
Wine-washing: colonization, normalization, and the geopolitics of *terroir* in the West Bank's settlements

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Abstract. *Terroir* describes a set of special characteristics of a given place—geography, geology, climate, and human agricultural traditions—that incarnates in the unique taste of its products, usually wine. In contrast to modern perceptions of territory as an abstract legal-political entity, *terroir* invokes images of organic relations between people and a specific land with a unique ‘character’. The paper will analyze the evolving discourse in the West Bank settlements in recent years, which shifts the emphasis from biblical history, ideology, and security—to tourism, vineyards, and *terroir*. The argument will be that the usage of sophisticated wine language enables normalization of the Jewish settlements in the West Bank in a paradoxical way that is emphasizing their location and blurring it at the same time. While the concept of normalization is usually applied to the ‘quality-of-life’ urban settlements, our paper concentrates on the small and ‘ideological’ settlements, which are located in the densest Palestinian regions. By that, we wish to contribute to the growing research body on the West Bank settlements, as well as to the fields of geopolitics, colonial and postcolonial studies, and cultural geography.

Keywords: West Bank, Golan Heights, *terroir*, colonialism, geopolitics

Introduction

“The greatest challenge ever faced by the settlements in their entire existence”, writes Michael Feige, is “the challenge of normalization” (2002, page 119)—that is, the normalization of Israeli control over the territories themselves and the definitive disappearance of the Green Line⁽¹⁾ in Israel’s national conscience and psychology. As Feige puts it, “if YESHA⁽²⁾ is here and the territories are an inseparable part of Israel, then the territories have been normalized and also those living in them” (page 133).

The process of growing integration between pre-1967 Israel and the West Bank has been the object of a large body of scholarship, which has investigated its politico-institutional (Azoulay and Ophir, 2012; Gordon, 2008; Lustick, 1988; Ron, 2003; Rubinstein, 1988) and political economic (Benvenisti, 1986; Hever, 2010; Newman and Portugali, 1987; Portugali, 1991) drivers, and described the creation of a dual system based on separate legal

⁽¹⁾The Green Line refers to the 1949 armistice lines, which turned in 1967 into the border between the State of Israel and the Occupied Territories.

⁽²⁾YESHA is an acronym in Hebrew for Judea, Samaria, and Gaza. Despite Israel’s disengagement from Gaza and the evacuation of the Jewish settlements from the Strip, the acronym is still in common use to describe the Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories.

(Benvenisti, 1990; Kretzmer 2002; B'tselem, 2002) and physical (B'tselem, 2004; Efrat, 2006; Weizman, 2007; Handel, 2014) infrastructures for the local Jewish and Palestinian population. Many scholars have emphasized the inherent ambiguity of Israeli policies, aimed at blurring the Green Line without erasing it completely (Azoulay and Ophir, 2012). Already in 1988, Meron Benvenisti described these policies as a conscious strategy of "constructive ambiguity":

"Israel is precisely at the point in which it wants to be. The existing situation, amorphous, fluid, and blurry is the best of all possible worlds ... a system was invented ... simultaneous integration and segregation ... in some areas it is possible to focus on annexation and in others it is possible to take refuge behind the excuse of occupation" (1988, page 49).

Indeed, Israel holds the territories in a vague manner, deliberately preserving the tension between inside and outside. Nonetheless, vagueness invites pressure from both sides: a pressure to annex and nullify the difference between inside and outside, vis-à-vis an opposite pressure to disengage and retreat or—at the very least—provide a clear and unequivocal definition of the difference between "here" and "there". It is in this context that Feige's observation should be placed: for the settlers' movement and its supporters the greatest challenge is, in the end, obliterating the Green Line so that the Jewish communities of the West Bank would be perceived as an integral part of Israel.

This paper will examine the manner in which the settlers attempt to deal with the challenge outlined by Feige. It will do so by examining the process of creation of a cultural and symbolic space that stresses taste, enjoyment, and uniqueness, as manifested in the thriving wine industry in the settlements—and its role in the construction of a new image of YESHA that is very far away from the stereotype of messianic fanatics who live in caravans on wind-swept hill tops.

'Normal' versus 'abnormal' settlements

The process of integration and separation between Israel and the territories occupied during the 1967 War is certainly a prominent theme in the discourse on Israeli–Palestinian relations, including the academic discourse. Against this background, it is somehow paradoxical that the issue of Jewish settlements—admittedly, one of the main drivers of this process—has been relatively overlooked. Of course, scholars working on Israel/Palestine have not been blind to the expansion and the controversial status of Jewish communities in the West Bank and Gaza; most of the contributions, however, have considered the proliferation of settlements in the light of the broader context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict—for example, their role in the developing 'geography of occupation' (Efrat, 2006; Gordon, 2008; Handel, 2014; Weizman, 2007); in relation to the dynamics of Israel's state building and democracy (Peled and Shafir, 2002; Shenhav, 2012; Yiftachel, 2006); in the context of Israeli–Palestinian negotiations (Masalha, 2000; Falah and Newman, 1995; Reuveny, 2003). On the other hand, most of the contributions addressing Israel's settlement policy as a topic in its own right have so far delved into the political culture and organization of the settlers' movement (Aran, 1987; 1991; Aran and Feige, 1987; Feige, 2002; 2009; Isaac, 1976; Lustick, 1988; Newman, 1985; 2005; Newman and Hermann, 1992) and its relationship with Israel's political establishment (Eldar and Zertal, 2007; Gorenberg, 2006). Overall, this literature focuses overwhelmingly on the identity and/or the agency of the so-called 'national-religious' settlers—epitomized by the Gush Emunim and its heirs—vis-à-vis mainstream Israeli/Zionist/Jewish political culture and institutions (see, for example, Dalsheim and Harel, 2009).

Despite a promising start in the 1980s (E Benvenisti, 1990; M Benvenisti, 1984; 1986; 1987; Benvenisti and Khayat, 1988; Dehter, 1987; Hochstein, 1983; Newman and Portugali, 1987; Portugali, 1991; Reichman, 1986), the literature on Jewish settlements published in the last two decades is marked by a lack of appreciation for the way in which

settlements have created a ‘new Israeli space’—and not merely appropriated Palestinian space or implemented a radical politico-messianic agenda. A partial exception in this respect is constituted by recent contributions focusing on the political economy and the political geography proliferation of settlements (Algazi, 2006; Allegra, 2013; Allegra and Maggor 2012; Gutwein, 2004; Weiss, 2010; 2011a; 2011b; Yacobi and Pullan, 2014). Not surprisingly, the study of the various facets of the “normalization” of Jewish settlements—namely, the heterogeneity of the settler population, the policy mechanisms underlying a settlement’s expansion, its socioeconomic and spatial drivers, and so forth—holds a central place in this developing stream of research.

More importantly, these contributions offer us a starting point to critically reflect upon Feige’s “challenge of normalization”. For Feige normalization entails the acceptance of the political project of the national-religious settlers by the Israeli public in general: if and when the paradigmatic radical settlers are able to “settle in the hearts” (Feige, 2009) of the nation, the normalization process will be complete—a rather conventional approach to the development of Israel’s settlement policy, and one that, as Hadas Weiss noted in her review of Feige’s (2009) book, ascribes “disproportionate agency to a nationalist theology” (Weiss, 2009, page 757). We maintain that a more fruitful approach should focus instead on the dynamics of normalization, and on the concrete mechanisms through which the Green Line disappeared in Israel’s collective psyche and consciousness. Rather than an acceptance of the radical agenda of the settlers’ movement, this process can be described as an ongoing process of banalization of Jewish presence in the West Bank.

As already noted, national-religious, politicized settlers have received the lion’s share of the academic attention—despite their relatively scarce demographic weight: a Peace Now 2002 survey showed that about 77% of the settlers cited “quality of life considerations” as a primary motive for their decision to move to the West Bank (Peace Now, 2007); following Marco Allegra’s (2013) calculations, between two thirds and four fifths of the total settler population live in the metropolitan area of Jerusalem—and mainly in large suburban communities such as Ma’ale Adummim, Givat Ze’ev, and Beitar Illit. Still, as Joyce Dalsheim and Assaf Harel (2009) pointed out, much of the existing literature tends to present them as a homogeneous group whose identity and practices are marked by irrational fundamentalism—a group that is politically, existentially, and spatially located ‘outside’ the democratic, secular, sane and rational body of Israel. Indeed, this is the prevailing image of the settler population as a whole; even when the existence of ‘other’ settlers is acknowledged (eg, the large suburban communities in the metropolitan areas of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem) this dichotomous approach is promptly reintroduced through the opposition between ‘ideological settlers’ and ‘quality-of-life settlers’, between ‘legally sanctioned settlements’ and ‘illegal outposts’, and so forth. We do not want to deny that many significant differences exist between the idealistic, radical youth of the ‘hilltop people’ and white-collar commuters residing in Ma’ale Adummim—or the left-leaning, educated middle-class that populates the bars and cafes of Tel Aviv. Still, any investigation of the settlements should be aware of the complexity and nuances underlying Israel’s settlement policy, of the fundamental heterogeneity of the settler population, and of the multiple connections existing between the two sides of the Green Line.

The concept of normalization is, therefore, usually applied either to a wide Israeli acceptance of the political project of the national-religious settlers (as in Feige’s work), or to the reality of large urban communities and the so-called ‘quality-of-life settlers’, who do not see themselves, and are usually not perceived by others, as ‘settlers’. In this paper, however, we will try to use that concept in the context of small, relatively peripheral communities and to describe the changing strategies of the more ideological and politicized component of the settler population. We will do so by showing how the marketing strategies deployed by the growing wine industry in these communities also constitutes practices of ‘wine-washing’

of the settlement project as a whole. We will demonstrate how ideological settlers have been trying to talk in a language that connects them to the sophisticated wine lovers in Tel Aviv—a language that paradoxically emphasizes their location in the heart of the West Bank rather than blurring it. Through the concept of *terroir* and the adoption of the jargon born in French wineries, the settlers created a set of tools for presenting to the progressive, middle-class residents of Tel Aviv the ‘unique taste’ of YESHA.

The first part of the paper will discuss *terroir*—a common term used in the wine industry to denote the overall characteristics (geographic, geological, climatic, and human) of a habitat in which grapes are grown to make a certain type of wine and which are reflected in its unique taste and which differentiate it from other wines—and the concept of territory derived from it. The second part will present the ways in which beginning in the 1980s the Golan Heights turned into ‘Wine Country’, and how a unique Golan taste was shaped and turned into a mark of quality and a normalizing sign. The third part will point out how the wineries in the West Bank imitated the process that took place in the Golan Heights, while attaching to it additional characteristics such as security, Jewishness, and historical continuity. The essay will offer a contextual review of the construction of *terroir* in relation to previous campaigns by the settlers, in order to point out the specific ways in which the West Bank is shaped as an area that combines unique climate and soil with history and Jewish belonging, which together unite to normalize Israeli control of the West Bank and create the smoothest connection possible between it and the 1949 borders of Israel.

***Terroir* and territory**

“If any topic in the geography of wine is equivalent to opening Pandora’s Box, it is discussing *terroir*”, writes Percy Dougherty (2012, page 22). And, indeed, defining the concept is hard and confusing. Many times it is translated to English as ‘ground’ or ‘soil’ but, as Robinson suggests, “no precise English equivalent exists for this quintessentially French term and concept” (1994, page 966). In general, there are two main views of the concept: the first takes only measurable and tangible factors into consideration: soil, climate, degree of slope, sun direction, and so on, as well as agricultural factors such as the distance between the vineyards and the technique of harvesting. The second approach sees *terroir* as nearly mystical, arguing that a piece of land can possess a holistic and unique quality that is beyond the calculable, and therefore can never be fully defined and understood (Gade, 2008; Unwin, 2012; Wilson, 1998). It is, therefore, a full philosophy of place, which can be described in the geographical discourse as ‘sense of place’, commonly understood as affective and emotive attachments people have to their environment (Azaryahu, 2009). This was clearly put by Nathalie, a French wine grower, who explained: “It’s the person who gives the work and the identity to *terroir*. There’s an emotional identity to a particular piece of the earth” (quoted in Erlanger, 2013). An article in the *New York Times* described how:

“The importance of *terroir* to the French psyche and self-image is difficult to overestimate, because it is a concept almost untranslatable, combining soil, weather, region and notions of authenticity, of genuineness and particularity—of roots, and home—in contrast to globalized products designed to taste the same everywhere” (Erlanger, 2013).

In French common conceptions, food and drink from certain places have unique tastes. Trubek explains the French sense of *terroir* as “framing and explaining people’s relationship to the land The connection is considered essential, as timeless as the earth itself” (2008, page 18). In that, *terroir* has deep connections to the notion of territory (*territoire* in French). If territory is usually conceived as a ‘bounded space’ (cf Giddens, 1987), as a ‘power container’ (cf Taylor, 2003), or as the final and necessary product of territoriality (cf Sack, 1986), then the concept of *terroir* adds to it history, habits, and defined and recognizable products such as wine, chocolate, coffee, or honey. A *terroir* is thus a bounded place where generations of

people have crafted a distinctive way of life during which they have created distinct products (Asselin et al, 1996; Unwin, 2012). Moreover, as Stuart Elden (2009; 2010) states, a territory is a political technology: it comprises techniques of measuring and control. As in other political domains, however, it should also acquire legitimacy, which is exactly the focus of our paper: to show how a certain tract of land is produced, legitimized, and normalized by cultural–geographical means. That is to say, how *terroir* territorializes.

In modern times, one can identify two major conceptions that dictate the different manners of production and emphases in wine flavors: there is the Old World versus the New World. The Old World conception represents the classic European tradition that has a long history of wine making in countries such as France, Italy, and Spain. The New World conception is common in countries whose wine history is less than 150 years old, such as the United States, New Zealand, and Australia. In the Old World system, harvest is manual, wine pressing utilizes the central screw system, fermentation is conducted in wooden barrels, and a slow process of aging persists. On the other hand, in New World manufacture, harvest is mechanical, pneumatic presses are used, and aging is conducted in stainless steel vats (Rand, 2015). Over and above the differences in the style of wine making, the two manufacturing methods represent different philosophies of nature and taste. While New World wines are considered ‘scientific’ and precise—and the vintners are for the most part academically trained and the process is supervised and monitored throughout—‘Old World’ wines emphasize the *terroir*, the conditions of soil and climate of the region in which the grapes were grown, and the wine making tradition. Therefore, Old World wines are customarily marked by the region in which they were grown, while New World wines are marked by the type of grape the wine was made from (Unwin, 1996).

A brief history of the wine industry in Israel

As in most of the Mediterranean Basin in antiquity, grapevines grew throughout the territory that is now Israel/Palestine and the wine that was produced from them was one of the major branches of agricultural trade in the economy of the time. Grapevines and their produce are mentioned hundreds of times in the Bible and other historical sources, and many archeological digs have unearthed wine presses and vessels for the storage and consumption of wine. Manufacture and consumption of wine halted almost entirely with the Ottoman occupation at the beginning of the 16th century and was renewed only in the second half of the 19th. The primary impetus behind the wine industry occurred when Baron Edmund de Rothschild, owner of renowned wineries in France, purchased land in Palestine, imported Bordeaux grapevine branches, and established two wineries. Despite the enormous investment, the wine industry failed to develop as expected. The first crops found it difficult to survive in the climate and soil and suffered from various botanical diseases. The grapes that were harvested quickly spoiled and soured in the Mediterranean heat, which required the wineries to dig huge cellars, at great cost. In addition to the agricultural and climatic problems, the same period experienced a significant drop in the price of wine in the world market, and with the outbreak of World War I the wineries experienced real difficulties in exporting their produce. The 1920s were characterized by the closure of the large markets in Russia (due to the stabilization of the Communist regime) and the United States (due to Prohibition). With time, the wine industry recovered and stabilized, as it focused solely on the local market and the production of sweet wines for Jewish religious purposes and cheap table wines. Over the years, some of the wineries closed and others opened. At the beginning of the 1980s fifteen wineries operated in the country and the market was dominated, for the most part, by the Carmel–Mizrahi wineries. The Israeli wine industry almost collapsed at that time, as the demand for wine hit an unprecedented low point, despite the cheap prices

at which it was being offered. And, indeed, the surplus of wine led to the uprooting of more than 1200 acres of vineyard.

At the same time and quite out of step with this reality, an initiative was being formed to establish a new winery in the Golan Heights, an area that was occupied from Syria in 1967 (Kipnis, 2009; Rand, 2015). Two factors became involved in this new initiative and helped execute it: the first was a group of agricultural households (*kibbutzim* and *moshavim*) from the Golan Heights, for whom it was a way to maintain their hold on the area, increase agricultural production, and profit once more as partners in the factory that would receive the fruit and process it. The second and significant factor in the foundation process was the Ministry of Trade and Industry that was supported by the right-wing government headed by Menahem Begin. Government policy supported the establishment of the factories out of a combination of ideological-Zionist, social, and economic motives, with the aim of creating jobs for residents of the Golan and deepening their connection to the place. The establishment of an industrial winery using advanced technologies was one in a series of projects established in the Golan Heights in these years in the context of government encouragement to develop the area (Kipnis, 2009). The Golan Heights Wineries introduced new oenological and professional standards to the existing industry and were characterized by being the first New World wineries in Israel (Rand, 2015).

How does the Golan taste?

As mentioned above, the terroir aspect is emphasized primarily in Old World wines, which stress the limited growing area of the grapes (as opposed to the New World wines that tend to stress the type of grape from which the wine is made). Therefore, it is quite surprising to see a most extensive reference to this concept by the Golan Heights Winery, which have characterized themselves right from the start, as a New World winery. Along with the stainless steel vats, the lack of cellars, and the sophisticated and advanced machinery, the unique terroir of the Golan Heights region was emphasized throughout, by the wineries themselves and with the active participation of the media (Rand, 2015). Thus it was in the Winery's first days in the middle of the 1980s, and so it is at the time of writing. The Golan Heights Winery's Internet site (<http://www.golanwines.co.il/en/The-Winery>) presents rotating nature photos of the grapevines on the background of the area's scenery with the caption: "soil, height, temperature". Underneath these words the following text is shown:

"There is one place in Israel in which, just like in Bordeaux, France or Tuscany, Italy, optimal conditions exist in which to grow international quality grapes for wine. Here in the Golan Heights, in this breathtaking region, everything starts with the combination of these conditions: volcanic, basalt soil, the elevation of the land, and a cold climate. All of these grant this unique area its second name: 'The wine country'".

Under the heading "The Creative Philosophy", Victor Schoenfeld, the Head Winemaker, describes how "The wine has a sense of place. It is possible to sense the region from which it came in its taste, aroma, and color. Place, language, aromas, and people are embedded in the wine." The link between place and taste is also presented in the page dedicated to a series of wines called "The Preserve", which offers "an interesting variety of wines ... all of which rely on the unique growing conditions of the Golan Heights, and they possess the same 'Golanness' that characterizes the Winery and its growing region." At the same time, a tourist map made by the winery invites its users to "taste the place". The Golan Heights have become a region that has taste—the very 'Golanness' that characterizes the Winery and its region.

Nonetheless, and in a manner that ostensibly contradicts the claim of a distinct 'Golan' taste, the site provides a wealth of information about the variety and differences in the very same region. The vineyards, it appears, are located at different elevations, starting from 400 m

above sea level at Gshur and up to 1200 m above sea level at Odem. The type of soil changes from “well drained land at a medium depth” at the foot of the volcanic hills, to “very shallow, stony lands” in the center of the Golan Heights, to “more mature, very deep, and less stony lands” in the South of the Golan. Finally, there is a significant difference in climate between the various areas, manifest in varying levels of temperature, humidity, rate of evaporation, and more. All in all, the vineyards are divided into 401 lots (as of the 2012 harvest), each one with different conditions of growth, producing different crops.

This begs the question, why talk of ‘Golanness’ as a characteristic and uniform taste, when in reality there are many hundreds of tastes and styles? Similar questions have been raised by people in the wineries themselves. Segev Yerovam, former Chief Executive Officer of the Golan Heights Wineries wondered in an interview:

“What’s the connection between Gshur and Odem—they are separated by an elevation of 800 meters—they are not even similar to each other … it makes no sense. We made a proposal in the Golan … a map with definitions and sub-definitions for the entire North [of Israel], including the North, South, and Center Golan … characterized according to height, we actually delineated borders but not much came of it” (quoted in Rand, 2015). Yerovam’s further statements show how the situation through the entire country is even more absurd:

“The problem is that there are about six regions of wine cultivation in the country. Now, in Israel, topographically, there are a lot more than six regions due to the differences in height and climate. So they defined the Galilee from the Mediterranean, through the northern border of the country, all the way to the Eastern border. Imagine that Israel’s eastern border was in Damascus—would that too be considered the Galilee? Today the Golan Heights are considered the Galilee because of the European Union, the committee that is supposed to authorize growing regions in each country will not authorize the ‘Golan’ because it is a political issue, a recognition that the Golan is Israeli territory so they call it ‘Galilee’. What is the connection between Rosh HaNikra [on the Mediterranean shore] or the Sea of Galilee—a thousand meters lower than the Golan—and both of which are Galilee? A consumer reads ‘Galilee’ and can get grapes from the same region which are grown at 200 meters or 1200” (quoted in Rand, 2015).

One can see that the map of wine growing regions in Israel (figure 1) purposely blurs the regions, without any topographical or climatic logic. The Galilee stretches from the Hermon to the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan Valley all the way to the northern coast; Samaria encompasses the Jordan Rift Valley, the Nablus Mountains, and the central coast; the Shimshon region includes the entire plains area but also parts of the southern Hebron Hills (another part of which is included in the Negev region); while the Judea Mountains also include the Jerusalem corridor west of the Green Line. In this manner, information can be hidden about specific growing areas when they are politically sensitive—at the expense of the vinous-terroir accuracy. One cannot speak of a Samaria region terroir when it stretches from the low-elevation, dry, desert climate of the Jordan Rift Valley, through the high, chilly hills of the Samaria Mountains, to the heat and humidity of the coast. Similarly, there is no real ‘Golan-type’ terroir that connects all the types of soil and varying climates throughout the Golan Heights.



Figure 1. [In color online.] Map of wine making regions in Israel; the areas bordered by dotted green lines are territories occupied in 1967. (source: Who Profits, 2011).

Terroir and territory: the geopolitics of emotions

We have returned, therefore, to the question we began with: why does the Golan Heights Winery emphasize terroir? This question becomes even more acute due to the three reasons that justify not making the distinction. First, it is a New World winery that grants importance primarily to the type of grape and not to the region in which it is grown. Second, from a vintner's perspective, as explained above, it makes no sense to speak of a distinct 'Golan-type' terroir. Third, obscuring the source of the grapes permits the undisturbed export of the wines.

This question cannot be answered without referring to the political role of terroir. This is not the politics of cartography that wishes to blur the origin of the grapes, but rather the deep geopolitics of emotions that bind together soil, people, and nation.

James Wilson wrote regarding the mystical and unmeasurable notion of terroir that “Beyond the measurable ecosystem, there is an additional dimension—the spiritual aspect that recognizes the joys, the heartbreaks, the pride, the sweat, and the frustrations of history” (1998, page 55). And indeed, the concept of territory that arises from terroir is one of soil with ‘character’: not abstract borders and land as a commodity but a special, organic tie between men and land, manifest in its superb and recognizable products. Terroir in the full sense of the word would not be the same if one of its components were lacking. Therefore, only those who know how to tend the land and create a ‘true’, ‘authentic’ connection with it can bring forth its best. “Our wine” the Golan Heights Winery website states,

“is a perfect expression of many elements. We try to produce a wine that characterizes ourselves: our unique volcanic soil; the winter snow storms, the long hot summer days and the cold nights, the people of the vineyards, sun-burned and wind-scorched, and our team of vintners, with their rich experience, their abilities, and creativeness.”

The wine—and the Golan Heights themselves—is a mix of soil, climate, and the sun-burned and wind-scorched people (although, while the volcanic soil and the long hot summer days are millions of years old, the people who are being scorched by the climate have been there from no earlier than 1967). This is how the creation of a ‘Golan’ taste must be understood. Perhaps the lots are different from one another, but the people who connect them are the same, people who have become part of the landscape as well as its shapers. We wish to argue that the ‘Golan’ terroir was created consciously and on purpose as a way to appropriate a disputed territory—to make the Golan Israeli—and it has done so with extraordinary success, which is being copied in recent years in the West Bank.

Wineries and terroir in the West Bank

The district with the largest growth in number of wineries in the past few years has been the West Bank, where there are, as of 2011, twenty-nine wineries (compared with only fourteen in the Golan Heights). Besides these wineries there are several other vineyards that provide grapes to wineries located west of the Green Line (Who Profits, 2011). Jewish agriculture in the disputed territory is nothing new and is as old as Zionism itself. Agricultural crops take up land and therefore were always considered an efficient way to take over territory and hold it. Wineries and vineyards, however, have several other advantages considering the unique circumstances of the West Bank settlements. The first advantage is that they are perceived as a quintessentially Israeli industry. Landscapes are both a physical materiality and a representation (Blomely, 1998; Mitchell, 2000). The production of alcoholic beverages is forbidden to Muslims, who are the majority of residents in the West Bank and therefore—contrary to olives or wheat—the ownership of the vineyards cannot be disputed.⁽³⁾ Therefore, it provides visibility and legibility (see Braverman, 2008; Scott, 1998), enabling certain identification that prevents land disputes while also providing a ‘Jewish presence’ on the ground.⁽⁴⁾ Another advantage is that the wineries can also be marketed as a tourist attraction. Thus it is possible to gain twice the amount of governmental budgets—not only from the Ministry of Agriculture but also from the Ministry of Tourism (Who Profits, 2011). Moreover, tourism allows for the normalization of the territory.

⁽³⁾ An exception is the Cremisan monastery near Bethlehem, which holds a small winery. The Christian village of Taybeh, near Ramallah, produces and exports beer (a beverage that is not made of grapes, however).

⁽⁴⁾ For an analysis of ‘tree wars’ in the West Bank, see Braverman (2008).

Even after four decades, it seems that the settler's project of "Settling in the Hearts", which the Jewish residents of the West Bank have attempted to promote since its occupation in 1967 has failed (cf Feige, 2009). The publicity campaigns that bore the title "YESHA is Here" (in the 1990s) and "Judea and Samaria—Every Jew's Story" (in the 2000s) failed to penetrate and influence secular Israel. These campaigns, which emphasized the land of the forefathers and heroic stories, addressed the past: Judea and Samaria belong to us because that is where King David walked, where the ancestors are buried, where much blood was spilled in the 1967 War and afterwards. Such justifications, which motivate the settlers and their supporters in Israel and abroad with great success, have not succeeded in making the residents of the center of Israel identify with them and certainly have not managed to make them visit the settlements. It is hard to think of a couple in Tel Aviv taking their children to see Joseph's Tomb in Nablus or the memorial to the 1929 Hebron Massacre. But as for wineries, the story is different: unlike religious or heritage sites, advanced tourism, wine, development, and the idea of 'Europe in Israel' can attract many people and in this way effectively normalize the territory and Jewish control over it. This is how Doron Nir Zvi, owner of a coffee shop and bed and breakfast in the illegal Yair Farms outpost described it:

"Just as the Golan Heights became part of the Israeli consensus because people came and had vacations and saw that is good, and beautiful, and fun, and it would be a pity to give to the Arabs, the same can happen in Samaria. I know that it's a low common denominator. With simple people I don't talk about the land of our forefathers and ideology. I'm oriented towards it. Towards love. I want people to come here, to love the view and not to agree to give it up" (Eldad and Bashan, 2011, page 40).

The Golan Heights is an official model in the organization and planning of tourism in the West Bank. As Nati Israeli, tourism coordinator for the Samaria Regional Council, puts it,

"Our strategy has changed . . . Once we would organize demonstrations. Today it's the exact opposite. We simply want people to come and get to know us; to like us. . . . This is Tuscany, and it's 10 minutes away from your house . . . Tourist agents get a shock when they come here and see just how close it is to discover an unknown land. For many years, we've been perceived as madmen on a hill. We're not like that—and we don't have horns, either" (Gilad, 2013).

The tours are part of an organized plan that is intended to normalize the contested territory in the eyes of 'normal' Israelis. It was first created by Naftali Bennet, then the head of YESHA Council, and was led by the guidance of Hila Luxenburg, a secular settler from Efrat. This is how the project was described in an Israeli newspaper:

"In the last year and a half, Hilla guided hundreds of 'public opinion designers'—journalists, politicians and celebrities. She gave them Hebraic wine . . . and brought them together with settlers from all of the rainbow colors. She doesn't hide the purpose—creating deeper familiarity with the face beyond the phrase 'settlers'. . . . the tour's program . . . contains outposts, established settlements, dairies and industries. A visit to a winery is a must in every tour. This station is located in the tour's beginning, when the aim is clear—it is easier to connect and open oneself after a glass or two" (Novick, 2011).

Various websites offer, among other things, "A tour for wine lovers in Shiloh Valley: let's go on a special experiential tour among the wineries and vineyards, meet the owners, take in the intoxicating aromas and taste from the variety of wines that won 6 medals in the 2012 Golden Truss Competition"; "A celebration of senses and happiness: a guided, experiential tasting workshop and a visit to the ancient Jewish town of Susia"; "In the visitor's center we will taste the rich history of the Benjamin District, along with wine and aging cheeses", and so on. Not only territory but also history has a taste. Predictably, the word *terroir* is mentioned over and over again in the descriptions of the wineries. On the website of the

Mount Bracha Winery (<http://www.israelwines.co.il/MiniDefault.aspx?mi=201>), a radical settlement perched above the city of Nablus, we hear of:

“A unique micro-climate … on the one hand, hot air rises from the Jordan Valley in the East along with dryness. On the other hand, the cold winds comes in from the Mediterranean in the West creating the ultimate balance … the mountain is exposed all around so that the grapes ripen symmetrically. The mountain is 870 meters above sea level—the vineyard’s elevation is 840 meters. Therefore this is a unique, unchangeable terroir, which grants a unique character to the quality grapes grown here.”

While the Psagot Winery, which overlooks Ramallah and describes itself as “A winery that combines the Bible and wine” anthropomorphizes its crops: “Our vineyards do not have an easy life” the website reveals, while clearly referring to the difficult lives of the settlers, “The vineyard is planted on hard limestone, in antique terraces in a Greco–Italian Mediterranean style in the northern Jerusalem hills. In order to help the vines acclimatization we drilled holes for each seedling, so that it could deepen its roots” (<http://www.psagotwines.com>). One must take note of the fact that the terraces are not Palestinian (nor biblical) but rather “Greco–Italian Mediterranean”, how the vineyards are not near Ramallah but rather “in the northern Jerusalem hills”—and how the vine, with its difficult life, takes root and holds onto the bare rock.

We do not intend to argue that Israeli wine lovers are flooding the West Bank every weekend. We do see, however, a change in the settlers’ discourse, as well as in the perception of the West Bank by mainstream Israelis. The interesting point, in the Israeli context, is that most of the politically and culturally affluent in Israel identify with a liberal philosophy, which places them on the center-left of the political map. Wine tourism addresses this audience and this is what turns it into a normalizing practice. The West Bank is not marketed as an occupied territory nor as the land of the forefathers but as Europe, terroir, nature, and tours. A recommendation in the liberal newspaper *Haaretz* regarding a wine from the Psagot Winery normalizes it and turns it into part of Israel. Thus, Daniel Rogov, *Haaretz*’s wine critic, writes in 2011:

“Located in the community of Psagot in the northern Jerusalem Hills, overlooking Wadi Kelt, the Psagot winery was founded by Naama and Yaakov Berg, who planted their first vineyards in 1998. The oak barriques used by the winery are stored in a cave—dating back to the period of the Second Temple—that contains both ancient pressing facilities and fully modern wine-making tools . . . From the point of both quality and wines that command our attention, this is clearly a winery on the up and up” (Rogov, 2011).

While in *Haaretz*, Psagot will never appear without the prefix of “the settlement”, we can see how it is normalized to be a “community in the northern Jerusalem Hills”, and how the cave is dated back to the Second Temple. The concept of terroir creates an affinity between the climatic conditions and the human conditions, including history and tradition, through the products, which can be examined objectively. If a wine produced by a winery in an illegal outpost in the territories receives a high grade from an esteemed wine critic, that is a sign that the connection is real, authentic, and credible. The high grade is proof of the depth of the settler’s connection to his land. That is the deep political significance of the connection between terroir and territory.

From YESHA ze kan (“YESHA is here”) to YESHA ze fun (“YESHA is fun”)

In the middle of the 1990s, in reaction to the Oslo Accords and what was perceived by the settlers and their supporters as a threat to their project and their homes, the settlers launched a widespread campaign bearing the headline “YESHA is Here”. Feige (1999) analyzes the construction of the space and the various maps produced by Gush Emunim on the one hand,

and Peace Now on the other. He writes:

“‘YESHA is here’. This message can be interpreted in two ways: the first is that the areas that the government is about to transfer to Palestinian control are very close to the large population centers of the country, meaning they are ‘almost here’; the second is that Judea, Samaria and Gaza are the real ‘here’ of Judaism, Zionism, and Israel. While according to the first interpretation the territories are a wall of defense for another ‘here’, meaning the coastal plain, in the second interpretation they themselves are the ‘here’, the focal point of national identity, a space that is worth preserving for its own sake” (page 111).

This discourse combines security arguments with nationalistic-religious-historical ones. On the one hand, there is the threat to the country’s centers of population, which will find themselves just a few kilometers away from the Palestinian state, and on the other hand there is a reminder to secular Israel that the real heart of Zionism and Judaism is to be found in Judea and Samaria.

Almost two decades later, a new tactic has been chosen, and “YESHA is Here” (*YESHA ze kan*) has turned into “YESHA is Fun” (*YESHA ze fun*). The challenge of normalization underlying this new slogan is quite different from the old one: whereas the former centered on the adhesion of the Israeli society as a whole to the worldview expressed by national-religious settlers (security and religious discourses alike), the latter has to do with convincing the Israeli public that the settlers are not messianic fanatics who live in wind-swept hilltops, but rather ordinary Israelis. In other words, this process of normalization operates in reverse, postulating that Ofra or Hebron are not exceptional in relation to Tel Aviv.

Marketing strategies adopted by the wine industry in the West Bank—and especially the ones focusing around the concept of terroir—represent a component of this new strategy. In their book, carrying the title ‘*YESHA is Fun*’, Karni Eldad and Shlomo Bashan (2011) describe

“Award-winning wines in Binyamin, single-strain olive oil in Samaria, bed and breakfast with a Jacuzzi underneath the open skies in the Judean desert, an excellent restaurant in a Gush Etzion farm, and superb cheeses in the Hebron Mountains are just a few of ... the good life in the settlements. ‘YESHA is fun’ is a guide that reviews everything that a self-indulgent tourist can find to do in Samaria, Binyamin, the Jordan Valley and the North Dead Sea, Gush Etzion and the southern Hebron Hills ... ‘YESHA is fun’ is a must for lovers of good wine, good food, and the good country. It is a book ... that is a pleasure to put in the car and take a trip with to a country that is near but far, old but new.”

This, for instance, is how the “Livni Winery” is described in the book:

“Between the Molotov cocktails and the burning tires something else has been created here, the reason for our gathering: wine. The grapes are Cabernet, Pino Noir, and Shiraz, harvested and transferred to the winery in [settlement of] Carmel, where the vintner, Bruno, presses, filters, and ages them in wooden barrels until a very tasty wine is produced ... the logo of the winery is a copy of a 3700 year old wine jar handle with the inscription ‘To the king of Hebron’ (page 252).

The text seamlessly joins Molotov cocktails (the security situation), wine production (wooden barrels and a tasty product), biblical history (a supposed 3700-year continuum of wine production, which easily skips thousands of years of actual history). A perusal of other sources shows that this winery has won high grades in various tastings (including a gold medal in the 2012 Terravino and a silver medal in the 2011 Terravino) and many references on wine websites and among the critics. The language used when referring to the winery and the wines speaks of color, tannins, full body, lengthy finish, ripeness, and other terms from

the wine industry. The unique terroir is mentioned time after time, as in this article from the Israeli Wine Portal:

“The vineyard is located 900 meters above sea level … which means that during the winter it benefits from the cold and snow, and in the summer from the heat and dryness of the Judean desert. The large differences between day and night temperatures, the dark soil, the unique *terroir* … make the difference, it turns out. The harvest itself is also conducted manually by Jewish workers only (without workers from Thailand or Arabs)” (Perlmutter, no date).

As can be seen, the terroir includes not only height and climate but also the fact that the harvest is conducted by Jews only!⁽⁵⁾ This is the place to state that the owner of the winery, Menahem Livni, was one of the leaders of the ‘Jewish Underground’, a terrorist organization that operated in the West Bank during the 1980s and was responsible for a series of attacks that killed three people and injured dozens more. The Underground was caught while planning to blow up five Palestinian buses, with their passengers, in East Jerusalem. Livni was sentenced to a life sentence but was pardoned and released after serving less than seven years of the sentence. In 2013 it turned out that the lot “Sde Kav [Kalev’s field]”, in which he grew the grapevines, was allocated to him without authorization and he is not paying any fees for leasing it. Despite this, Livni received tight military protection when working in the vineyard and even received hundreds of thousands of Shekels compensation for theft from his lands (Levinson, 2013). The important point is that all of this is not mentioned in the favorable reviews of the wine and the unique terroir. The wine normalizes the territory, the violence, and the illegality.

Conclusion

Mori Ram (2014) shows how the Mount Hermon site was utilized to normalize Israeli control of the Golan Heights through the mimetic copying of a ‘normal’ ski site, meaning one in a European and alpine style.⁽⁶⁾ Ram points out the ways in which the discourse of whiteness (in this case the actual physical whiteness of the snowbound summit) was used both for laundering the control (it is not a disputed territory, a battleground, or a biblically historical site but just a ‘regular’ ski and fun site), as well as for laundering the Israeli settlers (who, if they own a ‘European’ ski site become ‘European’ themselves). Thus, as an extension of the discourse dealing with imitation in colonial contexts, one can see how the space itself becomes an object for imitation, which bestows its ‘whiteness’ on the people operating within it. Further on in the essay, Ram shows that this imitation—as in every case of imitation—eventually fails and creates an unbridgeable gap that undermines the attempt at cultural–geographical construction. This failure occurs on two primary levels: geopolitical (the constant presence of the military on the mountain, security tensions in certain periods, and political negotiations that bring up the fact that the territory is occupied) and human (the vacationers do not behave like Europeans and remind one that the area is in the Middle East). Imitation is based on an existing resource—snow—which allows the settlers to identify themselves with Europe and whiteness, except that the Middle Eastern reality breaks through and calls attention to the fact that it is an imitation, not the original.

⁽⁵⁾ The issue of “Jewish labor” has a long history in Zionist discourse (cf Shafir, 1996). However, while the goal of giving the Jewish newcomers a job—regardless of their relative inexperience in agriculture and construction, and their demand for higher salaries—acquired much legitimacy in the 1920s, it is not considered legitimate any more in contemporary Israeli discourse. The abovementioned quote normalizes that fact without a single political or ethical comment.

⁽⁶⁾ Mount Hermon, conquered from Syria in 1967, is the tallest mountain in the territories controlled by Israel and its only ski site.

It seems that normalization through wine and terroir produces a more sophisticated type of mimicry. First, it is a necessary combination of a natural situation (elevation, type of soil, winds, precipitation) and a distinct human population (the wind scorched and sun-burned growers, harvest by Jews only, and a national history of winegrowing that supposedly stretches to biblical times). Removal of any single component in the equation would deconstruct the distinct arrangement and produce a different terroir, less successful than its predecessor. The fact that wines from the West Bank receive medals in international competitions allegedly proves that they are not an imitation but the original. Thus, by way of a product, the connection between Jews and the West Bank becomes ‘authentic’, while supposedly proving that any other control is itself an ‘imitation’. Second, in the case of wine there is no need to imagine far away snowy Europe and we have already seen how the terraces of the Psagot Winery are “in the Greco–Italian Mediterranean style”. The message is that yes, we are on the shores of the Mediterranean, but this is a civilized part of the Mediterranean, one that knows how to produce high-quality wine from limestone and ancient terraces.⁽⁷⁾ Thus, terroir becomes an advantage: it is not an imitation of Europe in Israel but a proven advantage of a specific locality. Third, in contrast to the Hermon site, which is crowded with masses of Israelis that bring to mind the Middle East, wine addresses the elites from the very beginning. Wine consumers come mostly from the liberal, wealthy parts of society (Rand, 2015). Regardless of their ethnicity, they are the ‘whites’ of the Israeli public: refined, knowledgeable, worldly. Furthermore, the wine itself is distributed throughout the world and receives favorable reviews and medals in international competitions. One favorable review in a newspaper addressing the wealthy, liberal public has more power of concealment and normalization because it addresses the influential people. Terroir produces the territory anew, as a country of wine, good taste, and pleasure, and thus creates a powerful connection between the territories and Tel Aviv, between ‘YESHA’ and ‘Here’.

The concept of terroir permits one to speak about territory in mystical and naturalistic terms in a manner considered unacceptable, at least since World War II and the terms of *lebensraum* and *grossraum*. Territory is usually perceived as an abstract spatial mechanism of creating borders for the existence of distinct population groups. *Terroir*, on the other hand, manufactures land with character, and this character, as we have seen, has distinct national and ethnic traits. Zionism—like other colonial regimes in history—tended to see in occupied territory areas devoid of inhabitants and culture and perceived itself as the redeemer of the land. These are almost Lockian terms, according to which the improvement of the land in itself grants the right of ownership over it in a sort of theological directive to cultivate the land (Locke, 1690). The concept of terroir not only strengthens this aspect of land belonging to its cultivators but also permits identifying the ‘true owners’ through signs of a mystical connection between them and the land. Terroir is more than a simple ‘sense of place’, as the latter usually serves as a description of existing situation and not as a justification for holding onto a certain territory. That is why the terroir territorializes: the use of terroir in disputed lands serves as a means of territory making. The identifiable high-quality wine naturalizes this mystical connection and turns it into a provable fact. Therefore it seems that the concept of terroir has great importance when discussing colonial and postcolonial spaces and the ways in which land acquires meaning and ownership.

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⁽⁷⁾For Mediterraneanism and the way in which it is in contrasted in the Israeli discourse to Middle Easternism, see Hochberg (2011).

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