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MAKAN

## Introduction

The Editors

In states that experience national and ethnic conflicts, the “space” is usually an expression of the official and privileged narrative of the dominant group. This is particularly the case when the confrontations between the parties to the conflict exhibit characteristics of colonialism. The dominant narrative, and the memory to which it is attached, are preserved and entrenched by spatial planning and urban design, among other things. Designers, planners and architects who are members of the dominant group are partners in narrating the story of their group. They design and represent its historical, political and geographical narrative within the space. At the same time, they ignore the narrative and memory of subaltern groups, which include indigenous peoples and ethnic, cultural and national minority groups, and sometimes even erase them altogether (Fenster, 2007; Sandercock 2003; Zukin, 1995). The spatial story also reflects the collective and private memory from a particular point of view, while at the same time marginalizing other versions of this

story. It is therefore an expression of spatial power that contributes to defining the public past (Hayden, 1995; Zukin, 1995; Casey, 1987).

Some theorists argue that memory is connected to place and space, and that it enables an individual to connect with the built-up environment, which is part of the cultural landscape (Hayden, 1995; Zukin, 1995; Casey, 1987). In addition, memory, including spatial memory, which is part of personal and collective identity, locates the individual within a broader historical framework: that of the family, community, city and nation. Thus the loss of spatial memory can lead to the loss of personal and collective identity (Fenster, 2005).

In the Israeli context, the space of the state primarily reflects the Zionist ideological narrative. This narrative comprises stories and images such as the “tabula rasa” (the blank slate) and “making the desert bloom,” which are actually expressions of dispossession and control. The spatial planning carried out by the new state sought, and is still seeking



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today to erase spatial design that contradicts the Zionist narrative from the space. Spatial planning in the new state ignored the narrative and memory of the Palestinian minority, and determined that the design of the space would reflect the nascent narrative and memory of the Jewish majority (Fenster, 2007; LeVine, 1999).

Fenster (2007) argues that professional and institutional planning in Israel represents and implements the Zionist ideology, and thus is necessarily unable to represent the narrative and spatial memory of the Palestinians. She further argues that, “The process of building the Jewish nation included not only social, cultural, economic and political building, but also the construction of the space as Jewish and the erasure of the Palestinian past” (Fenster, 2007: 193). Said (1993) links geography and memory with occupation and control. He argues that the major Palestinian struggle is the struggle for “the right to a remembered presence,” and the related right to “possess and reclaim a collective historical reality.”

This volume of *Makan* explores the issue of “The Right to a Spatial Narrative.” It is divided into two parts. The first presents three academic articles that describe various aspects of the policies and spatial practices of the State of Israel. According to the authors, the objective of these policies and practices is to erase the Palestinian narrative by deliberately

forgetting, radically altering and destroying the Palestinian historical, geographic and political space. In the first article, entitled “Zionizing the Palestinian Space: Historical and Historiographical Perspectives,” Ilan Pappé sets forth the history of the political geography of the land of Palestine from the Ottoman era, which was brought to an end by the arrival of the Zionist movement in the region. Pappé argues that from the 1930s onwards, the Zionist narrative regarded Palestine as an empty place, a frozen and stagnant space. The Zionist movement therefore sought to move into every empty place in the space. At the end of the British Mandate, it owned 5.8% of the land in the space of Palestine, but following the departure of the British in 1948, the movement seized 80% of land in the newly-established state in a process of destruction and erasure. In 1967, the Zionist movement’s control over the land expanded, stretching from the northern Golan Heights to the Suez Canal.

Pappé also addresses the shifting Israeli academic discourse. In the late 1980s, researchers emerged within Israeli academia who contested the historical narratives of the Zionist movement. From the year 2000, however, critical and post-Zionist academic research was supplanted, primarily due to the effects of the Second Intifada, by neo-Zionism, which offers a “reaffirmation of the classical Zionist spatial interpretation of the present



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reality.” Neo-Zionist attentions are not only directed at the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), but also at the Naqab (Negev), through a policy of transferring the Arab Bedouin to reservations. Today, ultra-nationalism prevails within the geography departments of Israeli universities, and as Pappe concludes, “The old and romantic discourse of Zionism as nationalism has returned, where the land – that which was robbed from the Palestinians – is the major constitutive factor of self and nation.”

The next two articles address the space of the city of Yaffa (Jaffa). Prior to 1948, Yaffa was a central and prosperous city from a spatial, economic and social perspective. However, the Nakba of 1948 led to a drastic transformation in the human, physical, social and economic space of Yaffa, as in all Palestine. In his article, “The Islamic *Waqf* in Yaffa and the Urban Space: From the Ottoman State to the State of Israel,” Mahmoud Yazbak traces the spatial history of the Islamic *waqf* in Yaffa during the Ottoman era, and describes the spatial changes that followed the establishment of the State of Israel.

Yazbak directly links the increase in the *waqf*'s assets and buildings to the economic prosperity of Yaffa. The number of buildings and social and economic enterprises registered as *waqf* properties grew most markedly during periods of economic prosperity, which included the

governorship of Muhammad Pasha Abu Nabut during the years 1805-1819. This time was a period of local economic growth, especially following the development of the port. The *waqf* buildings and properties generated major changes within the urban and architectural space of the city.

Yazbak's article focuses on the spatial and physical history of the thirteen mosques built throughout Yaffa prior to the Nakba, and relates their story following the establishment of Israel, when they were brought under state control through the mechanism of the Absentees' Property Law – 1950. Yazbak argues that this law had “a devastating impact on the Palestinian *waqf*.” He shows how this and other Israeli laws led to the destruction or theft of most of the *waqf* properties in Yaffa and all over the state. The destruction or neglect of these buildings altered the urban landscape in Yaffa, and reflected an official policy of erasing the spatial history of the Palestinians, while underpinning and nurturing the narrative of the dominant Jewish majority. However, Yazbak argues that these efforts have not been fully successful, since the systematic destruction of the *waqf* in Yaffa has driven the local Palestinian minority to develop other means of preserving its national and cultural history and identity.

In an article entitled, “‘The Jaffa Slope Project’: An analysis of ‘Jaffaesque’



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narratives in the new millennium,” Ravit Goldhaber examines the “Jaffa Slope” local master plan, the declared objective of which is to provide a solution to the physical deterioration of the Jaffa Slope, located to the west of the Arab neighborhoods of Ajami and Jabaliya. The plan also included proposals for evacuation, construction and land reclamation to increase the supply of land for luxury housing.

The article analyzes and compares the institutional discourse and the discourse of the Palestinian residents of Yaffa surrounding the implementation of the plan. Goldhaber argues that the discourses represent a struggle over the spatial design of Yaffa. The first, institutional, discourse locates the implementation of the Jaffa Slope plan within the policy and practice of urban-social progress and rehabilitation, and maintains that the plan was designed to enhance the quality of the physical and social lives of the residents. Goldhaber contends that the institutional discourse reveals the establishment’s lack of “understanding or recognition that any process of rehabilitation and preservation must be inclusive of the residents within their traditional neighborhoods and their national heritage, and be commensurate to their financial capacity.”

The institutional discourse is paralleled by the discourse of the Palestinian residents of Yaffa, which reflects the latter’s sense of threat and fear of

expulsion, for a second time, from Yaffa and the Judaization of the space. The policy and practice of preserving and “rehabilitating” the space and buildings of Yaffa, with some private investment, ultimately led to its privatization and a consequent upsurge in property prices. The price increases drove Palestinian residents of Yaffa out of the circle of buyers, and brought affluent Jews into the city. Goldhaber argues that, in addition to the municipality’s declared objectives of the rehabilitation and advancement of Yaffa, underlying the plan were also the unannounced, concealed goals of Judaizing and privatizing the space. The small number of Arabs who remain in Yaffa pose no threat to the Judaization of the space, but merely, “redecorate the imaginary Jaffaesque environment with a few authentic drops of color.”

The second part of this volume of *Makan* presents selected excerpts from an objection submitted by Adalah to the National Council for Planning and Building on 31 October 2007 against the regional plan for the Be’er Sheva metropolitan area. The objection is permeated by a discourse of the historical, spatial and cultural rights of the native Palestinian residents of the space. The objection is followed by excerpts from the state’s response, as provided in oral statements made by planning authority officials at a hearing held in the presence of the investigator on 2 July 2008. The



response reflects the condescending narrative of the state, which sweeps aside the needs and demands of the Arab Bedouin in the Naqab, and its cultural, social and spatial distinctiveness. The institutional narrative can be clearly seen to contradict and oppose the narrative of the local Arab Bedouin residents.

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