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ARTICLE

Good citizens: legitimization strategies of new religious movements in Israel

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Abstract

The presence of new religious movements (NRMs) is often fraught with tensions and confrontations. Depicted as foreign elements and "cults" they face opposition demanding to restrict their activities. NRMs in Israel, despite small numbers, raised concerns and objections, attributed among other things to the dominance and power of Orthodox religion. Gradually, however NRMs managed to establish themselves in Israel and to successfully deflect the opposition to their presence. In this work, based on interviews and media reports, we explore two strategies that enabled the movements in Israel to minimize rejection and opposition to their presence. The first, based on a republican concept of citizenship, included the adoption of Zionist ideology and taking part in settlement ethos and military service. The second, based on neoliberal concept of citizenship, fits well with more current trends in Israel, offers paths to economic advancement and social mobilization through education and ethos of success.

Keywords: citizenship; Israel; legitimacy; new religious movements

New religious movements (NRMs), many of them hardly "new" by now, established themselves in various shapes and forms in different countries in the last decades. Their establishment, however, was often fraught with tensions and confrontations, especially when the movements were depicted as foreign elements and designated as "cults." Consequently, concerned family members and established churches, aided by suspicious and sensationalist media coverage, demanded that restrictions be placed on their activity. NRMs, on their behalf, attempted to dissuade fears, gain legitimacy and present their members as normative citizens who participate and contribute to society. Both the presence and the marginality, or the liminality, of NRMs, therefore, tell something about contemporary questions of religion, society, and state, as well as of citizenship.

The existence (or, persistence) of NRMs in Israel is particularly interesting due to the lack of church–state separation and the confluence of religion and nationalism underscoring the "Jewish state." But, while religion remains a strong force in Israel society and Jewish orthodoxy has formally conceded little if any of its authority,

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Israel's religious landscape has changed throughout the years. New religious and spiritual movements, most of them imported from Europe and the United States, gradually established themselves in Israel, despite suspicions and opposition. Like elsewhere, new religions and spiritual movements were branded "cults" and depicted as a danger to society. Faced with Jewish orthodoxy's religious monopoly, on the one hand, and the role of Judaism in demarcating national boundaries, on the other hand, NRM's accommodation, integration, and legitimacy were challenging.

Gradually, several NRMs managed to establish themselves in Israel and to successfully deflect the opposition to their presence. Following Beckford's description of NRMs as "social and cultural laboratories where experiments in ideas, feelings and social relations are carried out" (1986, xv), we study the establishment of two NRMs in Israel, The Emin and the Anthroposophy. In this work we use the concept of citizenship to explore two strategies that enabled the movements in Israel to become accepted by state and society, or at least minimize rejection and opposition to their presence. The first, based on a republican concept of citizenship, included the adoption of Zionist ideology and taking part in settlement ethos and military service. The second, based on neoliberal concept of citizenship, fits well with more current trends in Israel, offers paths to economic advancement and social mobilization.

New religious movements—questions of legitimacy

The expected decline of religion associated with secularization and modernization in the mid-twentieth century was replaced by accounts of religious resurgence (Hadden, 1987; Berger, 1996/7; McClay, 2001). Religion was hard to ignore or to be dismissed as a private matter as (since the 1970s) it emerged (or reemerged) as a vital force in world politics. Against expectations of religious decline, scholars described a de-privatization of religions who refused to accept a marginal and privatized role. With growing public support, some became a significant political force (Casanova, 1994, 5). In other cases, in what Davie (2007) describes as "vicarious religions," active minorities, through religious institutions, continued to perform religious rituals, embody moral codes, and offer a religious space for a larger number of citizens. These, in turn, continue to identify with religion and seek religious services in significant or critical periods of their lives.

Not only have traditional or established religions been able to resist or accommodate to modernization. New religious groups existed throughout history, some completely innovative, but many emerged out of predecessor religious movements. A wave of NRMs emerged in the west Contemporary/20th century, their rise associated with rapid changes of late modernity (Beckford, 1986, xv) or with the declining counter-culture of the 1960s. They include a large variety of movements (sometimes referred to as alternative religious movements, marginal religious movements, or cults) that emerged in western Europe and the United States (see, Miller, 2016), and later spread elsewhere. Many of these groups are not religious in the western traditional sense, and some of them describe themselves as spiritual, rather than religious (Arweck, 2002; Bromley, 2007).

Despite their resurgence, NRMs remained suspicious and were often labeled as "cults" by the general public and the media (Olson, 2006). Accordingly, the struggles

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against NRMs are waged by "anti-cult" movements, family-based organizations, and individuals advocating against the danger the movements present to society; their warnings often echoed in sensationalist media accounts. Stark and Bainbridge (1985) describe the boundaries between "normal" (traditional) and "new" religious movements as delineated by different dichotomies like brainwashed/free thinking, controlled/autonomous, infantile/adult, or family indifferent/family-minded. Specifically, objection to NRMs include concerns regarding their recruitment patterns, their alleged control over members and the alleged harm they cause to members (Shupe, 2016). Zaidman-Dvir and Sharot (1992) offer three categories of concerns and anxieties NRMs evoke: the disruption of family life, concerns of secular populations against all-encompassing religious movements, and concerns of religious deviance by established religions. These concerns in many cases translate to political debates and to questions regarding the state's obligation to intervene and protect members from harm.

NRMs differ in the way they interact with society and, consequently, their ability to accommodate and integrate. Wallis (1984) offers a threefold typology of accommodation, rejection, or affirmation. World accommodating religions provide solace or stimulation for personal life, with relatively few implications for how lives should be lived. World rejecting religions demand allegiance and expect an upheaval bringing an improved world order. World-affirming religions emphasize the potential that human beings have for improving the world and offer ways to achieve this potential. Beckford (1985) offers a different typology of NRMs external relations and the variety of ways they "produce or reproduce themselves through links with the outside world such as direct evangelism, sale of therapeutic services, or provision of utopian refuges" (p. 85). Those that seek to preserve the conditions for avoiding the world can be described as refuges. Revitalization refers to NRMs that seek to shape the secular world in accordance with their particular values, bringing them into extensive contact with a less than perfect world. Finally, release offers the least difficult mode of insertion in society, typical of NRMs that specialize in "offering to release people from conditions allegedly obstructing the full realization of their potential" (89).

NRM's acceptance also depends upon the political, cultural, and social structures, within which they operate. Thus, for example, societies with one legal religion and a state church with a monopoly guaranteed by its alliance with the state are likely to differ from pluralistic societies where an open religious market allows competition and diversity (Zaidman-Dvir and Sharot, 1992). When depicted as "cults" NRMs likely find states and societies intolerant to their presence, and face demands to restrict their presence and activity. Hardin and Kehrer (1982, 267) suggested four potential sources of opposition to NRMs: individuals (often parents of NRM members), organized alternatives (established churches), mass media, and state institutions. Under effective opposition, especially when established religions and state institutions are involved, NRMs are required to find ways to deflect criticism and enhance their acceptance in society.

Citizenship and legitimation

Legitimacy is often a major concern for NRMs, especially when facing active opposition and suspected by society in general. Whether it is about the ability to attract

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new members, to keep followers within the movement, or to shape public opinion and appease authorities, questions of legitimacy are pertinent to the movements (Lewis, 2003). NRMs, as Beckford (1985) explains, attempt to "insert" themselves in society offering refuge, reform, or release to their members and recruits. They are also compelled to develop wider legitimation strategies directed toward the general public opinion, aimed to fend opposition rather than attract followers (Lewis, 2003, 15–16). The ambition to establish themselves within society requires NRMs to seek "accoutrements of legitimacy." These can be attained by "attaching themselves to world religions, claiming roots in venerable traditions, and engaging in charitable, political or educational activities" (Arweck, 2007, 265).

While many doctrines and practices of NRMs remain essentially the same, their globalization created new adaptations and reformulations of their teaching and legitimation strategies in different localities. Many new religious and spiritual movements today integrate within their teachings and activities modern therapy techniques and healing practices, and operate like global economic enterprises (Beckford, 2004; Arweck, 2007; Bromley, 2007).

The way established and legitimate religions differentiate themselves from NRMs they depict as dangerous and illegitimate, on the one hand, and the strategies NRMs use to legitimize themselves, on the other hand, may tell a larger story of relation between religion, society, and politics:

> …there are grounds for believing that the long term, socio-cultural significance of today's NRMs lies less in the intended contributions to religious and spiritual life than in the unintended consequences of their activities for the clarification of the limits of toleration. For, partly through litigation and partly through public controversies, NRMs are helping to define the practical boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable conduct in a supposedly secular age. (Beckford and Levasseur, 1986, 49)

States and societies differ in the importance of religion, its authority, and presence in everyday life. They also differ on perceptions of belonging, paths of integration, and answers to what makes a "good citizen." Combined, all these impact NRMs and the strategies they employ to legitimize and insert themselves in society.

Citizenship

Citizenship is a process of social inclusion that provides members of a political community with social status, social rights, and the right to take part in collective decision-making (Ben-Porat and Turner, 2011). Citizenship guarantees the egalitarian status and rights of individuals within the state (Axtmann, 1996; Kymlicka and Norman, 2000) and is translated into a "set of practices (juridical, political, economic and cultural) which define a person as a competent member of society, and which as a consequence shape the flow of resources to persons and social groups" (Turner, 1993, 2). Despite its universal character, citizenship often differentiates between individuals based on their group belonging and perceived contribution to society. Accordingly, citizenship can be a contested ground for individual and group rights, determine inclusion and

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exclusion and the very definition of the political community. Groups and individuals perceived a threat to society or a potential burden upon it can be denied citizenship or some of its benefits. Conversely, demands for inclusion and equality are often based on contribution to society and state, namely "Good citizenship."

Groups and individuals may adopt (or conform to) a republican version of citizenship. Citizenship, according to this perspective is beyond a legal status and includes a civic virtue, measured in the commitment to the public good and active participation, or in more stringent versions total loyalty and sacrifice (Dagger, 2002). Active participation, in turn, entitles citizens to a larger share of the community's material and moral resources. Evaluated contribution and sacrifice impact social status (Shafir and Peled, 2002, 5) often based upon a "republican equation" where military service constitutes a supreme civic obligation, defining the boundaries of citizenship and delineating a social hierarchy between those who serve and those who do not (Levy, 2008). Contribution, and particularly military service, therefore, can also provide groups and individuals an entry card to society and a source of legitimacy for their claims for inclusion.

"Good citizenship" can also be claimed through a neo-liberal frame of reference that measures groups and individuals by their ability to integrate in the market as consumers, workers, or entrepreneurs. This stretches beyond the liberal idea of citizenship as protection of individual rights and the individual as the sovereign author of her own life who pursues her private affairs or conception of the good (Shafir and Peled, 2002, 4). Rather, it pertains to the very idea of solidarity that, as Fourcade explains, "has shifted from the state to the person: the duty to realize one's full potential as an individual implies productive work engagement, skill upgrading, knowledge of law and values, and civic participation." The neo-liberal citizenship rests on the logic of markets, on competition as a model for behavior and individual responsibility as a core element of citizenship. Accordingly, it is not about active collective participation for common good but rather individual mobilization for economic activity, engagement in contractual partnership, and readiness to compete with others. This meritocratic concept of citizenship implies that good citizenship is about being a self-sufficient participant in the labor market, reversing earlier social citizenship ideas that rested on the priority of status over contract (Joppke, 2021).

Accordingly, NRMs claim to "good citizenship" can use both models, the republican and the neo-liberal. In the former, contribution to society by participation and contribution, military service for example, is a source of legitimacy. In the latter, helping members to cope with stress modern life presents, providing them with skills to exploit their potential, or offering educational services that cater for any of these desires, provide NRMs with support and legitimacy. Republican and neo-liberal conceptions of citizenship are ideal-types that, when translated into legitimization strategies, are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In the rest of this article, we demonstrate how these strategies were employed by NRMs in Israel.

Case studies and methodology

The Anthroposophy and the Emin Society are veteran NRMs in Israel. In this study, we follow the strategies they used to integrate within Israeli society, how they confront

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criticism and suspicion and how, through different citizenship discourses, they attempt to gain public and institutional support. The study is based on interviews of activists and members, official reports, and media coverage. Interviews were conducted with Emin members in a visit to Maale Tzvia, a center of the movement, and with members of Anthroposophy in their homes. In addition, both movements received media attention, providing another resource of interviews with activists and members. Finally, controversies and debates regarding the status of the movements also involved parliamentary commissions, reports, and debates that provide more information and insight. We study perceptions and ideologies toward state and society, evaluation of the difficulties and the strategies used to adapt and legitimize. We also explore the movements and their initiatives are perceived by state institutions they interact with. Specifically, we explore, first, the perceived opportunities and limitation the movements encounter; and, second, particular legitimation strategies of contribution to the public good, namely attempts to align themselves with the master (republican) Zionist narrative of citizenship and with neo-liberal concepts of citizenship.

Israel: religion, old and new

Israel does not provide full religious freedoms customary to most Western democracies. Jewish Orthodoxy holds a prominent formal and informal status in Israel and authority over religious and non-religious Jews alike. Its privileged position institutionalized through a series of agreements in the pre-state period, formalized in the early years of statehood, known as the "status quo" (Susser and Cohen, 2000). Beyond its pragmatic political underpinning, the status quo was accepted also by the majority of nonreligious Israelis that continued to relate to codes, values, symbols, and a collective memory that can hardly be separated from Jewish religion (Kimmerling, 2004, 354). More important, Jewish religion underpins the boundaries of Jewish nationalism and, consequently, is a gatekeeper of Israeli citizenship (Ben-Porat, 2013).

Three important changes provided new grounds for secularization and for potential religious pluralism. First, social-economic changes associated with globalization underscored the evolvement of a global consumer culture, at times indifferent to religious constraints but also creating a "religious market" of new alternatives. Second, mass immigration from the former Soviet Union brought many secular Jews and a large number of non-Jews to Israel, undermining religious authority. And, third, ideational changes, in the form of new and renewed demand for recognition of non-Orthodox Jewish alternatives and religious pluralism (Ben-Porat, 2013). While these changes provided room for new religious and spiritual alternatives, Jewish Orthodoxy remained powerful. Collective national identity in Israel, shared by religious and secular Jews, is deeply anchored in Jewish religion and religion continues to play a critical role in the definition of national boundaries. The majority of Israeli Jews, regardless of their reluctance toward Jewish orthodoxy in general and the rabbinate in particular, continue to relate to it is a "vicarious religion" (Davie, 2007), preferred over modern Jewish alternatives (Ben-Porat, 2013). Consequently, attachment to Jewishness is often perceived essential to national identity (Yadgar, 2011) and

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pluralism, conversely, a threat to national unity. New religions, therefore, need to legitimize themselves not only by liberal arguments of freedom, or by adaptation to Israeli particular needs and expectations, but also by contribution (real and claimed) to the national public good.

New religious movements in Israel

NRMs became active and visible in Israeli society since the 1970s (Beit-Hallahmi, 1992; Ariel, 2010) with a bustling scene of New Age and alternative spiritualities that differ in their level of penetration into contemporary Israeli society (Feraro and Lewis, 2017, xii). This included groups who gained international success (such as the Anthroposophical Society, Transcendental Meditation, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, and Scientology) or smaller groups (such as the Emin Society). Most of the NRMs in Israel are not Christian, or do not use overt Christian themes. Yet, some Christian NRMs, such as the Jehova Witnesses and Messianic Jews, also have a presence in Israeli Jewish society. Apart from the "imported" non-Jewish NRMs, a few new local, mostly Jewish-Kabbalistic movements developed in Israel, and some of them, like the Kabbalah Center (which started its activities in the 1970s in Israel and the United States) and Bnei-Baruch, which was founded in Israel in the early 1990s, became international movements (Huss, 2007; Myers, 2007; Introvigne, 2017).

Israelis' keen interest in new religious and alternative spiritual movements has expanded through a growing engagement with New Age culture. Since the 1990s, many Israelis partake in New-Age related activities, such as alternative medicine treatment methods, human potential workshops, and channeling. To these activities one may add the growing numbers of Israelis practicing various Eastern and indigenous techniques such as Buddhist (mainly Vipassana) meditation, yoga, tai chi, neo-shamanism, and neo-paganism (Werczberger and Huss, 2014; Kaplan and Werczberger, 2017). While some NRMs remain under the public's radar, others have permeated deep into the Israeli mainstream (Feraro and Lewis, 2017, xii). Overall, the fact that members of both imported and local movements were ethnically Jewish, namely part of the Jewish nation and have not declared themselves a separate religion, was essential to overcome opposition.

In Israel, as in other countries, the rise of new religious and spiritual movements aroused a wave of public panic and, concomitantly, a strong anti-cult movement (Beit-Hallahmi, 1992; Zaidman-Dvir and Sharot, 1992; Cavaglion, 2008; Ruah-Midbar and Klin-Oron, 2013). The presence of an orthodox monopoly, the attachment of the majority of Israelis to Judaism, the strong affinity of Judaism to national identity and the state, and, consequently, the suspicion or even hostility toward non-Jewish religious alternatives have placed severe limitations on NRMs. Following the campaigns of anti-cult organizations, the Israeli authorities also reacted to the activities of NRMs. Between 1982 and 2011, four government committees issued reports that focused on NRMs and the "cult phenomenon" (Tassa-Glazer, 1987; Ruah-Midbar and Klin-Oron, 2013; Werczberger and Huss, 2014; Sagiv, 2017). The negative account of "cults" in the reports reflected the general attitude of suspicion and at times hostility toward NRMs (Klin-Oron and Sagiv, 2016; Sagiv, 2017).

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NRM in turn, drawing on Israel's unique citizenship regime as well as recent changes of Israeli state and society, used different strategies to counter suspicion and resistance and to legitimize their presence. Below, we describe two relatively successful strategies. First, as the Emin case demonstrates, the movement and its members adopted republican citizenship ideas and practices and took an active part in national missions like military service and settlement. Second, as the Anthroposophy case demonstrates, the movement provides educational services that cater to a growing demand for private or exclusive schools, in line with the individualism of contemporary neo-liberalism.

Being good citizens

Israel's citizenship regime includes not only classifications that exclude non-Jews but also republican classifications that determine hierarchies within the Jewish majority (Shafir and Peled, 2002). This republican citizenship can be traced back to the pre-state era and the civic virtue of pioneering. Pioneering was a central tenet of Zionism, part of the envisioned transformation of the Jewish people from dependent and weak Jews of the diaspora to proud and self-reliant men. Pioneering was also a strategy by which land purchase, settlement, and agriculture in Palestine would establish presence and later sovereignty. The state, established in 1948, especially in early years, continued to place high demands on its citizens and maintained the pioneering spirit and individual service to the collective, especially military service. Individuals and groups were treated by the state and society according to their contribution to the common good, military service, and pioneering.

The "republican equation" (Levy, 2011) not only exchanged military sacrifice for social dominance, but also provided the institutions in charge of security, and the men serving in them, with status and authority. Contribution to the collective security, through military service, continuously expanded the meaning of security, as the late Kimmerling (1993, 198) argued, "the ever-expansive boundaries of 'security' are loosely defined, and almost any sphere or subject can be connected expediently to 'security'." Militarism, therefore, serves as an organizing principle of Israeli society, based not only on the formal role of the military and its jurisdiction but also on a "state of mind" as security discourse permeates society, defines different social questions in terms of security and providing security experts with authority. In recent years, military service lost some of its appeal, especially among the veteran elites, but remained essential for other groups' status and mobilization.

Pioneering, the settlement of the land and the periphery in particular, was another dimension of contribution and sacrifice. Historically, it was an essential part of Zionism's attempt to establish presence to strengthen its claim for Jewish sovereignty and, later, it was directed by state institutions to ensure Jewish dominance and control of territory and borders. The Kibbutz, a communal settlement originally based on agriculture, epitomized the Zionist ethos of pioneering and sacrifice. By the 1980s, however, the Kibbutzim have fallen from grace. Many were in financial difficulties, the younger generation was leaving, and attempts to establish new Kibbutzim, similar to the veteran ones, were largely unsuccessful. Under these circumstances, the state's desire to settle Jewish citizens in the periphery required new ideas, opening

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opportunities also for NRMs. Despite being suspected by the state (and resented by the religious establishment) NRMs were not only allowed to build settlements, part of the Zionist project, they also received direct state support.

The citizenship regime began changing in the mid-1980, offering new ideas of good citizenship, in line with a new neo-liberal ethos. The collective ethos was replaced by a more individualistic and competitive one, though like elsewhere, neo-liberalism in Israel has only partially undermined state power and also incorporated national sentiments (Harvey, 2005, 84). Neo-liberalism transformations allowed other paths for NRMs to establish themselves within Israel, such as alternative educational initiatives. Israel's education system was strongly affected by social and economic changes, especially the non-religious and secular schools. Declining state investments in education, higher demands of parents, and a growing individualist ethos have all led to different educational alternatives. While the number of private schools remains small, various semi-private initiatives, usually initiated by upper-middle class parents or by entrepreneurs/activists emerged. These institutions offer alternatives stressing excellence, unique pedagogy, or a safe environment. Consequently, NRMs, like anthroposophy, who were able to offer educational alternatives found another way to insert themselves within society and receive recognition and legitimacy.

In both cases, whether it was republican or neo-liberal paths, NRMs in Israel attracted mostly the educated, Jewish middle classes. While there are no official statistics, from our interviews and encounters, it is safe to say that members come from the "old elites," Ashkenazi (of European descent), from the main urban centers and the Kibutzim.

The Emin: the republican path

The Emin Society (also known today as the Eminent Way and the Template Network) was founded in England in the early 1970s by Raymond Armin (a.k.a Leo) and soon after reached Israel. The Emin's teaching and practices are eclectic, based on various esoteric and occult sources. Israel became one of the movement's largest centers (Beit-Hallahmi, 1992; Amram, 2019); the branch in Tel-Aviv included by 1982 around 350 members. The movement received negative public attention, was branded as a cult by an official government committee, and mentioned in later government reports as a threat to society. In response, the Emin stressed their patriotism and sense of belonging to Israel, explaining that: "We have read Israel's Declaration of Independence the principles and goals and witnessed the gap between them and reality. Because we know our members are working successfully to accomplish these ideals and we know that the spirit of pioneering is within us, and it is obvious to us we are part of Israel and the Jewish people, we feel that it is our duty to do all we can to make Israel better" (Commission Report, 106). Emin members continuously stressed their contribution to state and society, especially military service and settlement. Being Jewish Israelis, military service in Israel was mandatory for the members but they took special pride of their service in elite combat units, a measure of patriotism and contribution.

In 1986, the Emin, supported by state institutions, established a communal settlement, on the remains of Maale Tzvia, a Kibbutz founded seven years earlier and

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deserted by its members (Amram, 2019). Emin members were now officially taking part in a Zionist national project and could proudly describe themselves as pioneers. The settlement taken over by the Emin, with the government's implicit blessing, was part of a government plan in 1979 to establish 30 settlements or "outlooks" (Mitzpim) in the northern part of Israel. Placed on mountain tops, overlooking Arab towns and villages the Mitzpim were to serve as a wedge, separating Arab settlement concentration and to limit their territorial extension, and to halt the alleged take-over of state lands by Arabs (Yiftachel and Carmon, 1997).

"Demographic engineering" was an essential part of Zionist ideology and state-building designed to establish Jewish presence and control of land, at the expense of Arab citizens (Shmaryahu-Yeshurun and Ben-Porat, 2021). After statehood, different plans were made to ensure that Jews will be a majority in every part of the state. In early years of statehood, the plans relied upon population dispersal and settlement of Jewish immigrants, many of them from Muslim countries, at times forcefully, in the periphery areas where Jewish population was sparse (Tzfadia & Yiftachel, 2004). However, despite efforts and resources invested, majority of Jewish veterans and newcomers preferred to reside at the center rather than the periphery.

The Mitzpim were part of a wider plan for "Judaization of the Galilee," designed to ensure a positive demographic balance in favor of Jews. Jewish people were encouraged to relocate from the center, as the government created a range of incentives including state land at very low costs, physical infrastructure at negligible costs, generous housing assistance, and high-quality municipal and educational services (Yiftachel and Carmon, 1997). Emulating the American suburbs, the new settlements were to offer their (exclusively Jewish) upper-middle class residents a quality of life in a communal setting, providing not only improved infrastructure but also the right to exclude those unwanted. Settlement, however, was not only about private economic incentives, but also part of a national ideology described as a new pioneering that, consequently, carried also symbolic rewards for those taking part in the settlement.

The Emin's place in the settlement project, however, was not without opposition. While Emin members have all served in the military, in line with the requirements of the Jewish Agency, who owned the land, they were still branded a cult by government reports. A senior official of the Agency described the dilemma:

> On the one hand, there are rules and regulations the Jewish Agency follows…we serve Jews, people who served in the military and members of the Zionist Federation…they answer these criteria. I think the state should not interfere with personal beliefs…as long as being member of the Emin is legal, I must allow them to settle, and I believe they will build an excellent settlement. But, on the other hand, people of the government commission, whom I cannot ignore, tell me that Emin are neo-fascist and you are helping in the making of a neo-fascist cult. I don't believe you can contain cults by administrative means, but of course building a settlement for a cult is undesirable. So let me assure you—Maale Tzvia will not be a cult settlement (quoted in Livne, 1987).

The Emin's defense line against the accusations was the argument of them being normative citizens, contributing to the common good and deserving to be part of the

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project. In a letter to a member of Parliament the Emin Spokesperson complained of the accusations: "This campaign of extremists is an assault and defamation of 500 law abiding citizens who serve in the military as reservists and whose activity is for self-betterment and improvement of the State of Israel" (8.2.1984).

Through the years, Maale Tzvia established itself among the other Jewish settlements in the area. In their website, it is described as a "Community settlement whose residents are members of the Emin movement…Emin members established Maale Tzvia in the Galilee as an expression of contemporary pioneering and Zionism." The school in Maale Tzvia, The Golden Education Template, based on Emin principals, was recognized by the ministry of education and is currently open to children from the area. Its website presents an educational philosophy that "seeks to provide students values and tools for independent learning while allowing for space and attention to the inner qualities of every child waiting to come out, grow and develop…alongside preparing them for the demand for excellence and skills they will encounter after they will graduate…" (https://get-zvia.org/?page_id=12). The description resides well with the current pride members take on being economic self-reliant and good citizens, compatible with a neo-liberal perception. As one member described: "look around you, the cars, the houses, the quality of life, people live well here…people work, every family is an independent economic unit, there is no collectivity and everything works fine" (interview to authors).

When criticized for being a cult and a "foreign element," Emin members did not hesitate to posit their contribution. This was especially pertinent against their adversaries, the anti-cult organization Yad la-Achim, whose ultra-orthodox activists are exempt from serving in the IDF: "The people of Yad la-Achim, who do not serve in the Army, and live on our expense, try to teach us about Zionism and security. Ninety-five percent of our men served in the army. We have commando fighters, pilots, naval commando, whatever you like. A high percentage served in combat units. Our sons, who continue us, go to the army in great numbers" (Caspit, 2003).

A plan to open a military preparatory program in the Emin settlement in 2003 raised again the objections against the group that seemed to subside (Ben-Porat and Huss, 2023). Pre-military preparatory academies (in Hebrew, Mechinot) were first established in the late 1980s, and became popular in Israel, allowing young people before enlisting to the military to study and work together under different initiatives, religious, secular, and others. Opening a military preparatory, from the Emin's perspective, was a demonstration of their establishment in Israel, able to prepare young people who want to make most of their military service, many of them find their way to combat units and later become officers. The preparatory was to be led by veteran army officers, several of them members of Maale Tzvia, and was not to include any studies of the Emin way of life. Yet, opponents referred to the Commission Report and argued that the Emin should be prevented from educating future soldiers.

Initially, the Ministry of Defense approved the plan for the preparatory, but later retracted when opposition to the plan mounted and the Ministry of Education objected.

The debate also caught some media attention. One newspaper article title declared: "They are allowed to Command in the Commando, but are forbidden to prepare youth to military service" (Gorali, 2003). Another, explained that

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> The Emin are among the elite of Israeli society. Salt of the earth. Independent business people, entrepreneurs, artists, laborers and, above all, high ranking veteran officers and an enormous number of Sayeret Matkal [Israel's distinguished commando unit) veterans…. The members of the Emin come from the elite of Israeli society, the salt of the earth…especially, veteran officers of high rank. There is a "commercial quantity" of veterans of commando unit 269 in the Emin. (Caspit, 2003)

The use of the term "salt of the earth" was not incidental, as in the Israeli case it is embedded with the Zionist ideas of pioneering and contribution, symbolizing republican concepts of citizenship.

The prestigious army service of some of their members was used to fend of the accusations that membership in alternative spiritual movements is incompatible with a commitment to Israeli society and its core values. Yet, even the writers impressed with military credentials of Emin members remained somewhat suspicious. Caspit (2003) described Emin as one of the most mysterious cults in the world, with a strict hierarchical structure and a demand for blind obedience to the leader. His impressions from Maale Zvia were that although the settlement is welcoming and friendly, there is also something strange, and sinister: "Most of the questions marks keep hanging in the air," he concludes, "Mystery hovers, like a thick cloud, around the cult, its beliefs, its deeds and its members" (ibid).

The Emin appealed to the high court against the decision of the ministries of defense and education to shut down the academy. In the appeal, they denied the Emin was a cult, and presented it as a philosophy that encourages the perpetual study and development of the unique potential of every person. Moreover, the founders of the academy asserted that it does not teach the Emin doctrines, and is not different from other pre-military academies. They also emphasized that Maaleh Tzvia, with high percentage of officers and combat soldiers, with rich military experience, can provide the cadets proper training. The high court denied their appeal. The judges opined that the apprehension of the ministries to approve and fund the academy, which was based on the report of several government committees and Police reports, was justified.

In recent years Maale Tzvia encountered new challenges, as the Emin was losing members and struggling to find new ones. Residents who wanted to leave Maale Tzvia were prevented from selling their houses to people who are not Emin members, pushing down the market value of the houses. The regional council that has sided with residents attests to the integration and legitimacy of the settlement, or to the declining importance attributed to the Emin's danger. "Maale Tzvia is one of 35 settlements in the council. It is a unique settlement in the spirit of the Emin. Its residents are highly involved, inside and outside of the settlement, in voluntary communal, cultural and educational activity" (Haaretz, 19.7.2019).

Anthroposophy: educating citizens

The Anthroposophy's establishment in Israel was easier than the Emin, neither part of the government's investigative report nor a main target of anti-cult groups.

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Harduf, a communal settlement established by members of the Anthroposophy in 1982, not far from Maale Tzvia, is today a successful settlement that specializes in organic farming, educational initiatives, social therapy, and rehabilitation. While the Emin have one school, anthroposophy has branched out and its Waldorf kindergartens and schools operate in many locations across the country. Israeli Anthroposophists distanced themselves from groups like the Emin, claiming that Anthroposophy is "a Western, modern spiritual movement, based on individual social and spiritual freedom, and worldly renowned for its contribution to the sciences, the arts, education, agricultural and medicine" (letter, 27.7.87).

Established in Germany in 1913 by Rudolf Steiner, the doctrines and practices of the Anthroposophical society are based on Christian themes, modern German Philosophical ideas, and western esoteric and occult teachings. Jewish anthroposophist, who immigrated to Israel from Europe, established small Anthroposophical study groups and founded the first Anthroposophical branch in Israel in 1965 (Lubelsky, 2017; Zander, 2016). In the early 1970s young Israelis, most of them Kibbutz members, became interested in Steiner's writings and joined the Anthroposophical society. Anthroposophy did encounter some criticism, especially from ultra-Orthodox circles, and the anti-cult group *Yad Leachim* who described Anthroposophy as a "mystical-religious cult" that hides its true essence behind the veil of spirituality, as well as it anti-Jewish and anti-Semitic roots. Criticism also was raised in Israel against Anthroposophy education system, and Steiner's anti-Jewish sayings. Overall, however, Anthroposophy was not branded as a cult and achieved significant success in Israel (Zander, 2017; Huss *et al.*, 2016).

The Anthroposophical Waldorf educational system operates across the country with more than 30 schools and 100 kindergartens. This successful expansion can be attributed to wider changes of Israeli society in general and perceptions of education in particular. The foundations of public education established in Israel after statehood gradually gave way to privatization "from below," initiatives of parents dissatisfied with the education system and of different entrepreneurs. These changes are part of wider transformations of Israeli society and the neo-liberal shift. This includes, first, the replacement of collectivist values with individual ones; second, growing suspicion and doubt of public institutions and their ability to provide adequate services; and, third, belief in the values and benefits of individual choice, competition, and entrepreneurship. This has led to growing parental involvement in public education as partners, "customers," or even entrepreneurs of educational alternatives (Gofen and Blomqvist, 2014). In this process of "privatization from below," parents dissatisfied with the standard public education system, or interested in different pedagogy, are able to negotiate particular schools, publicly funded but independent.

The expansion of anthroposophy did not go unnoticed. In 2008, Abraham Michaeli, a Knesset [Israel's parliament] member of the Ultra-Orthodox Shas party, speaking in the name of concerned parents, demanded that the ministry of education did not allow anthroposophical programs to operate within schools:

> Our children, in the state of Israel, a Jewish country…it is unacceptable that in a school in Israel, a cult is allowed to operate…a cult that believes in angels, demons and who knows what else…a mystical, Christian cult, anti-Semitic,

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> that does not even hide it is a against Judaism…Parents are concerned that their own children, in the state of Israel, will leave their religion….

The minister of education at that time, Professor Yael Tamir (a renowned scholar of liberalism) responded:

> Anthroposophy is not a cult, certainly not a missionary cult, it is not a cult that engages with Christianity. It is an educational worldview, some like it more and some less, but it is like the Democratic schools and like other educational perspectives it has a place in the pluralist education in Israel. (Knesset, June 11, 2008)

By 2008, the Anthroposophical Waldorf educational system was already well-established in Israel. The schools, according to the website, promise "to provide a deep and meaningful answer to the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of the child," and "learning full of creativity…with a warm and personal tutoring of every child." Like many other educational alternatives that rose in these years, it juxtaposed itself to the allegedly impersonal and inflexible school system, appealing to parents who were looking for something different. Research has found that parents in Israel who choose alternative schools are from a higher socio-economic class background and that the schools tend to be homogeneous (Fishman, 2014). In a series of interviews we conducted with parents whose children were in the Waldorf system, words like "caring" or "personal touch" and "creativity" came up many times, as an explanation for their choice. The general school system was described as uninspiring, concentrated on achievement and lacking personal space for exploration and development, as one parent described it:

> It was our experience with the standard educational system that pushed us to explore anthroposophy…the system is stuck in its attempt to push for excellence, a factory for excellence and success that does not see the people. (Interview 3)

Contrary to teachers in the state school system described as fatigued or lacking the capacity to engage with pupils, educators in the Waldorf system are described as highly motivated:

> Our dream was to meet people, that our daughter will meet people with a calling, that see education as a mission, who can put themselves in the place of a child and to relate to what he feels and needs…my impression was that teachers in the general school system are mainly concerned with the teaching materials they have to deliver. (Interview 11)

Some of the parents were familiar with the Waldorf education system before making the decision. Others were looking for an educational alternative, and afterwards became familiar with the pedagogy and to a lesser extent the philosophy behind them. And, some admit they could have been equally happy with another alternative:

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> If there was another private school available, I would consider it too…I mean, I don't rule out the democratic schools…my fantasy was an art school…but because the only alternative was anthroposophy, I sent my children to that school. (Interview 9)

The schools offer, or demand, a relatively high level of parental involvement, making the parents partners in the school. The parents, who pride themselves on their taking part in their children's education, see it as part of their way of life, putting children's education as a priority.

> The priority of the parents. Because…it is an education that costs a lot and you really need to change your priorities. Many times you will give up on other things, travel abroad, designer clothes or a better car to provide for it. And, when we consider moving elsewhere, education will be the first thing on our list…we will check where we can have the best anthroposophy education, and then all the rest. (Interview 12)
> People that have the right priorities and values because they put their children's education first. Because it usually costs more money it means they will sacrifice other things for good education. People with values I would say. (Interview 11)

It is all the case, that these parents are relatively affluent and educated, in line with what is known about parents who seek educational alternatives.

> regular schools have an advantage of being more diverse…it is both an advantage and a disadvantage…you don't have this in an anthroposophy school. It is a unique group of people, usually of a particular social and economic class…like living in a bubble. (Interview 5)
> When I look at the parents in school…I think it of higher social-economic class, most of us have an academic degree…people who see education as something wider, something beyond grades and scales. (Interview 8)

Overall, anthroposophy's ability to cater to the desire of middle-class and educated parents for alternative schooling facilitated their establishment in Israel. The contribution of Waldorf education in Israel to good citizenship, according to the neoliberal concept of citizenship, is emphasized in the publications of Gilad Goldschmidt, a leading Israeli Anthroposophist, who was one of the founders of Waldorf education in Israel. Goldschmidt, who resides in Kibbutz Harduf, and teaches at Oranim college for education, studied the integration of Waldorf's alumni in Israel society, according to their own perception, in a PhD thesis entitled "A Decade of Waldorf Alumni in Israel," written in Haifa University.

In his thesis, Goldschmidt examined the integration of Waldorf Alumni in three areas, gap year voluntary community service (shnat Sherut), military service, and academic studies. Goldschmidt asserted that his research results show that the trait characteristics of Waldorf graduates, according to Rudolf Steiner, namely, strength and resilience, responsibility and maturity, vitality and interest, independent personality, flexible and vital thinking, and strong will power, were found amongst the Israeli

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Waldorf alumni. According to Goldschmidt, "The study's main conclusion is that an education system, that does not emphasize competitive achievements, and encourages artistic and creative expressions, hands-on work, a connection with nature, warm personal relationships, and a pedagogical process without any exams and grades, can produce graduates who successfully cope with the challenges they face in different frameworks, following completion of their studies" (Goldshmidt, 2012, vii).

A later article (Goldshmidt, 2013) dedicated to the Army service of Israeli Waldorf graduates emphasizes the contribution of Waldorf's education to the coping skills, personal advancement, social success of the alumni, and "issues relating to life readiness and coping by young adults throughout their military service." The graduates, he observed, are able "to set aside the immediate situation in order to observe it as though from the outside; the ability to adapt; diligence and ability to work hard; the ability to create personal connection in a wide range of situations and diverse populations; maturity and readiness." All linked these traits to the education they received in school (Goldshmidt, 2013, 106). Research findings show "the individualistic aspect of independent, aware personalities among the graduates," and emphasizes the graduates' independence, strong personalities, and "the moral and ethical values on which they were raised."

Anthroposophical education (albeit being a "bubble"), therefore, "prepare the pupils better and more thoroughly for coping with reality's challenges, based on the premise that faster is not necessarily better, and that the necessary skills providing adults with coping abilities are learned gradually over a lengthy, multidisciplinary set of phases …it seems that they are resilient and capable of coping" (Goldshmidt, 2013, 107).

Thus, the neoliberal values and concepts of good citizenship—namely that Anthroposophical education "prepares its graduates for entering real life"—was claimed to provide also a republican contribution (being good soldiers), another source of legitimacy.

Conclusion

Israel provides a challenge to NRMs, because of the lack of church–state separation, the political power of Jewish orthodoxy, and the overall consensus and commitment to the idea of the Jewish state. Accordingly, not only the general concerns over NRMs being depicted as cults played a part in the suspicion towards them, like elsewhere, it was also their portrayal as a "foreign element," non-Jewish and potentially threatening the very concept of a Jewish state. The opposition to NRMs, which included government investigations, reports, and public debates, however, has seemed to subside in recent years. In this preliminary work, we suggest two paths through which NRMs were able to legitimize themselves. The first, republican, taking part in military service and in the pioneering efforts of "Judaization." The latter allowed the Emin to receive state-land for settlements based on their way of life. The second, taking advantage of liberalization and individualization, Anthroposophy offers unique educational alternatives catering for the needs of Israel's upper-middle classes. The two paths, republican and liberal, are ideal types, not mutually exclusive and potentially strengthen each other. Thus, the Emin's school attracts parents and children from neighborhood settlements and the Anthroposophical education is claimed also to prepare students

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for excellence in military service. Overall, NRMs were able to establish themselves as "good citizens" both contributing to the common good and for the making of self-sufficient citizens and entrepreneurs.

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