



From Rakevet to the Neighborhood of Neve-Shalom: Planning, Difference and the Right to the City

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Spaces are experienced by the many different people who inhabit them. What is “Culture” to one group may be “oppression” to another. (Zukin, 1995: 293-294)

Introduction

Henri Lefebvre expanded the discussion on urban space to include aspects related to identity, culture, social difference, protest, and opposition (Lefebvre, 1996). The concept of “the right to the city” that he proposed included not only a change in the class system, but also other manifestations of social power relations, such as ethnicity and migration. My interpretation of Lefebvre in regard to the right to the city is based upon the claim that his analysis – which views the spatial experience as an expression of power relations and the construction of difference – while being rooted in Marxist thought, also opens the way to understanding the politics of space in other critical fields, such as feminism and post-colonialism (Deutsche, 1988: 29). Lefebvre expands the concept of the right to the city beyond the allocation of material resources – an approach anchored in the Marxist thought from which his writing grew. For Lefebvre, the right to the city means being granted freedom,

the right not to be excluded, the right to establish an individual and collective identity and way of life, and the right to participate in decision-making.

Given this background, I wish to claim that spatial planning can serve as an effective way to realize the right to the city if, in addition to relating to universal planning needs, planning needs derived from the specific and distinctive cultural characteristics of the various groups at which planning is targeted are also taken into account. Ethnic and civic identities are always in tension, particularly when we are speaking about a national context in which the ethnic identity of a minority group “endangers” the homogeneity sought through a nationalistic project. This having been said, there are those who will claim that it is patronizing to draw a distinction between ethnic and civic belonging within the context of planning, because reference to an ethnic identity is supposed to be an integral part of the definition of the rights of a community. However, the reality of life in multi-ethnic societies has demonstrated, especially in most planning systems that function according to the principles of rational-comprehensive planning, that there is a need for such a distinction, since rational-



comprehensive planning does by its very nature support the needs of the state by defining them as the “public interest,” while ignoring needs that derive from the identities of minority groups (Sandercock, 1998).

In this article, I expand the discussion of the right to the city beyond the political-economic dimension. To do so, I will present a specific planning project which provides us with an example of an initiative by the authorities – a project in which Arab families from the Rakevet neighborhood were evacuated to the Neve-Shalom neighborhood in the mixed city of Lod (Led). The article is based upon field work conducted in the city of Lod in which I interviewed residents, activists from non-governmental organizations and representatives of the authorities.

The Rakevet Neighborhood

The Rakevet neighborhood of Lod was established during the period of the British Mandate as a residential neighborhood for the British employees of the railroad and their families. It was built as an isolated urban entity, according to the principles which characterized British colonial planning (Yacobi, 2003). Following the 1948 War, Rakevet served as a source of high-quality residential units for Jewish immigrants who were settled in Lod.

A report published in 1969 by the “Authority for the Evacuation and Construction of Rehabilitation Areas” described the changes that had taken place in the northern area of Lod, including the Rakevet neighborhood (Hashimshoni, 1969). The report includes details of the deterioration of the buildings,

infrastructure, and municipal services in the area. Another report published by the Authority in 1972 detailed the changes that had taken place in Rakevet: among 243 families that lived in the area (1,206 persons), 176 were Arab families (919 persons) who could be characterized as socially and economically disadvantaged. Further, the report cites that around 70% of the area’s Jewish population immigrated from Asia or Africa and that the size of the Jewish families was an average of 4.3 persons, in comparison with an average of 5.2 persons among the Arab population.

According to the report, there were 242 buildings in the neighborhood, of which 190 or 79% were residences. The segregation which existed in the neighborhood, too, was noted: two-thirds of the residents, the Arabs, were concentrated in the heart of the neighborhood and in Pardes-Snir, while the remaining one-third of the neighborhood’s residents, the Jews, lived in an area adjacent to the Lod-Ramla highway. At the time that the report was written, buildings in the Rakevet neighborhood were single-storey structures: approximately 73% were built of stone and the remainder were made from light materials such as sheet metal and wood. Although a majority of the houses were constructed of sturdy materials, the authors noted, exactly, that “only 19 families lived in buildings that could be called good” (The Authority for the Evacuation and Construction of Rehabilitation Areas, 1972: 1).

What, then, were the causes of the aforementioned change in the demographic composition of the area, and the deterioration in the state of the buildings and level of services?



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The answer to this question can be found, in my view, in the ongoing conflict that has been playing out in this mixed city. Before presenting the Neve-Shalom project that is the focus of this article, it should be recalled that, as part of the authorities' policies in the 1950s and 1960s, Bedouin Arab families migrated to the area from the Negev and the Sharon. Some of these families, in particular those who came from the area of Sheikh Munis and the Triangle, received agricultural land in Lod as compensation, representing approximately 10-15% of the land that had been expropriated from them.

Overcrowding of the homes in the Rakevet neighborhood continued and worsened when two processes observed in other mixed cities occurred in parallel there: the standard of living of the Jewish population improved, and Jewish families left for new, more spacious homes elsewhere, while the Arab population which had arrived in the city settled in the neighborhood, which increasingly took on a Arab character. The housing demands of the Arab population, which had been relocated to Lod in order to solve its housing problems, were not met and as a result buildings and additions to buildings began to be built without permits, with occasional encroachment onto state land. As a result, the issue was raised for discussion in the Knesset. Former MK Rafael Swisah (Labor), who in early 1990s raised a Point of Order before the Knesset on the issue of "Dealing with Poor Neighborhoods in Lod-Ramla," stated the following:

If I saw hundreds of mice and rats in Ramla, in neighborhoods like these in Lod you can see packs of thousands of rats the normal size of cats... a

year ago I asked in the Knesset what was being done to develop these neighborhoods and was told that the matter was undergoing planning. Since then and until today nothing has changed... tourists and guests who come to the Arab neighborhoods see neglect, negligence, filth, a lack of aesthetics and inequality (Algazi, 1991).

Built at the beginning of the 1970s, the Neve-Yerek neighborhood of Lod consisted of approximately 300 residential units, and was intended for the Arab population registered as living in the Rakevet neighborhood. The planning of this neighborhood was one of the first initiatives that sought to address the housing shortage of the Arab residents of Lod. However, the project did not assign any importance to the social and cultural needs of the population, principally Arab Bedouin families who migrated to Lod following the expropriation of their land. These planning needs included consideration of the number of persons in the nuclear family, and the desire for proximity to the extended family. As a result, many of the residents of Rakevet refused to move to the new neighborhood. Furthermore, some of the families claimed that the Neve-Yerek project would only strengthen their feelings of "ghettoization":

Today the neighborhood has two entrances, two openings. However, previously there was only one entrance. I mean, it is a road, and it is supposedly okay, but there was only one place to enter and to leave. Everything moves in as if it is a trap, okay? You know, like, those paintings of mouse traps? That is what it was like (Interview with Hanan, 25 April 2001).¹



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In a meeting that I had with representatives of the Arab neighborhoods of Lod in April 2000, the representatives of Neve-Yerek claimed that even those families which did move to the new neighborhood at the beginning of the 1970s encountered a housing crisis, due to the natural growth of the population. Most had already expended the building rights granted to them and, since their needs had not been met, they began to build without permission.

From the 1970s onwards, an increasing area of government land in the Rakevet neighborhood was taken over and additional structures were built without permits. The former mayor of Lod, Maxim Levi, advanced a unequivocal approach which called for the “elimination” of these areas. He stated that, “Within the framework of the acceleration of evacuations, I eliminated entire neighborhoods, whose residents were transferred and dispersed among the new neighborhoods and properly integrated into the life of the community” (*B'eretz Israel*, 1983). However, in 1986, Levi admitted that this approach had failed and claimed that the wave of Arabs arriving in the city was out of control. According to Levi, the orders issued and the actual demolition of houses did not assist in solving the problem. Levi stated that:

... these are Israeli citizens. They have identity cards. But the Ministry of Interior, which issued them, is not willing to recognize them as residents, because they are not registered in the census. The city does not have a budget for the neighborhood... none of the authorities recognize them. It is as if they are anonymous people... I acted like a big hero when I said I am going to

destroy houses, but immediately I saw that there is no other place to throw these people. It was a huge mistake to destroy those houses. We have demolition orders, but no one is interested in a solution. Everyone shirks away from it (Capra, 1986).

In November 1983, the Knesset decided that the Interior and Environment Committees in the Knesset should attend to Rakevet, especially since the attention required was beyond the fiscal capacity of the Municipality of Lod. Accordingly, they recommended that responsibility for the neighborhood be transferred to the Ministries of Interior, Construction and Housing, Education and the Israel Land Administration (Municipality of Lod, 2000: 19). However, it appears that the demographic changes in Lod in general, and the Rakevet neighborhood in particular, remained out of control. A report from 1987 by the Municipality of Lod and the Ministry of Construction and Housing determined that the Arab population in the city was continuing to grow, and that none of the official agencies knew the exact proportion Arabs made up of the population, since they were not included in official surveys of the Central Bureau of Statistics (Municipality of Lod and the Ministry of Construction and Housing, 1987: 2). This situation has not changed, according to a report issued by the Municipality of Lod in 2000:

Residents of the Rakevet neighborhood do not reside on land they own, but rather on land they encroached upon that is privately owned or that belongs to the Israel Land Administration. All of this has been declared as agricultural land.



Buildings are not supposed to be built upon it; rather, is only for agricultural purposes... residents of the neighborhood are enclosed within themselves socially, are not economically viable and are involved in all kinds of questionable jobs. Sanitation and environmental quality are low and the housing is in an inhumane condition (Municipality of Lod, 2000: 19).

A spatial consequence of the abovementioned process has been the development of an informal housing market in the Rakevet neighborhood. Through such a market it is possible to rent housing in residences that were built without a permit. Furthermore, it is also possible to “purchase” building rights from private persons who have attained illegal control of state land, and who sell this land to others. This housing market is run by persons who control local social networks, and access to them was limited during the field study.

“The Sooner the Better”

A decision to vacate the Rakevet neighborhood was made in 1985. All residents registered in the area were asked to conduct negotiations with the authorities regarding evacuation and compensation. The negotiations were intended to convince families to leave Lod and to move to other Arab cities, such as Rahat and Kfar Kassem (Meeting with representatives of Arab neighborhoods in Lod, 11 April 2000). Families agreeing to this arrangement received far higher levels of compensation than those which refused. The processes of evacuation and compensation were an attempt to control the “demographic balance” of the city, as Mayor

Levi declared:

In consideration of the city’s special demographic nature... it is worth considering unconventional solutions and to act to disperse the population beyond the city of Lod and to prevent, entirely, the continuation of illegal encroachment of residents into the city in the future.

The problem of Lod’s Arab population is, as I said, difficult, immediate and requires a comprehensive, deep and immediate solution, as had been said, “the sooner the better” (Municipality of Lod and Ministry of Construction and Housing, 1987).

What, then, is the operational mechanism of this policy and how is it implemented? In order to answer these questions, I interviewed a number of employees of the Loram Company, responsible for development in the Lod-Ramla area. Loram is a joint governmental company, 75% of the stock shares of which are held by the Ministry of Construction and Housing, with the Israel Land Administration holding 20% and the Municipality of Lod the remaining 5%. The company was established in 1964 for purposes of the planning, development and construction of residential infrastructures. Its policies are formulated “with an overall view of the needs of the government, the residents and the regions in which it operates.”² Loram declares that it regulates the price of housing, thereby enabling young couples to purchase housing in the areas in which it operates. The company is also involved in evictions, demolitions, and the rehabilitation of neighborhoods, as well as the management and inspection of building work (Loram, 1995).



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The company's engineer, Michal Berkowitz, stressed in an interview conducted on 29 January 2000 that official decision-makers establish the planning principles, and that, "the company is responsible only for their implementation." The responsibility for the eviction of Arab families from the Rakevet neighborhood was turned over to "private sub-contractors," who conduct the actual negotiations (Interview with Micah Abraham, Loram Projects Director, 29 January 2000). Hanan Shachar, an eviction contractor for Loram, related that his salary is determined on the basis of the number of evictions completed, and that the evictions often involve violence (Interview, 1 April 2001). From the figures presented to me, only 40 from a group of 200 families with whom Shachar conducted negotiations over the last 15 years received monetary compensation and voluntarily left the city. Households not owning property elsewhere and which agreed to be evacuated to the new housing project, Neve-Shalom, received compensation according to detailed criteria.

The basis for negotiations is established according to information collected by the contractor responsible for evacuations. The information gathered by Loram on the property designated for evacuation is compared with that held by the settling body involved, which in most cases is Amidar. Hanan Shachar noted that, "in the majority of cases there is a discrepancy between the structure targeted for evacuation in terms of its size and the area on which it is built and what is registered at Amidar. This is the result of the fact that, in the absence of a law, the residents took the law

into their own hands. They built additions and took control of land."

The criteria for determining compensation relate to this reality: a family that is being evacuated from an apartment in which they are living will receive compensation at a rate of 100% for the structure legally registered with Amidar, at an approximate rate of NIS 4,650 per legally-built square meter. The remuneration residents receive for additions built without a building permit is 75% of the previous amount per square meter. However, according to Shachar, it seems that there is such a great desire to evacuate the residents from the area that, in cases where the living space including its additions is less than 50 square meters, residents receive an additional 35% so that they can purchase an alternative apartment. Furthermore, families with many children receive, according to certain criteria, an additional 25% of the value of the evacuated property. A report of Contemporary Israel Investments and Development, Inc. entitled, "Evacuation Report According to Actual Demolition Date," which relates to the Rakevet neighborhood, reveals that 75 families have been evacuated from 29 residential lots, and the total amount of compensation paid was NIS 28,421,386 (2001).

In spite of the many efforts and resources invested in the evacuation of families from the Rakevet neighborhood, there remain tens of registered families who refuse to be evacuated. In addition, tens of unregistered families live in the area, although the exact number is difficult to ascertain, since they are undocumented. In an interview conducted with



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Hanan Shachar (1 April 2001), he estimated that there were around 100 such families living in Rakevet. Eviction and demolition orders have been issued against their properties, but, according to those responsible for the evacuations, “It is possible that no official body will be able to implement these orders. The police are reluctant to add to the tension and the City Council, where there are Arab representatives, is unwilling to engage in a confrontation. From what I have heard, even Court clerks are unwilling to issue orders.” An engineer employed by the Municipality of Lod, Oded Arnon, similarly claimed that, following the destruction of the houses of residents who had been evacuated, the empty land was taken over by other residents, who subsequently built houses on it (Interview, 13 December 2000). In order to prevent an ongoing struggle for control over lots whose residents have been evacuated, Loram has begun to place large boulders on land following the demolition of structures. As can be seen from **Illustration 1**, it appears that the boulders have prevented the initiation of construction without permits following evacuations.

At the Corner of Salah al-Din & Rabin

I asked Tallal, one of the residents who moved to the Neve-Shalom neighborhood, if this is the first time that a street in Lod had been named after a historic figure such as Salah al-Din? “True,” he said with pride, “but you have to see the name of the main street at the corner. Do you see what is written there?” We came closer to the street corner and I saw that we were standing at the corner of the streets – Salah al-

Din and Rabin. (Interview with Tallal A’,³ a resident of the Neve-Shalom neighborhood, 10 May 2001).

In addition to the attempt at the beginning of the 1970s to move Rakevet residents to the neighborhood of Neve-Shalom, a neighborhood named Varda was built at the end of the 1980s, with four housing blocks containing a total of 80 apartment units. The planning for the project called for residents of Rakevet to be evacuated to this new neighborhood. However, Varda was constructed without consultation of the residents’ representatives. As a result, the neighborhood was inappropriate for the lifestyle of the Arab Bedouin families, who refused to live there. Ultimately, only eight families relocated to Varda, and the remaining apartments were allocated to families of “collaborators” (meeting with representatives of Lod’s Arab neighborhoods, 11 April 2000; Interview with Hanan Shachar, 1 April 2001). In an attempt to learn lessons from the failures of the Neve-Yerek and Varda projects, the authorities endeavored to offer the residents of Rakevet neighborhood a tempting alternative in the form of the Neve-Shalom project. This project was intended to house 200 families at a cost of approximately NIS 110 million. To date, only a few of the planned units have actually been constructed.

From a distance, it does appear that a distinction can be drawn between the Rakevet and Neve-Shalom neighborhoods. The area of Neve-Shalom has a system of perpendicular streets, the lengths of which are lined with cubical structures covered in colored plaster.



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Houses are one or two-storeys high and enclosed within a fence. The roads are paved and the sidewalks constructed of interlacing pavement blocks. Street lights extend along the streets and all the houses are connected to the city's infrastructure systems. The criterion for allocating apartments to families evacuated from the Rakevet neighborhood is based upon the size of the nuclear family: families of up to four persons will receive an apartment with a surface area of 80 square meters; families of up to seven persons will receive an apartment of 100 square meters; and families of more than eight persons will receive one of 130 square meters. Here it is important to note that all the apartments were planned so that they can be extended in the future. In a report presented at a UN Habitat conference, the Neve-Shalom project was cited by the State of Israel as a positive achievement (Ministry of Construction and Housing, 2000). At a ceremony held on 17 September 2000 to mark the inauguration of the neighborhood, former Minister of Construction and Housing Benjamin Ben-Eliezer praised the project:

These days, when the extremists in the Arab sector seek to inflame hostility towards the state and its institutions, I am happy to inaugurate the Neve-Shalom neighborhood in Lod, built to replace the Rakevet neighborhood, known for many years as a center of crime and drugs. Instead of deteriorating shacks, today residents are receiving beautiful, single-storey houses, and instead of negligence and filth they will now attain comfort and dignity.⁴

According to Ben-Eliezer, the project is

exemplary of what can be achieved in other mixed cities, such as Jaffa, Ramla and Acre, if "residents will cooperate with the Ministry of Construction and Housing on the basis of trust and good will."⁵ The Minister even promised that a health center, elementary school, infant and early childcare centers, a kindergarten and a public garden would soon be built. He stated that many persons doubted whether such a project could be successful, "but those who succeeded were those who believed in Jewish-Arab co-existence in the State of Israel." However, quite a different picture emerged from my own observations and the series of meetings which I conducted with groups of residents of the neighborhoods of Neve-Shalom and Rakevet.⁶

Planning, Ethnic and Civic Needs

On 11 April 2000, soon after the first 50 families moved into Neve-Shalom, I visited the neighborhood for the first time. Already discernible at that time was the gap between how the agencies involved – the Municipality of Lod and the Ministry of Construction and Housing – perceived the project, and the cultural use of the space intended to enable residents to "attain comfort and respect."

The work of Tovi Fenster (1996) concerning the inter-relationship between the definition of planning needs and the rights of communities suggests that analytical tools from the field of gender research can assist in establishing the parameters for assessing planning and development programs for ethnic communities. The logic behind the employment of this methodology is derived from the similarities



1. The Rakevet neighborhood: boulders placed to prevent construction



2. The Neve-Shalom neighborhood: a store



3. The Neve-Shalom neighborhood: a *sheig* construction at the front of a house



4. The Neve-Shalom neighborhood: additions attached to the fences and stairs of houses



between gender relations and majority-minority relations. Just as in gender relations, where fundamental assumptions are biased by a masculine perception of the world which excludes women, so, in the case under discussion, the dominance of the majority group creates disregard for the unique planning needs of the “Other.” On this basis, two categories can be defined: “civic-planning needs,” which refer to a situation where different groups, be they ethnic or gender-based, receive identical treatment in similar situations. In such cases, the principle of equality is realized in fields such as infrastructure, employment and access to municipal services. “Ethnic-planning needs,” by contrast, are properly fulfilled when different ethnic groups receive differential treatment in similar situations, on account of the fabric of their cultural-social characteristics, including the system of internal community relations, gender or inter-generational relations, and traditional patterns of land ownership.

The question remains of how cultural dimensions can be translated into ethnic planning needs. According to one definition (Duncan, 1985), “culture” signifies the way of life of a specific group with a shared worldview, realized by their shared lifestyle and by their economic and symbolic allocation of resources. It is my claim, in relation to the meaning of the concept of culture with regards to planning and development, that the issue cannot be examined through an anthropological lens, *per se*, since culture is a socio-political factor which incorporates exclusion and social change (Zukin, 1995).

An examination of the Neve-Shalom project

that compares the *civic* and *ethnic* planning needs of the local population brings into sharper focus the issue of the right to the city. The planned area did offer residents significant improvements in environmental conditions relative to those in their former surroundings in Rakevet, from which they came. Such improvements did address their *civic* planning needs for electricity, sewage, water and roads. However, a closer examination of the standard of the infrastructure, the quality of the construction of the housing units, and the nature of the development of the surroundings reveals clear discrimination at the civic level, principally in comparison with Jewish neighborhoods built in the city during the same period. Thus, for example, the paving of streets and development work were not completed and, as a result, rain pooled during winter, creating a safety and environmental risk. The low standard of construction of the residential units was evident not only from the cracks which opened up in the walls of the houses and the fences shortly after the completion of building works, but also in the seepage of rain into the houses.

Minister Ben-Eliezer’s promise that the neighborhood would be provided with municipal services such as “an elementary school, child and infant care centers, and a public garden with playground equipment” was not upheld.⁷ There are still no municipal services in the area, except for a kindergarten and women’s health care center that were completed in February 2002. An additional kindergarten classroom and an elementary school were opened in 2004, but access to some



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of the buildings is via a dirt path. The absence of commercial urban services on a neighborhood-wide scale led one of the families to open a grocery store in the ground floor of their home, which serves the residents of Neve-Shalom, as can be seen in **Illustration 2**. Undertaken without a permit and in violation of the planning regulations, this store provides an example of how residents of the neighborhood are forced to find informal solutions to their *civic* needs.

In response to the only partial addressing of their *civic* planning needs, residents in the new neighborhood have acted to take care of specific aspects of their daily needs. Their reaction to the neglect of their cultural needs, however, has been much more intensive and revealing of the gap between the planners' intentions and daily use of the space. In opposition to planning dictated "from above," the residents have disrupted the architectural order planned for the neighborhood by adding extensions without acquiring permits to do so. In my view, such architectural actions "from below" are an additional expression of the struggle by the residents of the new neighborhood for the right to the city. Such actions encompass not only the struggle for the material right for a roof over one's head, but also a struggle for the recognition of cultural difference as a central component of daily life in the space.

There are two primary types of identifiable cultural needs on the part of Arab Bedouin families living in Neve-Shalom which did not receive attention from the planners, or which were only attended to only in part. The first relates to symbolic aspects of Bedouin culture.

The most visible example is the construction of *sheig el-mik'ad*, a traditional tent in which men gather. In the new neighborhood, the *sheig* has become a structure constructed of solid materials, such as wood and bricks. Similar to the traditional *sheig*, it is a place where guests are received, and as such it controls movement from the public space (the street in this case) to the private space (the house). The *sheig* of the Abu-Udah family, for instance, was built in such a way that it leans against the walls of the house and serves as the place where men of the extended family and guests can meet and be hosted. During the period in which the field work and observations were undertaken, many structures that serve this function were built, with most facing the street, as **Illustration 3** demonstrates. It is important to note that this phenomenon – the construction of a permanent *sheig* structure in violation of the planning regulations – is common in other government-planned Arab Bedouin towns in the Negev (Yacobi, 2004).

The second type of cultural needs relates to the division of roles between men and women in a traditional society. The gender division of everyday space and the existence of spaces "forbidden" to women (Fenster, 1999: 235-239) are characteristic of such societies, a fact which explains women's absence from the public space in Neve-Shalom. The planners' neglect of this cultural factor can be discerned through the architectural modifications undertaken by residents immediately upon moving into the new neighborhood. In **Illustration 4**, we see that various kinds of additions have been attached to most of the



fences surrounding the houses, in order to raise them and to create a clear separation between the public space (the system of streets) and the private space (the houses' courtyards). Also discernible from the illustration are the sheet metal and plastic sheets which have been attached to the guardrails of the exterior stairs leading into the houses. These additions shield the movements of women in and out of the house from public view. An additional architectural change can be seen in the houses located along the margins of the neighborhood. There the area outside of the lots has been fenced off by residents and appropriated as part of their land. According to the original plan, the courtyards were located so as to create a direct connection with the street, that is, the public space. However, such spaces are used by women for activities connected with the household, such as cooking or raising animals, hence the need to fence them off and add them to the private space.

"A Maze of Autonomous Activity"

The fieldwork I conducted included interviews with many residents of Lod. Among them was Tamer al-Nufar, who lives in the Ramat Eshkol neighborhood, one of the neighborhoods which has been undergoing "Arabization" since its establishment in the 1970s. We met at the neighborhood grocery, a sheet metal shed built without a permit at the edge of a main street. Dressed in the garb of a rapper, Tamer led me to his parent's house – a typical but well-kept apartment which stood out markedly from the neglected stairwell and the street. Much can be gleaned about the meaning of the spatial

processes that have been taking place in Lod from the feelings which Tamer expressed:

Let's compare it with an all-Jewish neighborhood, say Ganei Aviv, in terms of how it looks, or the "Build-your-own Home" neighborhood. Now give me two Arab neighborhoods ... say, Rakevet. Now you see the differences. Terrible! Been there? ... Did you see the bridge when you entered Ganei Aviv? Nice, huh? Did you see the "stops" [from the Hebrew word "tach'anah," which refers to a place where drugs are bought and sold] here and there when you entered Rakevet? Now, if you are a kid, you look around to see where you live. There everyone is Jewish and you see how nice they look. Rakevet people, all of them are ugly (Interview with Tamer al-Nufar, 22 January 2001).

From what Tamer al-Nufar and other interviewees⁸ told me, it is clear that the spatial dimension represents the power relations in the city, which is expressed clearly by the images used to describe the Arab neighborhoods in the city and their social meanings. Lod is described as a city of walls and ghettos, of order and disorder, of filthy and clean places, all of which creates the distinction between "permitted" and "forbidden" places, and accordingly "the Arab place" and "the Jewish place." The borders between these spaces, symbolic borders connected to ethno-national association, are constructed as part of the struggle over the identity of the city, but also create tension and segregation through their symbolic meanings. One aspect which appeared clearly in all of the interviews conducted is the use of different places in the city, "representational spaces" in



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Lefebvre's terminology, that are distinguishable by the use of metaphor in descriptions, the use of symbols, and in the creation of connections between "ethno-national" association and "a place."

However, in this regard, I would like to propose an alternative, less binary interpretation. The physical space in Lod's Arab neighborhoods, such as Pardes-Snir and Neve-Shalom, provides the most prominent expression of protest by the Arab residents of Lod. The phenomenon of construction without a permit is undoubtedly a private reaction to the absence of a public response to the basic need for housing. However, the appearance and extent of structures without permits, and the inability of municipal authorities to deal with them provide an opportunity for an alternative view of this phenomenon. Construction without a permit may not only be a housing solution, but also an expression of protest that extends beyond the binary definition of opposition and non-opposition as two extremes – one an expression of collective and conscious organizing, the other indicative of passivity. I propose that we rather recognize it as a tapestry of personal actions, which usually take place without coordination and which in their strength undermine the hegemonic interest.

I do not claim that these are conscious actions. Yet, the presence and appearance of structures built without permits do stake out entire areas of Lod as Arab, and in doing so "threaten" an urban landscape which seeks to be Jewish, Western and modernist. We should abstain from idealizing construction without a permit, as it jeopardizes the capital of the city's residents

and does not allow for the provision of services and infrastructure at a reasonable level. However, such activities strengthen the presence of Arab residents in Lod and serve as a form of spatial declaration and protest, with the appearance of a subversive act against the "Judaization" of the city.

This conclusion is the first step in an attempt to describe the strength of everyday practice. Following the insights of Michel de Certeau (1997), this is an effort to challenge the view which sees the nature of everyday actions as a dark background of social activity. This position is further supported by the research of Adriana Camp (2000: 42), who claimed that the binary distinction between "small," daily forms of opposition and between conscious, "political" protest misses the principal issue. According to Camp, practical, daily forms of opposition always move between the unconscious and the conscious, between the direct and the indirect. These statements, which are based upon de Certeau's approach, support the importance of research involved in activities of users that are commonly thought of as passive and disciplined (de Certeau, 1997: 15). Furthermore, the strength of such activities, according to de Certeau, extends beyond the dichotomous division between opposition and non-opposition, and reveals a "maze of autonomous actions," which have the power to challenge the appearance of total control.

On the basis of this discussion, I have sought to illustrate the symbolic meaning of the "small" protest and to claim that, in spite of the substantial strength of the professional domain, which translates power relations into a spatial



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product, the built-up area of Lod is characterized not only by its top-down planning and control. One of the patterns of the landscape which dominates in Lod is informal building which, while seeking to provide for residents' basic needs, at the same time presents a threat to the cultural existence and image of the city as a Jewish city. Thus, the autonomous action which is at the center of the right to the city also undermines the achievements of the professional domain, which is closed to anyone who is not a member of the professional community: contrary to the many efforts and resources invested by Lod's planners, the city is becoming "Arab."

Notes

- 1 Fictitious name.
- 2 See, the Loram Company Internet site, <http://www.loram.co.il>.
- 3 Fictitious name.
- 4 Office of the Spokesperson, Ministry of Construction and Housing, 17 July 2000.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 The meetings with residents of the Rakevet and Neve-Shalom neighborhoods took place on 11 April 2000, 10 May 2001, 8 November 2001, 19 February 2002.
- 7 Office of the Spokesperson, Ministry of Construction and Housing, 17 September 2000.
- 8 For a broad narrative analysis of interviews I conducted with residents of Lod, see Yacobi, 2003.

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