

# Editors' Note



It cannot have escaped the notice of any *Israel Studies Review* readers—or, indeed, of much of the world's literate population—that 2018 marked the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel. Academics commemorated the anniversary in their usual way, with a host of conferences in Israel, the US, and plenty of other places on innumerable topics relating to everything Israeli.

Most of these conferences have focused on a particular aspect or theme, while only a few chose to take a wide view of the phenomenon that is Israel. What was missing in the 70th anniversary commemorations was a sociology of knowledge overview and a broad perspective that looked at and analyzed the various different approaches, paradigms, methods, and models through which scholars have tried to understand the Israeli phenomenon.

Indeed, since the early 1950s, when the revered father of Israeli sociology, S. N. Eisenstadt, wrote his book *Israeli Society*, there have been more than two dozen distinct paradigms through which social scientists, historians, and other liberal arts scholars have tried to understand and analyze the 'Israeli case'. They began by arguing that Israel is a special and unique case, and only since the mid-1990s have they admitted that it is not *sui generis*.

The paradigms that were explored included modernization theories and developmental studies; Israel as a small state or as a Jewish state; and Israeli society as an example of a deeply divided society that uses consociational mechanisms. In the 1990s, radical scholars employed postmodernist and post-structuralist theories to explain the Israeli project. At that point, terms such as 'colonial state', 'settler state', and 'immigrant settler state' were freely used. Globalization, neo-liberalism, and neo-institutionalism then became the hype in the last decade of the twentieth century. And there have been other paradigms too, based on neo-Marxism, populist theories, 'diasporism', feminism, militarism, and various other -isms.

Yet one paradigm is still missing—one that emphasizes 100 years of war and 50 years of occupation. There are plenty of books and research papers

on different aspects of the war(s) and the Occupation, on the territories and their Palestinian or Jewish inhabitants, on Israelis' attitudes toward the territories and the Palestinians, and so forth. But there has been no comprehensive study of the permanent war and the Occupation as inherent phenomena of the Israeli project. Both have generally been seen as external and temporary singularities at the periphery, not at the core, the center, or the bottom of 'Israeliness'.

Fully aware of its explosive political power, most scholars have preferred not to deal with this issue at all. Indeed, in the last 10 annual meetings of the Israeli Sociological Society, only one panel has focused on a single aspect of the Occupation—the settlers. Only those radical scholars who define Israel primarily as a colonial enterprise perceive war and occupation as intrinsic aspects of Israel's essence. The mainstream schools simply ignore them.

The missing paradigm is one that unashamedly sees Zionism as a legitimate Jewish national movement of liberation rather than as a colonial project. Thus, the creation of the state 70 years ago was just. It also explains continual war and 50 years of occupation as intrinsic, not as external and temporary phenomena. Such a paradigm must show how the war-that-has-no-end and five decades of occupation influence almost every aspect of Israeli society, from architecture and landscape to political structures and agents, religionization processes, thriving organic nationalism, gender relations, and the arts.

Of course, ISR is by no means ignoring the portentous 70th anniversary, nor do we seek any special lens or paradigm in our articles. Last summer we issued a call for abstracts on the topic "New Perspectives on Israel at 70." We were overwhelmed by the response. Over 50 abstracts, many of great merit, were sent in—enough for several issues. For us, this was a vote of confidence in our journal, an expression of appreciation of its quality and prestige. So we decided that Israel's 70th deserves two special issues. And rather than focusing on topics such as politics and the conflict, we decided to publish one issue on Israeli culture and the other on Israeli society. You are looking at the 'culture' issue; the 'society' issue will be available in November.

This issue begins with an overview of the translation of Hebrew literature into other languages, from 1948 to the present. Yael Halevi-Wise and Madeleine Gottesman examine the implications of translating the literature of a language that is 'small' by world standards but whose modern literature necessarily contains resonances of both ancient beliefs and modern conflicts.

Landscape was a feature of a number of our submissions, focusing on both its importance to the country and its change over time. Amelia

Rosenberg Weinreb shows how the 'branding' of Israel's 'desolate' landscapes has changed considerably over time to fit the needs of Zionism's policy- and opinion-makers, from the 'land without a people' trope of early Zionism, through a wilderness to be conquered, to today's emphasis on finding peace and solitude.

Mostafa Hussein has an entirely different landscape in mind in writing about an 'intertwined landscape'. He shows how Arab place names, cultural concepts, and 'Islamicate' culture were important sources of inspiration for many early Zionist writers and thinkers.

The destruction of the landscape and everything else is the subject of Netta Bar-Yosef Paz's study of Hebrew ecological dystopias, an important theme in recent years. She sees this as a direct result of the increasing environmental awareness now pervading Israeli society and culture, in addition to the influence of similar themes in American literature.

Lia Friesem drags us further into contemporary social media than many of us have previously ventured in her examination of Hebrew tweets regarding the (ab)use of the Holocaust for national and political purposes. She uncovers a subculture of resistance in the tweetosphere that is very different from the staid and establishment-oriented culture on Facebook, for example.

Mor Cohen focuses on aesthetic resistance, providing a 'transversal' reading of art and politics during and in the wake of the 2011 Israeli social protest movement. She contends that the aesthetic form of protest is an important—and often overlooked—aspect of its nature.

Lastly, we present Yuval Gozansky's analysis of changes in Israeli children's television programming over 50 years. As the technology changed, the purposes of the producers shifted fundamentally, along with the portraits of childhood and 'Israeliness' being presented.

Our book reviews, however, are not limited to those commemorating Israel's 70th, except in the larger sense of documenting, analyzing, and critiquing the septuagenarian country that has actually emerged. They include books on a wide variety of subjects, including Israeli-African relations (reviewed by Naomi Chazan), the rights of Negev Bedouin (reviewed by Morad Elsana), and conversion in Israel (reviewed by Ian Lustick), among others.

We hope you find this issue enjoyable and stimulating, and we always welcome your comments. Remember, the next issue will arrive before the end of the year. You now have an extra (third) issue to read (online).

— Yoram Peri and Paul L. Scham