Judaization more broadly, and began my studies into the system of transhumance. Someone could direct fair criticism towards my project for being narrowly focused on land, landscape and territory at the expense of local voices and lived experiences and I have with this section tried to be transparent on how I came to decide on a procedure that I was comfortable with.
Figure 13 Panorama view from the Lahav forest. The white line in the centre is the Wall. Photo: author, 2021.

Figure 14 Welcomed to the Har HarNegev nature reserve and warned for entering a firing area. Photo: author, 2019.
The Naqab

The Naqab and the State-Bedouin land conflict

The State of Israel has never formally defined its current borders. Of the territory often referred to as Israel within the pre-1967 borders (that is, excluding the occupied Gaza, West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights) the Naqab/Negev constitutes about 12 800 km, or 60%. The Naqab has been inhabited by Nabateans, Byzantines, Jews and for the past centuries, by Bedouin tribes. The Ottoman government acknowledged the authority of the tribal leaders and did not really exercise central control over the region until the end of the 19th century when its geopolitical importance heightened (Nasasra, 2015). The city of Beersheba was constructed in the early years of 20th century as an Ottoman administrative centre, with the ambition of increasing administrative control, partly by persuading tribal leaders to settle in the city. To build it, the Turks had bought about 2000 dunams from the ‘Azazame tribe (Abu-Saad, 2008). It grew to a small but modern city.

Following the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, and the war of 1948-49, large numbers of Bedouins were expelled from their lands or fled the Naqab (see Nasasra, 2012 for a consolidated account of the colonisation of the Naqab). Violent clashes and killings continued into the 1950s, when most of the remaining Bedouins (the fourteen tribes from West Naqab) were confined to the enclosed “siyaj” northeast of Beersheba and put under military administration (as was other Palestinian groups within the, now, Israeli territory) (Nasasra, 2017).

After the Nakba, Beersheba became a Jewish city. Pre-state Jewish settlement in the Naqab was sporadic until the mid-40s when settlement acceleration began, largely on land purchased by key Zionist settlement organisations (Meir, 1997). Jewish villages established in the region during the 1950s, were often constructed on lands belonging to absentee or displaced Bedouins and handed over to settlers (Nasasra, 2012; Meir, 1997, 66). A general strategy of planning in the young state was to establish development towns in the peripheries and kibbutzim and moshavim along the borders (Tal, 2008). This strategy to secure control over territory has been combined in the Naqab, with early pre-state kibbutzim and the “development towns” and
suburbs. These towns and suburbs were also built on land claimed by Bedouin tribes (Abu-Saad, 2008).

Between the years of 1948-1967, Palestinian Arabs were governed by the military (Nasasra, 2017). Bedouins within the enclosure, to which they had been displaced, were not permitted to leave the area, nor move freely within it, without permission (Marx, 1967) and they were moreover not permitted to access the labour market (Stavi et al., 2006). No permanent structures were allowed to be constructed, resulting in temporary dwellings (Yiftachel, 2006). Grazing was allowed within the enclosure but the restrictions of movement and the denied access to the nearby markets of Beersheba and the cut of access to the Hebron region and Gaza almost completely destroyed the practice. Subsequently, the population was severely impoverished. Ismael Abu-Saad (2001:241) quotes an interview from 1963 in the newspaper Haaretz with Moshe Dayan, then Minister of Agriculture, which illustrates the attitude of the State towards the Bedouins in the Naqab:

We should transform the Bedouins into an urban proletariat - in industry, services, construction and agriculture. Eighty eight percent of the Israeli population are not farmers; let the Bedouins be like them. Indeed, this will be a radical move, which means that the Bedouin would not live on his land with his herds, but would become an urban person who comes home in the afternoon and puts his slippers on. His children would be accustomed to a father who wears trousers, does not carry a shabaria [the traditional Bedouin knife] and does not search for head lice in public. The children would go to school with their hair properly combed. This would be a revolution, but it may be fixed within two generations. Without coercion but with governmental direction … this phenomenon of the Bedouin will disappear.16

Before 1948, the Bedouin subsistence had been based on mobile to semi-mobile pastoralism and agriculture. Agriculture was practiced in a form of patchy, extensive cultivation, well adapted to the dry and varying climate, characterized by recurrent draughts. This type of land use did not need to be permanently attended to, but was nonetheless recognized and protected by local law (Meir, 2009). Grazing was similarly organized as an extensive practice within tribal territories or, after agreement, on lands belonging to other tribes. Agricultural lands were kept within the tribe’s territory to secure post-harvest stubble grazing in the early summer season (Marx, 1967). During the mid-19th century, the seasonal locations for grazing became increasingly fixed. Herders moved seasonally between locations that remained the same, year after year, establishing permanent locations, with property rights, also according to local law (Kedar et al, 2018:132). This process also meant a

16 Haaretz, 1963 July 31 [Hebrew]
gradual development of the territorialisation and land allocation between tribes that remains today. The basis for tribal and inter-tribal boundaries had developed over the years through conflicts, wars and other arrangements (Meir, 2009; Kedar et al. 2018; Stewart, 1986; Nasasra, 2017). Today, it is very common that families keep small numbers of livestock near their house but few, but not insignificantly few, are living from it as a main or important source of income. Some sheep growers have industrial business and about a hundred growers, often with middle-size flocks of ca. 100-500 heads, take their animals to seasonal pasture in the JNF forests, that is, they take part in the transhumance (see Paper 3).

The expulsions and forced relocations of the late 1940s and early 1950s form the basis of the still ongoing land ownership conflict between the state and a number of Bedouin claimants. The State, drawing on Ottoman land laws of 1885, has declared almost the entire Naqab to be state owned land. The Bedouins on their part claim rights to ancestral lands or rights to remain on lands on which they were placed after expulsion in the 1950s. In 1948, Naqab Bedouins cultivated about 2 million dunums (ca. 450 000 acres) (Swirski and Hasson, 2006). The current land claim amounts to 600 000 dunums (ca. 150 000 acres). These claims are largely manifested in 32 “unrecognized” and 14 “partly recognized” villages, located in the northern Naqab.17

The specific story of historical ownership, registration or existence of title deeds differs between villages, but they share the predicament of being denied official planning and most basic forms of societal services such as water, sewage and electricity. Some of the villages have an elementary school and health clinic but no other facilities. Of the estimated 240 000 Bedouins living in the Naqab, about half live in unrecognized or partly environments. The lack of formal planning renders the houses and other buildings illegal and therefore under threat of demolition. According to the NGO Dukium, 2241 demolitions were carried out during 2019 (Avrech, 2020). A significant amount of these are “self-demolitions”, where home owners tear down their own houses to avoid high fines, but also the trauma of seeing the house torn down by bulldozers. In 2019, self-demolitions constituted 88% of all demolitions (Avrech, 2020). These demolitions are not formally carried out by the Bedouin Authority, instead, a number of actors have formed unites within their organizations that can issue demolition orders. These actors are the National Unit for Planning and Building Law Enforcement, the Abu Basma Regional Committee, the Green Patrol/the Green Police (organized under the Ministry of Environmental Protection), the ILA and the Yoav Police Unit (Avrech,

17 Three villages were partly recognized in December 2021: Abdih (عبدة), Rakhma (رخمة) and Hashm al-Zena (هاشم الزنإ). The recognition of these was part of the political strategy of the United Arab List (Ra’am), who has a strong voter base in the Naqab. Mansour Abbas, the party leader, visited in 2021, promising to stop the JNF plantation (see Paper 1 for these plantations).
2020:21), a “highly militarized” unit within the police who assists in the demolitions (Adalah, 2020). These authorities operate according to an amendment (no 116) to the Planning and Construction Law, referred to as the “Kaminitz law”. This amendment circumvents the formal legal process and permits the authorities to (without a court order) confiscate machines used for construction, issue high fines and demolition orders and arrest people. Kaminitz law’ is named after Eretz Kaminitz, who led the special committee that proposed the amendment in 2016, with the main purpose of targeting Palestinian homes without building permits in East Jerusalem (Sverdlov, 2019). Moreover, according to the Negev Coexistence Forum (Tal, 2020: 21) the authorities use a high-tech aerial drone system; highly resolved image analysis for facial recognition and reading of license plates, resulting in a feeling of constant surveillance. This technique illustrates the mutually constitutive logics of law (land use planning, colonial interpretation of local systems of property rights etc.) and threat of violence or violence in settler-colonial practice described by Brenna Bhandar (2018). It should be noted here that the Bedouins’ situation, in which a lack of legal masterplan is used as an argument for the illegality of their houses, is not unique for the Naqab, but is a plight of all the Palestinian sector. Since 1948, aside from the seven Bedouin towns in the Naqab, the government has not formally constructed any new Arab localities (Afasi, 2014). This issue is well-beyond the scope of this thesis but is nonetheless an important insight into the structural, land-based, discrimination of the Palestinians in Israel (see for example, Yiftachel, 2006).

The displacement and dispossession of the Bedouins from their lands is held in personal and collective memory; Safa Abu-Rabia (2008) has argued that the identity of the Naqab Bedouin is an identity shaped by exile. Stories and memories of the 1948 Nakba create an inter-generational identity of being strangers on their own land. As Abu-Rabia puts it, “their physical presence within the borders of the state certainly does not reflect their inclusion in it” (2008:108). The exile identity is complex and multifaceted, as their homeland is often just a few kilometres away. It forms an ongoing temporality, which can be understood as resistance and refusal to accept the displacements as a permanent state. This temporality is also continuously recreated from state policies denying rights to work the land and create permanence. Moreover, many feel strongly reluctant to settle on lands that traditionally belong to another family or tribe (for a comparison with the distribution of grazing

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18 This law is under memorandum since 2020, after it turned out that the Jewish moshavim encountered problems, as many have shifted from land-uses permitted according to their master plans (for example, agriculture) to other types of business (for example, tourism). Mansour Abbas, leader of the Ra’am party, demanded a full freeze of the law when entering into the coalition government with Naftali Bennet and Yair Lapid in 2021, which however has not been enacted (Abu Sneineh, 2021).
Belonging to the land is recreated through stories of past times and by visits to historic lands (see also McKee, 2014).

The Bedouin group is heterogeneous and hierarchically stratified according to class, gender and tribal background. Hierarchies are largely based on whether the tribe was either landowning or landless. Landowning tribes would employ individuals from landless tribes to work in their agriculture. A small group of the landless are the black Bedouins that were bought or stolen as slaves from Africa. The children and grandchildren of these families are sometimes among landed tribes referred to as “slaves” in everyday speech (Abu-Rabia, 2012). Moreover, the sedentarization of the Bedouins significantly altered the role of the women in the first generations post-1948. While the Bedouin society was shaped by strong patriarchal norms, women held an important position within their families through their responsibility for the animals (Abu-Rabia, 2012). Life in the planned towns broke socio-spatial roles of women being protected from the gaze of others and in reality, meant that women became powerless and unable to leave their homes (Fenster, 1999). The memories of the old land are also passed on between generations through songs, rhymes and poetry, speaking of places and stories that have happened in them: both memories of war and displacement and memories of herding animals, harvesting, living in the land (Richer-Devroe, 2016). These actions are creating an embodied experience of memory in space, and by that a sense of belonging (Fenster, 2017). As such, the memories are all part of the landscape.

Pastoralism and territory in the Middle East

This thesis began as an examination of the remaining Naqab transhumance. Transhumance is a malleable concept denoting a type of pastoralism somewhere in the middle of pure nomadism and pure sedentarism, based on the maximization of land use by moving between fixed places located in different ecological zones on a seasonal basis. Definitions of transhumance differ across regions, perceptions of distance and borders are relative concepts depending on social organization and the available space (Costello & Svensson, 2018). The Naqab has been grazed by various mobile to semi-mobile tribes throughout millennia. Some of these groups would later be called Bedouin. Through the prism of this form of mobile pastoralism, the Naqab landscape has unfolded.

Across the world, nomadic pastoralism has generally developed alongside sedentary agricultural communities (Khazanov, 1994; Barker, 2011). Some tribes would settle and engage more extensively with agriculture, while some
sedentary groups would develop a mobile lifestyle. The cyclical pattern of changing dominance between sedentary and mobility anywhere is likely explained by a combination of climatological conditions and micro and macro social organization (Barker, 2011). The relationship between the groups cannot be simplified, it is in each case a matter of complex, place-specific developments including economy, ecology, technical development and demographic growth (Rosen, 2009, 58). In the Levant, pastoralism has never had the character of “pure” nomadism, as could be found on the Eurasian steppes or on the Arabian Peninsula (Khazanov, 1994). Instead, mobile pastoralism in the region has from 3000-2500 BC has been characterized by various forms of semi-nomadism with generally small size herds of sheep, goat and to some extent camel and quite extensive interaction - peaceful and hostile - between sedentary and mobile groups (Khazanov, 1994, 102).

Pastoralism has had an intricate relationship with the formation of nationalities and territories (Johansen et al., 2015; Gonin and Gaultier, 2015; Zhang, 2019, Benjaminsen et al., 2019). Pastoralist territorialisation tends to differ from settled territorialisation, as the latter generally is organized around land surveys, private ownership and exclusive use rights. Most legal systems are structured to suit this latter form of territorialization and protect the interests of the settled land users, resulting in territorial marginalisation of pastoralists and potential aggravation of conflicting interests (Chang and Koster, 1994; Lengoiboni et al., 2010). These types of conflicts have also been prevalent in the Levant (Finkelstein and Perevolotsky, 1990; Chatty, 2018). Colonial powers (French, British and Ottoman) have throughout the centuries attached a variety of qualities to the pastoral groups. British ethnographers, inspired by the emerging European race taxonomy, divided groups into farmers (fellaheen), city dwellers and nomads (Bedouin); turning the spatial category of nomadic livelihood into ethnicity. What previously had been a category of land use and lifestyle was by the end of the 19th century translated into a category of race (Assi, 2018). The Bedouin society’s perceived seclusion from other local groups caused the Europeans ethnographers to dub them “original Arabs”, descending directly from the Arab conquest of the 7th century. However, as the “original Arabs” were inextricably (discursively) linked to mobility in the form of nomadism, they were accused of destruction of the landscape (through accused overgraze).

Pastoralism has, in a dichotomous way, been pitted against expressions of Israeli national identity and state-formation, which until the 1970s was epitomized by agriculture. As mentioned earlier, agriculture both represented the formation of the “new Jew” (a new individual – and a new Jewish life – reborn through connection to the soil and through redemption of the land, see Paper 2) and the politics of the Labour Zionists. This understanding of mobility among the colonizers also meant that the Bedouins were disqualified
as Indigenous to the land. A large-scale reform of the Ottoman Empire, including the reform known as the Land Code of 1885 formalized the interpretations of sedentarism (such as cultivation) as a superior form of land claim. This legislation was part of the Tanzimat reforms, conducted throughout the Ottoman empire in an attempt to strengthen territorial control. The Land Code stipulated that land that was not cultivated for a number of consecutive years and/or further away from a village than the reach of a loud calling, would be classified as “mawat”, which was a category of public land. The State of Israel, has in a series of legal processes furthered the interpretations prepared by the Ottoman and British powers, by concluding that no cultivation could be done below the meteorological “aridity line” (see p. 24) and therefore dismissed all settlements south of the line as “mobile structures” with no legal rights to land - a phenomenon dubbed the Dead Negev Doctrine by Kedar et al., 2018). In effect, this doctrine turned all of Naqab into state land.

Pastoralism in Israel

In Israel, grazing in general and mobile grazing, in particular, has been constructed as a quintessential Bedouin practice (Zerubavel, 2008). Despite critical literature, debunking much of the ideologically guided myths about grazing, a narrative of grazing as a harmful form of land use has shaped environmental policy in contemporary Israel and guided it toward restrictiveness towards grazing, informing the conditions for both transhumance and non-mobile grazing (Olsvig-Whittaker et al., 2006; Wachs and Tal, 2009). Restrictive policies echo in contemporary interpretations of land use in the Naqab, even though the formal regulations have eased. As argued by Avni (2014: 26), a historical narrative of the destructiveness and non-sedentariness of the Arab conquest in the 7th century, which until the 1980s was not seriously questioned by scholars, caused faulty dating and subsequent faulty conclusions of historical events. Artifacts were largely interpreted and dated as pre-Islamic, meaning as belonging to the Byzantine era of sedentary villages. When this was applied as an analytic lens for settlements throughout the Naqab it gave the impression that the region was void of anything interesting for archaeology after the end of the Byzantine era. On the contrary, scholars argue that a brief period of city and village expansion in fact followed the Islamic conquest (Weizman and Sheikh, 2015:22), but that these findings were erased by the feedback loop that classified all things settled as pre-Islamic much like the modern feedback loop of “the Dead Negev Doctrine”. From the mid-10th century, however, the Naqab was close to empty of sedentary villages and remaining societies had turned to mobile pastoralism.
Scholarly interpretations of this Byzantine-Islamic transition in the Naqab ranges from emphasizing rapid civic unrest and societal collapse (for example, Eisenberg-Degen, 2016:159) to a gradual process in which the material culture slowly melted from Byzantine to Islamic and centuries of coexistence passed before the changes were visible to the eye (for example, Avni, 2014). These argue that the non-sedentary Naqab by the 11th century is better explained by consecutive droughts and reoccurring wars than major geopolitical events (Avni, 2014). In general, both declines and upsurges are often explained by events such as new innovations, beneficial or difficult climate and administration.

In spite of severe restrictions, it is not uncommon that Bedouin families keep up the tradition of transhumance. There is no available data on the exact number of sheep growers but ca. 100-150 growers take part in the transhumance located in areas (forests) managed by the JNF. Rationales for maintaining grazing in the Naqab despite small or no profitability has been identified as economic security (Ginguld et al., 1997; Stavi et al., 2006) and it has been argued that families keep up the practice to create work for female members (Degen, 2007; Ginguld, 1997), who are otherwise excluded from the labour market due to social and spatial norms as well as workplace discrimination (Abu-Rabia-Queder, 2017). It has, however, been questioned whether the herd is kept to provide work or if the herding is made possible due to available labour, existing due to Bedouin norms and ethnic discrimination on the labour market (Stavi et al., 2006). In addition to above socio-economic incitements, perhaps the most important reason to keep animals is a strong sense of meaning and tradition: upholding cultural heritage and land claim, wellbeing and keeping family cohesion (Degen et al., 2019, 2007; Ginguld, 1997; Meir 1997). These incentives obviously differ between individuals and are shaped by personal experiences and situation and the political orientation of the herder (Meir and Karplus, 2018). See Paper 3 for a more detailed description of the current system in the Naqab and in Israel.

The Naqab as a frontier

The Zionist appeal of “settling the Negev” gradually became emotionally and symbolically central to the Israeli nation state-formation, partly through Ben Gurion’s (the first prime minister) personal focus on the region (he settled in the kibbutz Sde Boker in the Naqab), and evidenced by the international exhibition *Conquest of the Desert* held in Jerusalem 1953. Early Jewish
pioneers of the late 19th century saw the Negev through a shimmer of romance (through its Biblical symbolism surely, but the pioneers also identified with the desert and the Bedouins as source of authenticity and belonging (see Assi, 2018; Zerubavel, 2008). However, the organized Zionist movement first started to engage with the south in the mid-1930s. The land was cheap but the semi-dry soils needed hard work and it was first ruled out as infeasible (Pappé, 2015).

Nevertheless, the Naqab had also had pre-state colonial, geopolitical importance and settling the “peripheries” had been an important strategy in the international pre-state negotiations. Members of the Peel Commission of 1936 suggested splitting Palestine into three parts: a Jewish, an Arabic and a Mandatory part under British rule. The Naqab, they suggested, would belong to the British. In 1943, the Morrison-Grady plan suggested the north Naqab to the Arabs and the south to the British, but none for the Jewish state. When British support for a Jewish state weakened with the publication of the Peel Commission, and Jewish migration was limited with the White Papers 1939, the Zionist movement changed strategy. The settlements now came to represent political “facts on the ground”: the establishment of settlements became in themselves a way to establish the Jewish State. In the Naqab, this “fact” materialized in the establishment of a network of settlements in the night of Yom Kippur 1946. Here, 11 outposts were established in a large-scale coup, prepared by the Jewish Agency, the Jewish National Fund (JNF), the Zionist paramilitary unit Haganah and the water company Mekorot. Eventually, the British ended up pushing the responsibility of the partition onto the UN. When the UN presented their plan in 1947, they suggested the Naqab to be part of the Jewish state. This turn of event is sometimes ascribed to the “Yom Kippur settlements” (see for example Kark, 1981). The outposts would later become kibbutzim. When I visited one of them, Mishmar HaNegev (Hebrew: The Guard of the Negev) in the fall of 2019 to speak to a family subletting on Airbnb, the story of the establishment was mentioned to me in conversation. In relation to earlier discussion about the limits of the Naqab, is also interesting to note that the most northern of the outposts, Kedma, is located almost in line with Jerusalem, that is, an area often not thought of as the Naqab/Negev today.

The frontier in national plans and strategic visions

In popular discourse (the discourse of governmental authorities, media and large parts of academia), the Naqab is constructed as a frontier. This construction is discursive, with a word seemingly detached from its settler-
colonial connotation (see Theoretic framework). A paragraph from the edited volume *Developing frontier cities* (Lithwick and Gradus, 2013) illustrates the discourse construction well:

[L]ike many other frontier regions, the Negev is endowed with abundant resources, a superior climate, open spaces and clean air. Despite its frontier characteristics, the Negev is not remote. It is about 100 km from the economic heartland of the country. As a result, these natural amenities offered the region a unique opportunity to develop a modern economic structure. Moreover, this structure could be accommodated within a planned spatial framework, based on a well-established urban development ‘theory’. One might reasonably expect that this region could serve as a model for many modernizing frontier regions (Lithwick and Gradus in Lithwick and Gradus 2013, 273)

Both governmental outline plans (referred to as ”statutory”), ”strategic plans” and plans/visions produced by Zionist organizations are envisioning a rapid and large-scale transformation of the Naqab: Negev 2015 (governmental plan), Blueprint Negev (U.S. JNF), Israel 2040 (Israeli JNF), Israel 2048 (the OR movement) (please see Paper 2 for details about the Israeli planning system and plans).

The Israeli statutory planning structure is hierarchical and tied to the national outline plans. These outline plans are regulating building and construction on national, regional and local level and are informed and complemented by ideas formulated in the strategic plans, which on their own are more akin to visions. They are not legal documents and are not tied to the national outline plans. The two types of plans, however, intersect. For instance, Israel 2020 is a comprehensive strategic plan developed in the 1990s, but from which all presented principles have been implemented in the National Outline Plan for Building and Construction. A core strategy for the development of the ”new” Naqab is the relocation of Jewish residents from the central areas along with immigration from the diaspora (see the Negev 2015 plan). The target group is well-educated young, Jewish couples (Swirski 2007). This group will be attracted to the south by a variety of housings, among which are generous plots of land for ”unique” constructions. The Negev 2015 plan contained a controversial proposal to relocate 100 families to ”single farms”, in an attempt to ”increase the sense of security”. In the late 1990s, the idea to create a network of ”individual farms” for Jewish farmers was proposed by the chair of the Ramat HaNegev Regional Council and

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19 It is important to also note that part of the region (for example the ‘siyaj’) was absent from formal plans in the first decades of the State (Abu-Saad, 2008) and no permanent buildings given permission (Yiftachel, 2006).
accepted by then Minister of National Infrastructure Ariel Sharon and Minister of Agriculture Raphael Eithan, with the explicit purpose of "preserving state land" and create barricades between different areas used by the Bedouins (Human Rights Watch, 2008). These farms were given land in the mid-south Naqab for "symbolic fees" (Tal, 2008) without proper permits, assuming that these would be given in due time (personal communication with single farms-farmers, 2019). The idea that the permits would be granted with time was not a far-fetched assumption: during interviews with planners in various governmental bodies acting in the Naqab, I was, many times, informed that the attitude of "do first, ask later" was modus operandi among people applying for building permits (personal communication, 2019). Here, it should be underlined that these people are Jewish citizens - the Bedouins have been met with a different approach with demolition orders on houses without proper permits (see Paper 3). The initial idea was to fuse agriculture with tourism, something that soon proved to be too challenging in the dry environment. Many of the farms have kept tourism as a business, but the agricultural aspect is marginal. A part of these farms oriented themselves at winemaking and what was inherently a territorial manoeuvre of stopping coherent Bedouin space in the Naqab was marketed as the Negev Wine Route, a plan that was approved 2005 (Human Rights Watch, 2008). Some farms in the northern Naqab were actually built already in the 1970s. A goat farmer that I visited in 2019 told me that he was invited by the government in 1976 to move to the farm in the Naqab to show others how Jewish shepherds can grow sheep and goats in the desert. There are in total 59 individual or lone farms in the Naqab (Human Rights Watch, 2008). The gradual "legalization" of these farms has been juxtaposed with the demolishing of Bedouin houses lacking formal planning, for instance by the legal centre for human rights Adalah. This interpretation is, however, only part of the picture. Many of the leaseholders perceived the temporary permissions as promises given to them and they see the authorities as making an example of them in their new request for formality. For instance, they cannot pass the contract over to their children (personal communication with farmers, October and November 2019). From dialogues with planners working in the Naqab, I gathered the impression that it was in fact the norm not too long ago to "do first and ask later", but that this has begun to shift towards a more standardized procedure (see also Alfasi, 2006, for an analysis of the discrepancy between formal order and practice).

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20 The initiative was allegedly a reaction after a census had revealed that the number of Bedouin citizens in the region was much higher than expected, which 'shocked Zionist politicians' according to a leaseholder on one of the individual farms (personal communication, 2019).
Visualizing Beersheba

The idea of creating a strong, Jewish population centre in the south is not new, but has never been very successful. The massive land appropriations in the Naqab from the onset of the formation of the state testify to the inherent territorial orientation of the state. A number of Jewish development towns and kibbutzim were built in the Beersheba region and in the western Naqab, but large parts of the Naqab were not "settled" in the same way as the central and north areas, but instead turned into military training areas or protected nature.21 A development plan from 1974 ("National Industrial Zone of the Negev") presents the national goal to be an increase of one million people to the south (Teschner et al., 2010). Aforementioned strategic plans (for example, Negev 2015) accelerate this vision. Formal plans set the development of a metropolitan area of the city Beersheba and its surroundings as a priority (for example, Be'er Sheva Metropolitan 2030).

The city of Beersheba, is surrounded by a network of small Jewish towns built during the 1950-60s to house newly arrived immigrants from North Africa, Romania and later, the former Soviet Union, and by kibbutzim (pl. kibbutz), moshavim (pl. moshav) and community settlements, some of which were located at a remote distance and others are more akin to traditional suburbs. Moreover, Beersheba is surrounded by seven Bedouin towns along with the previously mentioned 46 Bedouin villages, 14 of which are "recognized" in formal planning and 32 which are considered "unrecognized" (or "illegal", in government discourse). The latter, as outlined earlier, constitute the focus of ongoing the State-Bedouin land conflict.

The development of the city of Beersheba has from the 1950s been characterized by suburban city planning, urban sprawl and by automobile dependency with large shopping malls in the city’s outskirts attracting most business. Early planning was centrally organized with little connection to the ground, informed by Zionist territorial strategies, which saw extensive settlements as means of claiming territory (personal communication with Israeli architect involved in the development of the Beer Sheva Metropolitan 2030 Plan, April 2021). The European ideal of the "garden city", a low-density urban pattern characterized by parks and green areas, was imported to Beersheba by city planners. The dry, semi-desert climate however made the dream impossible and the parks ended up as swaths of land, creating distance

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21 In 1974, the al-Hawashleh tribe argued in court that the State had illegally confiscated 36 000 dunams (9000 acres) of their land to build the Jewish development town Dimona, but the court ruled in favour of the Stare (Al-Hawashleh, 1974 in Abu-Saad, 2008). Members of the al-Hawashleh tribe still live near Dimona (in the unrecognized village of Ras Jarabah). In 2019, the ILA issued eviction orders for 500 structures in the village as part of the State’s relocation plan (Yefet and Yahia, 2022).
between neighbourhoods. Over the decades, the city largely grew through social housing dedicated to newly arrived immigrants. Planning norms began changing but the city continued a development of sprawling outskirts and declining city centre (Avni et al., 2016). By the 1970s and 1980s, many who resided in Beersheba relocated from the city to newly built affluent suburbs of Meitar, Omer and Lehavim, close to the city. These suburbs are, according to Swirski (2007) the southern equivalent to the Galilee ”mitzpim”, that is, a network of secluded suburbs organized as ”community settlements” established to gain and manifest territorial control in a predominantly Arab area. For a period, central planning prevented the establishment of new communities in the Naqab and instead directed development to already existing locations. This policy changed during the 1990s, when the political neoliberal turn meant less centralized planning and a sudden increase in newly established rural settlements across the Naqab. Land was made available for private developers outside the city (Avni et al., 2016). This brought with it increased pressure on Bedouin families, who lived in areas outside Beersheba, and resulted in more organized resistance from the Bedouin community who collectively began struggling for ownership rights. In summary, the city of Beersheba has been characterized by both urban sprawl and the establishment of secluded suburbs, while the extended region has been shaped by a Zionist planning ideal of establishing dispersed rural or urban centres as a territorial strategy. Today, most kibbutzim and moshavim are ”renewed” (Ashkenazi et al., 2009). This renewal means they are open to partial privatization and that families who are not members of the collective can buy (lease) a plot in the village (see Paper 2 for details on the ”renewed kibbutz”).

The forest and the landscape

The Yatir forest in the northern Naqab is the largest planted forest in Israel (fig. 16 and 17). A quote on the JNF website informs the reader that “[t]he Yatir Forest proves that we can combat desertification, and heal the wounded earth” (JNF, n.d.). In Israel, afforestation has been used to create cultural and pictorial bonds to Biblical landscapes while at the same time making Israel an extension of Europe in the Middle East (Tal, 2013). Afforestation, both in terms of materiality on the ground and as embodied commemoration through the act of planting, has been treated as a way of healing both a traumatic past of diaspora and rootlessness and the biophysical land that has been narrated as degraded and misused. Therefore, it has represented both care for the new nation and territory for the nation (Abufarha, 2008; Long, 2008, Braverman, 2009). The act of uprooting trees (olive and fruit trees mainly) is a well-
established practice among both West Bank settlers and state actors, both as a symbol for the erasure of the Palestinians and as an actual legal erasure of the Palestinians (Braverman, 2008).

In the mid-1990s and early 2000s, Nancy Peluso and Peter Vandergeest began developing their theory of the mechanisms of state territorialisation and racialization through forestry (see Peluso, Vandergeest and Potter, 1995 and Peluso and Vandergeest, 2001). With their concept ”political forests” Peluso and Vandergeest (2020:1089) argued for the forests as a space that are never entirely natural but, always ”created and in the process of being created through politics and cultural ways of seeing, as well as through “nature’s agency’, as biological, ecological and socio-natural processes”. State-territorialization has in many cases been generated in the calculations and control over the forests, sprung from the importance of forests as a resource for ship-making (Wing, 2015). The making of political forests is, however, not confined to state-making but is also part of global (colonial) networks of politics, economics and knowledge production. They are moreover ”produced, reproduced and transformed” through struggles over access and use between local groups and state (and other) agencies, as well as competing ideas of management between different actors (such as governmental, nongovernmental, corporations and local people) (Peluso and Vandergeest, 2020:1089).

The Naqab case diverges in some respects from the type of forests from which the political forest was developed (that is, forests that were already there and used at the arrival of the colonizers). Commonly, these spaces and people who live in and off them have been shaped by colonial regulations that ”permitted” certain forms of use that were already part of the ”traditional” practice in areas mapped (figuratively and literally) as ”empty”. It was (and is) also in the toolbox of the Israeli state to narrate spaces as empty (see for instance, Kedar, Amara and Yiftachel’s Emptied lands from 2018 for the making of the ”empty” Naqab). However, the forest was largely planted with the arrival of the settlers. In turn, these settlers related their legislation to colonial legislation, already in place by the British (Braverman, 2009, Bhandar, 2018). Nonetheless, Israel is placed within a colonial European tradition where forests are both a representation of civilization, health and progress and a tool for managing unwanted effects in the biophysical environment. For instance, numerous mobile pastoralist communities across the Sahara were sedentarized and displaced during the early post-colonial era as a result of afforestation aiming at stopping desertification (David and Robbins, 2018).

Afforestation in Israel is carried out by the organization JNF-KKL on behalf of the government (see Paper 1 for an elaboration of the history of the JNF and the political implication of their rule against leasing or settling lands
to non-Jews). It was founded 1901 by the Fifth Zionist Congress as the Zionist Organization’s arm for buying land in Ottoman Palestine for Jewish settlers. Drawing on the strong symbolism of trees, roots and life, now iconic campaigns collected money from Jewish households in the diaspora to plant symbolic trees, ”proxy-immigrants”, in what would become Israel (Long, 2008; Wallach, 2011). The symbolic and hands-on method is still in practice with trees purchased through the JNF website costing 18 USD. Usually, these plantations are performed on the Jewish holiday Tu BiShvat (”New Years of Trees”), which has been ”turned into” the secular Israeli holiday Arbor Day, centred on the planting of trees. The story of the “blue boxes” has become part of the grass-root mythology of the making of Israel (fig. 15). On the organizational level, JNF was allocated huge swaths of land that had been expropriated from Palestinians under a set of new laws (one of the most important was the Absentee Property Law of 1950) as land was protected under the statutes of JNF. Forests were planted over this type of land to assert ownership and to hide the visual memories from a Palestinian past, such as rubble from houses and villages, demolished in the war (Falah, 1999). The JNF were formally authorized in 1961 to serve as Israel’s forestry agency and they still own 13% of the land (Tal, 2012). The 1961 arrangement was part of a large-scale reform where all lands were gathered under the management and control of the Israeli Land Authority (the JNF has a significant representation in the ILA board). The organization continues its practice of claiming land with afforestation, both on the occupied West Bank and in the Naqab (Cohen, 1993; Braverman, 2008; Galai, 2017). In the latter, this afforestation accelerated around twenty years ago, aimed at stopping the ”illegal intrusion” of Palestinian Bedouins on lands claimed by the state (Tal, 2008; McKee, 2016). This acceleration has led to a renewed organized resistance among the Bedouins whose lands are being targeted. It has also led to the surfacing of an interesting schism between the state and the green movement, and in particular the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI), where the latter argues that the afforestation is damaging the desert landscape. See also Paper 1.

Figure 15 One of JNF’s collection boxes, for sale on the antiques site Pasarel.com for $175. The text reads Keren Keyemet LeIsrael.
Figure 16 The Yatir forest was planted with pine trees. Photo: author, 2018.

Figure 17 The hills south of what is now the Yatir forest used to be grazing land for Bedouin families living in the area. Photo: author, 2018.
Summary of papers

Paper I

This paper explores how nature is negotiated and mobilized in the settler-colonial state. I present a case study of a schism between the Jewish National Fund (JNF) and the civil society green movement in Israel, that has recently surfaced in the context of state-led afforestation on the historical land of Arab Bedouins in the Naqab. The study is based on interviews with activists from the Bedouin community and representatives from JNF and other concerned actors coupled with close-reading of media coverage and published reports. I argue that this schism offers insights into how nature is negotiated in relation to environmentalism and the Zionist ideology and I argue that this negotiations points to an emerging new self-image of a post-settlement state that has left pioneering behind, symbolized by the replacement of the planted forest landscape by the natural landscape as the emblem for Zionist nature.

Paper II

In south Israel a network of Jewish-only villages has been established as part of the century-old ambition of the Zionist movement to secure Jewish presence in the peripheries. By analyzing audiovisual material produced by two Zionist actors, the powerful Jewish National Fund and the grass-root settlement organisation the Or Movement, this study explores how the settlements are narrated to the public as suburbia, offering a seemingly apolitical packaging of a deeply political-territorial practice. It finds that relocation to the south is narrated as a modern re-enactment of the classic pioneering trope and that this ideal is mediated in relation to the new neoliberal ethos of Israel as a ”start-up nation”. I argue that while the pioneer
ethos is offered in an updated form, the conspicuous continuity of the (settler colonial) frontier narrative is equally striking.

Paper III

The Naqab is a region in south Israel, which until 1948 was mainly inhabited by Palestinian Bedouin tribes. A small part of this community continues to take their sheep and goats to seasonal grazing, a practice that carries deep and significant cultural importance but has been all but abolished by various post-1948 laws. Following a turn in forest management, grazing has become sought after as cost-effective pruning. However, mobile herds are now hard to come by as the practice has been obstructed among the Bedouins and as mobile herding is commonly thought of as an Arab cultural practice. Forests, on the other hand, have long represented the Israeli nation both as identity and territorial claim. Current regulation does not fit the new demand, making new regulation necessary. Reading Tim Ingold’s concept of *taskscape* as a posthumanist approach, I explore how grazing is regulated in the Naqab in relation to both the state-Bedouin conflict and to the wider settlement-colonial enterprise in Israel/Palestine. I suggest that taskscape is a concept that can hold the complexity of natural resources, cultural identity and conflict while simultaneously countering the colonial idea of ”empty space” which tends to inform both state-pastoralists conflicts and grazing regulations, thereby offering a new lens through which to understand the ongoing settler-colonial project.
Discussion and conclusion

I began this thesis by asking what characterizes contemporary Israeli settler colonialism. Lorenzo Veracini (2010:99) has said that settler-colonial narratives are spun around the promise of a linear trajectory towards the future, a ”teleological expectation of irreversible transformation”. Based on findings from my inquiries into the administration of nature in the Naqab, I argue that Israeli settler colonialism is operating not only according to a rational of linear, irreversible transformation, but also according to two contradictory rationales, which veil the settler-colonial element of the practices and policies through which it is performed. On the one hand, suggestions to create formal systems to replace the old ”ad hoc” practices tell a story about a nation that perceives itself as superseding its pioneer establishment and moving into a phase of formalization and stabilization. On the other hand, the Naqab is continuously created as a frontier, a narrative that is continually changing in relation to the contemporary political climate, visible for instance in mainstream planning discourse and in the narrative of the JNF and the OR movement. The frontier concept is inherently connected to the trope of settling a space that lies ”beyond” the full territorial control of the governing power, illustrating that the settlement process is ongoing. In other words, the narrative of a finished settlement hides the unfinished course of action.

I then posed the question of how the creation of nature is used by the state to assert control over territory and how this territorialisation is upheld and countered in the landscape. Drawing on insights from posthumanist political ecology and in particular from the landscape/taskscape perspective, I argue that the territorialisation is countered by both organized political resistance (paper 1) and transformed through the complex interplay of cultural practice and a nature that ”bites back” (paper 2 and 3). For instance, the pursuit of state actors to create spatially bounded spaces and assert control over these using afforestation is subverted by elements beyond the hands of the state: as the landscape is not a static blanket of nature it needs to be maintained in an everyday form of practice (Paper 3).

In this final chapter, I will unpack and develop on these two arguments and their contribution to the growing awareness of the frontier in Israeli settler
colonialism. Recently, urban scholars in Israel/Palestine have been turning to the frontier concept to frame the gentrification of the big cities as part of the settler-colonial project (see for example Alkhalili, 2017; Milner, 2020 and Sa’di-Ibraheem, 2021). I have turned to the frontier project as a form of nation-making and I argue that while the updated frontier of Eyal Weizman (2006) that underpins much of these urban studies is indeed an important conceptualization of a "frontier space" (that that, it is not necessarily spatially bounded), the materiality of the frontier has to remain in centre.

Question 1: Formalization of the perpetual exception

The first question asked what the cultural, political and ideological contexts are in three main aspects of settlement and how the processes informing them are changing. It also asked which could be drawn from these changing processes to better understand the mechanism and condition of Israeli settler colonialism.

Grazing the frontier or the post-settlement landscape?

Pastoralism was for a long time the main livelihood for the Bedouins dwelling in the Naqab. When agriculture began taking up a larger part of the livelihood, herders continued moved seasonally with their herds to green pastures. Caves were used to store fodder and usually a part of the family stayed in the fixed location. The establishment of the Israeli state meant severe damages to the herding system with extreme limitations to movement of both humans and animals for a period followed by draconic laws ultimately altering the herds almost completely from goats to sheep (Paper 3). However, some families continued to not only keep animals, but also to move them seasonally. In the beginning of 2000, changes were introduced to the herders that were then required to show vaccination and tax records of their herds. These new laws finally decimated herding to a marginalized practice. At the same time, a new species of sheep was introduced to the Bedouins sheep farmers. While many were reluctant, many chose to join the project. The new sheep, the improved Awassi, is slightly less suitable for open-land grazing, as this requires a certain sturdiness in the animal. Meanwhile, the conditions for the Bedouin community gradually hardened, as the state set about to remove "illegal" villages from the Naqab, resulting in large numbers of home demolitions to houses that did not have building permits (such permits were not possible to obtain as the villages were denied formal spatial planning). This process, summarized in the "Prawer Plan", was part of the state-led sedentarization that
has informed the government's approach to the Naqab since the very beginning. The introduction of a species less suitable for open-land grazing created incentives for sheep farmers to keep their animals in pens and not take part in the seasonal grazing. Thus, the changed biology of the herds made the animal husbandry easier to adapt to the Naqab the state had attempted to create; a “modernized” and settled space.

Grazing takes place all across Israel/Palestine. Yet, for the Naqab and the Bedouins a different set of laws, policies and informal governmental practices have prevailed. This type of exception is a common element in state-driven frontier projects. However, there are indications that this practice is gradually changing. A new law to regulate grazing is on its way, prepared by various governmental agencies. This law is meant to apply equally to all of Israel (not the occupied Palestinian territories, which are governed by the Civil Administration). Expert interviews indicate that there are also changes in how the Naqab is treated informally within authorities (Paper 3). I argue that the formalization should be understood as part of the tightened regulation of the Naqab (also visible in new legislation targeting the camels), tied to the need of the settlement project to be acted out in a ”modern” space of lines and predictability. This formalization indicates that there is a destabilization of a practice that, since 1948, has attempted to establish the Naqab as a geographic space administered as separated from other parts of the territory, but simultaneously a stabilization of Israel as a legitimate nation. In other words, in terms of formal law and practice, the Naqab as a territory defined by its ”exception” is gradually disappearing as a result of the development towards more formalized systems, which in turn indicates a new post-settlement self-image of the Israeli State. The formalization is an indication of a new national self-image of a country that is moving from an era of settlement and ad-hoc pioneering to a stability and ”completeness” of the settlement project.

22 The line is not always clear as to whether the law applies to the geographic space or the ethnic group
23 Grazing by Palestinian herders on the West Bank are subjected to control (and abuse) by the governmental organs overseeing the Occupied Territories (that is, the Israeli Civil Administration and the military). During the fieldwork I did for my Master’s thesis (Adolfsson, 2017), I spoke to herders who repeatedly got their goats arrested by the military, if the flocks wandered into one of the many areas appropriated for military use. Israeli settlers, on the other hand, are not subjected to any regulation at the moment as they are not really under Israeli law and there is no formal arrangement for grazing (senior expert at the Nature and Parks Authority, interviewed on 7 October 2021). In May 2022, the Israeli NGO Kerem Navot published a report and an interactive map titled ‘The Wild West: Grazing, seizing and looting by Israeli settlers in the West Bank’, arguing that sheep and cattle grazing gradually has become the most important tool for dispossessing Palestinians on the West Bank.
24 Little over ten years ago, Assaf Likhovski (2010) published an article in Israel Studies titled ‘Post-Post-Zionist Historiography’, which spurred a debate about what
As I will return to, this process is however not as linear as it might seem. In fact, the narrative in which the "settling of the frontier" is completed and belonging to the past, is only possibly when combined with the contradictory narrative of the pressing need to secure and control the frontier. This apparent paradox is an illustration of the operations of the frontier as a project played out in multiple time-spaces at once. But before developing further on what the implications are of this interplay, let us turn to the forest.

A new forest

The new national legislation is tied to the emerging need, and the emerging recognition of the need, to use sheep and goats in pruning of the many forests. The forests where this practice, now increasingly referred to as ecosystem service (see Paper 1 for a context to this phenomenon), is welcomed and wanted are foremost found around Haifa and Jerusalem as these are densely planted and have been exposed to fires. Experts from government authorities tended to exclude the Naqab from these discussions, but interviews with KKL staff in the Naqab indicated that the animals are much needed here as well. The authorities are balancing an economic and ecological benefit (grazing in the forests) with a political situation with two main dimensions. The first pertains to the connection between the Palestinian Bedouin culture and open land grazing that led to the (mis)understanding of grazing as a detrimental practice, which in turn led to the Plant Protection Law (or "the Black Goat Law") of 1956, which prohibited goats in the Naqab. This combination, of historical bans and contemporary needs, has led to a situation where there are too few goat farmers available. The authorities do not want to endorse open-land grazing in the Naqab, but are instead creating incentives for stable-fed, industrialized husbandry (see the above note on the changing biology of the Naqab sheep and see Paper 3). The second dimension pertains to a general and a new and ‘third wave’ of Israeli historiography. These new scholars were less interested in the grand meta-narratives and have shifted from politics to the private, mundane and quirky, or, ‘from colonialism to the history of hair’ (Likhovsky, 2010:15). Likhovsky saw this as a shift from politics to culture, reflecting a more individualized society. In a response, Eran Kaplan (2013) suggested that the new historians of the 1980s and 1990s was products of a time of prosperity, while the post-post-Zionists are products of the time of ‘permanent emergencies’ (with reference to Slavoj Zizek), that is, an Israel that no longer sees possibility for peace and a world shaped by post 9/11. This, Kaplan, argues, makes them turn to security and tradition and are therefore less likely to revolt against the past. What I find interesting is that Kaplan sees a new generation that looks for a different story than war and Palestine. I consider this an interesting analysis, because it strikes a chord with what I have noticed in my own studies – a new generation, looking for a future that is not defined by its history.
unwillingness to adapt legislation to fit a mobile practice: agricultural activities in Israel are by necessity sedentary, a norm likely emerging from the historical context of agricultural settlements as territorialization (see Paper 3). The current puzzle for the authorities is that what is requested is grazing but not mobility. Therefore, the challenge seems to be to chisel out a system that encourages a new segment of people (Jewish villagers), to grow goats on a small scale for forest grazing (which needs to be mobile to some extent). This legislation is, however, produced in a historic and political context that connects this land-use with Palestinian Bedouin belonging.

Another example of the tension between the formal and the ad-hoc is the case of afforestation in Bedouin villages east of Beersheba; Sa’wah (سعوة), Khirbat al-Watan (خربة الوطن), al-Ru’ays (الرويس) and Umm Nmila (أم نميلة). Here, certain voices in the Jewish society (the green movement and segments within the JNF) are pushing for a more formal administration based on the argument that the pioneering is a phenomenon of the past and that the future needs a new approach to forest administration. The green movement has recurrently appealed to the court in order to change the afforestation practice of the JNF, who they accuse of trying to evade both previous court rulings and the formal planning process. Despite a legal system (the Supreme Court) that seems to demand a certain level of order in the action of the governmental and semi-governmental organs, the practice nonetheless seems to slide towards the informal tradition of the JNF acting according to own will.25

This tension is also an illustration of the aforementioned paradox of the settlement as narrated as both finished and acute: from the government’s perspective (including the Israeli Land Authority, who controls the land, and the JNF) as well as the green movement, the afforestation around the villages are undertaken to prevent the Bedouin villages from spreading as these are illegal in the eyes of the law but also as they damage the local ecosystem. Consequently, all these actors unite in a discourse in which measures are needed to clear up, regulate and modernize the Naqab (albeit with different suggestions for suitable methods). These modernizations seek to produce a space characterized as backwards, unruly and chaotic, with all qualities that within settler-colonial logic sanctions and justifies the establishment of large-

25 These villages have been the site for organized resistance during 2020 and 2021: when the JNF-KKL, in its role as semi-governmental forestry agency, arrived with bulldozers to clear areas for soil preparation, it resulted in protests across the villages (see Paper 1). Unlike the afforestation of the early 2000s, which was planted on lands zoned as forests and referred to in planning terminology as ‘statutory forests’, these plantations are carried out on land zoned as ‘agriculture’. They are not referred to as forests, but as ‘agricultural plantations’ and their purpose is explicitly territorial (see Paper 1). It is interesting to note here that the green movement is demanding the JNF-KKL to stop afforestation for environmental reasons.
scale spatial restructuring and displacement of "the native". Thus, here we see the paradox of the frontier.

I have in Paper 3 referred to the general push for formalisation as the "legalization of the Naqab". In this discourse, not only the space but also the Bedouin people, are casts as "illegal". This legalisation is strikingly obvious in the state’s conceptualization of the Bedouin villages as "illegal" settlements (these villages are referred to in NGO and critical research discourse as "unrecognized"), to which we now will turn.

The multiple spaces of settler-colonialist narratives

The aspect of the making and erasing settlements is twofold: first, it involves the development of new planning tools to enable the new "legalized" Naqab (see Paper 1 and 3 for the intersection with afforestation and grazing respectively) and second, it involves the discourse and practice of the settler movement in the Naqab (paper 2). The organizations advocating increased Jewish settlement in the Naqab are not politically loud compared with the groups operating on the West Bank and in Jerusalem, but I argue that the discourse of this movement in the Naqab offers a key insight into the logics of Israeli settler colonialism, namely that Israeli settler colonialism is characterized by the fact that it operates according to two conceptualizations of territory and of time. Territorially, in Israel, it is conceptualized as a territorial unit separated from the occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt), but at the same time, it operates in a "Greater Israel", that is, the combined territory of the State of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory. "Greater Israel" is an abstract land unit without fixed borders, that alludes to a mythical and Biblical Israel. In political rhetoric, Greater Israel is connected to the right-wing expansionists and West Bank settlers. According to Feige (2013), the goal of the settlers is to normalize their presence on the West Bank. Their discourse pendles between two worlds: on the one hand, in a world in which they are in constant conflict with the Palestinians and the Israeli state (that they perceive as working against them) and, on the other hand, in a world where their presence is fully normalized and unquestioned (for example, through denial of specific intent or through Biblical references). In Paper 2, this discursive doubleness is illustrated by the narrative of the Naqab as on the one hand "undisputed" space and, on the other, the frequent visual language in videos and maps where Palestine is completely erased.

I argue that the process I conceptualize as "legalization", widens the frame to include both these imagined geographies, partly through the legal frameworks and policies that shift from the West Bank to Israel (for instance, the development of the community settlement) and partly through the development of national laws that materialize locally in the Naqab forests. The conceptualization can moreover be seen as a broadening of the modernization
discourse, which for decades has targeted the Bedouins (and other Arab Palestinian citizens in Israel) territorially and biopolitically, for instance through political interventions to assimilate and curb the demographic growth (see for example, Abu-Rabia-Queder 2019, Kanaaneh, 2002). Arguably, these interventions of "modernization", couple with this logic of elimination, operates according to Israel as a modern, nation- and casts the Bedouin and other Arab Palestinian groups as "minorities". As many others have pointed out (Busbridge, 2018; Pappe, 2012), the nation-state concept offers a particular challenge for the international community in its approach to Israel. The rights of the Jewish nation to self-determination and sovereign territory, an idea of human rights developed in post-war Europe, is protected in the nation-state. Subsequently, this right is also enacted to protect the nation state. What "legalization", essentially a concept derived from the posthumanist political ecology approach of this thesis (that is, it comes out in this thesis through the management and control of forest and grazing), can potentially offer is the inclusion of interventions that do not directly target the Bedouins, but are played out on a wider, national scale. For example, the trend of formalization of laws regulating forest and grazing respectively. What these interventions can give to the research is an indication of the self-image (to which I will return) of the settler state and the idea held about it and its establishment as proxy for nation building. I argue that legislation shifts the focus from dynamics within Israel to the question of Israel in relation to Palestine and the settlement enterprise more broadly. The settlement enterprise on the occupied Palestinian territories is fully incorporated within the government and during the last few years, several respected human rights organisations have formally called the occupation and the treatment of Palestinians within Israel as "apartheid" (such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International). However, most of the focus is on the dire situation in the occupied territories and the ontological separation between Israel and the occupied territories is often quite solid in NGO and political discourse. Others have argued that a potential benefit of the settler colonial framing is that it might provide rejuvenation to Palestinian political mobilization across these barriers (see for example, Busbridge 2018).

"Legalization" includes the formalization of laws and policies on a national scale (Paper 1), and the development of new legal frameworks that enable the displacement of the Bedouins on a local scale (Paper 3). Within discussions and debates around formalization, a specific argument surfaced - that Israel has left its phase of establishment and is now moving towards a new era no longer characterized by pioneer-spirited, ad-hoc solutions. Concurrently, the Naqab is continuously narrated as a frontier.

In terms of imagined time, Israeli settler colonialism operates according to two contradictory rationales. Through their development of strategic plans, the settlement movement in the Naqab brings another crucial aspect into focus, namely that the narrative of the "frontier" is not continuous in the sense of a
static idea, but instead it is changing and adapting to other political trends. The Zionism articulated in the Naqab is a Zionism drawn from neoliberalism and global tech-trends. The ”start-up Zionism” (see Paper 2) flirts with freedom, boundlessness and similar tropes associated with nomadism (”digital nomads”, ”laptop nomads”) and the forward-looking spirit of (high-tech) pioneers. In that sense, it is a movement that is inherently territorial while narrated as place-less.

Making of a frontier with the exception

To understand this legalization, we can turn to Giorgio Agamben and the state of exception. The relationship between the power of the state and the frontier, can be characterized as an Agambian “inside-outside”: the outlying frontier is where the state demonstrates its power. However, the actual processes within the space narrated by the power as the frontier are both quite classic examples of withdrawal of law (normally, the state of exception means a specific form of legality that carves out spaces beyond law or where law is suspended) and the excess of new laws. I have made the argument throughout this thesis that the Naqab is narrated as a geographic space in acute need of order. However, in this story, the Naqab is in fact a peculiar contradiction of a place narrated as lawless while being meticulously (and military) regulated. It is both subjected to increased law and actual withdrawal of the law (for instance, the practice of circumventing the formal planning procedure). Thus, the Naqab can be characterized as a space of both exception and of ‘hyperlegality’ (see Braverman, 2015a).

The ”hyperlegal” condition or response was first theorized by Nasser Hussain (2007) in the context of modern anti-terrorist legislation. It means a proliferation of laws and regulations or an excessive bureaucracy; Braverman (2015a) expanded it to include nonhuman subjects (zoo-kept animals and red listed-species). According to Hussain, hyperlegality operates according to the logic of colonial law “through the increasing use of classifications of persons in the law, and the use of special tribunals and commissions” (Hussain, 2007:516). In a slight disagreement with Hussain, Arnold (2018) recently asserted that hyperlegality may actually still contain elements of lawlessness (or what Agamben called “the state of exception”). I use the concept to denote the condition of increased formalization of law in the management of the human and nonhuman Naqab, but more specifically to denote this condition within the discursive doubleness where the Naqab is narrated as lawless but at the same time being under meticulous surveillance and regulation. Thus, while, for instance, Hussain and Arnold have applied the concept to the refugee and the prisoner and the actual creation of extra-legal subjects in, for instance, the Guantanamo base (drawing on Hannah Arendt and Giorgio
Agamben), my observation speaks to the contradiction between narrative and practice and thereby to the discursive making of the frontier.

Again, the frontier is understandable through Agamben's exception. This exception is admittedly more explicit when considering the relationship the state has to the settlements on the occupied West Bank, that in many ways is the definition of a practice that is placed outside of the state while being at the very heart of it. The exception, nonetheless, continues to be relevant in framing the contemporary processes in the Naqab that this thesis has analyzed as the making of a frontier. Frontiers are created through stories of lawlessness and chaos, and the achievement of order through the rupture of current conditions. In Hagemann and Korf's (2012) case study on the actions of the Ethiopian state in the Ogaden, the exception is two things: first, an area that is defined by specific exceptions in time and space; specific laws, policies and rules that can be tied to specific interventions and events; and secondly, in a wider time perspective, an exception that is non-stop ongoing and through which the state power is manifested and generated. In other words, the power of the state is generated (in part) by how the state upholds their frontier spaces. Placed in comparison, the Naqab is a frontier space that is characterized by temporary exceptions, for instance in afforestation committees and specific rules on animal husbandry or the establishment of a new spatial order (as seen in the relocations of the Bedouins). At the same time, there is a non-stop exception that functions as a generator for the Zionist ideology, centered on the appropriation of land.

Finally, the fact that the Bedouins in the Naqab are citizens of Israel is a strong illustration of how the gliding between inside and outside veils the state's power, enacted through the appropriation of land. For example, a planner at the Bedouin authority (Paper 3) shared with me how the threats and demolitions (from the police unit Yoav) function as an efficient lever, which help the Bedouin authority reach off-court agreements with Bedouin families. As the police and the Bedouin authority are both part of the state, the violence of the state operates both outside and inside and simultaneously. The role of the frontier in the settler narrative can be understood as an Agambian exception: the often-violent actions that take place in the frontier are separated from the national (that which is within the control and community of the state). The frontier is concurrently generated as the space and idea from which the ideology of settler colonialism manifests with state control. Thus, the frontier represents the power, emanating from the core of the state.

**Question 2: Nature in the settler-state**

The second question I posed in this thesis has been how the creation of nature is used by the state to assert control over territory and how this
territorialisation is upheld and countered in the landscape. I argue that this territorialisation is performed through two interlaced dimensions: territorial control over physical space and imagined geographies.

Territorial control includes the effects from bulldozers and other ground working machines: uprooting existing plantations and demolishing houses and other dwelling structures on the one hand and preparing the ground for the plantation of JNF trees on the other. It includes the establishment of forests, nature reserves and military training areas. The territorial control over these spaces includes physical signs, both those of a skull sprayed with a stencil on concrete blocks warning that the area is a firing zone (sometimes, these are found at the entrance of a village slated for demolition) and those seemingly neutral in lacquered wood from the JNF welcoming visitors to the forests. These signs are of a different kind but are both physical manifestations of the state’s narrative of ownership and by extent, of Jewish belonging at the price of Palestinian belonging. This type of territorialisation also includes the work of the Green Patrol. In response to the conflicting positions between the ILA-JNF and the green movement on the suitability of planting trees in the Naqab one senior positioned expert at the National Parks Authority (who agreed with the ”green” side), said that a sound alternative to the tree plantation would be to increase the use of the Green Patrol in keeping unwanted individuals out of the areas claimed by the state (see Paper 1). Another aspect of this kind of territorialisation has been the practice of providing private lease contracts, as these are assumed to create incentives for the leaseholder to keep others out (see Paper 1).

In this dimension of territorialisation power is asserted through biopolitical interventions; first, through regulation and administration of herds and second through changes introduced to herd reproduction. The grazing administration, in which grazing is produced as a natural resource, includes a meticulous system of permits and registrations with a number of concerned authorities. These registrations include who moves where, when and with how many heads of sheep and goat. Over the course of the years, a number of regulations have been introduced that have significantly changed the conditions under which grazing can be upkept. Aside from taxation, the demand for vaccination of each animal has been perceived as a strong blow to the herders (see Paper 3). Herds are regularly controlled by authorities and if unvaccinated animals are discovered, herders may be forced to put animals to death. Second, as mentioned earlier, in the beginning of the 2000s, a research program was launched with the aim of introducing a new sheep species to better suit modernized industry. This sheep breed, the ”improved Awassi”, yields more lambs but is slightly less suitable for open land grazing, and thus for transhumance (see Paper 3). This breeding project has had ramifications for the make-up of the sheep population in the Naqab and is, as such, an intervention that has shaped the conditions for mobility in the landscape and the task of open land grazing.
The assertion of territorial control has been interlaced with the dimension of imagined geographies. The physical reality and the imaginings moulding it through laws, policies and interventions have continuously co-created each other. The "meaning" of the physical space is never pre-given, universal or absolute, but always situated and changing; stories, myths and norms are structures of interpretation that inform how we interpret and move through space (McKee, 2015). Tim Ingold’s landscape/taskscape sees such acts as performances of temporality, that is, being is not played out in chronology, but rather each moment is always in the past, present and future at once.

Within Zionism, certain specific landscape elements are narrated as symbols of Jewish belongings. The role of the green landscape is well-written in academia and other literature: "greening the desert" and "making the desert bloom" are both famous Zionist slogans referring to the establishment of the Jewish state in Palestine (see paper 1). These slogans (albeit changing) manifest in planning documents, making space for green areas to create a welcoming landscape for newcomers who are incited by either settler organizations to move into Jewish-only villages or by government subsidies to "settle" the Naqab (see Paper 1, 2 and 3). Thus, the green landscape is both a discursive and material creation of the natural landscape. However, the Zionist symbology of the green landscape is always in interplay with the landscape of the desert. The desert is the ultimate open space for incoming settlers; a space for romantic connections to both the pioneering and biblical past. Much like the ambivalent identity construction of "Indigenisation" (Deloria, 1998, Veracini, 2010) wherein settlers create a new identity derived from a combination of despised and elevated characteristics ascribed to the "native", the desert is an ambivalent symbol, also representing destruction, bareness, lost times and ultimately, an Arab belonging. While the desert does have a specific place in Jewish-Israeli national identity, it does not compare with the importance played by the green landscape and most of all the forest (see for example, Braverman, 2008). In the conflicting interests between the JNF and the civil society green movement (Paper 1), the green movement is acting within the established discourse of trees as Zionist symbols, making the illustrative statement that the caring for the desert landscape is as worthy a Zionist task as caring for forest once was. Thus, what is also in the making, is a new materiality to embody the Jewish landscape.

The twist of the landscape: posthumanist political ecology

The formulation of the second question was shaped within political ecology, an academic field interested in power relations of nature-society interplay. PE has branched out in a number of directions and the approach I have taken in this thesis was inspired by the posthumanist turn of political ecology, which
interlinks with environmental narratives and knowledge production (associated with the post-structuralist "branch" of PE) but emphasizes non-human actors, or "nature itself", as active subjects in, what is now referred to as, the socio-ecological or "socionature". Scholars in the field tend to use the word "nature" within citation marks to indicate the focus on of how the bioecological environment is narrated and shaped within political, economic and ideological systems. It has been pointed out (for example by Chagani, 2014) that the merging of political ecology with posthumanism is not free from friction in terms of the conceptualisation of agency and power. "Agency" can be perceived as an apolitical approach, which evades a more critical discussion on dominance and power. Similarly, there is indeed a tension between the almost deterministic conceptualisation of the "logic of elimination" central to the settler colonialism approach, and, the openness in the ontological roots of posthumanism. These positions cannot be fully bridged and do not need to be. The tension between the objective of the "logic of elimination" and the unruly landscape it seeks to "close" or "settle" is a conceptualisation close to reality. Instead, the tension is the place to query. The Naqab landscape is shaped by a clear and explicit political agenda. Zionism is a hegemonic ideology in the Israeli society. It informs both planning and regulation of natural resources. It is a nationalist-territorial ideology and political movement, that to a significant extent, operates through immaterial and material creation of nature, with the aim of asserting territorial control.

This agenda can be called the "frontier" and it has been imagined and performed in many places on Earth. Frontier imaginations travel between times and places, referring back to the mythology of each other (Tsing, 2003). Thus, when the Naqab frontier spins itself around stories of the American Wild West (by people referring to it as the Wild South) or to the tech-frontier of Silicon Valley (see Paper 2), it is following the perfect pattern of frontier logic. To borrow Tsing’s (2003:5102) word: the frontier is “not a place or a process but an imaginative project with the ability to mould and shape the landscape”. However, I argue that the great value of the posthumanist perspective is the reminder that territorialisation is a living thing, and, as such it demands maintenance from humans and nonhuman actors in a landscape beyond full control, a landscape that “bites back”. It should perhaps be clarified here that the insight that the landscape (or rather the territorialisation of the landscape) is not passive resonates in a specific cultural and political context, were nature, much like in most Enlightenment-influenced traditions, has been narrated and used as an object. Moreover, this maintenance is inevitably entangled in power hierarchies and political, cultural and economic contexts that brings with it unforeseen paradoxes or consequences: the complex knot of afforestation and sheep and goat grazing is one such example. Here we find forests planted by the state to asserts ownership against Bedouins, that later turn out to need sheep and goat grazing to reduce the risk
of fire, only to find that this grazing service is no longer very easy to come by as the laws regulating it (also indirectly to assert ownership against Bedouins) have decimated the number of active herders. A consequence of this complexity has been that researchers suggest new rules for goat husbandry, which would create the possibility for whole new sections of society (in this case Jewish people in villages in the Jerusalem Forest) to keep goats (see Paper 3). There is a common perception in Israel that Jews have cows and Arabs have goats and the shift means a rewriting of the cultural ideas connected to keeping goats. All these twists amalgamate to illustrate that while the frontier is a coherent idea, the reality will still be paradoxical, ironic and uncontrollable. The “grand schemes” it imagines and launches never does “fill the landscape” (Tsing, 2003:5102).

In Question 1, I expanded on the organized resistance against the afforestation. Here, a completely different aspect of resistance to territorialisation emerges, namely that the frontier imagination and the landscape it moulds in the Naqab is not static but carries within itself its own transformation. Here Ingold’s concept of space as a “meshwork” of interlaced and always changing trajectories of humans and nonhumans comes to mind. The meshwork is an “open space”, or what Doreen Massey called “the simultaneity of stories so far” (Ingold, 2017b: 115, Massey, 2005: 130). It is a space of temporality instead of chronology, a pulse of life and a “carrying on” through time in the meshwork that is reality and continuing to be but in a continuously changing form (Ingold, 2017:119). However, the conditions for the living nature and the “interlaced trajectories” are shaped and constrained by political interventions. The question of the ”knot” is a question of practice. In the Naqab, the practice of herding did not get the conditions it needed to be sustainable. Now authorities are searching for legal ways to reintroduce herding practice, to obtain a set of specific effects in the physical landscape. However, the question that emerges for the authorities is, what the effects are in the landscape/taskscape, that is, what kind of taskscape is created and which tasks are sustaining which past and protecting which future (see Paper 3).

The twists of the landscape are also illustrated in the month-long festival Darom Adome (the Red South) at the beginning of the year. The festival is a collaboration between local entrepreneurs to create a new image of the Naqab (or rather, of the Negev, as the festival is a Jewish initiative) to attract tourists to the region and build a new place identity. According to the initiators, many (Jewish) Israelis associate the Naqab with danger connected to its closeness to Gaza. The heart of the festival is visiting the field in the western Naqab where the little red anemone blooms, families rent bikes and have picnics on the grass. However, these areas have been exposed to fire attacks from Gaza, with balloons and similar flying objects sailing across the wall with burning coal. To prevent fires, Bedouin herdsmen are scheduled to access the fields earlier than before, so that the sheep can eat the grass and prevent potential fires from spreading. This new time in arrival means that the blooming of the
red anemone is in danger, as the sheep would graze them before they bloom. It is an ironic twist. The reason the anemones are there in the first place is because the landscape, before it was fenced off and pastures decimated, it had been grazed for centuries, gradually creating a special ecosystem where the little red flower thrives. It has now become a symbol for the tourist-welcoming Negev, integrated in the agricultural landscape of the fertile west from which the Bedouins were expelled and had their lands given to Jewish settlers.

Concluding remarks

In many ways, Israel is an extreme place to study. Acts of settlement are often surprisingly open and certain truths and justifications of separate treatments of Jews versus Arabs are normalized and explicit. The dire question of "why", appears as self-explanatory. Looking closer, a polyphone voice of multiple and contradictory narratives and logics together create the "frontier", a set of ideas and practices, mobilised to change – to settle – the Naqab. This settlement is not primarily driven by control over resources, but rather speaks to the process of making the imagined territory of the nation coherent with the territory of the state. This imagination has materialized in the establishment of a new visual landscape of extensive forests and in the establishment of Jewish-only villages. It has also materialized in a number of plans and policies regulating grazing, animal husbandry and living conditions in general. The evictions and displacement of Bedouins from their lands has resulted in a new wave of protests, connected to the Palestinian protests across Israel/Palestine that came out as a result of aggressive settlement policies in Jerusalem and the war on Gaza in 2021.

Together, the aspects of settlement that have been the focus of my attention, indicate a trend of (discursively) leaving the settler past behind. Understandably, this discursive reality would offer an appealing break for the Israeli society from an ever-present conflict with Palestine, however one defines Palestine. If Israel, however, is conceptualized as settler colonial, and seen through the lens of settler colonial studies, the new discourse rather appears as a denial of the strikingly present Other. Arguably, it is the denial of conflict that scholars attempting to approach, for instance, decolonization, will need to pay attention to.

The Israeli settler-colonial process is stretched out in time. While it is true that the settlement of Palestine (initiated in the late 19th century) is ongoing, it is also true that Israel is already a couple of generations from its establishment. The pioneers are in some ways "retro" - they are repeating what their grandparents did (albeit shaped by current neoliberal trends). Thus, what is at play in the landscape is at the same time the establishment of something
new and the fear that the Jewish memoryscape will be erased, in other words, the very same thing that the Palestinian Bedouins fear. This duality means that the settlement is simultaneously in a state of establishment and of protection of the past (the past created during the last one hundred years). Seeing the settler-colonial process as taking place in multiple and competing taskscapes helps make sense of this observation (temporality is not linear time). I show, in Paper 2, that the "front" is already making retro references to pioneer history, looking to achieve what the older generation has done. I make the argument in both Paper 1 and 3 (about forest and about grazing) that the regulation of natural resources (sheep/goat pasture, afforestation) is an indication on the country leaving the pioneering phase (this is also supported by planning regulation) and turning to a more regulated governmental apparatus. The frontier project attempts to establish a geographic space where special rules and regulations apply, underpinned by narratives of chaos and disorder and connected to modernist ideas of national identity tied to specific landscapes. This latter notion moves in two directions: it advocates a landscape telling a story of a new belonging of a new national group moving into the territory, and, the simultaneous justification of the removal of the old inhabitants as they are connected to the old landscape of chaos and degradation. I have shown in this thesis that while the frontier discourse attempts to establish the Naqab as a "frontier" (and as such as a space distinguished from the rest of Israel), the processes of developing new legal tools found in both grazing and forest administration blurs this boundary as the territorialisation method of the state, making "nature", demands it.

The "front" is a space of inside-outside, a "beyond" that possesses a nation-making quality and that is subjected to other rules than the space perceives as already part of the nation. The front resembles the condition Agamben described as the exception. The exception is not the absence of law, but a "hyperlegality" of controlled space, expanded to nature (human and non-humans alike) (see also Braverman, 2015a). Note that I am speaking about the role of the frontier project within Zionism, which should not be conflated with statements about actual control over specific territories. A "frontier" is not a space in of itself, but an imagined geography, albeit with the potential to shape the landscape (Tsing, 2003). The space itself is an open "meshwork" of life trajectories, unfolding in and with the environment. Nonetheless, the making of a frontier is the making of a space of disruption and an ensuing new order in the name of modernity, it is a designation of a space as "needing" certain remedies: development, modernisation, legality, order and so on. This "governmentalization of nature" institutes the rational management of the biophysical environment, informed by expert knowledge (Escobar, 1999). There is a certain freedom-from-politics associated with the Naqab, rooted in romantic pre-state pioneer ideals, for instance expressed through statements of "the Wild South". It is somewhat of a paradox as this space, as a frontier, is both meticulously surveyed and an arena for the development of new
regulations (for example, the development of new planning tools as part of the displacement of the Bedouins).

Finally, a paradox of the frontier imagination is that it foresees a linear "teleological development" toward a completed settlement while it always exists in the past as much as in the future. In this thesis I have created a theorization of the operations of the "frontier" that first explain the paradox of the linear and the temporal and second, reveal the determinism of politics and the openness of space. Conceptualizing a space through the embodied, posthumanist lens, erodes the nature-society binary and thus also erodes the power of the modern expert knowledge and modernisation as the valid rationale for management of the landscape - the mainstream framing of settler initiatives in the Naqab. This conceptualization also effectively debunks the main myth of empty land in the imagined geography of the frontier and instead conceives of the space as lived and as produced through the lives unfolding in it. Thus, embracing posthumanist perspectives challenges the determinism inherent in settler-colonial world-views and imaginations. The Naqab is found in a tension between the teleological expectation of settlement and in the unruliness of the world.
Svensk sammanfattning


Med utgångspunkt i tidigare forskning om den israeliska statens territoriella strategi och egen empiri har jag strukturerat den pågående bosättarambitionen utifrån tre aspekter: bete och djurhållning, skog och skogsplantering samt fysiska bosättningar (både de processer som skapar nya samhällen och de som river gamla). De empiriska studierna svarar på två övergripande frågor: (1) I vilken kulturell, politisk och ideologisk kontext har tre aspekter av ”bosättning” av frontlandet tagit form? Vilka processer handlar det om och hur har dessa förändrats? Vilka insikter kan nås från dessa förändringsprocesser för att bättre förstå den israeliska bosättarkolonialismens mekanismer och tillstånd? (2) På vilket sätt åberopas, skapas och används


"natur" för att territorialisera och hävda äganderätten över mark? Hur är "natur" sammanflätat med de bosättarkoloniala processerna och hur (a) upprätthålls och (b) motverkas statlig territorialisering i landskapet? De empiriska studierna är framför allt baserade på fältarbete i Naqab under åren 2017-2021. Avhandlingen i sin helhet består av tre artiklar där de olika empiriska delarna presenteras och analyseras, samt en ramberättelse ("kappan").


Så vad innebär det att studera Israel som en bosättarkolonial stat? Åren 2021 och 2022 började några av civilsamhällets tyngsta aktörer uttala sig med en ovanlig skärpa gentemot den israeliska statens agerande. Det som förannlet den nya tonen var formaliserandet av en ny grundlag, Basic Law: Israel - The
Denna lag skrev in de arabiska eller palestinska medborgarnas (de med israeliskt medborgarskap) underordning i samhället genom att slå fast att ”Landet Israel (Eretz Israel) är det judiska folkets historiska hemland och den plats i vilken staten Israel bildades”, vidare att ”staten Israel är det judiska folkets nationella hem i vilket de fullgör sin naturliga, kulturella, religiösa och historiska rätt till självbestämmande” och slutligen, i lagens grundprincip, att ”rätten till självbestämmande är unik för det judiska folket” (min översättning). Både Human Right Watch (2021) och Amnesty (2022) slog fast att den verklighet Israel skapat är apartheid. Begreppet avser framför allt den palestinska verkligheten på Västbanken, men enligt Human Right Watch, utsätts de palestinska medborgarna i Israel för en systematisk diskriminering som är del av samma politik som skapar den extrema situation som råder på Västbanken. Bland kritiska forskare går åsikterna isär något om huruvida det bosättarkoloniala perspektivet är applicerbart på Västbanken eller inte, alternativt om man istället i värsta fall reproducerar kolonial logik genom att dela upp analysen mellan Västbanken å ena sidan och Israel å andra sidan. Jag uppfattar perspektivet som ett hjälpamt sätt att studera den specifika situation som råder i Naqab.

uppåt och framåt bygger den etablerade berättelsen om statens (och de sionistiska organisationernas) förhållningssätt till de arabiska beduinerna som lever där. I specifika fall finns naturligtvis positiva effekter av sådana satsningar, men här finns också, som i andra bosättarkoloniala kontexter, en idé om en underordnad kultur som inte primärt ska reproduceras utan assimileras. Det här narrativet bygger i grunden på en idé om en ociviliserad wilde som oundvikligen måste gå under med modernisering (Lorenzoni, 2019). Som Desiree Poets (2021) skriver (utifrån en brasiliansk kontext) är den typen av assimilering ett sätt att skala av ursprungligheten från människan och med den det ursprungliga anspråket på marken, eller med andra ord, det är ett sätt att överföra den koloniala logiken om terra nullius (tom mark) till kroppen, vilket gör den möjlig att skriva om med ny mening som assimilerad i det nya (bosättar)samhället.

Slutligen kan jag konstatera att denna avhandling har skrivits i en politisk samtid som präglas av enorm politisk turbulens i Israel, med bland annat fem extraval under åren 2019-2022. Den präglas också av blottlagda motsättningar mellan israeler och palestinier i Israel som förstärkts av bombningar mot Gaza. I maj 2021 chockades omvärlden av konfliktens ovanliga brutalitet då det visade sig att 67 barn dött under dagar av intensiv bombning. Att analysera denna situation är långt utanför denna avhandlings ambition men jag kan konstatera att spännings som delvis varit dolda har kommit upp till ytan och att det verkar finnas en ökad acceptans för högerextrema partier som aggressivt förespråkar judisk dominans och territoriell expansion. Min förhoppning är att den här avhandlingen ska bidra med ökad kunskap om hur denna territoriella expansion kan se ut inom Israel och med vilka medel den genomförs.
References


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