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# Territory, Knowledge and Power: Understanding Israeli Sovereignty

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ANON, JUN 9 2009

**Discuss in Detail the Ways in Which the Concepts Used in the Academic Articles Relate to the Analyses Presented by Weizman. Are Some of These Concepts Better Illustrated by Weizman's Story than Others, or Perhaps Challenged? Which of the Academic Concepts are Most Useful?**

*"Hollow Land reveals how overt instruments of control, as well as seemingly mundane structures, are pregnant with intense historical, political meaning. Cladding and roofing details, stone quarries, street and highway illumination schemes, the ambiguous architecture of housing, the form of settlements, the construction of fortifications and means of enclosure, the spatial mechanisms of circulation control and flow management, mapping techniques and methods of observations, legal tactics for land annexation, the physical organization of crises and disaster zones, highly developed weapons technologies and complex theories of military manoeuvres – all are invariably described as indexes for the political rationalities, institutional conflicts and range of expertise that formed them."* [1]

Eyal Weizman's comprehensive account of the techniques of expansion and oppression deployed by the Israeli forces in the Occupied Territories provides a thorough and graphic exposé of a whole range of understudied, ignored or unrecognized colonizing methods, some ingenious, some barbaric, all subject to constant adaptation. In the nine chapters that follow Weizman illustrates in the Occupied Territories what he regards as 'the laboratory of the extreme' and Palestine as an experimental microcosm in which models of management and control are formulated; these scientific methods of control harbour an ominous future of what Weizman calls 'gated community politics' or 'green zone democracy' that may be exported throughout the world to insulate against the fallout of neo-liberal globalization.[2] The evolving processes and carefully examined usefulness of strategies of Israeli colonization, annexation, and domination that manifest through a multiplicity of competing and complementing forces are categorized by Weizman in several ways, such as: the promotion of *obfuscation* to instil a beneficial 'structured chaos' or 'constructive blurring': attempting to *humanize apartheid* by *naturalising* the 'facts' of segregation and domination: concocting three-dimensional land rights in a matrix of disjointed topography: splicing terror and pollution by encouraging hygiene phobias and phony 'chemical warfare' threats: localizing and beautifying colonial architecture by producing a unified, naturalized, and archaic/Orientalist veneer to present an 'organic' quality to settlements: employing 'vertical geography' for the cause of 'subterranean colonization' often called 'archaeology': 'archaeologism', imbuing all architecture with a quasi-religious meaning often accorded to archaeological or historical sites to accentuate permanency and sanctity.[3] This essay will relate the concepts used by Weizman to the concepts shaped by Oren Yiftachel, namely 'Judaizing', 'Ethnocracy', and the 'Internal frontier', and to Stephen Legg's reading of Foucault's Population Geographies, to compare and contrast the ideas, determine which author utilizes the concepts to best effect, and finally determine which ideas are most useful and deserve further attention. The politics of 'Judaization' and of retaining a disproportionate ethnic-class structure that ensures a uni-ethnic dominance of a multi-ethnic society by establishing a constitutional *Jewishness* throughout the Israeli nation-state is what Yiftachel understands to be an *ethnocratic* regime.[4] Yiftachel's other idea of the 'Internal frontier' postulates the necessity in settler societies to retain the notion of a frontier even when they have achieved an established nation-state that exerts full territoriality.[5] The notion of the hostile frontier must be propagated within the dominant culture for purposes of nation and state building. I will consider Legg's re-theorization of biopolitics and governmentality via population geography and apply them to the reality of the Occupied Territories and ascertain their usefulness vis-à-

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vis Weizman's and Yiftachel's approach.

In the Occupied Territories and within Israel the "...dynamic morphologies of the frontier resembles an incessant sea dotted with multiplying archipelagos of externally alienated and internally homogenous ethno-national enclaves – under a blanket of aerial Israeli surveillance. In this unique territorial ecosystem, the various other zones – those of political piracy, of 'humanitarian' crises, of barbaric violence, of full citizenship, 'weak' citizenship, or no citizenship at all – exist adjacent to, within or over each other." [6]

This essay will attempt to find out which of the authors best explains this situation.

In the first chapter of Weizman's story, *Petrifying the Holy City*, we learn of the 'domestication' and 'familiarisation' building procedures used in the Occupied Territories to make the settlements seem not only aesthetically pleasing but to arouse in the settlers a psychological sense of belonging. [7] 'Jerusalem stone' was by law the required façade for all settlement architecture which, whilst frustrating architects, would produce an emotional sensation making settlers reminiscent of ancient Jerusalem, that would apparently inspire a feeling of homeliness in the collective memory. [8] *"The function and value of the masonry construction must be measure not only according to an architectural value that seeks to reveal a buildings construction method in its appearance, but according to a cultural value that sees buildings as conveyors of emotional messages referring to the image of the city. It is against this cultural value that we must weigh the (extra) price of construction... this justifies, even today, the requirement to maintain the continuity of stone facing as the material which embodies the appearance of the city."* [9] Mysticism and spirituality outdo functionality or modernism in important pieces of Israeli architecture, especially within Jerusalem. Weizman goes on to explain the role of archaeology in expropriation of Palestinian lands. The national role of archaeology was to expose the underlying 'Israeliness' of the land and prove how the surface had been appropriated in inutile manner by Palestinians. [10] Biblical archaeology would consistently provide an alibi for new colonization. A specious sense of historic authenticity was at the heart of both architecture and archaeology, hence *archaeologism*, both operating dualistically to make the Palestinian feel out of place in their own land whilst making 'returning' Jews feel at home. Although the other authors do not touch on the phenomenon of archaeologism to the same extent as Weizman, Yiftachel does talk about an "ethos or mentality" that combines spiritual and material growth with the process of colonization. [11] Both authors are referring to a pseudo-historical identity cultured to justify not only the expansion into the West Bank, but the sweeping away of an 'inferior' culture residing over it – bio-cultural integrity literally built-in.

In chapter two, *Fortifications: The Architecture of Ariel Sharon*, Weizman considers 'civilianization' – the process of transferring military control over to civilian control which ultimately militarizes all facets of Israeli society in the Occupied Territories – and the strategies of 'depth' and 'networks', the activities of 'Special Commando Unit 101' and the regeneration of the myth of the frontier as personified by Ariel Sharon, and the 'suburban matrix of control'. [12] With Sharon began the re-opening of the Israeli frontier and the rejection of the static, concrete statism and status quo embodied in the Bar Lev line. The frontier was no longer to be stubbornly and desperately held in place, but fluid and ever-expanding to match the regeneration of Zionism. In this sense the frontier became the symbolic centre of the nation, as a "laboratory for the creation of a new Jew". [13] The new elasticity of the frontier and its mythic qualities largely copied from the socially mobilizing, identity crafting, lawless American frontier of past centuries, allowed for transgressions of all lines, leaving the 1948 Green Line in the dust. [14] Thanks to Sharon's sacrifice of the Bar Lev line in favour of deep, interconnected, numerous, civilianized outposts not only was any definitive border line indistinguishable but a new ability to survey, divide and restrict Palestinian activity arose. This, coupled with the conduct of Special Commando Unit 101 – who wilfully transgressed any and every border they could in the Occupied Territory, be it geopolitical, hierarchical, or legal – created the habitat of the internal frontier. The relation between the establishment of the internal frontier ethos as understood by Yiftachel and the activities of Sharon in militarizing settlement outposts, abolishing linear defence as it restricted not only military strategy but future expansion, shows a strong connection. The idea of an external frontier – beyond the Bar Lev line – was rescinded for the idea of internal enemies, the 'demographic time-bomb', and eventually a focus on the *Judaization* of Palestine, resulting in the Israel settler culture 'taming' hostile internal minorities with the same prejudice as external threats. [15] After the 1967 war a stable polity and territorial nation-state had been established yet, thanks to the efforts of Sharon, the frontier mentality persisted. The enemy Other, the enemy within, and the

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image of the frontier was and is deliberately maintained in the majority culture. The Israeli state “must create symbols, challenges and threats around which the (emerging settler) culture can rally and strengthen its identity and cohesion.”[16] This may have been an absolute necessity in the earliest days of Israel but now is maintained to court public opinion and international opinion for political popularity and to justify the ongoing settlements and discrimination against Palestinians.

Judaization is the name Yiftachel gives to the process of preserving, deepening, and expanding the Jewish character of Israeli social institutions with the goal of entrenching the dominant position of the ruling ethnic class. Yiftachel describes the political geography of Israel as follows: one Ethnocracy, two ethno-nations, several Jewish and Palestinian ethno-classes.[17] Uni-ethnic control over a multi-ethnic society falls short of our general delineation of a democracy but this has occurred not as a singular phenomena, but as the result of a series of coalescing forces that Yiftachel has attempted to coherently present. The ethnocratic regime in Israel, Yiftachel observes, is the consequence of three factors: a colonial settler society with a religious-political ideology; the mobilizing power of ethno-nationalism derived from Westphalian statehood aspirations and national self-determination; and the ‘ethnic logic’ of capital which reinforces ethnic-class structures.[18] Intra-Jewish class structures are the result of a split between the institutionalised charter group, the ‘founders’ who established their vision for a Jewish state and segregated itself at the top, and the later arriving immigrants, who assumed the role of petit bourgeois, and, of course, the dispossessed underclass indigenous population.[19] Yiftachel also mentions how this rigid classicism has been further exasperated from the 1980s onwards by the practice of neo-liberalism.[20] It seems a ‘Jewish’ state cannot be a democratic state. Indeed, France can be French and remain democratic, England can be English and remain democratic, but France cannot be *only Catholic* and be democratic, England cannot be *only Anglican* and be democratic, as Israel cannot be *only Jewish* and be democratic. Israel can be *Israeli* and be democratic, but it is democratically incompatible to retain one ruling ethnicity or religion as a permanent fixture, the logical result of which is ethnocracy straying into theocracy.[21] Alas, Yiftachel points out, Israel does not have a *demos*, it has an *ethnos*. [22] This is an appropriate juncture to introduce Legg’s reading of Foucault, as the treatment of Israeli’s by their state can be well understood in Foucauldian terms of biopolitics, the national-organism, and the ‘functional inversion’ of state apparatus. Thus, the (Israeli...) “*Population comes to appear above all else as the ultimate end of government. In contrast to sovereignty, government has as its purpose not the act of government itself, but the welfare of the population, the improvement of its condition, the increase of its wealth, longevity, health, (...) it is the population itself on which government will act either directly, (...) or indirectly, through techniques that will make possible, without the full awareness of the people, the stimulation of birth rates, the directing of the flow of population into certain regions or activities, and so on.*” [23] The reverse logic is directed to the minorities comprising the internal frontier, who ‘disease the national-organism’. Those who disrupt or threaten the growth of the organism, “abnormal or deviant subjects (are) removed from society and placed in spaces in which they would supposedly be reformed, like the asylum, the prison, the lock hospital, or the school” or, in this pretext, isolated, concentrated Palestinian Bantustans subject to pervasive panopticonism.[24] In this condition the criminal (the ethnic Arab) is not only enclosed but *created*. The ‘population state’ is born – a healthy population as a source of strength in military and economic terms, which can exert territoriality.[25] The aggressive exertion of territoriality in a borderless state means neighbouring populations are the object of oppression. In the population state, conscious of its national biopower, calculations (statistics, demographics, governmentality) are used to transform territory into a domain of density and vitality.[26] In this way we see the subconscious and structural forces of biopower and governmentality empowering the Judaization of the nation-state, the ethnic cleansing of the national-organism and perhaps even a genetic urge toward an ethnocratic bias. These more theoretical based assertions compliment the more evidential work done by Weizman in chapters three, four and five.

*Hill tops, Optical Urbanism, and the Split Sovereign and one-way mirror.* In these chapters Weizman looks in greater detail at the day to day methodology of Israeli occupation. With the energetic, independent and competitive philosophy of Sharon, the descent of NGOs and international influences with separate agendas into Israel and the Occupied Territories, the rise of orthodoxy, we see an advantageous cleavage between the bio-nation and the political state. The nation, subject to an array of competing, co-operating, overlapping, surreptitious and overt forces, appears to be evolving beyond the domain of state control, yet the instruments of governmentality allow for the state to capitalise on this phenomena in a number of ways. The atmosphere of chaos and improvisation allows for ambitious agency, be it from hard-line orthodox Jews foregoing government permission and snatching hill-tops, then

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to be backed by organized religious-political groups such as Gush Emunim who claim the site to be of strategic importance (overlooking a road, or close to a communications tower, etc) and then have the military – which is in a permanent state of emergency and can expropriate land at will if it deems it a matter of national security – securitize the hill-top and even begin the process of re-routing the infamous Wall around the site.[27] Here we can trace a relation between the ideas of each of the authors: the fear of indigenous groups in peripheral regions compounded by the mobilizing power of ethno-nationalism based on a highly selective historical/cultural narrative (Yiftachel):[28] the ‘free for all’ style of Sharon utilizing this ethos to create the elastic geography of a frontier (Weizman):[29] the quasi-religious episteme of the dominant biopower internalised by Israeli’s in order to reciprocate the desires and maintenance of the ‘hegemonic moment’ (Legg).[30] The culmination of these concepts actualized a spatial policy in Israel and the Occupied Territories incredibly discriminatory against Palestinians. Requisition has legally replaced expropriation, to emphasise the temporariness of occupation. The idea of temporariness is a permanent fixture, resulting in *permanent temporariness*. [31] This spatial planning policy justifies the removal of Palestinians from land as it is only a ‘temporary’ ‘security’ measure that will be resolved when the situation is secure – which is unlikely to be soon. In this sense ‘terrorism’ or violence more generally is in Israel’s interest since it justifies the continuous process of requisition.[32] This is maintained in the collective opinion because ‘security’ and ‘Jewishness’ are one, not only do Israeli’s require Palestinian land and protection from Palestinian attacks, but from the demographic growth of Palestinians. Hence the containment of Palestinian populations is a security issue.[33] Jew only ‘community settlements’ – run by the Jewish Agency and World Zionist Organization out of the US, thus avoiding Israeli law and taxes – run a racist, totalitarian type of settlement where applicants are judged by ethnicity and wealth.[34] Hilltop settlements, blindingly illuminated by night and illegal to view by day (with binoculars or up-close viewing under a shoot to kill policy in places) perform a panopticon role of placing the Palestinians under Gaze whilst affirming the heightened, unreachable superiority of the Israeli’s.[35] The optical camouflage of the ‘transparent sovereign’ (IDF and its subsidiaries) dictating to the phony ‘prosthetic sovereign’ Palestinian Authority at all checkpoints, the curfew’s, the politics of closure (of everything from roads, to checkpoints, to whole towns) the phasing in of biometric ID cards for all Palestinians, and finally the liberation from responsibility for the occupied afforded by the Oslo accords which, Weizman argues, “metamorphosed the belligerent occupation into a neo-liberal service economy” where all Palestinian needs are provided for by Israel at a cost.[36] Not only are these measures in response to the threats – imagined, contrived, or real – from the hostile, ‘wild’ minorities of the internal frontier, but they spread the institutionalisation of Judaizing occupied lands and furthering the politics of separation demanded by the *ethnos*.

Many of the ideas presented by the authors mutually reinforce one another. I find Yiftachel’s notion of the internal frontier to be the most useful since it is most universally applicable. One can apply his formula to the American push west, to modern Sri Lanka or Malaysia, or perhaps wartime Germany in its treatment of Jews within annexed territories, and other places and times. Also Yiftachel’s deconstruction of an ethnocracy, his methods for doing so and his reasoning regarding what constitutes an ethnocracy offer a clarity and a conceptual framework I find more useful than the other ideas available herein. Weizman’s story, although a tour de force of Israeli technè and spatial manipulation, is thick with minute details on a vast number of policies and incidents over many years and reads more like an event-by-event history book in places. I felt more enlightened by the concise and holistic nature of Yiftachel’s concepts, knowledge of which is readily transferable to different scenarios. As for Legg’s re-theorising of Foucault, it is always refreshing to engage with improved post-modernist tools incising toward the nature of government and society.

## Conclusion

In this essay I have attempted to highlight a selection of Weizman’s most penetrating and vivid observations and relate them to the arguments of Yiftachel and an updated understanding of Foucauldian population geography by Legg. I have shown that the instrumentality of control and domination given in gruelingly spoonfuls of facts by Weizman is permeated by Yiftachel’s idea of Judaization and given a coherent core or motivating force in the form of ethnocracy. I have shown that Yiftachel’s notion of the internal frontier is biologically and psychologically invested with Legg’s understanding of populations and their incremental evolution and segregation of biological and psychological threats, which again is made real by Weizman’s graphic story of apartheid and ethnic cleansing. The clearest, most cogent and potentially powerful argument brought forward in this essay is in the incompatibility of Israel as both Jewish and democratic. All the factors seem to equate to an ethnocratic and semi-theocratic regime.

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Israel should not have to relinquish its Jewish character but it cannot consider itself democratic until non-Jews become politically visible and receive a much greater degree of equality. It cannot insist on the legalised absoluteness of a single ethnic/religious nation-state without continuing the brutal occupation the world finds so abhorrent, brutality made necessary from a refusal of democracy.

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[1] **Weizman, E.** (2007), *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation*. London: Verso. Pg 6

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[17] Ibid, **Yiftachel, O.** 'Judaizing', pg 369

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