Title: Freedom and peace at the shopping centre: the politics of consumerism in Israel/Palestine

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Abstract: Shopping centres are products and indicators of consumerism. In the case of Israel/Palestine, where shopping malls have spread since the mid-1980s, they have acquired political meanings beyond the widespread conception of consumer-choice-as-freedom, as they also claim to advance coexistence in a context marked by ethnic segregation. We perceive shopping centres as 'non-places', following the work of Marc Augé, and analyse two overarching ideologies that coalesce in the shopping centre, in alignment with the political economy of Israel/Palestine. The first is liberal peace, which underpins the remnants of the Oslo process, but in an individualised form. The second is securitism, which presents shopping centres as a secure island in a sea of inter-ethnic violence. This image is taken apart throughout the article on the basis of ethnographic and discourse-analytical research on four sites in Israel, Jerusalem, and the occupied West Bank, focusing on the ways Palestinian consumers experience Israeli shopping centres.

Key words: consumerism, Israel, Palestine, security, shopping centres, liberal peace

Introduction

The first shopping centre in Israel opened in 1985 in Ramat Gan near Tel Aviv, days after the right-leaning Likud government adopted the Emergency Economic Stabilisation Plan, and in close cooperation with the US implemented a series of market-privileging reforms.[1] The shopping centre confirmed the country's place in the global economy as a neoliberal state, aligned with global capital (and is credited with introducing the Hebrew term *kanyon* for 'shopping centre'). By 2017, there were 383 shopping centres in Israel, according to an economic consulting firm.[2] This article focuses on four Israeli shopping centres in different locations, which are frequented by both Palestinians and Jewish Israelis despite dominant patterns of social and geographic segregation between these two groups.

The shopping centre, or 'mall', presents an ambiguity in terms of political definition: it is a privately-owned space, only marginally regulated by the state, yet it is geographically public, and it actively attracts 'members of the public' to it. Malls appeal to leisurely experiences of shopping while forming a key pillar of the economy for the capitalist state.[3] As sites of consumerism, they are premised on insatiable desire,[4] and push the role of consumption beyond fulfilling one's needs.[5]

We treat shopping centres as empirical 'non-places' (*non-lieux*) as defined by Marc Augé, as globalized, homogenized spaces under conditions of 'supermodernity'.[6] Playing on the connotations of the term as a legal decision (meaning 'there is no case to answer'), Augé reminds us that there are 'checks' on those who enter the 'non-place' to determine their 'innocence'.[7] Passing the checks of official identity markers – not the relational acceptability of thick identity in communities which are anthropological places, as opposed to 'non-places'[8] – is tantamount to a 'not-guilty' verdict. Only after the official checks can one can shed the thick identity and become an anonymous, albeit consumerist, individual, free from ethnic and other political identities. Malls are fundamentally pacifying spaces, providing an opportunity for 'thin' freedom and peace for people in the middle class who can shed their thick, anthropologically recognisable, identity, yet they offer little in terms of 'positive' freedoms.[9] The article uses ethnography to understand the idea of a 'non-place' and explore the nature of interactions in such spaces devoid of identity and history.

This is the locus of our ethnographic exploration, along with ongoing manifestations of the entrenchment of the Israeli state, abstractly rendered as the struggle over who is excluded and who is included, and we argue that the shopping centre is a formative and formed arena of this struggle. As icons of global capitalism that are formed by local specificities, shopping centres display variegated intersections: in Israel, they reflect new cultures of consumption, aligned with the image of a modernised and globalised Israel (distinct from the older pioneering Socialist Zionist/Orientalist imagery), while restructuring and re-embedding ethnic relations. The expansion in consumption extends to Palestinian society in Israel and in the occupied West Bank, which have witnessed a massive influx of consumer goods. A Palestinian middle class has emerged as a social status, defined in contrast to those Palestinians in working class jobs or from prominent families. This status is manifested in spending habits and leisure activities emblematic of consumerist lifestyle. In the West Bank, private lending and personal debt are an indication of middle class aspirations despite low income.[10]

Building on academic studies that explore the shape of consumerism for Palestinians,[11] this article examines the materialisation of two overarching ideologies that permeate Palestinian experiences of Israeli shopping centres: liberal peace and securitism. We focus on the ways in which these two ideologies intersect with and enable consumerism, which we perceive as an ambivalent hegemonic ideology of late modernity. Unpacking the interplay between these ideologies in shopping centres, we explore the discourse of coexistence advanced by malls and the performance of multilingualism in the malls. Invoking Stuart Hall's use of 'articulation' to explain the ways in which ethnic relations are reorganized under new modes of production,[12] we posit that an articulation is operating between a specific ethno-national category, which is Palestinian/Arab, and socioeconomic class, which is an aspirational consumerist middle class. This articulation is critically revealing of consumerist definitions of freedom and peace. We argue that shopping centres, as pacified non-places operating under conditions of liminality, offer a temporary and ambivalent escape, ultimately sustaining ethnic hierarchy, segregation, and precarity. Following Judith Butler, we conceive of precarity as a politically-induced condition that is unequally distributed among populations framed according to race, nationality, or other embodied characteristics.[13]

The article is structured as follows: After describing the methodology, context, and parameters of the study, we analyse the ways in which the two seemingly contradictory ideologies of liberal peace and securitism coalesce in shopping centres, critically analysing their claim to advance coexistence. We focus on middle class consumers and on workers in the malls, as well as on the politicians and market analysts who make statements on the nature of encounters in and within these consumerist locations. The final section highlights socio-linguistic hierarchies in a context of segregation, by testing the malls' claim to enabling a kind of coexistence where one might expect the languages of diverse customers to mingle. However, we find that multilingualism, practiced mostly by Palestinians and less by Jewish Israelis, reiterates the shopping centre's function as a non-place, since the anonymous nature of the situation primes speakers for fleeting interactions where 'thick' identities are not performed.

Methodology and context

Relying predominantly on ethnographic methods, our research sites were shopping centres in west Jerusalem, in Kfar Saba (in central Israel), on the outskirts of Nazareth (in the Galilee), and in the occupied West Bank. Malha Mall in west Jerusalem, owned by the Azrieli Group, opened in 1993. G Kfar Saba Mall, owned by Gazit-Globe, opened in 2009, the same year as BIG Fashion Nazareth, which is co-owned by BIG Shopping Centers, Africa-Israel Properties, BST Group (which belongs to magnate Badie Tannous, a Palestinian-Israeli from Nazareth), and the Greek Orthodox Church (which owns the land on which the mall was built). Finally, Tzomet HaGush is a shopping complex initially built by Rami Levy (who owns a supermarket chain) on the Bethlehem-Hebron road and near Gush Etzion settlement, which is illegal under international humanitarian law. Opening in 2010, it is one of at least 187 businesses that Israel has built inside settlements.[14] All four locations are on the edges of Palestinian population centres but accessible to Jewish Israelis without having to enter Palestinian locales.

Between 2012 and 2016, we visited the shopping centres as participant observers to take notes on the settings and the visible and visual practices. We conducted interviews with shopkeepers and shoppers at the locations, including the performance of a rapid anonymous survey. The survey addressed four questions to shoppers and workers at three shopping centres, approaching half of

the 72 randomly selected respondents in Israeli Hebrew with a greeting, introduction, and request for participation in the research, and the other half in Palestinian Arabic in the same way by the same researcher holding a notebook and pen.[15] The researcher is a fluent but not native speaker of both languages, and dressed in a fashion that avoided referencing any specific local culture, though inadvertently thus reinforcing the notion that wearing trousers, leather shoes, a suit jacket and no head-dress is 'neutral' attire for a woman.[16] This appearance called to mind the 'thin' unspecified identity of the non-place. The survey was designed to gain a picture of language use in the shopping centres and test attitudes to being addressed in another language, specifically Arabic.

Fourteen additional interviews were conducted in BIG Fashion Nazareth mall: nine open-ended and in-depth interviews with Palestinian shoppers, as well as five other interviews with figures from the private sector and non-government organizations.[17] Furthermore, we critically analysed articles in Arabic, English, and Hebrew media that discuss the four malls. By subjecting official statements, interviews, and media depictions to critical discourse analysis, we sought to lay bare the ideologies underlying discussions on shopping centres.

[Figure 1: Map]

Since the beginning of Zionist settlement in the region, the population distribution between Palestinians and Jews has been segregated, whether inside Israel or in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.[18] However, as both Palestinian and Jewish customers visit all four shopping centres, they are advertised as spaces of coexistence. According to the Vice President of BIG Shopping Centers, 60% of visitors in BIG Fashion Nazareth on weekdays are Palestinian and 40% Jewish.[19] On Saturdays, when Jewish-owned shops elsewhere are shut for the Sabbath, 70% of the visitors are Jewish. Around 25% of the customers in Malha Mall are Palestinian, according to its CEO.[20] Furthermore, both Palestinian customers from Beit Ummar near Hebron in the West Bank and Israeli settlers reported on the convenience of shopping at Tzomet HaGush for fashionable clothes; however, while it is merely time-consuming for settlers to travel to another shopping centre, Palestinians require a military permit to pass Israeli army checkpoints.[21] There is no such restriction on the freedom of movement of settlers.[22] The reason shopping centres are fruitful testing grounds for the practical manifestations of ideologies of 'liberal peace' and

securitism, is precisely because they claim to draw Palestinians and Jewish Israelis out of their segregated experiences.

Designs of shopping centres follow a template developed in the United States where architects have seen in the form and function of the space an 'alternative focus for modern community life' and a replacement for 'decaying' downtown commercial neighbourhoods.[23] All shopping centres under examination were purpose-built large projects housing a number of shops including franchises for clothes and cosmetics (although Tzomet HaGush arose piecemeal over several years), as well as restaurants and cafés, many of which were outlets for international chains. None of the shop advertising and way-finding signs were in Arabic. Privately owned spaces are not bound by legislation requiring that public signage be provided in what was, at the time of the fieldwork in 2016, the two official languages of the state, Hebrew and Arabic[24] (although this legislation had not been consistently implemented).[25] By 2016, the third generation of Palestinians socialised in the Israeli educational system, including on the expanded tertiary level,[26] had come of age in the structural settings of late-capitalist consumerism and globalised neoliberalism, which is marked by a shift to service sectors which require communicative skills.[27] These conditions have served to economically mobilise Palestinians' command of Hebrew in addition to Arabic.

We use the term 'Palestinian' to refer to disparate groups subjected to different legal categories determined by Israeli authorities. Palestinian and other Arab citizens of Israel are those who remained in their homes during the 1948 war, what is known as the *Nakba*. They number 1.8 million people, representing approximately a fifth of Israel's citizenry. The second group is around 300,000 Palestinians in East Jerusalem with the legal status of permanent residents but not citizens.[28] Excluding Jerusalem, the Palestinian population in the West Bank is 2.9 million people. They live under Israeli military occupation, despite the nominal jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority (PA), the entity established by the 1993 Oslo Accords. The Accords' Protocol on Economic Relations of 1994 gives Israel control over the PA economy's imports and exports, due to its control of all borders, and has implemented a system in which Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza are in a de facto 'customs union' administered by Israel, and the New Israeli Shekel is used in all transactions.[29] Like Israel, the PA has embraced neo-liberalisation as a core aspect of its political economy.[30] Invoking consumerism as national liberation, the PA portrayed

the May 2017 opening of the West Bank's biggest shopping centre, Q Center in Rawabi, as 'a source of pride to the Palestinians, since it was created and is run by Palestinians themselves.'[31]

Another two million Palestinians live under a blockade in Gaza, imposed by Israel and Egypt, with tacit approval from the PA.[32] The blockade is another example of consumerism forming a battleground of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: Israel's explicit strategy is to punish Gaza's population by restricting its ability to consume. As one Israeli official explained, 'The idea is to put the Palestinians on a diet, but not to make them die of hunger'.[33] According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 38.8% of the population in Gaza lives in absolute poverty (nearly three times the rate in the West Bank), and per capita expenditure is 58% of the West Bank.[34] Although Gaza has been subjected to 'de-consumption' (to paraphrase Sara Roy's de-development[35]), Israeli officials have highlighted the lucrative potential of this captive market. One solution for accessing this market without necessarily integrating it, suggested by Israeli officials, is a floating trade port off the coast.[36]

Furthermore, Israel has invoked consumerism to challenge the view of Gaza as besieged. In August 2013, the Israeli army's official blog posted an entry titled 'What happened to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza?' which featured a photo of a multi-storey shopping mall.[37] Although the photo turned out to be from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and had erroneously been attributed to Gaza on white-supremacist websites, the logic behind the post is telling. The presence of a shopping centre was presented as evidence that Palestinians in Gaza are not suffering from a crisis; if they have a shopping centre, then they are 'happy and free'. The counter-argument internalises this equation, arguing that they do not have that mall and, by extension, are unhappy and captive. Although the Israeli military continues to prevent the import of construction material and the Israeli-controlled electricity network operates only a few hours a day, a shopping centre, Capital Mall, did in fact open in Gaza in February 2017, awash with consumer items brought in via Israel. It is frequented by members of a small middle class, who describe its appeal as the ability to pretend one is 'outside Gaza'.[38]

Liberal peace and securitism

There are two ideologies circulating in the shopping centre, and although they seem incompatible at first glance, they overlap and complement one another, mediated by the overarching ideology of consumerism. The first is liberal peace. Reinvented in the 1990s and advanced by the Bill Clinton administration and the European Union at the end of the Cold War, it is a version of the liberal-functionalist ideology of economic peace laid out by European philosophers during the Enlightenment.[39] It sought to craft a 'new Middle East' through development, globalisation, and wealth in the form of peace dividends. The ideology of liberal peace did not dissipate with the collapse of the negotiations initiated by the Oslo Accords, and its emphasis on economic prosperity underlies contemporary discussions about ending the conflict, representing a consensus between the PA, Israel, and the international community.[40] Liberal peace is explicitly aligned with, and arguably contingent upon, consumerism.[41] It is a process through which 'thick' identities evaporate in the face of the supremacy of capital. In shopping centres, it comes in an individualised incarnation rather than a state-led project.

According to this ideology, peace brings – even guarantees – security. As Shimon Peres stated in his Oslo-promoting manifesto, 'Peace is the means for security'.[42] The circularity of this argument corresponds to the circularity of the 'peace dividends' equation: the establishment of a modicum of normalcy in diplomatic relations (coexistence?), based on the cessation of hostilities (security?), will lead to neoliberal integration, which in turn will bring more stable peace, and hence security. The integrated arrangement brings mutual commitment to each other's welfare, thus a win-win peace.

The second ideology is securitism, which gives precedence in political decision-making to security considerations in the military sense.[43] Following the realist school of thought in international relations, security is incompatible with liberal peace, because sovereign states are in competitive relation to each other. Peace is irrelevant unless security is first assured through defence from military threat in a zero-sum, as opposed to win-win, logic. Though incompatible *in theory*, liberal peace and securitism meet at the shopping centre *in practice*, among other junctions,[44] under the auspices of consumerism, and enable consumerism to proceed uninterrupted. The promise of consumerist liberal peace represents a departure from simply a victory in the zero-sum struggle of realist peace. Instead, securitism is the basis that facilitates

liberal peace and its conditions for equal, post-national, rights in the consumerist enclosure. The securitist paradigm demarcates the shopping mall as a fortress, which, if conquered, harbours the treasures of consumerist bounty and post-ethnic freedom and peace.

Standing surrounded by anarchy, then, the shopping centre allows only the vetted, the 'not-guilty', to experience its freedom and peace. Shopping centres are enveloped in layers of security checks; like many commercial spaces in Israel, they are guarded by private security guards, typically situated visibly at the entrances of buildings.[45] This can be observed on a global scale: with the proliferation of the shopping centre, it has become the object of securitisation, utilising pre-emptive techniques, including the adoption of racial profiling.[46] The system of security checks throughout Israel/Palestine uses surveillance technology and profiling that targets Arabs, justified on the basis that Palestinian armed groups were the main perpetrators of attacks on shopping malls during the second intifada,[47] resembling the Irish Republican Army's targeting of North London's Brent Cross and Wood Green shopping centres in 1991 and 1992.[48] One of the last suicide bombings of the second intifada, claimed by Palestinian Islamic Jihad, took place at the entrance of Hasharon Mall in Netanya on 5 December 2005, the third attack at the same place.[49] The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs annotated the location of the attacks, always with personal accounts of the Israeli victims, not only as civilian spaces but as spaces of leisure, such as mall entrances and beach clubs. The attacks are thus depicted as targeting spaces of Arab-Jewish intermingling as well as icons of modernity, liberalism, and capitalism more broadly.

[Figure 2: Photo]

Such securitised consumerist spaces have been themselves posited as elements of strategies to defuse security threats by pacifying communities framed as violent.[50] The criteria for 'innocence' indicated by the shopping centres' security arrangements appear to rest heavily on the discretion of privately hired guards who have the legal authority to determine 'a reasonable suspicion' that a person is about to endanger public security or commit a violent offence on the basis of, among other factors, 'a person's violent behaviour in a public place, including verbal violence or threats, or behaviour that is otherwise threatening or frightening'.[51] This provision allows the enforcement of a securitised regime on the basis of perceptions of threat and fear: in April 2015, three Arab men were denied entry to the Azriely Mall in Tel Aviv after a security guard took the initiative to inspect their ID cards, found that they were Palestinians with permits

to work in Israel, and judged that they were not entitled to access the shopping centre.[52] They did not pass the 'not-guilty' entrance test conceptualised by Augé.

Access to and presence in Israeli shopping centres has become a symbol of inclusion for Palestinians in Israel. According to one study, young Palestinians were disproportionately 'enthusiastic' about visiting shopping centres for socialising, as opposed to engaging in other types of consumerist behaviour, such as buying products and accessing recreation.[53] Following the logic of a 'non-place', as opposed to a 'place', this enthusiasm might indicate that Palestinians have relatively more to gain from shedding the 'thick' relational identities of their segregated home communities (themselves structured by mutable sectarian, generational, and gendered disempowerment)[54] and enjoy, for a time, 'thin' identity in the anonymity of the shopping centre. The equality proposed by the shopping centre is one where the consumerist role, which is individualistic, supersedes the ethnic category, which is collective. Being Palestinian, in the shopping centre, is an accident of fate which consumerism can help overcome. Feelings of equality, in this context, are *only* possible in a 'non-place' and *after* the vetting process.

This sense of not belonging in the shopping mall was invoked by Palestinian parliamentary candidate Issawi Freij to describe the deterioration of relations between Palestinians and Jews. While on an electoral campaigning house visit in Baqa al-Gharbiyeh, in an area of central Israel known as 'The Triangle' where there is a cluster of Palestinian towns and villages, he recalls, 'In the summer of 2014 my wife said she didn't even want to go to the *kanyon* [mall] anymore, because of the looks she gets there, the hatred in their eyes'. The shopping centre was explicitly highlighted as the last line of retreat for Palestinians intimidated by expressions of racism.[55] He was in effect campaigning for official identities to be checked in a less discriminatory way and for consumerist identities in the shopping centre to be better anonymised, reiterating the promise of consumerism that 'if everybody were let into the shop, then everybody would be happy'.[56]

As one of the last remaining zones of interaction between Israelis and Palestinians, consumerism across Israel/Palestine promises to be the only force powerful enough to drive out war. In the summer of 2014, while armed conflict raged in the Gaza Strip, a Facebook advertisement for a shopping centre in Kfar Vitkin (in central Israel) offered 'free hummus for [each] table with Arabs and Jews sitting together'.[57] A journalist spending time in the Malha Mall arrived at the

conclusion that 'The Middle East Needs Less Praying and More Shopping'.[58] The economic editor of *Haaretz* argued that consumerism has become the main unifying 'Israeli' experience, replacing the army or other forms of nation-building: 'Once they find parking and pass through the metal detectors at malls, all Israelis [including those who are Palestinians with Israeli citizenship] become one'.[59]

For this (aspiring) middle class, the shopping centre offers an ambivalent escape from segregation, but it is also an ambivalent escape from precarity for those Palestinians who work in the service economy, whose class and ethnicity intersect markedly. In another electoral discussion group among students in Tira, also a Palestinian town in central Israel, parliamentary candidate Aida Touma-Sleiman from the Communist party (one of the four parties in the Joint List, an alliance formed in early 2015 that mostly attracted Palestinian voters) invoked the mall to discuss larger questions about the inclusion of Palestinian workers in malls:

> The political reality is unfortunately deteriorating and in a situation of increasing racism. And this you won't only find at university. Go to the *kanyon*: you'll see this. When you walk through the *kanyon* and they put up a sign saying [in Hebrew] 'worker wanted with military experience'. In order to sell shoes, or distinguish large size from extra-large, why is it necessary that I complete army service?

A few weeks later Ayman Odeh, the head of the Joint List, also used precarious jobs in the shopping centre as a reference point in his maiden speech to the Israeli parliament:

> Put yourselves in Hiba's shoes: a young woman full of life, who has just finished secondary school, is looking for work at the shopping centre. In the job listings that had caught her eye she discovered that the vacancies are offered to those who have completed army service only. Is it necessary to be initiated into the craft of war in order to wait on tables?[60]

'Coexistence' in the shopping centre

The geo-demographic pattern of shopping centres located on the edges of Palestinian population centres is significant for the theme of coexistence, which has permeated the discourse of the shopping chains' owners, Israeli politicians across the political spectrum, including the Joint List and Meretz (a Left Zionist, social-democratic party), the Israeli and international press, and even

human rights organisations. Owners of shopping chains portray the secure space they offer as an opportunity for multi-ethnic mingling of equal consumers. This coexistence, the promoters applaud, is a harbinger of peace amid conflictual national relations.

To encourage Israeli firms' marketing to and engagement with Palestinians, Nir Plotkin, the head of *Shear LaMigzar* (Gate to the [Arab] Sector), described the appeal of G Kfar Saba Mall:

> G Center in Kfar Saba [an area in the central Jewish Israeli conurbation] […] is packed with Arabs from the Triangle [a Palestinian-populated area in central Israel]. For them, this is an experience a little bit like being abroad. The shopping craze continues even for 40 days after Eid al-Fitr (the end of Ramadan) until Eid al-Adha.[61]

Plotkin perceives the Palestinian middle class as a product in itself, pointing to the lucrative potential of the increase in Palestinian consumerism in Israel and the adoption of a lifestyle of leisurely activities and recreation.[62] Yet, the mall is still a fundamentally Jewish-Israeli space, and the presence of Palestinians there has been described as a form of 'functional contact'.[63] While formulating the language policy enforced in her shop, a Palestinian shop owner in G Mall indicated how Palestinians' behaviour remains ethnicised: 'When we [staff] are alone we talk amongst ourselves in Arabic; if there are customers around we use only Hebrew' [*lamma minkūn laḥālna mniḥki maʿ baʿd bilʿarabi iza fī lakoḥōt basʿibri*].[64] This linguistic disciplining comes amidst news reports that some cafés forbid Palestinian staff from speaking Arabic at work altogether, ostensibly so as not to distress Hebrew-speaking customers.[65] Here, multilingualism is part of the 'security checks' placed on Palestinian workers.

On the other hand, the Nazareth-based BIG Fashion is explicitly and repeatedly described as an equally Arab and Jewish space, perhaps to ensure it does not alienate Jewish customers. The discourse of coexistence has been at the heart of the mall's establishment; at its opening ceremony in July 2009, its CEO declared: 'The building of BIG Fashion in Nazareth is a model of mutual respect and understanding […] and encouragement of a population that includes Muslims, Christians and Jews, who can provide an example of tolerance for the whole region'.[66] Similarly, in an advertisement for an exhibition at the mall, it is described as offering 'the latest [and most] advanced interpretation of coexistence [*paršanutʿadkanit u-mitkademet le-du-qiyum*]'.[67] The mall is thus elevated to a utopian space where political and religious strife no longer exist. Shop owners and developers frequently invoked coexistence – among workers and customers – as a near-sacred principle.[68] A manager of a shop in BIG Fashion argues:

> There is a large percentage of workers from both the Arab and Jewish sectors, but the percentage of Arabs is higher because of the [dominance] of the Arabic language [in Nazareth] […] We encourage coexistence and cooperation between the two sectors, and we believe in cooperation and coexistence between the two populations.[69]

With Nazareth's heavily reliance on tourism as a main industry, terms such as coexistence and cooperation have been heavily commercialized. The city's mayor has criticised political tensions for disrupting Jewish consumption in Nazareth (appraised in 2015 at NIS 10 million per weekend).[70] And BIG Fashion is part of this trend: it is described as having 'brought back the economic and tourist benefits of the city of Nazareth'.[71]

BIG is a large shopping chain in Israel,[72] boasting 14 malls, and its 'arrival' in Nazareth represents the recent 'discovery' of Palestinians as consumers, as laid out by Plotkin above. The mall is located on the outskirts of the city, accessible from the motorway, enabling a shopping experience that is disconnected from the city (while diverting shoppers away from the historic markets: the 'decaying' downtown).[73] It expanded its parking premises in 2012 to accommodate the growing number of visitors, receiving a permit to do so in record time (despite apparently contradicting zoning laws and drawing the ire of residents who struggle to obtain construction permits).[74]

The mall faced controversy for instructing shop owners to not play Arabic music. Critiques of this decision were formulated in terms of its defiance of the tradition of coexistence that has defined Nazareth and has 'become a symbol to be emulated in the whole world'.[75] In response, the mall's Strategic Consultant argued that it was a way to satisfy all customers, since the mall is at a 'crossroads' between Nazareth and Natseret 'Illit: 'It is not only a commercial centre for Arabs but is a shopping centre serving all consumers in the country: Jews, Arabs, and foreigners'. He asserted that English music was chosen as a 'global' language and culture and that restrictions on Arab music were a way to transcend sectarianism and racism.[76] This is part of the mall's self-description as a global, urban, and modern space – a process for which it must shed any Arab identity, or at least reduce it to an aesthetic aspect of its multinational and multilingual identity. For instance, BIG Fashion's design proclaims to 'combine rural elements that are fitting of the local environment and surroundings, which make the mall a unique compound with an international atmosphere'.[77]

The Director of Projects and Promotions describes it as 'bringing the urban lifestyle' of Tel Aviv to Nazareth.[78] Nevertheless, the status quo of segregation between the two communities is largely maintained inside the mall, aside from during business transactions. Unlike shop owners, Palestinian consumers appeared reluctant to adopt the discourse of peace-making through consumption. One interlocutor dismissed the mall as a form of economic appeasement, proclaiming, 'revolutions do not start in shopping malls,' and urging the researcher to 'go to the West Bank' to understand economic encounters that were 'political'. To him, the mall was not a political space because consumerism in the mall serves a de-politicising purpose.[79] Even while he was physically participating in such consumerism through his presence in a café at the mall, he invoked this familiar Palestinian critique of normalization.

The case of Malha Mall in west Jerusalem offers different interactions due to more frequent everyday tensions. Malha Mall is seen as a fundamentally Israeli space, and Jewish consumers generally perceive the presence of Palestinians there negatively.[80] Scholars have characterized interactions at Malha Mall as 'co-presence in the same space' rather than coexistence, contradicting the management's narrative in which the mall is above political and/or national aspirations.[81] Yet, mixing in commercial spaces is not only part of a fantasy of neoliberal peace, but also a way to push back against political initiatives that are opposed to the superficially pacifying goals of the consumerist project under Israeli control, which maintains the occupation of East Jerusalem.[82]

The mall has been a site of conflict, such as in March 2012 when dozens of rioting Beitar Jerusalem football fans entered after a match, carrying signs saying 'Death to the Arabs'. When they harassed Muslim women in the food court, cleaning staff — Palestinians — came to drive away the rioters, who violently turned on the cleaners. Despite witness testimonies and camera footage, the police investigation resulted in mild cautions against 16 men, including bans from attending matches for two seasons. The director of Malha Mall expressed shock but did not explain how a large riotous group could pass the entrance security checks.[83] The Beitar fans had somehow passed the 'not-guilty' test at the security gates that the Palestinian workers in Tel Aviv had not.

Palestinian visits to Malha Mall declined in 2014, a result of the tensions that accompanied the war in Gaza. Boycott campaigns became more pronounced, as were inter-communal tensions

that led many Palestinians to disengage from Jewish spaces. The withdrawal of Palestinian shoppers resulted in a decline in sales,[84] leading the mall to launch an advertising campaign to bring back customers, but Arabic newspapers reportedly refused to publish the mall's advertisements.[85] Palestinians from the West Bank who received Israeli permits to go to Jerusalem on holidays were criticized for shopping at Malha Mall, with one commentator contending that they seek Israeli permits not to pray in al-Aqsa mosque but to visit the mall.[86]

Even in the occupied West Bank, where the Israeli military has instituted multiple restrictions on Palestinian freedom of movement,[87] shopping centres regularly champion coexistence among both consumers and workers. At a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Tzomet HaGush shopping centre in August 2016, parliamentarian Nurit Koren said, 'I hope the mall will be a symbol of co-existence based on economic peace'.[88] When an attack targeted an Israeli supermarket owned by Rami Levy at Tzomet HaGush, *The New York Times* ran the headline, 'West Bank Shopping Complex, a Symbol of Coexistence, Is Shaken', while suggesting that the shopping centre was targeted because of 'its image as a hub of coexistence'.[89] The 'gleaming new Israeli supermarket' is described as 'a once-congenial meeting spot for Israelis and Palestinians'.[90] Inside shopping malls, there can somehow be a 'coexistence' between occupier and occupied, a coexistence that is made compatible with the reality of segregation. Palestinian shopping at Tzomet HaGush, arguably part of the stoic practices of 'getting by' – described by Chris Harker as 'unremarkable and unremarked upon'[91] – is made remarkable and transformed into a statement in favour of participation in the Israeli economy. In the shopping centre, the ideologies of liberal peace and securitism appropriate the Palestinian act of 'getting by' as part of their logic of coexistence.

When another attack took place in one of Rami Levy's shops, the chain's owner declared, 'The terrorists attempted to destroy a place of coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians'.[92] Rami Levy stores are the object of regular protests organised by the Israeli far-right organisation Lehava which seeks to prevent the 'assimilation' of Jews with others. Lehava's 'anti-assimilation' campaigns rebel against the liberal-securitist discourse of coexistence. Responding in a media interview, Rami Levy specified that he is 'more cautious of inter-marriage than Lehava is'[93] and insisted that he would try to prevent intermarriage between Arab and Jewish employees.[94]

His position towards coexistence is essentially limited to business interactions. He supports the employment of Palestinian labour, taking advantage of contested employment laws, and providing a space for Palestinians and settlers to shop side-by-side.[95] At the ribbon-cutting ceremony at Tzomet HaGush, deputy defence minister Eli Ben Dahan laid out this vision of coexistence, telling Palestinians: 'Come and see what the State of Israel can give you. Come and enjoy the Israeli economy, but know that this is the land of the Jews and accept it'.[96] The political economy of coexistence suggests an adherence to the current hierarchy. Coexistence is limited to factors that benefit the Israeli economy, such as cheap Palestinian labour and Palestinian consumption of Israeli goods. In this arrangement, 'coexistence' as espoused by Rami Levy can be combined comfortably with rhetoric of ethnic purism.

Multilingualism in the shopping centre

Reading Marc Augé, already bleak in his expectation of expansion of non-places, in conjunction with Judith Butler, who examines regimes of precarisation that decide on the relative value of human life and death, leads us to map differential exposure to precarity on the interactions with Palestinian and Israeli shoppers and workers during the performance of a rapid anonymous survey in 2016. The survey was designed as a linguistic-anthropological intervention in three shopping centres (Tzomet HaGush, Malha Mall and G Kfar Saba), whereby the researcher approached a dozen interlocutors first in Hebrew, then another dozen in Arabic, selected with an effort to counteract any unconscious tendency to match the language with the visual cues of ethnicity. All respondents were approached when they seemed at leisure. The script in each introduction was the same (different only in language of delivery). It read, as rehearsed: 'Hello, my name is Nancy Hawker, I'm doing research on languages for my university. I have four short questions; would you be willing to answer them, anonymously? It will take about three minutes of your time.' The intervention echoed the methods of 'the theatre of the oppressed', in which

> …a troupe of actors devises an improvisational script that will be enacted in the streets or public spaces of a community. The drama is based on a highly polemical social issue that is of immediate concern to this community. The script revolves around creating a provocative and engaging set of interactions with a public […]. The performance is invisible because the actors assume the role of everyday persons and do not announce to the observing public that they are witnessing a scripted drama […].[97]

The intervention tested the norms of multilingual interaction in supposedly anonymous and coexistence-friendly settings. Those interlocutors who agreed to proceed were first asked, what did you come to the shopping centre for today? Second, what languages did you hear today at the shopping centre? Third, what language do you speak at home? Fourth, did you use (your home language) at the shopping centre today? Of the 72 respondents, 24 indicated that they were native Arabic speakers. Of those, nine had been approached in Hebrew. One, an elderly woman from east Jerusalem, requested a switch to Arabic, commenting laughingly, perhaps apologetically, 'I'm a bit old for it [Hebrew] to stick on my tongue' [*ana kbīre šwey fa mā bilazʾeš ʿala lsāni*]. All Arabic speakers completed the survey cooperatively.

Of the 72 respondents, 39 conveyed that they were native Hebrew speakers. Twenty-three of them had been approached in Arabic, and all of these requested a switch to Hebrew, even four of them who had reported knowing some Arabic. Of the 23, eight absolutely refused to participate in the survey, even when a switch to Hebrew was offered by the researcher. The other respondents, not accounted for in this summary, were speakers of other languages, including Russian, French, English and Chinese. A table laying out the overall results of the survey is in Figure 3.

[Figure 3: TABLE]

As Robin Lakoff contends, 'Linguistic imbalances are worthy of study because they bring into sharper focus real-world imbalances and inequities'.[98] From the pattern of the responses, and here, non-cooperation with the survey is taken to be a marker of heightened unease in the situation, it transpired that addressing Hebrew speakers in Arabic in the shopping centre aroused sensitivities: 35% of respondents addressed in this way refused to undertake the survey, and there was no such reaction from any other language/speaker combination. When there was a match between the speakers' native language and the language they were addressed in, cooperation was smooth in all cases. The results cannot be quantified further; what merits attention is how the interactions instantiated the articulation between class and ethnicity. One shopkeeper in an empty shop explained her refusal to complete the survey by saying 'I simply can't when there are customers around' [*pašut kše yeš lakoḫot ani lo yaḫola*]. Another shopkeeper, after mutely absorbing the researcher's introductory speech in Arabic, turned to the

back room to summon an assistant, calling in Hebrew: ‘Muhammad! I have no idea what she’s saying!’ [*muḫamad ein li musag ma hi omeret*]. Muhammad completed the survey laconically.

Refusing to interact with a person approaching them in Arabic is the privilege of those least exposed to precarity: in Bourdieu’s metaphor of the linguistic market, they own the most highly prized commodity which they have no motivation to trade for a cheaper one.[99] What is noteworthy, in fact, is how many interlocutors did cooperate. Another, more trivial, surprise was the respondents’ acceptance of the researcher’s ‘theatrical action’[100] in the languages that strongly index ethnicity in accordance with ‘one nation-one language’ logic: the closest to seeking an explanation for the researcher’s behaviour was one Hebrew-speaking businessman’s asking, in Malha Mall, without waiting for an answer, ‘Are you from Beit Jala?’ (an affluent Christian-majority town in the nearby Bethlehem conurbation). The high levels of cooperation in the experiment coheres with the portrayal of shopping centres as ‘places of coexistence’, if by coexistence is meant a superficial, fleeting, anonymous interaction. This is ‘thin’ coexistence based on ‘thin’ identities enjoying ‘thin’ freedom.

Two Hebrew speakers who completed the survey, after a switch from initial Arabic to Hebrew, queried the reasons for being approached in Arabic. One of the queries was formulated as ‘did you think I was Arab, kind of?’ [*at ḫašavt še ani aravi, keʾílu?*], but seemed satisfied with the answer that the survey questions were posed in this way because of the research objectives. The four Hebrew speakers who stated their knowledge of Arabic (but nevertheless chose to complete the survey in Hebrew) also seemed to want to distance themselves from the more precarious status of Arabic-speakers: two mentioned that they spoke Yemeni, ‘not this Arabic’, one other qualified their knowledge as ‘a drop’, and the most enthusiastic exponent of his own Arabic skills was an Israeli settler in Tzomet haGush, wearing camouflage clothing with an embroidered Arabic sign saying *kāfir* (‘infidel’) and carrying a machine gun, who claimed that he ‘chatted with the Arabs in the workers’ canteen all the time’. For him, that was coexistence; what it was for the workers is the point at issue.

Due to the nature of the questions, all (cooperative) respondents were keen to elaborate on their hearing and knowing many languages, especially English, but in practice only the Arabic speakers addressed in Hebrew demonstrated multilingualism. This could be, on the face of it, a factor of the constraints on staff visibility. The Palestinians who work in areas that the researcher

could access – consumer areas – would have been hired on the basis that they would be able to communicate in Hebrew, as required for the service: their multilingualism mitigated the effects of precarity and segregation.[101] Some of those who work as cleaners and stackers were encountered on a previous research project, in Shuafat Refugee Camp in East Jerusalem: young men and women who displayed the style and language, including Hebrew borrowing and codeswitching, that performed a consumerist youth identity.[102] Their response to precarity was to seek escape into consumerism, funded (to a limited extent) by menial jobs, which they had to reach by navigating securitised space.

Eleven of the 24 Arabic speakers surveyed were customers, and so theoretically not bound by the rules of service to pay polite attention to the researcher. Many of the Arabic-speaking respondents were, in fact, keen to display of appreciation for multilingual skills. One Palestinian worker in Tzomet HaGush, where settlers carried weapons openly, went so far as to say he spoke only Hebrew at every opportunity, even as he stated in Arabic, 'we live in Israeli society, thank goodness' [*iḥna ʿayšīn fi muǧtamaʿ israʾīli, ilḥamdulillah*]. The adherence to Hebrew preference was so strong that even those whose Hebrew proficiency was limited preferred to continue to communicatively struggle in Hebrew, even though they had been offered a switch to Arabic, since Hebrew was what they had been addressed in. However, Arabic was not entirely suppressed in the shopping centres: in a café in Malha Mall, where the service counter was built as an island surrounded by sitting customers, the barristas put on a show of arguing in Arabic over whose turn it was to wash the dishes, to the amusement of the 'audience' who understood the comedy without necessarily understanding the language.

Drawing on the sociolinguistic literature that posits that anxieties about language serve as proxies for broader social anxieties, and that demonstrates that the suppression of linguistic diversity is linked to other forms of social injustice,[103] we can use the survey experiment within its limitations, as a gauge of power relations. On the one hand, the non-cooperative results and the patterns of switching to Hebrew (for the Hebrew speakers addressed in Arabic), and of completing in Hebrew (for the Arabic speakers addressed in Hebrew), confirmed the tacit norm of avoiding addressing anyone but an Arabic-speaker in Arabic (a norm which the survey experiment deliberately violated).[104] The Arabic speakers increased their language skills in adaptation to the (for them) securitised, precarious environment, while Hebrew speakers did not,

in line with expectations in a situation of linguistic hegemony.[105] On the other hand, levels of cooperation were high and respondents were generally accepting of superficial transient interactions regardless of which 'thin' ethnic identity, indexed by language, was performed, and many expressed enthusiasm for multilingualism, albeit slightly dampened when it came to Arabic.

These findings indicate, along with the rest of the evidence presented in this article, that shopping centres offer an ambivalent combination of consumerism, securitism and neo-liberal peace: they offer a 'thin' reduced quality of freedom from dependency and of superficial coexistence, which are nevertheless attractive, in places of precarity, as a temporary escape into non-places.

Conclusion

The mall is seen as a liminal mediating space, a space in which both parties can interact and subsequently withdraw. Nothing changes. Despite its claims to transcend segregation, the shopping centre in fact reaffirms collective segregation by confirming the notion that the two communities can only meet in this 'non-place' as individuals, not bearers of their collective identities in a space where they come together, *en masse* yet atomised, for a purpose organised by the set of self-serving and seemingly common-sensical principles of consumerism. These principles are implicitly built into the architecture of the space,[106] and made explicit through instructions, in a contractual arrangement that 'can even be felt as liberation by people who, for a time, have only to keep in line, go where they are told, check their appearance.'[107] After that time, though, they have to go home to their communities, places that remain saturated with conflict. Coexistence is therefore depicted as only being possible through the mediation of this particular version of consumerist modernity, and only within the strictly maintained boundaries of the shopping centre.

The ethnic hierarchy does not dissipate in consumerist non-places; rather, it is mediated in the shopping centre through these ideologies of liberal peace and securitism. Palestinians and Israelis can meet in the 'non-place', a place where identity is temporarily 'thinned', and mitigated by Palestinian multilingualism, to ease consumerist interactions. The same person who seemingly

embodies empowerment, peace, and pride inside the shopping centre still exits that setting to experience the dependency, violence, and shame associated with precarised subjectivities. The 'negative' freedom offered in the shopping centre fails to alter one's everyday experiences. It represents what Augé labels an enjoyment of role-play.[108] The mall, offering a fleeting reality, is essential to the process of role-play; it can be a central element of 'living through and beyond violence'.[109]

Through ethnographic fragments, we have highlighted the ways in which the ideologies of liberal peace and securitism in the shopping centre form an ambivalent assemblage. Advocates of coexistence in the shopping centre perceive it as offering a space for Palestinians to live a 'normal' (free and peaceful?) life, or as normal as is possible, similar to the 'micro-freedoms' Nasser Abourahme describes in Ramallah, or the 'pacified spaces' laid out by Tobias Kelly in his account of the second intifada.[110] The encroaching consumerism in Israel/Palestine has thus far failed to displace the established patterns of ethnic segregation, and often interweaves with it. In fact, consumerist rationales enable the continuation of certain violent practices: in Northern Ireland, similar consumerist encroachments have been labelled 'Potemkin villages'[111] – fake presentations of empty promises of prosperity and peace.

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Notes

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[93] Lehava's strategy cannot be accurately described as 'caution': it includes incitement to violence on the basis of allegations of contact between Jews and non-Jews: one of the options on the organisation's 'hotline' is 'If you know of a goy who masquerades as a Jew or is harassing Jewish women, or of locations where there is an assimilation problem, press 3.' See S. Winer, 'Hotline lets callers inform on Jewish-Arab couples', 9 September 2013, *Times of Israel*, available at http://www.timesofisrael.com/hotline-lets-callers-inform-on-jewish-arab-couples/

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Tables

Figure 3. Results of Rapid Anonymous Survey conducted in three shopping centres located in the West Bank and Israel.

The numbers correspond to the number of respondents in each combination of parameters; 'coop.' signifies a cooperative respondent who answered the survey questions readily; 'non-c.' signifies a respondent who refused to complete the survey.

Location / Home Language / Survey language	Role	Tzomet HaGush		Jerusalem Mall		G Kfar Saba	
		Arabic	Hebrew	Arabic	Hebrew	Arabic	Hebrew
Arabic	Customer	1 coop.	4 coop.	2 coop.	2 coop.; 2 non-c.	2 coop.	3 coop.; 1 non-c.
	Worker	3 coop.	2 coop.	1 coop.	2 coop.; 2 non-c.	2 coop.	2 coop.; 3 non-c.
Hebrew	Customer	1 coop.	5 coop.	3 coop.	4 coop.	2 coop.	2 coop.
	Worker	3 coop.	0	2 coop.	1 coop.	2 coop.	4 coop.

Figure captions

Figure 1: Map: *Approximate locations of the research sites*, © the authors

Figure 2: Map: *Malha Mall entrance in April 2016, with three security guards and an electronic body scanner*, © Nancy Hawker

Figure 3: Table: *Results of Rapid Anonymous Survey conducted in three shopping centres located in the West Bank and Israel*

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