

Israelis Studying the Occupation: An Introduction

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Background

The idea for the present collection was conceived in the beginning of 2015, following a call for papers for the seventh International Conference of Critical Geography that was held in Ramallah. As we were critical researchers interested in the conference topics, this call raised an immediate dilemma. On the one hand, we would be obviously happy to submit a paper or organize a session in a conference that has a tradition of innovative and fascinating thought, particularly when it is being held so close to our homes in Tel Aviv. On the other hand, we weren't sure that as Israelis, we would be welcome at all in a conference being held in the occupied West Bank. Beyond our interest in the conference topics, a question of etiquette also came up: What is worse, inviting yourself to a party at which you may be unwelcome or ignoring it completely? In other words, if the Israeli critical community shuns a major international conference held in the West Bank, is not that problematic in and of itself?

We tried to think of this in comparison, for instance, to feminist conferences. Men should not take over the event, yet it seems that they should arrive and be part of the audience and perhaps even a modest part—ideally, a self-aware part—of the speakers. Otherwise, the conference could be tagged as a women-only, sectarian affair. However, the need to create a safe space for the organizers, the speakers, and the audience is also clear, and the last thing we would like to do is to extend the occupation by other means.

We decided to open up these questions and consult with the conference organizing committee. A comprehensive correspondence developed, at the

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conclusion of which we decided we would offer to raise these dilemmas in a special session in the conference titled “Israelis Studying the Occupation.” Instead of concealing and deliberating, we would put the issue of occupation research in relation to the occupation itself on the table, and instead of doing so in a conference in Tel Aviv or the US, we would raise the hard questions where, as Israelis, we would have to contend with the sharpest criticism—that is, in Ramallah.

Each one of the researchers participating in the session was supposed to present one of their research papers on the occupation and dedicate part of the presentation to reflecting on the political and ethical questions as well as the methodological and theoretical ones that are raised by the situation in which the occupier researches the occupied and the situation of occupation itself. The idea for the session arose from the understanding that it is impossible to separate the subject of research from its politics and the form in which it appears (including the conceptual and methodological frameworks through which it is expressed) and that it is impossible to separate the research we conduct from the place in which we live, certainly as political-critical researchers.

The departure point was the problematization of the colonial/settler-colonial/postcolonial situation in which critical research is made in a society that purports to be relatively open but whose very openness to critical research is founded on ethnocratic power relations towards entire populations. The questions raised for discussion were: What is the responsibility of

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Israeli academics in researching the occupation? Is it even possible to study the occupation as Israelis? Perhaps political responsibility requires opposing the regime and emigrating from the country? What about methodological and linguistic issues? How should the gaps and obstacles created by the occupation itself be treated when conducting such research? Is it mere happenstance that most of the Israeli studies deal with top-down power structures and population management, while most of those conducted by the Palestinians emphasize the human dimension and the active agency of life under occupation? In this period, should one strive for cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian researchers in order to better understand the occupation and oppose it, or rather is it better to respect the boycott, even at the cost of dismantling radical political partnerships?

During our correspondence on the subject, we realized that despite the fundamental interest in the discussion we were proposing, we were putting the conference organizers in a tight spot. We gave up on organizing the session but decided to continue the discussion and raise these important questions in writing, through the current collection of essays.

Studying the Occupation as Israelis: General Outline

One must begin by acknowledging that the occupier has always studied the occupied population and the occupied territory. This was so in the history of colonialism and also in the specific case of Israel/Palestine. A manifesto published after the conference included the following:

Israel's academic establishment is an intimate and complicit part of the Israeli regime, by active choice. In particular, universities, colleges and research centers, many built on Palestinian land, play a central role in the occupation of Palestine through research and development in the service of the Israeli Armed Forces; Israeli military training; development of weapons and military doctrines deployed against Palestinians.¹

And indeed, Israeli academia participates in the existing power structures in a variety of ways: development of new weaponry; elaboration of international law that validates Israeli army actions in the West Bank and Gaza after the fact; laying the ethical-philosophical groundwork for military measures and the occupation in general; and the work of experts on the Mid-

1. "Forging Solidarity, Taking a Stand on Palestine," International Critical Geography Group, 15 Oct. 2015, iccg2015.org/resolution-english/

dle East, geographers, sociologists, and anthropologists who study Palestinian society directly on behalf of the power structure and for its purposes.

In addition, there is a relatively small group of critical researchers of the occupation who do not act as part of the power structure but against it. Yet, regardless of their wishes, they too are embedded in various ways in the society in which they act.

While the political and civilian critique of the occupation began immediately after the 1967 war, it seems that the birth of Israeli institutional academic critique can be traced to the 1980s, to a series of publications authored by Baruch Kimmerling and Meron Benvenisti. While the former wished to present the occupied territories as an integral part of the Israeli system of government (and therefore one must speak, accordingly, of one unit of control and a contiguous controlled space), Benvenisti (alone and with coauthors in the West Bank Database Project) concentrated on describing the most intimate details of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank: water, settlements and urban planning, the labor market, demography, and more.²

This distinction between those that examine the occupation as part of a wider system that exists between the Jordan river and the Mediterranean (hence, Israel/Palestine) and those that emphasize the events beyond the Green Line alone (hence, the Occupied Territories) is a thread that runs through critical research to this day, and as we shall see below, it is part of the question that we must explain when we wish to discuss Israelis studying the occupation.

The years of the first Intifada (1987–1991) led to additional studies of Israeli control of the territories and the effect of the occupation on the Palestinian population.³ In the middle of the 1990s, apparently inspired by the Oslo Accords, which threatened to shift the study of the occupation to the history departments, a certain decline in occupation research became noticeable, except for a small number of radical researchers who had al-

2. See Baruch Kimmerling, "Boundaries and Frontiers of the Israeli Control System: Analytical Conclusions" in *The Israeli State and Society: Boundaries and Frontiers*, ed. Kimmerling (Albany, N.Y., 1989): pp. 265–84. And see Meron Benvenisti, *The West Bank Data Base Project: A Survey of Israel's Policies* (Washington, D.C., 1984), *1986 Report: Demographic, Economic, Legal, Social and Political Developments in the West Bank* (Boulder, Colo., 1986), *1987 Report: Demographic, Economic, Legal, Social, and Political Developments in the West Bank* (Boulder, Colo., 1987), and with Shlomo Khayat, *The West Bank and Gaza Atlas* (Boulder, Colo., 1988).

3. For example, see *Ha'Intifada: Mabat Mibifnim (Intifada: A Look from the Inside)*, ed. Shlomo Swirski and Ilan Pappé (Tel Aviv, 1992), and Juval Portugali, *Implicate Relations: Society and Space in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Dordrecht, 1993).

ready identified the problematic nature of the accords.⁴ Further on, in the 2000s, one can see a palpable rise in the number of studies of the occupation in various fields: law, history, geography, planning and public policy, and more.⁵

Twenty-Five Years Ago

In order to better understand the current situation in occupation research, we wish to go back to the early 1990s, to a self-reflection regarding a field study conducted by Maya Rosenfeld, an Israeli researcher in the Dheisheh refugee camp. In “An Israeli Researcher in the Dheisheh Refugee Camp,” Rosenfeld offers a thought-provoking account of the place of the researcher in the anthropological-sociological field and of the politics of the study itself.⁶ Three points seem to us particularly important.

In the beginning, Rosenfeld discusses the issue of creating trust in the researcher, writing that “Were I English or French or even a woman from the Palestinian Diaspora, gaining people’s confidence and willingness to share their experiences and thoughts would have been an ongoing business.” In a manner that seems today incomprehensible, Rosenfeld points out that her being an Israeli seems to create more (mutual) interest and even trust in the Palestinian population. In the early 1990s, when the separation regime was in its infancy, nearly all the Palestinians knew different

4. See for example Oren Yiftachel, “Israeli Society and Jewish-Palestinian Reconciliation: ‘Ethnocracy’ and Its Territorial Contradictions,” *The Middle East Journal* 51 (Autumn 1997): 505–19, and Jeff Halper, “The 94 Percent Solution: Matrix of Control,” *Middle East Report* 216 (Autumn 2000): 14–19.

5. A very partial list would contain: Yiftachel, *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine* (Philadelphia, 2006); Orna Ben-Naftali, Aeyal M. Gross, and Keren Michaeli, “Illegal Occupation: Framing the Occupied Palestinian Territory,” *Berkeley Journal of International Law* 23, no. 3 (2005): 551–614; *A Civilian Occupation: The Politics of Israeli Architecture*, ed. Rafi Segal and Eyal Weizman (New York, 2003); David Kretzmer, *The Occupation of Justice: The Supreme Court of Israel and the Occupied Territories* (Albany, N.Y., 2002); Elisha Efrat, *The West Bank and Gaza Strip: A Geography of Occupation and Disengagement* (New York, 2006); Neve Gordon, *Israel’s Occupation* (Berkeley, 2008); Shir Hever, *The Political Economy of Israel’s Occupation: Repression Beyond Exploitation* (New York, 2010); Merav Amir, “The Making of a Void Sovereignty: Political Implications of the Military Checkpoints in the West Bank,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 31 (Jan. 2013): 227–44; Yael Berda, *Habirokratia shel hakibush: mishtar heterey hatnu’a bagada hama’aravit 2000–2006 (The Bureaucracy of the Occupation: The Permit Regime in the West Bank 2000–2006)* (Jerusalem, 2012); Ruthie Ginsburg, “Taking Pictures over Soldiers’ Shoulders: Reporting on Human Rights Abuse from the Israeli Occupied Territories,” *Journal of Human Rights* 10 (Jan.–Mar. 2011): 17–33; and Ariel Handel, “Gated/Gating Community: The Settlement Complex in the West Bank,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 39 (Oct. 2014): 504–17.

6. See Maya Rosenfeld, introduction to *Confronting the Occupation: Work, Education, and Political Activism of Palestinian Families in a Refugee Camp* (Stanford, Calif., 2004), pp. 21–27.

types of Israelis: soldiers, employers, partners, clients, right- and left-wingers, religious and secular individuals. According to Rosenfeld, she primarily aroused interest in the residents of the refugee camp as to “what type of Israeli is she.”⁷ According to her account, rather than foreignness, there had been a sense of deep involvement between Israelis and Palestinians (from a negative, skeptical point of view, of course, yet with mutual curiosity and potential for listening and getting to know each other).

A second point is related to the role of political theory and open discussion in mutual change. During her study, Rosenfeld found that the two parties—the researcher and the researched—are pondering the same theoretical dilemmas (social change, the role of Marxism in national thought, and more) and that this deliberation makes them partners in a journey rather than participants in a hierarchical system of researcher vis-à-vis researched. The shared theoretical background (mainly Marxist) should be noted too. Years of sitting in Israeli jails served the Palestinians as an incubator for theoretical thought and elucidation of social, economic, and national issues, which arose from the same sources studied at the time in the social science departments of Israeli universities.

A final, important point is that Rosenfeld never “went Dheishan.” She constantly emphasizes that no matter how much time she spent in Dheisheh, how much she ran away from the soldiers or adopted the local accent, she did not make any pretense of blurring the difference between one who returns to West Jerusalem at night and those who remain in the refugee camp. Therefore, Rosenfeld is completely cognizant of the social/national privileges accorded to her as a Jewish/Israeli researcher and of the fact that these privileges are among the things that must be put on the table.

Critique of the Present

In conclusion, Rosenfeld notes that it is reasonable to assume that if she were to conduct the same study two or three years later (in other words, in the middle of the 1990s), she would not have enjoyed the same level of openness, curiosity, and trust. This comment leads us to think of the historical present and the problems that it poses for critical researchers of the occupation in the year 2017—after the disappointment from the Oslo Accords, after the second Intifada, after the construction of the wall and the prohibition on Israelis from entering area A, after several military attacks on the Gaza Strip that left thousands of civilian corpses, and in a period that is witnessing an increasing separation at all levels, along with new heights of suspicion, spontaneous and institutional violence, and rad-

7. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

icalization in all areas of the discourse. What are the institutional contexts of occupation research today? What are its limits? What are the privileges accorded to researchers but not to the researched? What are the theories shared by the two parties? What possibilities of cooperation can be formed?

The most prominent difference from the 1990s is the almost complete disappearance of daily contact between Palestinians and Israelis. In 1991 the general exit permit, which allowed nearly all of the Palestinians to daily and freely cross the Green Line (the 1949 armistice line, which separates the State of Israel from the territories occupied in 1967), was cancelled. Further restrictions and obstacles were established after the wave of violent attacks perpetrated in the middle of the 1990s, and with the eruption of the second Intifada in September 2000, the closure was institutionalized as a permanent method. The physical and cognitive distance increased further with the construction of the separation wall in the 2000s and the ban on Israelis entering the A areas. At the same time, importation of workers from Eastern Europe and Asia decreased the dependence of the Israeli economy on Palestinian labor and thus brought about a near complete disengagement of the two populations in all areas of life. Therefore, contrary to the beginning of the 1990s, there is a lack of human contact (language, public space, daily encounters, trust) while physical and cognitive walls are on the rise.

One of the implications of the lack of human contact and the separation is a reduction in the number of ethnographic studies. The majority of the papers written by Israeli researchers in the last two decades deal with the occupation mechanisms: the systems of laws and regulations, the checkpoints and separate roads, the violence and management of daily routines. The British geographer Christopher Harker wrote, in direct criticism of the title of Eyal Weizman's *Hollow Land* and Jeff Halper's term *matrix of control*, that "to employ only a geopolitical epistemology to encounter Palestinian lives and spaces is to run the risk of abstracting these spaces and subjects in much the same way as the practices of the Israeli occupation do."⁸

Limiting the research to the mechanisms of control might turn the occupation itself (and by implication, the image of the occupiers and their self-aesthetics, technology, and socialization and disciplinary mechanisms)

8. Christopher Harker, "New Geographies of Palestine/Palestinians," *The Arab World Geographer* 13 (Sept. 2010): 203–4. See Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation* (New York, 2007), and Jeff Halper, "The Key to Peace: Dismantling the Matrix of Control," The Israeli Committee against House Demolitions, icahd.org/get-the-facts/matrix-control/

into the main issue, while blurring or obscuring the occupied.⁹ Not only does the occupier become more interesting than the occupation, another result is the obscuring of the agency of the Palestinian population. In other words, this is not only an abstraction but also a double victimization. The Palestinians, who are the subjects of the occupation regime, also become passive victims of the discourse of the occupation.¹⁰ Thus, due to institutional and lingual separations, some critical works might hold the risk of becoming just another brick in the wall.

The Colonizer Who Refuses?

Where does this separation—personal, institutional, discursive—put the critical researcher? In his book *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Albert Memmi characterizes some of the types of occupiers and occupied alike. One of the chapters traces the “colonizer who refuses,” and it seems that some of the described characters tell the story in its entirety: the goodwill colonizer, or the colonizer who crosses the lines. He concludes by arguing that there is no future for the left-wing colonizer.¹¹ According to Memmi, the necessary discrepancy between the universalism of the leftist and the nationalist ideology involved in decolonization not only leads to a split in the personality of the goodwill colonizer but also makes him politically worthless. Whether he crosses the lines or remains as a critical voice in the settler society, the leftist colonizer is destined to political sterility and a lack of any influence in either society:

Hard-pressed, the role of the left-wing colonizer collapses. There are, I believe, impossible historical situations and this is one of them. The present life of the leftist colonizer in the colony is ultimately unacceptable by virtue of his ideology, and if that ideology should triumph it would question his very existence. The strict consequence of this realization would be the abandonment of that role.¹²

9. See Gil Z. Hochberg, *Visual Occupations: Violence and Visibility in a Conflict Zone* (Durham, N.C., 2015).

10. See Handel, “What Is Occupied in Palestine?” *Political Geography* 53 (July 2016): 86–88. However, a contrary view is presented in the book *Decolonizing Methodologies*, according to which the occupier should not conduct ethnography of the occupied but should investigate mainly himself. This, out of a political, ethical, and sociological position that identifies the power relations in the ethnographic research itself and is aware that research is often an extension of the occupation by other means; see Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London, 1999).

11. See Albert Memmi, “The Colonizer Who Refuses” in *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, trans. Howard Greenfeld (Boston, 1991), pp. 19–44.

12. Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, p. 39.

In the case discussed by Memmi, it is clear that “abandonment of the role” means leaving the colony. But what is the meaning of “abandonment of the role” in the current case? And by implication, what is the “colony”?

Here too, the way in which the occupation has been framed is revealed as an ethical and political issue at one and the same time. Is the subject of interest 1948 or 1967? The *nakba* or the *naksa*? The settler colonialism in Israel/Palestine or the military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip? 1948 and 1967 are not only points in time or names of wars, they also indicate geographical areas—the meaning of 1948 is all of Israel/Palestine; 1967 refers to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip—as well as radical differences in the conception of the political situation, its analysis and resolution.

The choice to study only *the occupation*, meaning the areas occupied in 1967, implicitly absolves 1948, discriminates between occupation and settler colonization, and accepts the State of Israel in the borders of the Green Line as an undisputed entity. Thus, it also neutralizes part of the problematics indicated by Memmi. After all, none of the critical researchers lives in any of the Jewish settlements built in the West Bank. From that point of view, none of the Israeli occupation researchers in a situation of goodwill occupiers, if only because they are not considered occupiers.

On the other hand, referring to 1948 as the framework of the research, as most Palestinian researchers undoubtedly do, identifies the 1967 occupation as but another link in the chain of settler colonialism in which the motivating power is the same: complete Jewish control of the area between the Jordan river and the Mediterranean. According to this view, the entire Jewish population in Israel/Palestine is a settler population and therefore the leftists among them, even the most radical, are no more than goodwill occupiers. Furthermore, the choice to intentionally study the events in the territories occupied in 1967 and thus by implication validating 1948 and distinguishing between normal citizens (Jews living west of the Green Line) and settlers/colonizers (Jews living in the Occupied Territories) is part of a rhetorical move intended to deny the lengthier occupation, the one that began with modern Zionism at the conclusion of the nineteenth century.

A third approach combines the previous two. On one hand, it identifies the 1948 question as the framing question and understands that its iniquities are far from being resolved, but on the other, it identifies the differences in the practices implemented in both areas. In other words, there is a clear understanding that the framework of reference must be the entire territory of Israel/Palestine but also that within this territory there is a difference in the application of control in the different geographical areas and between Palestinians with Israeli citizenship (who still suffer from obvious institu-

tional discrimination, racism, and exclusion) and the noncitizens that live in the occupied territories.¹³ The Gaza Strip and the West Bank (except East Jerusalem) have never been annexed to Israel; rather they have remained in a constant state of inclusive exclusion.¹⁴ The regime in Palestine/Israel is based on a situation in which externalization is part of the mechanism of inclusion, part of the system that produces power and conceals it at one and the same time. In that case, where does it put the Israeli researchers of the occupation, inside or outside the colony?

Indeed, it seems that the very possibility of maintaining a relatively open and democratic regime in Israel in the 1948 borders is largely based on the fact that millions of Palestinians are deprived of civil rights like voting for parliament and freedom of speech and assembly. Willingly or not, the critical researcher is also part of the mechanism. The relative freedom of speech granted to the researchers by academia is part of the privilege granted to them as Jewish Israelis.

On the one hand, the dialectic of inclusion and exclusion puts the Israeli researchers in a good position. Michael Waltzer argued that the best criticism (in both meanings, effective and ethical) is internal criticism.¹⁵ His example is the Jewish prophets, who criticize the people as part of the same people and as part of its ethical system and language. Therefore, it seems that criticism by researchers of the occupation must be heard first and foremost from Israelis within the Israeli system—and preferably in Hebrew.

Yet, on the other hand, in the current political climate, does not the very fact of criticizing the Israeli regime remove the researcher from the group? In other words, doesn't the common Hebrew curse "go to Gaza" signify a discursive deportation as much as a geographical one? And again, what does this say about the concept of criticism itself when it is disconnected from its intended audience? Is not the result precisely the goodwill occupier who appears to be neither here nor there?

The dialectic of inclusion and exclusion thus puts the critical researchers in a position where they find themselves being shunned by their own community, which is increasingly unwilling to hear criticism about its state or policies, but also by the Palestinian community, with which they wish to create solidarity and support in its rightful struggle.

13. See Ariella Azoulay and Adi Ophir, *The One-State Condition: Occupation and Democracy in Israel/Palestine*, trans. Tal Haran (Stanford, Calif., 2013).

14. See *The Power of Inclusive Exclusion: Anatomy of Israeli Rule in the Occupied Palestinian Territories*, ed. Ophir, Michal Givoni, and Sari Hanafi (New York, 2009).

15. See Michael Walzer, *Interpretation and Social Criticism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1987).

Conclusion: What Is Refusal? Refusal to What?

Beyond the specific case of Israel/Palestine, such issues of solidarity and support raise some major questions regarding the relations between knowledge, justice, citizenship, and objection. If until now the main question has been that of the colonizer who refuses (that is, who is the colonizer and what is the colony), we would like to turn now to the issue of refusal. What does it mean to refuse?

John Rawls distinguishes between conscientious objection and civil disobedience. According to Rawls, the core of the difference is to be found in the appeal to the sense of justice of the majority.¹⁶ While conscientious objection is subjective, private, and apolitical, civil disobedience is public and political. While the first is personal, the latter is a means of communication: between the disobeying person and the government, on the one hand, and his fellow citizens, on the other.

For communication to be successful, one must assume, firstly, shared language and, secondly, that the speech can reach its audience. In the Rawlsian case, we may speak of two basic needs: a shared concept of justice, and that everyone is able to communicate with each other—to affect as much as to be affected. Both assumptions, however, fail in that case. In Israel/Palestine nearly half of the population are noncitizens, as the Palestinian inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza Strip are ruled by the Israeli government but have no influence on its decisions. Moreover, the language and the conception of justice are radically unshared: while the state of Israel suggests particularism (justice and democracy for Jewish Israelis only), its critics appeal to universalism (justice and democracy for all inhabitants of Israel/Palestine). In that case, the acts of criticism do not form communication. The lack of a shared conception of justice seems to push any act to the corner of private justice—that is, apolitical conscientious objection. It is a failure of the language to create a shared basis for discussion and negotiations.

On the other hand, we might think the act of objection not as a means of communication, appealing to an imagined shared conception of justice, but rather as its opposite: that is, an acknowledged refusal to use the majority's language. In that case, what we should seek are ways to decolonize language by appealing to critical inquiry. In the age of post-truth and alternative facts the most subversive act would be to make research, reveal facts, and produce knowledge that governments can neither hide nor resist. When

16. See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), p. 322.

newspeak phrases rule, truth itself is political. We, therefore, believe that beyond the double marginality of the occupation research, and beyond its inherent problematics, it still has an important role in exposure and change.

The authors in the current collection deal with those questions of truth, knowledge, citizenship, and justice from various angles. They discuss the difficulties in choosing the occupation as a subject of investigation; the dynamic between the Israeli researchers and the subject of research, the Palestinian residents, and the occupation situation; and they wish to delineate the structural and epistemological system that is the basis of the studies conducted by Israelis who are at the same time part of the occupying society.

Hagar Kotef suggests viewing the failures of the anticolonial activists as reflecting the failures and obstacles of critical academic writing in Israel, yet argues that failures may be productive and politically significant. Hilla Dayan reminds us that no one is born critical and focuses on the production of academic knowledge as part of a politics of hope. Out of her numerous years of experience as a journalist and researcher, Amira Hass presents an analysis of the complexity of the production of knowledge in the media field. Maya Rosenfeld discusses the unique conditions that enabled her to conduct an anthropological study in a refugee camp after the first Intifada uprising and the changes that have occurred since then. A structural analysis of critical Israeli research is offered by Amal Jamal, showing how researchers are trapped in analytical patterns related to their conceptions regarding the occupation. Finally, Irus Braverman asks how relinquishing Israeli citizenship can constitute a protest against the policies of the Israeli regime and how it has affected her as a researcher of the occupation.

As these lines are written, in February 2017, the mailing lists are gushing around another conference: the Association of American Geographers' (AAG) annual meeting, falling just a few weeks after Donald Trump's executive order restricting entry to the US from seven Muslim countries. Discussions regarding the responsibility of critical scholars lead to debates over academic petitions to the US government, plans to organize the next conference in Canada or on both sides of the US-Mexico border, and even suggestions to boycott the conference altogether. As questions of ethics blur with issues of political effectiveness, it appears that some of the dilemmas of Israeli researchers are now relevant to wider fields of critical and political work. What is the role of critical researchers in current societies? What is the relation between knowledge, criticism, and citizenship? What are the epistemological limits of the research itself? All these come up as central issues in the following collection of essays but might as well be all too relevant to more and more scholars around the globe.