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# “The Jaffa Slope Project”: An Analysis of “Jaffaesque” Narratives in the New Millennium

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## Introduction

The Jaffa Slope project is a development plan that was drafted for the city of Jaffa (Yaffa in Arabic) in the 1960s. It encompasses the Arab neighborhoods of Jabaliya and Ajami and the underlying shoreline, known as the Jaffa Slope. The aim of the project is to create new land by land reclamation, thereby creating open spaces for the public and land for building apartments of a relatively high standard, and making greater use of the shoreline (Local Master Plan – Jaffa Slope No. 2236). The project serves as a “shadow plan,” and accordingly any project implemented within its confines must conform to its directives. Although several stages of the project have been implemented over the past forty years, it was only in 1995 that it received final official approval. The project was implemented in accordance with the land policies adopted by municipal planners at various stages. However, its basic principles have remained unchanged since its launch: namely, to alter the social and physical fabric of these neighborhoods.

The public discourse surrounding the project and its implementation has constituted an arena in which Jaffa’s various actors (including the Jewish establishment and the Arab population) have battled over the redesign of the space. The municipality presents the project as part of its overall regional policy of integrated socio-urban rehabilitation and development, which ostensibly aims at enhancing the lives of those living in the Arab neighborhoods and improving their image and status. By contrast, the local Arab discourse reflects a sense that the community faces an existential threat.

In this article, I will argue that the implementation of the Jaffa Slope project reflects a convergence of national, economic and socio-urban interests that has given rise to a struggle over spatial identity. I will also contend that the competition over space and the use of space in Jaffa can be understood in the context of Israel as a society that is based on a Judaizing spatial ideology (Yiftachel, 1999; 2006) and has a liberal economic structure (Shalev, 2006). I shall further

examine the implications of this form of development on the indigenous Arab population, as well as its impact on relations between the Jewish and Arab residents of Jaffa.

I shall present my arguments through an analysis of the discourse of the establishment, in order to cast light on the local spatial policy, alongside an analysis of the local Arab discourse, which reflects the Arab struggle to hold onto the land and underscore its Arab character.

The article contains five sections. The first proposes “ethnic logic” as a theoretical framework for the occupation of indigenous cities by settler societies and immigrants. Next follows an outline of the principles of the Jaffa Slope project and planning policy in Jaffa over time. Thirdly, the article will address the national, economic and socio-urban interests that have been pursued through the Jaffa Slope project. The fourth section focuses on the discourse of the establishment and the local Arab discourse surrounding the plan and its implementation. The final section considers the implications of the project for the native Arab population of Jaffa, Jewish-Arab relations in the city, and the future of Jaffa’s Arab community.

### **Ethnic logic and the occupation of indigenous cities**

As indicated by Lefebvre (1996), urban space offers its inhabitants “the right to

the city”. This right consists of openness, flexibility, the recognition of differences, the right to be included, the right to develop an individual or collective identity, and autonomous decision-making, alongside an egalitarian distribution of resources and capital. However, his vision of urban space has remained confined to the realm of theory, as the right to the city of urban inhabitants is diminished by the constantly shifting balances of powers between social groups and their struggles over the control of spatial design. When social groups do not belong to a single ethnos, ethnic logic exacerbates the struggle over urban spatial design and control. This logic marginalizes vulnerable ethnic groups and relegates them to the city’s economic, political, social and spatial margins (Sibley, 1995; Yiftachel, 1999). According to Yiftachel (2006), ethnic logic comes into play where there is an attempt to consolidate the independence of a nation, outline the boundaries of a new country and populate an external frontier (settlement in a different country or continent) or an internal frontier (settlement in mixed cities) with settler societies and immigrants (Yacobi and Zfadia, 2004; Roded, 2006). The external frontier is populated by the settler society following their invasion of or immigration to an area. A good illustration of this process is European emigration to Australia and

Canada in the 18th century.

The internal frontier is populated by the settler society (the majority group) after their dispersion throughout and settlement in the areas in which the state wishes to reinforce the majority group’s control over the minority group. Examples are provided by Sri Lanka, Estonia, Greece and Malaysia (Yiftachel and Kedar, 2003). The settler society fosters its own ethno-cultural structure within the country’s borders and establishes a hierarchy of ethnic status. Within this context, the settler society attempts to redesign the cultural-national space in order to legitimize its appropriation and occupation. The settler society appropriates the space in such a way as to avoid mixing with the local population and sometimes even to facilitate its ethnic cleansing (Sibley, 1995). At the same time, the dominant class gains in strength relative to the lower and middle classes, thereby creating a society founded on ethno-class stratification. Yiftachel and Kedar (2003) indicate that this process leads to the creation of three main ethno-classes: the founding charter group, which acquires the dominant status; the immigrant group, which undergoes a process of upward assimilation within the charter group; and the native group (considered to be “locals” or “foreigners”), which is relegated to the economic, social and spatial periphery of the new society.

This exclusion is perpetrated through

territorial control, the “ethnic logic” of capital flows, the legal system and the land planning regime, and establishes and imposes the dominant culture, while undermining – even eradicating – the indigenous culture (Benvenisti, 1997; Ben-Shemesh, 2003; Bar-Gal, 2002; Roded, 2006; Yiftachel, 2006). Yiftachel (2006) and Roded (2006) illustrate the process of settling and occupation by settler societies in the internal frontier in Sri Lanka and Estonia, and demonstrate how planning is a crucial tool in expanding the control exercised by dominant groups. In Sri Lanka, a battle was waged over the division of space and power between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority. In Estonia, the process involved an anti-Soviet land and planning policy that excluded Russian citizens, who make up a third of the country’s population, and even revoked their citizenship. In parallel, a policy of “Estonia-ization” was adopted in the political, cultural and spatial system with the aim of reviving the Estonian nation and culture.

A mixed city plays a significant role in shaping politico-spatial relations between ethnic groups and reproducing them through spatial planning and production, the dominant group’s control over the accessibility and distribution of resources and capital, and in forging symbolic contents for space and feeding off preferred cultural sources (Yiftachel and

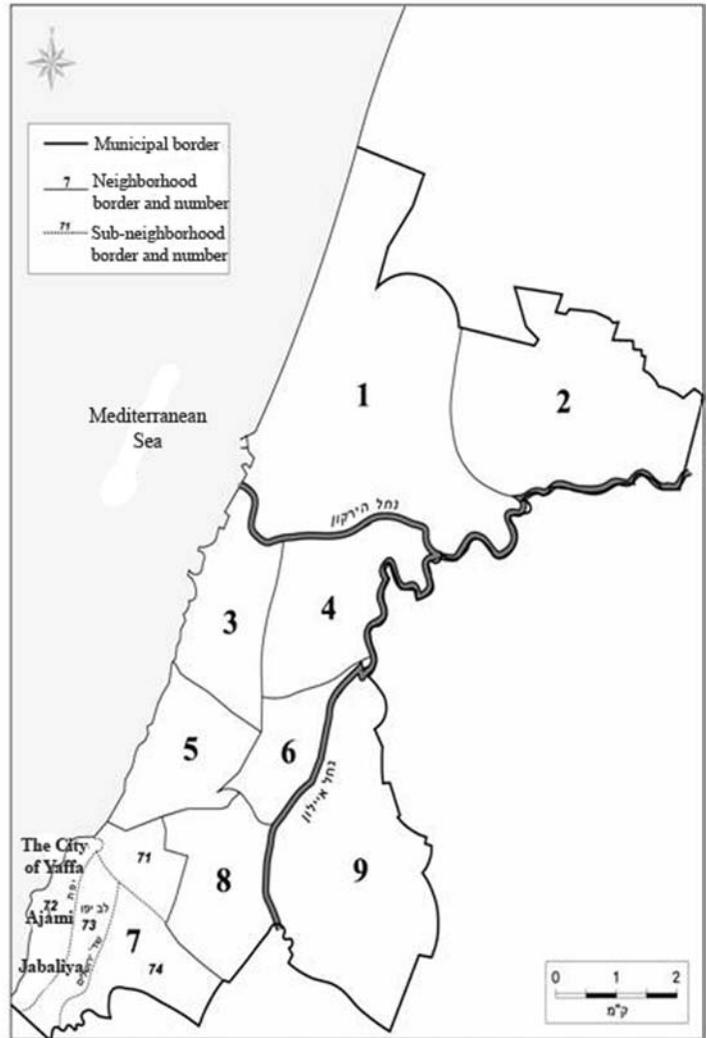
Yacobi, 2003). In mixed cities, ethnic logic is exposed through urban policy. At times it is apparent, and at others it is concealed behind various interests. The concept of the “mixed city” describes a mixed living pattern in which several ethnic groups inhabit a collective space. In Israel it describes a living pattern for Jews and Arabs that is not prevalent: only around 8% of Arabs live in mixed cities, all of which have a clear Jewish majority (Hadas and Gonen, 1994; Monterescu and Fabian, 2003; Hamdan, 2006; Yacobi, 2006; Falah, 1996; Yiftachel and Yacobi, 2003). Most of the mixed cities in Israel came into being as a result of geographic, historical and political circumstances whose roots lie in the establishment of the state (Gonen and Hamaisi, 1992), and were not the product of planning or regulation on the part of the government. The Arab residents of the mixed cities tends to live in concentrated areas separate from the Jewish residents (a frequent pattern among ethnic and racial groups in many cities worldwide [Ben Artzi and Shoshani, 1986; Boal, 1976]). However, there are also mixed neighborhoods that contain both Jewish and Arab residents, in which Arabs are again generally a minority. Within Jaffa, Ajami and Jabaliya are isolated Arab neighborhoods with large Arab majorities. The neighborhoods located alongside them, to the east of Yefet Street, are mixed neighborhoods. Because mixed cities are a

marginal phenomenon within Israel’s urban space and incompatible with the ideology of Judaization and spatial segregation, there is a pressing need to probe the overall interests that lie behind public planning policy in these communities.

This article seeks to demonstrate how the ethnic logic that guides public planning policy in Jaffa (in the form of national and economic interests) has contributed to the occupation of the city and to its transformation into a Jewish city. It will also discuss how this logic has had a deleterious effect on the native Arab population of Jaffa, through the various spatial design and planning and the process of gentrification, on which I shall elaborate below, that began in Jaffa in the late 1980s.

### **Main principles of the Jaffa Slope project and planning policy in Jaffa**

The Jaffa Slope project (Local Master Plan No. 2236), which covers the Jaffa Slope (the area west of Kedem Street down to the sea) and the Arab neighborhoods of Ajami and Jabaliya (east of Kedem Street) (Local Master Plan No. 2660), was drafted by the local municipality to provide a solution to the problem of the physical deterioration and social disintegration of these two neighborhoods (see map no. 1).<sup>1</sup> On the slope, the building plans were suspended and only the reclaimed area is now being



**Map no. 1:** Tel Aviv-Yaffa: Division of neighborhoods and sub-neighborhoods

dealt with.<sup>2</sup> The plan was submitted for approval as long ago as 1965 and first began to be implemented at that time. However, it was only finally approved by the planning authorities in January 1995. Over the years since the plan was first submitted, the municipality's public planning policy has altered significantly with regard to these neighborhoods.

A serious assessment of the magnitude of the implications of the public planning policy in Jaffa on its Arab residents must consider the status and importance of Jaffa in Palestinian society prior to its occupation in 1948. Jaffa developed into a major port city under Ottoman and British rule, and a major political, economic, social and commercial center. The city established commercial contacts both inside and outside the country and became renowned, among others things, for its thriving citrus industry. Its prestige grew to the extent that it became known as the "port city of Jerusalem" (Kark, 2003). The 1948 War of Independence, according to the Jewish narrative, or the *Nakba* (catastrophe), in the Arab narrative, stunted the urban development of Jaffa and the surrounding area, along with other Arab cities in Israel. Of the approximately 70,000 Arabs living Jaffa in its heyday in 1947, only a small percentage of Arabs did not flee from or were not expelled from their homes. The remaining Arab population – around 3,800 people in total – was concentrated

in Ajami and Jabaliya, which were subjected to Israeli military rule until 1950 (Portugali, 1991). Ajami and Jabaliya (named *Givat Aliya* in Hebrew) were thereafter known as "the Arab neighborhoods". The Al-Menashiya neighborhood was destroyed and the Old City of Jaffa deserted (Mazawi and Makhoul, 1991).

In 1950, Jaffa was merged with Tel Aviv and became one of the city's districts (District 7). Henceforth, the official name of Tel Aviv became Tel Aviv-Jaffa. The cultural, social and economic structures that had been part of Jaffa's past collapsed entirely, as did its Arab community institutions, which ceased functioning. The Arab local leaders and other members of the upper-middle socio-economic classes abandoned Jaffa, leaving behind a devastated community lacking a local leadership and comprised mainly of people of low socio-economic standing. Thus Jaffa, whose former status had earned it the epithets, "The Bride of the Sea" and "The Bride of Palestine," became – in the words of Shaker (1996) – the "slum of Tel Aviv". The public planning policy that has guided the municipality over the years, which I shall review below, is one of the main reasons for the current dismal state of Jaffa.

In the 1960s, an urban renewal policy was implemented, consisting of evacuation-construction and "brutal rehabilitation", which was used widely in

the Western world (Kipnis and Schnell, 1978). The plan involved evacuating and demolishing poor neighborhoods and placing the destitute population in public housing in other areas of the city. Most of the new neighborhoods planned for the evacuated areas were designed for a middle or upper class population (Hall, 1988). It was assumed that poverty could thereby be eradicated and private investment in the area stimulated (Carmon, 1993, 1997; Erez and Carmon, 1996). This assessment did not encompass the preservation of old buildings or houses of unique architectural or historical value, nor did it take into account the social problems likely to arise in the wake of the evacuation of entire neighborhoods. The “evacuation-construction” project, part of the Jaffa Slope project, that was planned for the neighborhoods of Ajami and Jabaliya involved evacuating the existing inhabitants (Arabs and Jews) from the space and demolishing some of the existing structures in order to build luxurious housing on the empty land for people of medium and high socio-economic means.

The plan also involved expanding the building areas by reclaiming a strip of land from the ocean (the site was declared a regional dumping ground for construction waste). The reclaimed site became an environmental, sanitary and aesthetic hazard for those living on the coast and to the marine environment (Or-Savorai,

1988). Though not official (Portugali, 1991), the policy of demolishing homes was nevertheless effective. Within the scope of the plan, the Israel Land Administration and the Amidar Housing Company, an Israeli housing company owned and operated by the government, demolished – with the support of the authorities – as many as 1,347 residential buildings (Shaker, 1996), amounting to 41.4% of the total number of residential units in Ajami and Jabaliya from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s (Municipality of Tel Aviv-Jaffa, 1993). The policy of evacuating and rebuilding the Arab neighborhoods, which was accepted by the Municipality of Tel Aviv-Jaffa and the Israel Land Administration, was implemented by contractors – the Amidar and Halmish building companies – over the course of approximately twenty years. It involved placing a freeze on new building, banning renovations, demolishing or sealing off buildings, and deliberately perpetuating the underdevelopment of the area (Mazawi and Makhoul, 1991).

The vacant, untended plots and abandoned and partially-demolished buildings, together with a decline in the quality of municipal services, lent the two neighborhoods an air of dysfunction. However, despite the deterioration of the area and the destruction of most of its infrastructure and buildings, most of its original inhabitants continued to live

there, a majority of whom were Arabs (Center for Socioeconomic Research, Municipality of Tel Aviv-Jaffa, 2003). Most Jews were able to leave the neighborhoods since they had the choice between financial compensation and public housing in other neighborhoods in Tel Aviv-Jaffa (such as Jaffa Daled) or in nearby cities (e.g. Bat Yam, Holon or Ramat Gan). Conversely, only one alternative housing project<sup>3</sup> was built for Arab inhabitants and it failed. Thus Arabs were left with the sole option of obtaining financial compensation, but this was not sufficient to enable most of them to relocate to other neighborhoods.

In the mid-1980s, public planning policy in Jaffa changed. Instead of “evacuation-construction”, the authorities adopted a policy of renewal, rehabilitation and development with the participation of local residents. Emphasis was placed on the combined tackling of physical planning problems and social problems. The catalyst for this change in policy was the harsh criticism that was leveled against the policy of urban renewal through brutal rehabilitation. Those implementing the plan were accused of disregard for the evacuees and of excluding them from the drafting process, as well as shortsightedness with regard to the heavy emotional toll extracted by forced evacuation and the social costs of destroying healthy communities (Carmon, 1993). In the spirit of the new planning

concept, the municipality sought to include the Ajami neighborhood in the national Neighborhood Rehabilitation Project, launched in the late-1970s. The municipality realized that the urban degeneration that was spreading throughout Jaffa would not be conducive to the creation of the infrastructure of a modern new neighborhood, and that it would not be possible to solve the problems of the Arab population without rehabilitating it on its own territory (Menachem and Shapiro, 1992). However, the Neighborhood Rehabilitation Project came to an end in 1994, before the physical and social aims of the project had been fully realized (Menachem and Shapiro, 1992).

From the beginning of the 1990s to the present day, the emphasis of the rehabilitation and development policy of the Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipality has shifted to focus primarily on business and economic factors (Carmon, 1993). This shift has given way to rising private enterprise, with public involvement. Private and public enterprise has primarily been reflected in the process of gentrification<sup>4</sup> (Ley, 1992; Short, 1989; Gonen and Cohen, 1989; Mazawi and Makhoul, 1991; Ginsberg, 1993; Monterescu and Fabian, 2003), which has seen the launch of housing projects for the wealthy population. The gentrification process has implications for the urban and social space in that it is instrumental to

urban renewal, and can help to eradicate poverty. It can also alter a neighborhood's image and status by bringing in more affluent residents while driving out the original, poorer inhabitants, and thereby damaging the social fabric of their communities (Schnell and Greitzer, 1994).

At first glance, the gentrification process in Jaffa appears to have been a natural urban process. In fact, however, it has been primarily driven by the municipal authorities through the investment of budgetary funds, the granting of building permits to real estate developers and individuals, the acceleration of the process of approving urban building plans, and rezoning of the land in Ajami (Monterescu and Fabian, 2003). This process is the response of a "defensive space": the dominant Jewish group is defending itself against the original ethnic group by attempting to alter the demographic balance in the area. This defense is achieved through the gentrification of the traditionally Arab neighborhoods, a process which attracts a new Jewish population to these areas. Gentrification can therefore be perceived as a means of occupying the indigenous city that takes place at an advanced stage of the settling process. As a result, the native Arab group views the gentrification process as a violent invasion of its space and as an attempt to intensify competition over the national and ethnic identity of

the land. This feeling is heightened by chronic housing shortages in the traditional Arab neighborhoods. Such sentiment was recently expressed in demonstrations that were staged in Jaffa in April 2007 in protest against the acute shortage of housing for young Arab couples and the authorities' failure to address this problem.

### **The national, economic and socio-urban interests behind the implementation of the Jaffa Slope project**

The website of the Municipality of Tel Aviv-Jaffa features a copy of Urban Building Plan 2236, the Jaffa Slope project. The Jaffa planning team and the Jaffa local administrative unit, established by the local municipality, provide extensive planning information on the upgrading of Jaffa's image within the urban landscape of Tel Aviv-Jaffa. The Israel Land Administration speaks of land privatization processes, the marketing of land to the public of Jaffa under preferred terms and ongoing investments in Jaffa as part of the general rehabilitation of the space. All of the above creates the impression that the discourse surrounding the Jaffa Slope project revolves around the professional spheres of planners and architects, who strive to rehabilitate the urban fabric to the benefit of the current and future populations. The discourse employs the universal language of

planning and architecture, which is devoid of any political or nationalistic expressions and is presented as a means of attaining functional and aesthetic goals in Jaffa for all citizens on an equal basis. It makes no reference to local history, culture or politics. The technocratic, rational character of this discourse blurs and obscures the implications of the Jaffa Slope project for the local Arab population and camouflages the Jewish national interest in gaining control over the land, as well as the economic interests that are involved in land privatization.

In the mid-1980s, the Municipality of Tel Aviv-Jaffa declared that its sights were set on the south of the city with the objective of rehabilitating the physical and social fabric of Jaffa, following many years of neglect. The Jaffa planning team was established for that purpose. The team came to the realization that the policy of rehabilitation through evacuation and construction had failed and that the Jaffa Slope project must be implemented in a different manner in order to achieve the following goals: preserve the area's urban characteristics and unique landscapes; nurture Jaffa's unique features to attract a new population to reinforce the existing one; and rehabilitate the local population within its traditional neighborhoods (Municipality of Tel Aviv-Jaffa, 1997). The rehabilitation of Jaffa required a massive allocation of resources. To this end, the municipality took action on

several levels. It promoted the drafting of an urban building plan for Jaffa to enable future construction in the area. It spearheaded efforts to include Jaffa in the Neighborhood Rehabilitation Project, and identified – through the Jewish Agency – the Jewish community in Los Angeles as a donor community for the rehabilitation project in Ajami. The municipality signed an economic agreement with the Israel Land Administration, the owner of the land and the structures standing on it, according to which the latter would allocate part of the profits from the sale of property in Jaffa to the development of its infrastructure. These actions made the implementation of the Jaffa Slope project possible.

In the mid-1990s, the Ministry of Housing and Construction initiated two separate public housing projects for Arabs living in Jaffa. The first project was designed for those entitled to housing in Jaffa's Arab community by the ministry. However, of the 400 housing units that were promised, only 50 were actually delivered. The second project was designed for young Arab couples and allowed them to construct their own houses on the land. However, the project failed due to the high development costs involved and because it was located outside of the traditional Arab neighborhoods. In the summer of 2001, a second attempt was made to market the "build your own house" project. This

attempt also ended in failure, for similar reasons. The municipality assumed that the project had failed because it lacked provision of housing, a problem which it held must be solved at the governmental level by the Ministry of Housing and Construction.

The Jaffa local administrative unit, which operates under the auspices of the Municipality of Tel Aviv-Jaffa, was established in 1999 to promote social and physical projects in Jaffa tailored to its particular needs (Municipality of Tel Aviv-Jaffa, 2003). The unit was another means through which the municipality attempted to demonstrate its willingness to address the problems faced by Jaffa and its Arab residents in a genuine manner and to promote its development and physical and social rehabilitation.

A description of the municipality’s activities reveals what is, on its face, a genuine attempt at the socio-urban rehabilitation of the traditional Arab neighborhoods. The resentment that these actions provoked among the Arab community is therefore puzzling at first glance. However, this resentment<sup>5</sup> reflects their fears over the implications of the plan on their future in the area as individuals and as a community, rather than the community’s objection to rehabilitation and development *per se*. The development plan attracted investors to Jaffa, who acquired land and property through competitive bids. Consequently

property prices in Jaffa soared to levels that drove the local Arab residents out of the competition. Massive, modern, luxury construction will bring a change in the local architectural landscape and efface its cultural past. Moreover, the Arab neighborhoods provide a sense of belonging and protective domesticity (Suttles, 1972), in the sense of personal and cultural security. Thus the struggle against the Jaffa Slope project is perceived by the Arab residents of Jaffa as an existential struggle against the destruction of the existing social fabric, and the “build your own house” project is not viewed as a viable solution to the housing problem, for the reasons discussed above. These factors substantiate fears that the Arab population will be excluded from their traditional neighborhoods and be evicted from the area, and that Jaffa’s Arab community will continue to disintegrate.

In addition to socio-urban rehabilitation, national and economic motivations underlie the efforts to advance the implementation of the Jaffa Slope project in its current format. The national Zionist movement, whose mission is to redeem the land and conquer the desert, had consolidated an ideology of Judaizing the space even before the establishment of the State of Israel (Yiftachel, 2006). This ideology was the basis for the belief among the supporters of Zionism that they could settle on Jewish land and demarcate its boundaries. Consequently, at the heart of

Zionist nationalism lies the project of de-Arabization, which has been conducted through the demographic, political and cultural homogenization of the territorial space and the de-ethnicization of the Arabs in Israel (Shenhav, 2006). Policies for implementing the Jewish ethno-national ideology have focused and continue to focus on the issue of land. It uses state institutions and non-governmental Jewish organizations, such as the Jewish National Fund and the Jewish Agency (Yiftachel and Kedar, 2003), to achieve its goals, which include the dispersion of the Jewish population throughout the land space in Israel, the *mitzpim* “lookout” settlements in the Galilee the *cokhavim* “star” settlements and the “individual” settlements in the Negev.<sup>6</sup> The way in which the Jaffa Slope project has been implemented reveals that the intention of its implementers is the Judaization of the space, even if there has been no official public declaration to this effect. The plan obscures the Arab community’s ideological and material connection to its traditional neighborhoods in various ways, all of which are indicative of the exclusionary nature of the spatial policy.

Firstly, as mentioned above, the municipality was engaged in the methodical destruction of housing units in the traditional Arab neighborhoods in Jaffa over a period of around twenty years and contributed to the underdevelopment of

the area. These policies were instrumental in driving the Arab community out of its traditional neighborhoods and in effacing its history, architecture and culture there. Secondly, and in retrospect, the Neighborhood Rehabilitation Project of the 1980s served only a small minority of Jaffa’s Arab inhabitants, and failed to compensate for the many previous years of physical and social neglect (Mazawi and Makhoul, 1991). Thirdly, the support provided by the municipality for the process of gentrification led to an increase in the rental value of properties and related expenses. Since most Arab inhabitants were financially unable to bear the tax burden or buy the properties, they left the area. Moreover, the Jaffa Slope project applies to the existing division of land, according to which building can be carried out on small areas of land only. The building zones for the areas covered by the plan are limited (the average area per housing unit is about 100m<sup>2</sup>), the building density is low (at about 70% coverage), and the height of the buildings cannot exceed three storeys. Thus the homes that have and will be built in the area covered by the plan will be suited to a culture that encourages small families, and not Arab culture, which traditionally encourages large families. Moreover, small housing units will prevent the neighborhoods’ local Arab residents from preserving its current living arrangements, in which parents live with their married children and families.

The resulting overcrowding will also probably drive many of the original Arab inhabitants out of the area.

Furthermore, within the scope of the project statutorily unregulated commerce in the Ajami market (known as the Citron Market or Gan-Tamar Market), was halted and its illegal operators (who according to the Municipality were merchants from Gaza) vacated. A large structure, the ground floor of which will house local shops and the upper floors residential apartments, is now planned in its stead. The building will also feature a European-style piazza, suited to the envisioned future population (Interview with the Jaffa planning team's architect in the Municipality, 2007). The planners expect that this residential building will attract a non-local population of an average socio-economic status, both because this socio-economic group has yet to coalesce in Jaffa and because of the European-inspired building style. The evacuation of the market primarily affected the poor population – namely the majority of the local Arab community – which was then forced to shop on Jerusalem Avenue and therefore to pay more for their goods.

The plan also includes several "flagship projects" built on large plots of land, including Andromeda Hill and Jaffa Village, which offer secluded residential grounds that are isolated from their physical and social environment. These

projects are designed for residents of a high socio-economic status and ensure the local Arab population's exclusion from the space. Indeed, the planners anticipate that the influx of a Jewish population of an average-to-high socio-economic status will lead to a maximal out-flux of the local Arab population from the traditional neighborhoods, and that only the Arab economic elite will be able to afford to remain in these neighborhoods. This restricted segment of the local population, which is expected to aspire to the pleasures of a luxury environment, will blend more easily into the new population and adapt to the majority culture. Thus, the physical and symbolic presence of the Arab residents in Ajami and Jabaliya is to decline and the area to assume a Jewish identity.

Accordingly, the implementation of the Jaffa Slope project assumed an ethno-national, Judaizing character. In the 1990s, it also took on an economic aspect, a development which reflected the structural changes that had taken place within Israel's state economy over the previous two decades, most notably the process of liberalization, through which direct state involvement declined and that of private business grew (Aharoni, 1998). Within Israel's economic structure there was a declining role for the state in the division of revenue and capital, and a greater openness to the world market and processes of privatization. These processes

permeated Israel's planning policy, even if the planning authorities did not adopt a specific policy of privatizing public space. In Jaffa, these processes were reflected in support for private and public gentrification, through offering tax incentives and foreign capital investments, for example in Andromeda Hill, and the acceleration of the privatization process by the Israel Land Administration. Luxury buildings as well as private and public investment in infrastructure have attracted an affluent population to the area, which in turn has brought quality services and luxury stores. This process has led to an increase in the rental value of the land, which has generated an increase in municipal taxes in the area, to the benefit of the public purse.

Furthermore, in flagship projects such as Andromeda Hill and Jaffa Village, the municipality transfers the costs of developing and maintaining the public areas to the tenants, thereby reducing its own expenses. Conversely, the circle of service providers and blue-collar workers expands. *Prima facie*, this policy would appear to benefit the general good and raise the economic status and thus quality of life of local inhabitants through the raised value of their properties. In fact, however, it has led to a situation in which local Arab inhabitants, the majority of whom are poor, cannot withstand the financial competition or the cost of maintaining property in expensive areas,

and are forced to leave for other poor neighborhoods. In practice, class polarization in Jaffa has grown and the Arab residents have been compelled to provide labor and services to new, rich Jewish inhabitants.

**The Establishment Discourse: A policy of socio-urban rehabilitation**

The establishment discourse that surrounds the Jaffa Slope project echoes a more general narrative about socio-urban rehabilitation. The quotations provided below were selected from among approximately thirty interviews conducted with representatives of the Jewish establishment (the Jaffa planning team within the Tel Aviv Municipality, the spokesperson for the Jaffa local administrative unit, the Israel Land Administration – Tel Aviv District) between 2003 and 2004 and in 2007. The establishment discourse focuses on the shifting physical, social and class character of the Arab neighborhoods and on improving the quality of the lives of the local inhabitants. The focus on these particular factors stems from tension that developed between the establishment and local Arab inhabitants as a result of long-standing neglect and unmet promises of rehabilitation. The establishment lacks 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. No other form of development will ensure sustainable development for Jaffa and its original inhabitants.

The plan, in its new format, has become a pro-resident plan. It will enable residents to build, renovate and even buy their apartments from the Israel Land Administration. In fact, it will enable them to continue to live in Ajami in far better environmental conditions... The Jaffa Slope project will attract affluent people of a higher socio-economic level and ultimately alter the image of these neighborhoods from poor neighborhoods into the pearl of Jaffa.

*Interview with an architect from the Jaffa planning team, 2 February 2004.*

It is important to stress that a large portion of the profits will be channeled back into Jaffa. We have an agreement to this effect with the municipality. As far as we are concerned, we are prepared to sell both to the residents and on the free market in order to promote development and enhance the appearance of the neighborhoods. Selling on the free market is important in order to bring new, affluent blood to Jaffa and change its unfortunate image.

*Interview with the Head of the Israel Land Administration – Tel Aviv District, 26 January 2003.*

All of the plans include directives for preserving the existing physical fabric, and design directives that are suited to the current style. Expropriations are kept to a minimum and there is sensitivity to the existing structures... The new buildings will also display different styles, including a European piazza and elongated windows instead of rounded ones. They [the locals] will have to get used to it or leave. But in any case, the majority will leave because they will not be able to bear the financial burden of maintaining the property and living in a luxury environment.

*Interview with an architect from the Jaffa planning team, 8 January 2007.*

### **The Local Arab Discourse: The Municipality’s policy as an existential threat to the community**

The local Arab discourse surrounding the Jaffa Slope project revolves around a struggle for control of the area and its Arab identity. The quotations below were selected from approximately one hundred interviews conducted with members of Jaffa’s Arab community between 2003 and 2004 and in 2007.

The local Arab discourse reflects a fear of an intent among the establishment to rid Jaffa of its Arab inhabitants and to Judaize the city. The Arab residents of Jaffa are aware of the fact that, as an ethnic minority in the city whose already weak influence is likely to evaporate within a

space that is controlled by the majority, becoming further dispersed as a community means being cut off from religious sites, Arab public institutions and a supportive social and spiritual environment, as well as the disintegration of the very fabric of their society. Therefore the struggle is perceived as being existential in nature. As a minority whose historical existence in the area has been interrupted and whose cultural and physical character has been devastated, nationalism by itself has not provided enough of a basis for identity, and therefore the local space has played a central role in maintaining the national-cultural identity of the Arabs in Jaffa (Schnell, 1994). The sense of territoriality within the traditional Arab neighborhoods in Jaffa is reflected in the concept of “sense of place”, as proposed by Relph (1976), who stressed the manifestation of feelings of identification with a place as a function of experiences that are attributed to the place, and then used to identify it. The physical changes that have been made to the environment and the altered composition of the Arab community in Jaffa have made experiences of the place for its Arab inhabitants a distant memory that cannot be recaptured.

Since 1948, attempts have been made to erase Arab Jaffa. The municipality, through its policy and plans, is waging a battle for the character of the space,

seeking to turn the once Arab city into a Jewish one.

*Interview with a 28-year-old Arab woman living in Jaffa.*

The Jaffa Slope project and the land reclamation were designed to develop Ajami not for the benefit of the Arab inhabitants who live here, but at their expense. These plans rob Jaffa’s Arabs, who are mostly poor, of any opportunity to continue to live in Jaffa. The plans expel the Arabs from their homes and their city... Building luxury neighborhoods creates a situation in which only people of high a socio-economic status can afford to buy homes here – in other words, Jews. Thus the plans were not designed to rehabilitate Ajami, but to Judaize it. This is a sophisticated way of kicking the Arabs out of here and settling Jews in their stead. If the idea really is to carry out renovations for the sake of the local population, then why is renovation not allowed? Why is there no construction for the Arab community? Why is there no building for young couples? New, expensive construction is beyond the financial means of most of the Arabs living here, and the only people who will be able to live here are rich Jews.

*Interview with a 49-year-old Arab woman living in Jaffa.*

The gentrification process has been partly

spontaneous and partly the result of the planning initiatives of the local municipality, which have attracted private developers, real estate developers and wealthy individuals seeking highly profitable investments in Jaffa. At the beginning of the 1990s, the price of real estate in Ajami began to climb, and at its height in the mid-1990s reached the sum of 300,000 US dollars for a small house built on a 60m<sup>2</sup> plot (Sheffer, 2003).<sup>7</sup> As a result, local inhabitants were excluded from the space they lived in and from any share of the profits earned from the property in that space.<sup>8</sup> The involvement of the municipality in initiating and investing in these projects, coupled with the shortage of resources allocated for renovations and building residential units for the local population in the traditional neighborhoods, compound the sense of exclusion of Jaffa’s Arab inhabitants.

The municipality’s policy is clear: Jaffa is for sale! Jaffa is on the free market for the highest bidder. The municipality is calling the money to Jaffa, regardless of whether it comes from a Jewish contractor, an Arab broker or a foreign investor... Take me, for example. My mother’s house was sealed off twenty years ago and declared unfit for habitation by the municipality. Now, from the apartment I am renting from the Amidar, I see how a Jewish contractor is making a profit in dollars

on my mother’s renovated house.

...

To wage war against the municipality. To wage war against the private developers and assessors. This is what we want in Jaffa, so that any rich developer will think twice before coming to buy up property in Jaffa.

*Interview with a 45-year-old Arab man living in Jaffa.*

The Jaffa Slope project has evoked strong fears of mass evacuations from the area, similar to those that were carried out in the 1970s and 1980s. These evacuations were conducted through legal means, be it by slating a building for demolition, expropriating yards and other parts of homes for public purposes, or by offering the building owners large financial incentives to leave. The financial compensation provided in exchange for dilapidated homes (since renovations are prohibited) is not sufficient to purchase a new house in Ajami, but only a small apartment in a housing project in Jaffa or another city. The end result is that Arabs are leaving the traditional Arab neighborhoods and are being cut off from its religious and cultural institutions.

They [the municipality] cheat people into leaving their homes, but they do it legally. They don’t let you renovate and they let your house get run down until the roof falls in over your head, and if

that doesn't work they tempt you into leaving for money, which is not enough to buy a place in Jaffa. And if that doesn't work, they build a highway through your living room. How do they do it? They confiscate it – it becomes public property. They tell you that you're best off taking monetary compensation and for you it's the best solution. Move cheaply to Lod, to Ramle, maybe to a village in the Triangle... You end up with small change, stuck in a housing project apartment that doesn't belong to you, far away from everything you've ever known.

*Interview with a 38 year-old Arab man living in Jaffa.*

**The implications of the Jaffa Slope project for the native population and for Arab-Jewish relations**

The future of the local Arab community in the traditional Arab neighborhoods of Jaffa is uncertain, since it has not been defined by the state as a unique ethno-national minority within a predominantly Jewish space. Such a definition would have made it possible to preserve the Arab culture and identity within these traditional neighborhoods and reduce the possibility of their disappearing into the recesses of planning history. Planning policy in Jaffa has been guided over the years by ethnic logic, which breeds disregard for the historical background

and the local cultural characteristics of the city. Entire streets, with their unique architectural and cultural flavor, have vanished forever. Today, even though some preservation directives have been issued, as well as design directives and a guarantee that the Jaffa Slope project will serve the “general good” of all citizens, the main issue seems to have been forgotten, namely, the fate of the native Arab community of the city. The planning institutions, their architects and planners are committing the mistake of creating an imaginary essence of Jaffaesque, designed to attract wealthy people to fill up the public purse and create an exclusive “Jaffaesque” style.<sup>9</sup> However the original essence and identity of the space will be tarnished in the process and ultimately fade away. Thus we will have Ajami without Ajamites, a Jaffa Slope without fishermen, and pseudo-Jaffan houses with Western inhabitants. Mazawi and Makhoul (1991) have aptly described the phenomenon of forgetting the human essence that gives meaning to a place, and characterizes, in my opinion, institutional structures and their representatives – architects and planners – who shape our space, as follows:

Jaffa is an ancient city that is estranged from its past, transplanted like a foreign limb on the wings of history; a city that presents the official, commercialized version of a time that never was, of inhabitants who never existed. Historical

uniqueness and cultural spatial authenticity are relegated to a remote corner and become victims at the altar of the war of cultures. Nothing is reminiscent of Arab Jaffa anymore, not a single tattered painting in a side room of a local museum, not a single street or alley name. Time has evaporated and a distorted present is speaking on its behalf in a new language... The Old Jaffa project takes its inspiration from a politico-economic perception according to which non-Jews are considered nationless, culture-less cave dwellers who left not a single trace worthy of inclusion in the chronicles of the city...

As a result of the municipality's planning policy, most of the native Arab population will leave Jaffa, unable to compete for housing on the free market, buy apartments in the traditional Arab neighborhoods or pay high property taxes. What will ultimately remain in these neighborhoods is a limited segment of the native Arab population, of an average-to-high socioeconomic status, which is capable of bearing these economic burdens. One can already see the mansions of Jaffa's wealthy Arab families, which have sprouted up in the last two to three years. This spatial pattern, which is taking shape before our eyes, is the lesser of two evils from the viewpoint of the municipality's public planning policy. The few Arab inhabitants who will remain in

Jaffa as an insignificant minority will redecorate the imaginary Jaffaesque environment with a few authentic drops of color, rather than paint it with broad brush strokes.

Today's development policy in Jaffa has generated an environment in which openness toward the original, indigenous setting is not encouraged, but rather intensifies competition over ethno-national identity and further exacerbates spatial isolation in Jaffa. Like Andromeda Hill, other similar projects planned for the surrounding area will increase the sense of alienation between the two population groups, although a significant socio-economic gap between either is unlikely, since the Arabs who remain in Jaffa will be relatively prosperous. However, in everyday life, spatial seclusion will persist, the Arab minority will remain across the fence from "pure Israeliness" and occupy the new space as a handful of individuals within the surrounding Jewish space, from which they will be cut off (Goldhaber, 2004).

In summary, behind the Jaffa Slope project lies the local municipality's undisguised and openly declared interest in socio-urban rehabilitation, as well as camouflaged interests based on the ethnic logic of Judaizing and privatizing the space. Revealing and recognizing these other interests serves to bring their victims into focus. The implementation of the plan has generated a discourse within the

establishment that extols the virtues of socio-urban rehabilitation. Conversely, the local Arab discourse flags up the masked interests of Judaization and privatization of the space as threats to the ongoing survival of their community in their traditional neighborhoods. Contrary to Montereescu and Fabian (2003), who perceive waning nationalism as a sign that the national project in Jaffa has come to an end and that neo-liberal forces are rising in its place, I contend that the objective of Judaization remains endemic and that the force of nationalism has not, in fact, waned. Rather, it has been channeled towards the technocratic strongholds of planning committees and tenders that merely camouflage its presence.

The sense of existential danger among the Arab community in Jaffa stands on a very real foundation, given that the Jaffa Slope project does not involve construction appropriate to the majority of the Arab population inhabitants. This population will ultimately be forced to move out of the traditional neighborhoods and scatter across Jaffa and other Arab towns and villages. The dispersal of Jaffa's Arab community within the space is tantamount to a death sentence.

## Notes

- 1 The plan is currently being implemented only in the Ajami and Jabaliya neighborhoods; Local Master Plan No. 2660.
- 2 I shall also use the term "the slope project" in reference to the Arab neighborhoods.
- 3 In the 1970s, several apartment buildings for Arabs were constructed in the southern part of the Jabaliya neighborhood, bordering Bat Yam. However, the inhabitants' response to offers to buy apartments in these projects was subdued. Their reluctance was due to the high building density, apartments that were too small to house large families, high prices, the lack of suitable community services and, in particular, the great distance separating them from the community's public institutions in Ajami (Mor, 1994).
- 4 The process of gentrification refers to the transformation of neighborhoods in decline housing a population of a low socio-economic status into neighborhoods of a higher socio-economic status through an influx of "yuppie" and "dinky" populations (Gonen and Cohen, 1989). These mid to mid-upper class populations move into the lower-class neighborhoods, improving the neighborhood environment and creating a residential style that reflects the preferences and values of their class. As a result, the physically deteriorated neighborhoods "siphon upward" on the housing market and their rental value increases. The gentrification process is part of a more comprehensive, multi-dimensional process through which the residential boundaries of the middle classes are expanded. This process occurs in Western cities and is also common in Israel and is primarily the result of an increase in the ranks of the middle classes over past decades following a general increase in standards of living.
- 5 One of the clearest manifestations of the Arab community's resentment is the hundreds of

- objections officially submitted by residents of Ajami against the Jaffa Slope project. Another is the activities of Al-Rabita, the League for the Arabs of Jaffa, which organizes protest actions questioning the ethics of the spatial plans drafted for Jaffa and stressing the historical injustice that has been perpetrated against the Arabs of Jaffa. The League further appeals to public opinion and the press and petitions the Israeli Supreme Court. It provides Arab inhabitants of Jaffa with professional, financial and technical assistance to help them to avoid selling their homes.
- 6 These are the names of different kinds of Jewish settlements.
  - 7 The sale price of a sea-facing apartment was estimated to be similar to that of a similarly-sized apartment in the luxury areas of the city. In other areas in Jaffa prices are approximately 100,000 US dollars lower than the prices in Ajami (Table of Apartment Prices provided by Yitzhak Levy, 2000). The table was published prior to the events of October 2000, following which the demand for apartments in Ajami from people outside of Jaffa fell for around a year and the prices of apartments plunged to less than half of their previous value (Sheffer, 2003).
  - 8 Ajami and Jabaliya were ranked 4th of 100 in the socio-economic ranking of the city's neighborhoods (Hadad and Fadida, 1993).
  - 9 The engineering department in the municipality published a detailed design manual for the “Jaffaesque” style, that applies to all construction in Jaffa (Municipality of Tel Aviv-Jaffa, 1995).

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