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The good Arab

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The good Arab: conditional inclusion and settler colonial citizenship among Palestinian citizens of Israel in Jewish Tel Aviv

ANDREAS HACKL *University of Edinburgh*

Dominant majorities often use idealized categories to validate the 'goodness' and deservingness of minority citizens. For Palestinian citizens of Israel, this category is the 'good Arab'. Since its origins in early Jewish settlement of Palestine, it has become a powerful and controversial metaphor in Israeli public discourse. As an experienced condition of limited inclusion, the 'good Arab' exemplifies the Palestinian dilemma of accessing socioeconomic opportunities in Jewish Israeli spaces that stigmatize and fend off their ethnonational identity. Combining a historical genealogy of the 'good Arab' with ethnographic research among Palestinians in Tel Aviv, this article shows how a historically evolved logic of settler colonial control and indigenous erasure continues to define liberal frameworks of conditional citizenship and inclusion. Theorized through the emerging concept of *conditional inclusion*, these insights open up new avenues for analysis and comparison in anthropological debates surrounding indigenous struggles, settler colonialism, urban inclusion, and citizenship.

> The outside world is exile,
> exile is the world inside.
> And what are you between the two?
>
> Mahmoud Darwish, 'Edward Said: a contrapuntal reading' (2007: 176)

From a busy road in Tel Aviv, I take a stairway up to a law office, determined to sign a new rental contract. With me is a friend who kindly offered to serve as a guarantor. We step into the office and the landlady greets us while my friend, who is a Palestinian citizen of Israel, introduces herself by saying, 'Nice to meet you. I am Lina'.[1] Seemingly shocked to hear an Arab name, the landlady coldly replies: '*What* . . . are you?' (*mah . . . at?*). After a few seconds of suppressed silence, the owner sinks into an armchair and turns to Lina: 'So, you are Arab? Do you speak Hebrew? Do you have a job?' As an Israeli citizen, Lina speaks fluent Hebrew and answers that she has a job. Seemingly unimpressed, the owner turns to the lawyer and says, 'I ask because we only take *good Arabs*, right?' The lawyer stares evasively into a book on the desk in front of him and nods indifferently: 'Only good Arabs, yes'.

As they demand 'good Arabs', 'good immigrants', or 'good Muslims', dominant majorities frequently pressure members of stigmatized minorities to abide by the standards of behaviour and identification they predetermine (Cohen 2011; Mamdani 1998; Shukla 2016). Qualifying as 'good' can thus become a precondition for people's access to citizenship and socioeconomic opportunities; it may be a prerequisite for the positive validation of a minority's racial, religious, or ethnonational difference. The affected individuals can respond in various ways and must balance the pragmatic need to meet these criteria with contrasting senses of identity. The figure of the 'good Arab' expresses a particular variant of such *conditional* citizenship in Israel/Palestine: it shows how a settler colonial logic of erasure becomes imbricated for Palestinians who seek socioeconomic inclusion and access in spaces dominated by the settler majority. More generally, the 'good Arab' reveals how the partial inclusion of indigenous minorities and their recognition as 'good' minority citizens opens conditional pathways towards socioeconomic incorporation, while simultaneously foreclosing the possibility of equality.

Widespread frameworks of 'national integration' have allowed settler elites to consolidate an exclusive national identity in states with large and diverse populations that do not identify with the national polity, such as indigenous peoples in the Americas (Speed 2017: 787). Another case in point is Australian liberalism, which has maintained an implicit hierarchy between white settlers and racialized minorities (Hage 1998). Indeed, liberal settler states often perpetuate the legacy of colonialism and its unequal systems of power (Povinelli 2002). When minorities struggle for equality, they may find that their partial recognition and inclusion – rather than the outright denial of rights – becomes an obstacle to their aims (Hale 2011: 184). A complicity of liberalism and settler colonialism can suppress the *inherent* sovereignty of indigenous peoples, which is historically rooted in the land, while making their ongoing dispossession acceptable (Speed 2017: 788). One distinguishing factor of Jewish-Israeli settler colonialism has been that it claimed its own 'inherent' sovereignty over the land in reference to ancient and religious roots.

The ways in which Israeli liberalism today offers individual Palestinian citizens partial access to Tel Aviv and its economy reveals how liberal regimes of urban and socioeconomic inclusion actively suppress the recognition of indigenous sovereignty and political identity in urban settler spaces. Despite the ongoing prevalence of this phenomenon, settler majorities tend to locate the dispossession of indigenous minorities in the past: a history to be reconciled with the present, perhaps, but history nevertheless. Moreover, there is a tendency in social anthropology to rarely employ settler colonialism as an analytical lens (Sturm 2017). When it is used, as in this journal, the focus is often on reconciliation or 'correcting' the past (e.g. Blackburn 2007). Working towards a better understanding of how settler logics continue to structure the frames of reference for access and belonging in a society and its economy is therefore an important anthropological project.

The specific category of the 'good Arab' thrives in a regime of citizenship and conditional inclusion that is widely perceived to be separate from a history of settler colonial erasure, although it is in fact its continuation by other means. The 'elimination' (Wolfe 2006) and 'supersession' (Edmonds 2010) of native sovereignty and space lives on through the many 'ongoing attempts of political erasure' (Sturm 2017: 341), one of them being conditional inclusion. Showing what is lost and what is gained as part of such processes, I explore how a 'permitted' presence of minority citizens facilitates

meritocratic access to a city dominated by the ethnonational majority. At the same time, this ostensibly 'liberal' invitation forecloses equality and visibility as a recognized ethnonational urban minority.

To be sure, Palestinians have long mounted resistance and popular opposition to settler colonialism, and these actions have shaped the political identity of a national liberation movement until today (Khalidi 1997; King 2007). They symbolize the contentious 'battles for visibility' that Palestinians have waged alongside indigenous minorities elsewhere (Blokland, Hentschel, Holm, Lebuhn & Margalit 2015; Feldman 2008). Yet, from the perspective of the 'good Arab', one may ask: what if socioeconomic inclusion and political recognition are in fact mutually exclusive, and what if access to a city depends on the invisibility of one's ethnonational identity and the absence of a visible collective presence?

My answers to this dilemma derive from more than two years of ethnography among Palestinian citizens in Tel Aviv, between 2012 and 2014, and again in 2017. Their daily experience entailed the need to be invisible in certain ways, often in exchange for immersion in the city and its social or professional spaces (Hackl 2018). Many among them were aware of the racialized figure of the 'good Arab', yet only few would openly identify as such. The identity category is nevertheless socially and politically powerful. The dilemmas behind this trope have inspired prominent books and popular TV shows. The fictional character Amjad of the Israeli TV series *Arab labour*, for example, does everything to be accepted by Jewish Israelis in the hope of attaining their privileges. The problem is that these privileges are always conditional.

When Norman Issa, the actor behind the fictional character Amjad, refused to perform in a theatre show in an illegal Israeli settlement in 2015, Israel's culture minister quickly threatened to withdraw support for Issa's own theatre. Only when Issa offered a replacement show did ministers take back their threats, with the culture minister saying, 'I gave him a ladder to climb down, and he used it'. The whole episode led one commentator to proclaim that Israel has no more room for 'good Arabs' 'who are not total collaborators' (Levy 2015). During pre-state Jewish settlement of Palestine, the 'good Arab' became a label for Palestinian Arabs who collaborated with Jewish security and intelligence officials. Today, it no longer refers explicitly to the role of the collaborator and signifies a specific stereotype of the 'Israeli Arab' – a term that misrecognizes the linkage of Arab citizens to Palestinians as a people, and to Palestine as a territorial unit (Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker 2005).

While I define the 'good Arab' as a sociopolitical category, or label, ethnographic research reveals it as a negotiated *social space* of inclusion. As a *label*, the 'good Arab' entails specific classifications of identity used in a powerful top-down process of 'making up people' (Hacking 1981). As members of the majority use this ascription to mark out an ideal-type minority *figure* (Lindquist 2015: 163), the 'good Arab' becomes part of a national protocol of recognition, a form of 'national intelligibility' of dominant sociopolitical role scripts (Stein 2008: 2-3). Behind such stereotypical scripts, Palestinians experience and negotiate a far more complex social space of conditional inclusion. Such 'social space' is always hierarchic and mediates the distribution of socioeconomic access and inclusion unequally (Bourdieu 2018 [1991]; Lefebvre 1991 [1974]). Although aware of the racialized logic behind the 'good Arab', Palestinian citizens sometimes conform with its criteria as a de-stigmatization strategy that opens pathways to socioeconomic inclusion. This is the hidden 'battleground' on which they

negotiate the limits and parameters of inclusion vis-à-vis the dominant ethnonational majority.

As settler states continue to police indigenous place-making and self-determination in numerous ways, they often do so particularly aggressively in relation to cities (Tomiak 2017). The specific context of Tel Aviv is crucial in this sense: this is the quintessential Jewish Israeli city that symbolizes the success of the entire Zionist project. It thus poses a tremendous challenge for the Palestinian citizens who live, work, or study there today. Ever since its foundation, Tel Aviv has maintained an opposition to Palestinians and is imagined as essentially Arab-free (Levine 2005; Mendel 2009). It buried its own violent history and the Palestinian narrative underneath a powerful image of a modern liberal city that celebrates diversity (Rotbard 2015).

The city offers opportunities that have attracted a growing number of Palestinian citizens. Their numbers are likely in the tens of thousands, but as a high-ranking municipality official admitted: 'There are no official numbers. We only have numbers of those who are registered residents', some twenty thousand Palestinian citizens. Yet, most of these live in historically 'Arab' areas of Jaffa south of Tel Aviv and the numbers do not include many of the two thousand or so Palestinian students at Tel Aviv University, who never registered as residents. The overall perception is that Tel Aviv hosts a growing but fluctuating minority of Palestinian citizens, many of them in their twenties and thirties, who staff its hospitals, pharmacies, restaurants, and buses, work as lawyers or doctors, and study at its universities. This is without counting the thousands of Palestinian labour commuters from the West Bank who spend their week on the city's construction sites. In the words of one young cook who lived in the city: 'If there are no more Arabs in Tel Aviv, Tel Aviv will close down . . . Every second worker is Arab'.

Although this research reflects a particular context at a particular time, the 'good Arab' offers an entangled and contradictory concept, rich with analytical value for theorizing minority citizenship and conditional inclusion beyond this particular case. It is closely related to a whole range of similar figures across diverse contexts: 'good Muslims' (Mamdani 1998), 'good immigrants' (Shukla 2016), 'civil citizens' (Elias 2008 [1981]), the 'permitted Indian', or *indio permitido* (Hale & Millaman 2006), and 'model minorities' (Yeh 2014). Many of these tropes are identity categories within racialized nations and neoliberal regimes that actively recognize a very limited space for indigenous presence and minority citizenship (Hale & Millaman 2006: 284). This pattern mirrors the old dichotomy of good nobles and bad savages in the Anglophone world (Berkhofer 1978), or that between the docile indigenous labourer and the treacherous insurrectionary Indian (Stavenhagen 1992).

The following review of this historical and conceptual genealogy of the 'good Arab' will explore these patterns. Ethnographic profiles then demonstrate how Palestinian citizens navigate this regime of conditional inclusion in Tel Aviv. Exploring the 'good Arab' in ethnography and theory ultimately reveals the ambivalent interplay between the discourses and practices that determine the in-built limitations of minority citizenship, and the tactics that affected individuals develop in response.

The good Arab: a short genealogy

As Jewish immigration to Palestine intensified during the early twentieth century, settlers established communities and rural colonies that required security and the co-operation of Palestinian Arabs (Alroey 2014; Cohen 2011). Friction between the indigenous Palestinian majority and Jewish settlers emerged in the 1890s and intensified

with the Balfour Declaration, which expressed British Mandate support for the creation of a Jewish homeland (Khalidi 1997; Robinson 2013). The spread of Jewish settlement fuelled conflict between Arab and Jewish communities and culminated in the 1936-9 Arab revolt, which the British crushed with the help of Jewish militias (Morris 2004: 10). As Jewish intelligence recruited collaborators to pass on important information and support the sale of land, some of these became known as 'good Arabs'. This collaboration was not necessarily a dominant practice among Palestinians at the time: they engaged in widespread resistance and mounted significant actions in opposition to Zionism, including armed actions and unarmed civil resistance (Khalidi 1997; King 2007). However, the Jewish settlers also exploited other interests among Palestinian Arabs, such as the desire for material gain and power under the newly emerging regime.

Orientalist thinking defined Israeli constructions of Palestinian Arabs as untrustworthy people who needed to be controlled tightly. Take Chaim Weizmann, Zionist leader and first President of Israel, who remarked to Arthur Balfour that the Arabs are 'superficially clever and quick witted', have a 'treacherous nature', and must be watched carefully and constantly (Said 2003 [1978]: 306). Such views informed Israeli policy towards Palestinians as a dichotomy between 'good Arabs (the ones who do as they are told) and bad Arabs (who do not, and are therefore terrorists)' (Said 2003 [1978]: 306). At the same time, Israel constructed a near-total dichotomy between Arab and Israeli identity (Shenhav 2006), which defined political Zionism and the practices and policies of the Israeli state (Makdisi 2005: 444).

When the State of Israel emerged from the Arab-Israeli War in 1948, the Palestinians had experienced a national catastrophe, the Nakba, with the coerced flight and expulsion of 750,000 Palestinians from the territory that Zionist forces captured (Robinson 2013: 70). Israel then extended to those Palestinians who remained within its new boundaries a discrete set of limited rights and duties, determined by the settler community (Robinson 2013: 3). Today's Palestinian citizens of Israel, around 20 per cent of its population, are for the most part the descendants of those 150-160,000 Palestinian Arabs who remained in or managed to return to Israel between 1948 and 1950 (Pappé 2011: 11; Robinson 2013: 1). Although formally incorporated as *citizens*, they effectively lived under military rule until 1966 and were barred from expressing Palestinian national identity (Khalidi 1997: 179). Many of the policy decisions that Jewish officials made after 1948 define how Palestinian citizens are governed today. Collectively, Palestinians were pushed into the periphery of the economy. At the personal level, they could reap profits from economic exchange with official bodies as long as they identified with the state (Saadi 2016: 37-8). Although formally included as citizens, a deeper undemocratic regime logic facilitated their dispossession and peripheralization as outsiders of the 'dominant ethnoclass' (Yiftachel 2000: 728).

The logic of the 'good Arab' gained a regional dimension in the early Israeli state, when Palestinians felt betrayed by the post-war armistice agreement in which Jordan and other Arab states handed over Arab land to Israel. A state can therefore become subsumed within the logic of 'good Arabs' in a region shaped by colonialism and asymmetric relations. Jordan may exemplify this as a peace treaty signatory with Israel and a regional partner – pragmatic and accommodating, such states do not challenge the legitimacy of Israel and focus on mutual interests instead. This has historical parallels throughout the region: as colonialism contributed to the 'dual society' in Arab countries, European commercial groups and governments found indigenous

merchants and landowning classes who assimilated their interests to those of the foreign communities (Hourani 2005: 295).

Israel managed to deepen its internal control of Palestinians through the framework of conditional citizenship (Lustick 1980): it rewarded those who co-operated, while monitoring others who did not. One was described as 'an honest man of good character who aids the authorities', while many others were outlawed as 'Israel-haters' (Cohen 2011: 25). After the Nakba of 1948, the Israeli state worked to fragment Palestinian society and undermine the power of its traditional structures (Saadi 2016). Soon a new generation of Palestinians organized themselves politically and embodied a more critical political stance. According to a report by a district representative at the time, 'The Israeli Arab is no longer passive and has gone over to nationalistic manifestations', necessitating 'a policy of reward and punishment' (MERIP 1976: 11-12). Although the idea that Palestinians had previously been 'passive' is an Orientalist mirage, the report shows how the state increasingly combated Palestinian activism. It used collaborators to report those who openly held nationalist positions, punishing some by blocking their professional advancement.

The state actively reinforced the accommodationist camp and played off one religious and ethnic community against another (Cohen 2011: 232). The Druze minority, especially, became the target of state policies that emphasized sectarian particularism while simultaneously undermining their national dimension, 'weaning them away from the larger Palestinian Arab community' (Firro 2001: 41). This recalls a familiar colonial practice of control, not dissimilar from the 'taming' of Algeria and Algerians as a classic divide-and-rule politics that separated good assimilable subjects from bad subjects, Berbers from Arabs (Prochaska 2004: 3, 234). Forging 'good' colonial subjects usually depended on maintaining social peace through a civilizing mission that was intended to discipline and pacify the natives (Cooper & Stoler 1989: 610; Jua 1995; Shepherd & McWilliam 2013). The handing out of rewards as a form of 'pacification' was crucial to the continuing appeal of the 'good Arab': collaborators were often assigned jobs or allowed to lease out land that the state had confiscated from displaced owners. The military establishment wanted to prove that 'we help those who help us' (Cohen 2011: 27).

Collaborators or 'traitors' often lie at the heart of processes by which states are made (Kelly & Thiranagama 2010). As mediators between village and state, Palestinian collaborators sometimes held influential positions that demanded careful manoeuvring between the regime and their own society (Cohen 2011: 37-8). The associated moral ambiguity often means that such a role is treated as a distortion of political life and identity (Kelly & Thiranagama 2010). This resonates within today's Palestinian life in Tel Aviv, the quintessential Jewish Israeli city that many Palestinians still consider an illegitimate and morally polluted permanent home. Some of their brethren call Palestinians in Tel Aviv *Aravivim* – a derogatory term that mixes the Hebrew words for Arab and Tel Aviv.

This moral ambivalence features prominently in Palestinian citizens' fictional literature on the 'good Arab' in the early decades of the state (Brenner 1999). Emile Habiby's tragicomic book *The secret life of Saeed the pessoptimist* (2010 [1974]), originally published in Hebrew, tells of a man who tries to be an Israeli collaborator and a Palestinian freedom fighter but fails in both. Yoram Kaniuk's book *Confessions of a good Arab* (1988) also deals with this tragic ambivalence, although written by a Jewish Israeli writer born in Tel Aviv. The main character in the story is 'Yosef Sherara/Rosenzweig',

the son of a Jewish Israeli woman and an Arab intellectual who ultimately faces double rejection by Israeli and Arab worlds. After serving the Israeli Mossad as well as militant Palestinian organizations, the character states: 'I was defeated on both my sides' (Kaniuk 1988: 76). Several other prominent works, such as the novels of Saed Kashua, especially *Dancing Arabs* (2004), have addressed the dilemmas of the 'good Arab'.

Importantly, this metaphor has emerged alongside another powerful figure: that of the Palestinian activist. After the Six-Day War in 1967, when Israel occupied the Palestinian territories, contact between Palestinian citizens and those who now lived under Israeli military occupation intensified. Palestinians in Israel took political action in solidarity with their brethren during the First Intifada (1987-93), and after the failure of the Oslo Peace Process. The October 2000 events during the Second Intifada, especially, symbolize a turning point, as they saw twelve Palestinian citizens (and one non-citizen) killed by police fire in Israel. The events inspired 'a new awakening' that contributed to the emergence of a 'Stand-Tall Generation' of young Palestinians with an unprecedented sense of entitlement and political energy (Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker 2005). However, the selective openness of the Israeli regime has not embraced political demands of equality among Palestinian citizens (Ghanem & Khatib 2017: 890).

Over time, the category of the 'good Arab' has become a widespread metaphor for those who merely avoided controversial political activity and any visible demonstration of their national belonging. Although equality remains foreclosed, Israeli liberalism invites them to become 'champions of meritocracy, professionalism, hard work, universalistic pluralism, [and] freedom of individual choice' (Rabinowitz 1997: 184). These dynamics are exemplary of Palestinian citizens living in both Jewish Israeli and mixed towns (Rabinowitz & Monterescu 2008). Yet it is important to remember that the majority of Israel's Jewish and Palestinian population live in segregated communities and attend segregated schools, by design of the state's official policies of Judaization and ethnoterritorial fragmentation (Yiftachel 2001).

Mixed towns and schools remain the exception, although Palestinian mobility into Jewish Israeli cities and spaces has intensified (Blatman-Thomas 2017). Tel Aviv, by official definition, is not recognized as a mixed city, which lends particular relevance to the space of the 'good Arab'. Merely recognizing a Palestinian minority in Tel Aviv challenges its very identity: in the words of the city's mayor, Ron Khuldai, 'it would be problematic to consider it as a mixed city' (Monterescu 2015: 126). The Palestinian citizens have moved into Israeli cities nonetheless, where they face the daily challenge of navigating the ambivalent territory of the 'good Arab'.

Becoming a good Arab

In their hope to gain access to Jewish Israeli cities and the socioeconomic opportunities there, some Palestinian citizens aspired to meet the criteria of the 'good Arab'. This became evident during more than two years of ethnography in Tel Aviv. Although I met people with a diversity of class backgrounds and aspirations, many shared a concern about how to adapt to the requirements of 'success' in this Israeli city without violating their senses of self-worth and identity. While class differences defined the depth and limits of individuals' immersion in Tel Aviv, doctors and cleaners alike needed to navigate the social space of the 'good Arab'. Because the citizenship regime establishes dominant values as 'virtue' and stigmatizes others as 'vice' (Isin 2002), Palestinians come under constant pressure to prove their 'virtue' as 'good' citizens. Such a conditional regime offers benefits for some and excludes others, while certain rights are enjoyed on the

implicit condition that others will not be raised (Hale 2004). Sometimes this required my interlocutors to become temporarily 'invisible' as Palestinians: a kind of invisibility in plain sight that recalls internalized responses to racism among Black Americans (Ellison 2001 [1952]).

The racialized logic of the 'good Arab' became evident in the experience of Mohammed, a young Palestinian citizen who lived and worked in Tel Aviv. He had already been living in the city for six years when we first met in the building in which I lived, where he cleaned the stairs. At the bottom of the building was a hairdressing salon that was run by a Jewish Israeli who once referred to Mohammed as 'a nice guy, a good Arab'. Mohammed, for his part, told me later that he did not expect the Jewish hairdresser to be welcoming. 'I felt he wouldn't respect me', he said, adding: 'But today I like him a lot, we sit and talk, drink coffee'.

Several weeks into our acquaintance, Mohammed and I had lunch in one of the few Palestinian-owned businesses in Tel Aviv: a falafel and hummus eatery in a renowned shopping street. Sitting outside the eatery, Mohammed told me about his two cleaning jobs, but emphasized that his *actual* job was as a nurse in a Tel Aviv hospital. While it would normally be unusual for educated Palestinian professionals to work as cleaners on the side, this was common practice within Tel Aviv, especially for unmarried men, who were under pressure to save up for a house and a future marriage.

Indeed, Mohammed was planning to get engaged soon, saying, 'If I didn't do all this work, I would need a loan and I would be in debt'. Having three jobs allowed him to maximize his income while working every day of the week. 'Most Arabs in Tel Aviv are like me. They work, eat, and sleep. That's it, we don't do more in this city', he said, adding that he had not slept at all the night before our meeting: after a night shift at the hospital, he continued as a cleaner in the early morning. Mohammed felt that this hard work was one reason why colleagues and Jewish Israeli acquaintances respected him.

Mohammed learned what it meant to be validated as a 'good Arab' on arriving in Tel Aviv and needing a place to stay. When he was eventually offered his first apartment, it turned out to be a conditional offer: the landlord asked him to find a Jewish citizen to sign the contract instead. Only after a year did the landlord allow him to sign. According to Mohammed, once trust was earned, 'he did not want to let me go anymore'. Anticipating similar problems, he made sure to reserve his next apartment at the viewing with a down-payment. Several days later, he was meant to sign a contract, but the owner realized he was Arab and changed his mind: it was now a one-month agreement 'on trial'. Mohammed said:

> Then I painted everything fresh and invested a lot in the place, and they were impressed. At the beginning, they saw me as an Arab and concluded I am not good. Today, they love me. So, it is important for me to show them that, because I am Arab, doesn't mean I am not a good person.

Aspiring to be recognized as a 'good Arab' counters the stigma with a display of traits that conform to values validated as 'good' by the dominant majority. Rather than replace one's difference by, let's say, assimilating to Israeli society, the stigmatized difference turns into a 'permitted' kind of difference, and this permission must be authorized by the stigmatizing person and requires recurring proof.

The problem is that even for those few Arab citizens who serve in the Israeli military, conforming to the state's requirements does not eliminate the structural discrimination to which they and their communities are subjected (Kanaaneh 2009: 62). Although Mohammed believed in what he called 'the revolution for the good', he

also recognized its limitations, saying that, 'I am Mohammed; I am a problem'. This recalls the stigmatization among Arab minorities in the United States, who experience their social identity as a recurring 'problem' (Bayoumi 2009). The key dilemma is, to borrow wording from Hage (2011: 121), that Israeli society 'instils' in the Palestinian the aspiration to be recognized as a universal and equal individual but 'denies them this aspiration at the very moment it encourages them to aspire to it and believe that they are entitled to it'; they have to 'endure both the hope and the shattering of hope that are part of this process'. Mohammed told me about an older resident who refused to return his casual greetings in his building. 'He always treated me like a dog', he said, explaining that he helped the old man carry his shopping bags upstairs in the hope of changing his attitude. 'Some people you can change, some you can't. I still try to do it, to emphasize respect and love and hope that it will change people'.

This reconciliatory attitude reflects a particular political trajectory and upbringing. Mohammed was influenced by his father, who had a restaurant in the Jewish Israeli city of Ashkelon. He once told Mohammed that he had two options to succeed as an Arab in this country: become famous, as a football player, for example, or work hard and earn money quietly. Although Arab football in Israel has long been a popular 'integrative enclave' (Sorek 2007), Mohammed went for the other option. His family belonged to the communist political tradition that emphasizes Jewish-Arab relations. But asked about the role of political demonstrations, Mohammed said he never went to protests, explaining: 'What I am trying to do is a demonstration, but for the better. I won't change the world, but I can change myself. Trying to change something for the good: this is the basis on which I act'. To underline his argument, he invoked the Arabic proverb 'Those who come to you with evil, reply to them with good' (*Illi bijik bi-sharr, taallo bi-kheir*).

However, this belief in 'goodness' did not increase his sense of belonging in Tel Aviv, which shows that negotiating the space of the 'good Arab' is primarily about socioeconomic access and not about identity or recognition: 'You will always feel different', Mohammed said, adding: 'In your everyday life, and the way people treat you. I tried to relate to this city, but in the end you just realize that it's not yours, that you don't belong'. All this hard work did little to combat discrimination. 'Let's say I want to go to a club', he continued. 'You show your ID, and they don't let me in because I am Arab', he said. Whether in nightlife, at restaurants, or entering bus stations, Israel has framed Palestinian men as especially dangerous people (Pasquetti 2013: 466), and this distrust only increases their need to be validated as trustworthy citizens. Although individual Palestinians cannot always escape estrangement and stigmatization, this does not necessarily decrease their hope of beating the odds. In the words of Mohammed: 'First they step on you, and then you have to slowly work yourself up, and they may trust you'.

Making good business

The eatery where I met Mohammed was, as noted earlier, one of the few Palestinian-owned places in 'Jewish' Tel Aviv, away from the Palestinian areas of the port city of Jaffa further south. It became clear that Palestinian-owned businesses in Jewish Israeli towns are under particular pressure to manage how they are perceived. The eatery run by Sama and her husband had served customers with basic food for sixteen years, but she admitted that if you are an Arab in Tel Aviv, 'you are marked with an X'. Originally from the northern town of Taybeh, she and her family decided to live permanently in Tel

Aviv and send their children to a Jewish school. As we chatted in her restaurant, Sama began talking about the war in Gaza, before assuring me that she did not support the Hamas movement. On the wall hung an old photograph of Jaffa dated 1933, showing a Palestine long lost: Tel Aviv's ascent coincided with the destruction of Palestinian urbanism as 95 per cent of Palestinians from Jaffa and other 'mixed' cities were forced to leave homes that became repopulated by Jewish immigrants (Monterescu 2015: 2). To this day, historic Jaffa serves as Tel Aviv's orientalized and gentrified Arab neighbour, while the history of Palestinians within Tel Aviv has been overwritten by its modern Jewish Israeli image.

To run an Arab business within Tel Aviv was unusual and required a careful balancing act. While Sama complained about Israeli politics in Arabic, she repeatedly lowered her voice and looked around nervously. The pressure on Palestinians not to be perceived as nationalist was present in 'liberal' Tel Aviv. As Sama explained: 'We live in Tel Aviv and my children go to a Jewish school. There is a lot of hatred, but they are smart enough not to interfere in these things'.

At the same time, the story of these businesses shows how Palestinians can turn their Arabness into a validated trait of 'goodness', however orientalized it may be. While my interactions with Sama were restricted to the lunch meeting with Mohammed, I gained a deeper understanding of a grocery in Tel Aviv run by a family from an Arab town in the north. Their shop in Tel Aviv drew in customers with a wide selection of fresh vegetables and good service. 'You need two things', said Abu Khaled, who ran the family business:

> You need to have one of the best shops, and it needs to have the best service. Your service has to be better than the service of Jewish competitors. You need to be better than the Jews, so they come to you. Seventy per cent of our customers come because of the good treatment.

Overall, entrepreneurship among Palestinians in Israel has had 'strong ethnic components', some of which are said to serve as 'buffers and cushions against failure or difficulty' (Meir & Baskind 2006: 79). The task is often to transform stigma into recognized 'ethnic' values and explore profitable niches. The grocery in Tel Aviv had its own strategies.

One day at the shop, I spoke to Fadi, the 22-year-old son of Abu Khaled, when a Jewish customer walked in. 'This is Yossi', Fadi explained, as the man ordered cigarettes and asked Fadi to 'write it on the tab'. 'What's my bill adding up to?' the man asked. 'More than 500 Shekel', said Fadi with a smile. After Yossi left without paying, Fadi explained that he was the owner of a nearby restaurant, and that people like him expected a special service from them. Then another man passed by, and, without walking into the shop, demanded his cigarettes through the window, which he immediately got from Fadi, then walked on. As Fadi wrote this one on the tab too, he looked at me and said: 'He is a tour operator. When my elder brother flew to Europe for studying, he got us the ticket'.

Although some other groceries allowed people to put purchases on the tab, this family appeared to offer special services because they needed to be a trusted Arab business. On another day, I followed them back into their home town. As we sat together on plastic chairs in front of their newly opened shop, I learned about their need to provide better service than their Jewish competitors. This involved exploiting their Arabness in a way that conformed to Jewish Israeli expectations. In their Tel Aviv shop, this included selling fresh vegetables and home-made produce. Their tahini, for example, came from a company run by some family members living in the city of Nablus in the

West Bank. 'You greet customers and you welcome them, you give them whatever they need, you joke with them', said Abu Khaled, hinting at characteristics of courtesy and civility. Indeed, Palestinian citizens who run businesses for Jewish Israeli customers often reiterate the terms of 'an Orientalist archive' recognizable to them (Stein 2008).

Abu Khaled's father first opened the shop in Tel Aviv twenty-five years earlier, and such an endeavour required strength: 'There are strong fears about the reactions from the city, from Jewish people. Their first thought of Arabs . . . is that that he is some sort of criminal', Abu Khaled said. To counter this suspicion, they have to prove themselves. 'You have to impress. As an Arab in this country, you are facing a lot of questions and you constantly have to prove that you are good'.

Abu Khaled admitted that he now contemplated closing down the Tel Aviv branch of the shop because of costs, but Fadi hoped to open his own business in the city one day. Although studying mechanical engineering, Fadi did a lot of work for the family business, driving from their town to Tel Aviv and back, and picking up tahini from their factory in Nablus. His plan to run a business in Tel Aviv had one shortcoming: he would never want to live there. Instead, he envisioned building a large house on his own land. Opening a business was the alternative to working as a mechanical engineer, a profession in Israel where many of the relevant companies are connected to the weapons industry. 'I can't work there; it is extremely hard to enter there as an Arab because of security issues', said Fadi. No matter how 'good' he would become in the eyes of this industry, he would still be pre-emptively excluded.

As the day of my visit to their town came to an end, Fadi took me to a road-side café, where we sat down with a friend and smoked *nargilah* (water pipe). Although now in Palestinian ownership, the place had a Hebrew sign outside: *mifgash haverim* ('friends meet-up'). The sun set and coloured the sky in a beautiful red, accompanied by the Lebanese music videos that ran on a large TV screen. Fadi told me that he believed in the 'good' impact their positive mind-set had on Jewish Israelis and their views about 'Arabs'. Towards the end of a long conversation about their business and the city of Tel Aviv, Fadi said:

> Do you see this cup of coffee? Jewish society sees us as a small cup like this. But once they really see us and get to know us, they often realize that there is more than that. From a young age, Jews in this country learn that Arabs are something to be scared of. But I can also show them who I am, show them that I am good.

Palestinian businesses in Israel face a dilemma very similar to that of individual employees in search of jobs: their ethnonational difference is only validated as 'good' for as long as it conforms to predetermined standards and remains apolitical. These businesses perceive their initial disadvantage to be so great that they see equal chances as something that actually requires them to be unique and 'better'. To become better than others in order to succeed despite discrimination is an equally widespread aspiration among young Palestinian citizens of Israel, many of whom attend university and stand on the threshold of their careers.

Becoming better

When I first met Amira, she was a fresh business student at Tel Aviv University. She grew up in a small Palestinian town in the north of Israel, which was known for having one of the few mixed Jewish-Arab schools in the country. Many of Amira's relatives studied at this school and they all learned to speak Hebrew from an early age. Her father studied

in Italy and had worked as a doctor in the village since then, while her mother worked at a branch of Israel's largest bank. Amira frames their town as a quintessential 'good' Arab town, saying that Jewish Israelis 'are not scared to come to our town because there is coexistence', while they would be 'very scared to enter Umm el-Fahm', a town in the same region that is known as the base of the outlawed northern branch of the Islamic Movement. To her, studying in Tel Aviv and pursuing a career there represented a trajectory that was rooted in her specific background.

Like many other young Arabs who move into Tel Aviv, Amira enjoyed the distance from her home village. It gave her a sense of anonymity away from the gendered surveillance that sometimes characterizes the lives of Palestinian women in Israel (Herzog 2009). Yet, similar to the privileges attained within the space of the 'good Arab', such gendered anonymity in the Jewish city remained conditional on the invisibility of Palestinian political identity and any collective presence (Hackl 2018). Urban anonymity and conditional inclusion both reinforce a certain Palestinian absence through a limited 'permitted' presence.

Amira had originally come to Tel Aviv to study Medicine in the belief she would not be accepted to study Business 'as an Arab'. After a first term, however, she decided to follow her ambitions and switched to Business, despite her fears of being disadvantaged. As the only Arab in her class, she pushed herself very hard. She was driven by the looming threat of stigmatization. 'It was the fear of always having to make up for being Arab', she told me during one meeting at university. Driven by this fear, Amira did 'a lot of self-learning' in her free time, signed up for online courses with US universities, and improved her English and Hebrew language skills.

Similar to other talented Palestinian students in Tel Aviv, Amira found a niche in the city's booming high-tech sector as an employee dealing with clients in the wider Arab Middle East. Many Israeli companies dealing with foreign exchange, gambling, or investment were officially based in Cyprus but operated from Tel Aviv. They relied on Palestinian citizens and foreigners to build close relations with clients and investors in Arab countries, without openly admitting to being located in Israel. This, in turn, made it easier for citizens of those countries – some of which do not officially recognize the State of Israel – to benefit from the selective openness of these relations. Similar dynamics have occurred in Jewish Israeli tourism with its desire for 'good' Arabness, including culinary traditions, authentic places, and cultural practices (Stein 2008: 6). As a space of inclusion and interaction across conventional boundaries, the 'good Arab' facilitates subtle, and at times covert, relations between a settler colonial state and its economy, on the one hand, and the Arab peoples it has historically had adverse relations with, on the other hand – be they Palestinian citizens of Israel, or citizens of neighbouring Arab states.

Amira soon changed employer and moved to one of Israel's online marketing companies, where she was once again responsible for selling services to the Arab region over the phone, saying: 'I set myself a challenge, which was to become the best seller'. She used her affinity to customers in the Arab world and became very successful. Filling a niche for Arabic-speakers was one thing, but getting a job against the competition of equally qualified Jewish Israelis was harder. Ever since university, Amira had invested efforts into countering the disadvantage:

> Maybe I can volunteer in something humanitarian or anything else that proves strategic thinking, showing that I belong to Israeli society. So, I have to work harder by myself in order to catch up with

the level of Jewish colleagues. I am working hard so my marks will be higher than theirs and so I will stand out when I am looking for a job.

Yet as much as she tried to make this stigma invisible through achievements and goodwill, she worried about remaining unsuccessful:

There are still difficulties. Maybe I will be in the same position as the Jewish classmate, even more exceptional, even on a higher scale, of better quality ... The fear is that despite all efforts I invest, they will prefer someone who went to the [Israeli] army.

For Amira, the drive to become better than others may have been an important factor in her career. 'Maybe all this success happened because I always had this fear', she told me in a later meeting during 2017, adding: 'My parents always told me to be realistic, that I will go back to the village and that I won't be accepted as an Arab in these firms in Tel Aviv'. Without doubt, the drive to get better was twofold here. Alongside the gendered familial pressures, which involved widespread expectation that daughters returned to their hometowns after graduation, she faced repeated rejections in her job applications. One experience involved a company that did not call her back at first, but when she submitted the same CV with a Jewish name, it did. 'So I fought against this as much as I could'.

One frustrating outcome for Palestinian citizens who are validated as 'good Arabs' is that they can cease to be recognized as Palestinians altogether. Amira recounted this tendency among her colleagues, who asked:

'What language do you speak?' I said Arabic, and they were like, 'Are you kidding me?' The funny thing is that some of them told me that I am not actually Arab. They couldn't accept it ... Even my boss there [at the marketing company] continued to say that I am Italian, that I dress well like an Italian, but when he learned that both my parents were Arab, and my mum from Umm el-Fahm, he was shocked. He just kept on believing that I was Italian for so long.

This logic of forced absence locates Palestinian Arab spaces outside of Tel Aviv, in Jaffa or Umm el-Fahm, and by the same logic, the 'good Arab' within Tel Aviv may then no longer be Arab at all. Indeed, in Amira's colleagues' eyes she ceased to be Arab altogether. This coincided with pressures to be highly individualized and detached from the larger Palestinian community. This was a precondition of blending into Tel Aviv unmarked. Such depoliticization came more naturally in Amira's case, who said, 'I don't believe in politics. It's bad energy for me. I believe in humanity. Good people exist in all cultures'. The space of the 'good Arab' and its implicit logic of erasure is reinforced by liberal urban culture. The process involves a form of 'politicide' by making the universal criteria of citizenship, or even humanity, conditional on the elimination of political and national difference.

At least in a pragmatic sense, 'becoming better' allowed Amira to gain confidence as a professional. Confident after job experiences in leading companies, victories in hackathons, and a university degree, she said: 'I no longer have the fear I had before, that people judge me and look at me *only* as an Arab. So now that I have overcome that fear, I can do what I love to do'. Although accommodating and intentionally depoliticized, these subtle struggles for access turn the 'good Arab' into a useful battleground for socioeconomic inclusion, however limited it may be. As Amira experienced routinely when she was a student, even the 'best' Arabs cannot escape the structural discrimination imposed on Palestinian citizens as a community, and the Jewish majority's suspicion towards them. Indeed, 'suspect Arabness casts its shadow even on "good Arabs"'

(Kanaaneh 2009: 63), which is even true for those who declare their loyalty to the state by joining the ranks of Israel's military. In this sense, whenever Amira entered the university gates, and the guards checked her ID, they recognized her Arab name and immediately searched her bag, on the basis of that identification. Structural discrimination and stigmatization routinely override the achievements made within the space of the good Arab.

Settler colonialism and the predicament of conditional inclusion

Tracing the 'good Arab' from its origins into a contemporary urban setting, I have revealed a hidden battleground of inclusion and access where the conditionality of citizenship becomes visible in the daily compromises of individuals. This analysis of the 'good Arab' explains how a logic of settler colonial erasure lives on within contemporary spaces of citizenship and inclusion in liberal settler states. It shows how the unfinished 'histories' of settler colonialism and dispossession continue to determine the relationship between indigenous peoples and the spaces of settler majorities today. As a sociopolitical category of recognition, the 'good Arab' allows us to see the various inscriptions of a shared logic of conditional inclusion through time and across space. Such *conditional inclusion* emerges as a key principle by which settler colonial citizenship governs durable inequalities between settler majorities and indigenous peoples.

Dominant 'protocols of recognition' (Stein 2008) like the 'good Arab' are always changeable. Yet there is striking historical continuity between colonial practices of 'divide and rule' and the liberal governance of indigenous minorities today. In spatial terms, too, a similar logic can be observed across scales and boundaries: the social space of the 'good Arab' manifests itself in the specific context of work or housing, on the larger economic level of inclusion, and in the regional level of Israeli business relations and tourism. What unites these scales of time and space despite their differences is that settler states can maintain a framework of *conditionality* of access across a wide spectrum of domestic and international relations with political Others.

The 'good Arab' further shows how settler logics turn inclusion and political recognition into mutually exclusive goals for minority citizens, the one being conditional on the absence of the other. While Palestinian citizens engage with the social space of the 'good Arab' in the hope of evading overt exclusion and discrimination, their validation as 'good' Arab citizens implicitly legitimizes settler sovereignty. We can say that once empowerment is achieved within the framework of a state-orientated institution or logic of misrecognition, 'it reaffirms the legitimacy of domination by the majority and represents integrative tendencies' (Sorek 2007: 7).

Yet one must acknowledge that certain kinds of agency simply come at the expense of political visibility and 'popular sovereignty' (Bishara 2017). Although much is lost, some things are gained as part of this process. Tel Aviv promises individual liberties, offers socioeconomic benefits, and enables the situational destigmatization of difference to whoever meets the underlying criteria. The implicit loss is that this process forecloses equality the moment people aspire to it because the racialized recognition as a 'good Arab' has its origins in the elimination of indigenous political power and identity. As today's minority citizens negotiate the requirements for being validated as a 'good Arab', they simultaneously open new doors and reinforce existing glass ceilings.

These insights open up new spaces for comparison across indigenous rights struggles and their experiences with so-called 'national integration' policies and frameworks of liberal citizenship, which often have the adverse effect of undermining

self-determination and autonomy (Hale 2011; Povinelli 2002; Speed 2017). When a liberal meritocratic ethos embraces indigenous individuals in settler spaces, a logic of political control continues to structure the terms of socioeconomic inclusion: their access to what is 'liberal' and 'universal' is made conditional on their perceived conformity with the dominant protocol for recognition of their ethnocultural difference. This often requires the suppression of the national dimension of their identity.

The irony is that access to universal equality remains alive as a potential but is unattainable in its actuality. As the experience of Arab soldiers in Israel's military confirms, 'even good Arabs are always potentially bad in a Jewish state' (Kanaaneh 2009: 67). After all, it is the ever-present presumption of untrustworthiness that triggers the requirement for proof of trustworthiness. The social significance of the 'good Arab' grows precisely because members of the Jewish Israeli majority often view Palestinians as suspicious Others. Although aware of these wider implications, Palestinian citizens in Tel Aviv pointed at the absence of viable alternatives. When your livelihood and your career depend on the ability to navigate a society and economy that is dominated by the settler majority, adapting to its requirements may be as undesirable as it is inevitable.

Reaching beyond the dichotomy of accommodation and resistance, the concept of *conditional inclusion* illuminates the difficult compromises and balancing acts that characterize relations between indigenous people and settler majorities. Once grounded in detailed historical genealogies and specific spaces, the 'good Arab' and other related metaphors of conditional inclusion can explain the complicated and ambivalent intricacies of minority citizenship across a variety of political and regional settings.

NOTES

[1] Pseudonyms are used to protect anonymity.

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Le bon Arabe : inclusion conditionnelle et citoyenneté coloniale parmi les Palestiniens ayant la citoyenneté israélienne dans la Tel Aviv juive

Résumé

Les majorités dominantes utilisent souvent des catégories idéalisées pour déterminer qui, parmi les citoyens appartenant aux minorités, est « bon » et méritant. Pour les citoyens israéliens d'origine palestinienne, cette catégorie est celle du « bon Arabe ». Depuis son apparition au début de l'installation des Juifs en Palestine, elle est devenue une métaphore puissante et controversée dans le discours public israélien. Parce qu'elle renvoie à l'expérience d'une inclusion limitée, la notion du « bon Arabe » illustre le dilemme palestinien de l'accès aux opportunités socioéconomiques de l'espace juif israélien, qui stigmatise et rejette leur identité ethno-nationale. En combinant une généalogie historique du « bon Arabe » avec une recherche ethnographique parmi les Palestiniens de Tel Aviv, le présent article montre comment la logique historique de contrôle par les colons et d'effacement des autochtones continue à définir les cadres

libéraux de la citoyenneté et de l'inclusion conditionnelles. Théorisées à travers le concept émergent de *l'inclusion conditionnelle*, ces considérations ouvrent de nouvelles pistes d'analyse et de comparaison dans les débats anthropologiques sur les luttes autochtones, la colonisation de peuplement, l'inclusion urbaine et la citoyenneté.

Andreas Hackl is a social anthropologist at the University of Edinburgh. His work has focused on the Middle East and the wider field of international development, alongside studies on forced displacement, labour mobility, inequality, and digital economies.

School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh, Room 3.20, 18 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh EH8 9LD, UK. Andreas.hackl@ed.ac.uk