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## **OLD SPACE, NEW URBANISM: ISRAELI PERSPECTIVE ON THE SPATIAL TURN**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In 2004, the municipality of Tel Aviv initiated a New Urbanistic urban-renewal project for one of its main thoroughfares, Ibn Gvirol Street. The plan prioritizes pedestrian traffic and encourages mixed uses. It was preceded by a design for the adjacent former Arab dwelling of Someil, made in 1997. In this plan, the remains of the village along with its topography are to be demolished, making way to a new design: integrated in all aspects of the urban texture.

This place, historically extrinsic to the urban continuum, had a potential for functioning as an Other Space in the city. It is persistently different from its context within space, society, and political allusions. Its historical capacity as a place for the disenfranchised makes it a possible Thirdspace – where Henri Lefebvre locates the struggle for Right to the City. However, New Urban plans are now transforming this site towards assimilation into the city.

New Urbanism draws from the past in search for locality. In Israel, where spatial-political amnesia is prevalent, it is challenged by conflicting memories. Other Spaces may act as reminders, whose presence in the urban environment prevents elimination of history and difference. Without them, the diversified becomes uniform and the Other is excluded.

### **INTRODUCTION**

This paper is an extended written version of a talk given in April 2010 at a conference in UC Berkeley. Even though New Urbanism may no longer be new, it is still a leading perception in planning and practiced ubiquitously. In this paper, with the aid of an Israeli case study, I address the issue of Other Space in relation to the movement's aspirations for diversity.

Following Edward Soja's concept of the Spatial Turn, I wish to consider ways in which New Urban plans threaten the explanatory power of space, and specifically the questioning of local historiography<sup>1</sup>.

The clash between old space and New Urbanism expresses a central conflict of space and history in Israel. Everywhere in Israel has some political significance to the establishing of the state, while the local practice of planning frequently avoids certain aspects of historical context.

## **A NEW WAY OF LOOKING AT NEW URBANISM**

New Urbanism arose as a movement among planners in the 1990's in North America. It originated as a criticism on deteriorating American city centers, stemming from the writings of Jane Jacobs and blaming poor urban conditions on the Modernistic town planning<sup>2</sup>. The Congress for New Urbanism, founded by architects in 1993, is now based in Chicago and has chapters throughout North America and affiliates around the world. In 1996, the CNU has published a charter, focusing on design principles for realizing social goals. Today, many cities around the world, as well as in Israel, apply New Urbanism as both a practical and a critical tool for improving their spatial-social condition.

The design principles of New Urbanism focus on mixed use, diversified population and housing options, and the concept of a compact town. These are arranged in categories of scale, from the region and the city, through the neighborhood and down to the street and buildings. With community activists being an important part of the New Urbanism enabling force, the social agenda of the movement is to build communities on grounds of variety and shared responsibility. Two key concepts in the New Urbanism manifest, that not necessarily coincide, are diversity and locality. Influenced by the compact European town, planners turn to local spatial history in search for community values.

The Criticism directed at New Urbanism may be classified into two closely related types: A spatial criticism, which deals mainly with urban design, and a societal one, that deals with city

planning and its outcomes. Some spatial criticisms reject the use of neo-traditional forms as incompatible in the cities of today; others oppose the idea of environmental determinism and the way a spatial order is used as a foundation for a moral one<sup>3</sup>. New Urbanism uses physical measures that are not new to the world of urban design, and boxes them to a set of rigorous rules meant to materialize its ideology. Allegedly nostalgic forms are brought as the ultimate way for reviving positive social values affiliated with pre-modern communities. Relying primarily on the design of the built environment for producing some specific kind of community ties subsequently leads to the construction of uniform environments. The societal critics denounce this undesirable yet frequent outcome of homogeneity, claiming that the strict architectural patterns result not only in uniform but also in isolated, exclusive places. New Urbanism is too often manifested in gated spaces, both metaphorically and literally, replicating suburban social formation, which is contradictory to its stated goals<sup>4</sup>.

I would like to suggest here a somewhat different approach for examining New Urbanism in contemporary urban environments, and ask: *Does New Urbanism allow for the viability of an "Other Space"?* – A place in the city that facilitates both spatial and social diversity, which are imperative for New Urbanism as well as for the city itself. This means that New Urbanistic projects should be evaluated not merely on their success to apply the movement's design principles to the city, nor on their positive affect on creating socio-economically mixed environments, but rather on the extent to which they manage to allow Other Spaces to continue to exist and function as such, without making them compatible to the urban continuum under the New Urban magic wand.

In Tel Aviv, for example, the urban fabric is dotted with remnants of Arab villages. These places are intrinsic to the city's spatial history, yet they are politically excluded from the

dominating local perception of the urban space, how it came to be, and its meanings. Although the Arab villages precede the city, the founding of Tel Aviv was partially a political act of establishing a new Hebrew town. Thus, the urban space of the city was initially also a national Jewish space, and was developed separately from the Arab dwellings. Along its short history, Tel Aviv is characterized by an architectural debate with local traditions. There is a continuous give and take between imported European planning and inclusion of indigenous Arab influences. How does New Urbanism, an imported practice which aspires to local spatiality, deal with such complex political conditions of ambivalent history? What share of locality should we expect it to embrace?

### **THE CASE OF SOMEIL**

The former Arab village of Someil makes an interesting case study for these issues. The portion of the site that is still undeveloped is about eleven acres large and it is located right in the center of Tel Aviv<sup>(Fig. 1)</sup>. Today, this place is comprised of just few buildings, homes to a disadvantaged Jewish community. The site holds a large synagogue, built in 1975, and some parking lots. It is a hole in the urban fabric, shadowed by an office tower built in the 90<sup>(Fig. 2)</sup>. Aligned with unpaved walkways and stands on a hill overlooking Ibn Gvirol street, it is urban outskirts in the heart of the city<sup>(Fig. 3)</sup>. This place has gone through different stages in its short history. It has never been properly documented, and most of the information comes from testimonies of Arab families who used to live there<sup>5</sup>.

An Arab settlement, known by the names of Someil and Al-Masudiyya, was founded here in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was surrounded by orchards and its cemetery was built on the Mediterranean shoreline. Today, these are all parts of northern central Tel Aviv. The villagers

were Palestinian Arabs, most of them Muslims. In the 1870's, the village had a few houses, a central well, and a mosque, which was built on the remains of an ancient church. These buildings were all aligned on both sides of a "street". This road, the future Ibn Gvirol Street, is in fact an historical north-to-south route which used to lead to the village of Salame – today a part of southern Tel Aviv.

In the year 1931, there were 127 houses in Someil for a population of 658 people. There was also a school with about 30 students. The main sources of income at that time were orchards, livestock and also occasional handiwork in the then nearby town of Tel Aviv. Since 1943, the site has been included in the municipal boundaries of the growing city. At that time, there were 20 Christian families and a few Jewish ones living in the village. There is even evidence of an adjacent Jewish farm, where these various groups used to meet for business and socially. By 1946, the process of urbanization had pushed out most of the villagers.

At this point in its spatial history, it seems that Tel Aviv may be defined as different from its local context. The city was developed along the principles of European town planning, notably in the 1927 plan made by Patrick Geddes for a Garden City. The architecture was "imported" from Eastern Europe by Jewish architects who studied at the Bauhaus school in Germany, making the 30's the heyday of International Style in Tel Aviv and embarking on a new vernacularism, leaving indigenous Oriental influences to fade in the background of the White City. This is also the time when Someil begins to emerge as different within the city. While it officially became part of the city, it had nothing in common with it socially, ethnically or in terms of nationality.

When battles on territory broke out in 1947 among Jews and Arabs, the inhabitants of Someil wanted no part in them. Could this have been a result of the coexistence lead by the two

peoples on that site? It certainly was a spatial anecdote in a time when Israeli Jewish sovereignty was formed through the taking over of lands. In December of 1947, the "Hagana" Jewish defense force (which preceded the IDF) has taken control of the site, and on the 25<sup>th</sup> of that month the remaining 930 Arab residents of Someil were forced to leave. At this phase of national conflict, the relatively new Jewish city could not allow for what was perceived as different – and in this case it was the ultimate kind of different: a different people – to inhabit its space. And so, a process of Othreing had been completed; the local was framed as different, both ethnically and spatially, and was excluded from the city. The population was driven away but the place remained, although existing outside the urban space.

The second life of Someil begins with the state of Israel, in May 14<sup>th</sup> 1948. At first, the local government took over the site and used the abandoned houses to solve housing needs of people whose homes were destroyed in the battles. Later on, the site was used for housing Jewish immigrants from Iraq. This way of action is representative of the political re-use of Israeli space at the time. In terms of Other Space, one of the countless aspects of the Palestinian refugee problem which is internal to Israeli planning is the inclusion of such places which are gaps in the local historiography into urban space. Deserted Arab villages are inherent to the Israeli scenery as well as to its politics. An integral part of the local space, they may be either relics, a starting point for a later Jewish dwelling, or absorbed into cities by a "natural" routine of urbanization which has meanings that exceed spatiality<sup>6</sup>. Although it is quite clear that the original population will never restore its connection to the actual site of Someil, the place will always remain a subject of yearning that is a formative element in the identity of that community<sup>7</sup>. As for the newcomers, they inherited the role of the different, only this time not through perceptions of nationality, but of culture and denomination. Moreover, the site itself continued to function as

Other for the modern city that has evolved around it, laid out in a premeditated grid pattern, and that may be seen both as an outcome of its history and as a cause for its ongoing capacity as different. The 1950's were a time of substantial development in Tel Aviv. Spreading onto the agricultural hinterland, new quarters were laid out in a premeditated grid pattern, following Modernistic planning principles and leaving Someil as rapture in the urban texture. As the city continued to grow north and eastward, the location of the site became more and more central. Ibn Gvirol Street, that until then delineated the eastern boundary of the city, started to evolve as a main commercial and institutional axis. Yet Someil remained distinctively different from its environment; ethnically, socially, economically and spatially. By the 1960's, the place was perceived as a spatial-social enclave.

Then, once again, an assault was made against the different. The city sought profit in this "tear" in the urban space and wanted to develop the prime location, now inhabited with yet another kind of a different population. In 1962, an effort to evacuate the residents and build a new neighborhood led to a violent outburst and eventually failed.

Today, Someil is an Other Space, exempt from further attempts of planning. It is a space that breaks the city's topography, the socio-economic profile, the common building forms, the street section, and – ultimately – the urban continuum. This place plays a unique role in urban otherness: it is not only for the different, rather it *is* different.

## **OTHER SPACE**

The challenge opposed to New Urbanism in such complex city space is best understood in the context of Other Space. The term, as it is used in the research of Someil and in this paper, derives from two main concepts. One is "Heterotopias" by Michel Foucault and the other is



"Thirdspace", formulated in Edward Soja's interpretation of Henri Lefebvre. Going back from contemporary planning theory to the texts of Foucault and Lefebvre is necessary for establishing an initial framework that combines theoretical and actual grasp of space. Then it is possible to examine postmodern models of planning that focus on the relations between urban space and society, such as New Urbanism, and look at them from the point of view of the Spatial Turn.

Foucault has written extensively on the relations between space and the "Other" in society. In his essay *Des Espace Autres* (first published in 1967) he coined the term "Heterotopias"<sup>8</sup>. It is important to stress that Foucault is referring to real places. In fact, that is partially how he defines these heterotopias: In contrast to utopias, which lack a concrete space, heterotopias are actual locations. These are the places where utopia – a perfected version of society – resides, because they are the representations of all sites which constitute culture. Theoretically, these are places in which multiple, contradictory, layers of space can coexist. However, having an actual place for utopia, does not mean it gets to be realized. On the contrary, heterotopias reflect society, and their function in the built environment is to reveal all spatial reality that surrounds them. They are different from all the other sites, exceptions to the rule of a certain spatial order, and thus allow for critical review of the urban space. In his text, Foucault lays out six traits of heterotopias; they exist in all cultures, their function may change over time (Foucault's example is the use of cemeteries in Christian culture), they can contain several and incompatible spaces, they are connected to time, they are isolated yet penetrable and, lastly, heterotopias have a role in the relations that exist among all other spaces. The second, third and fourth principles illuminate the possibility of heterotopias to contribute to alternative urban historiographies. For instance, the site of Someil demonstrates the local urban attitude towards the Other in different times. At one point, the role of Someil was to provide a contrast to the

Hebrew city, which allowed it to establish its own identity, and at another one it was to enable the city in dealing with internal issues of ethnicity, but it has always kept its quality of reflecting the urban experience. Having multiple spaces in one place, like in an Oriental garden which symbolizes the entire universe, is an urban virtue, compromised by zoning or by one dominating history. Someil is a parking lot for contemporary consumers, a promise for entrepreneurs, manifestation of local social power relations, and long gone home for some. And as for time, Foucault uses the term Heterochronies. These are heterotopias of accumulating time, like museums, or temporary, like fairs and festivals. The temporality of Someil is that of two timelines: The past and the present at the same time. This can only exist in actual terms when a place is somewhat left to be, not renewed nor preserved. Finally, these Foucauldian Other Spaces are real places which act as mirrors and interpretations for society and thus, most importantly, can undermine power relations in the city. Other Space has the ability to provoke memories of who or what was there before (and now is outside of) the urban continuum.

Tel Aviv provides a good setting for enquiring what Other Spaces can teach us about local historiography. This city's evolvment as an urban entity is grounded in a conscious decision to detach itself from certain aspects of local culture, architecture and planning. In a nutshell, the city replaced local spatial history with an imported one, when it substituted Arab indigenous with European Modernism. At the time, it was a spatial articulation of the Zionist project, which has always been to create a progressive place for a new society. Of course, by now, Tel Aviv has its own vernacularism. However, the current Bauhaus frenzy and the populist pursuit of the White City is yet another proof of how strong this narrative really is. Of all the architectural forms in the city it is the European Bauhaus that is consensually considered "local" in the eyes of the public. This is a result of a process in which the local was Othered. The

existing settlements in Palestine were part of the "old" and had no place in the "new" – what was considered to be the First Hebrew City. This accord can be compromised by heterotopias.

Although it has no Old City per se, Tel Aviv, like all cities that are not "instant cities" and have history as a dwelling space, is filled with such places that existed before it took shape, and are now in different stages of urban evolution. Some vanished into urban space and exist only as a memory, some left as a wound, like Someil. But, most importantly and in a broader sense, challenging the spatial coherence of Tel Aviv means to challenge also political issues of Israeli nationality. This could possibly be one function of Other Space.

Another function of Other Space can be found in Lefebvre's idea of the "Right to the City"<sup>9</sup>. Lefebvre is not referring merely to the right of using public space, but preferably to the right of participating and taking part in decision making concerning that space, and ultimately affecting the production of urban space as well. According to him, the urban society is an "ensemble of differences", not only composed by many different individuals but derives from the gaps and contrasts between them as well<sup>10</sup>. In this view, the "Different" is crucial for equality and for preserving rights, such as the Right to the City. Lefebvre criticizes the way in which philosophers "leap" from discussing space in the mental sphere to deducing conclusions concerning space in the societal sphere, and calls our attention to the physical space and real places<sup>11</sup>. He uses space as a practice for understanding the complexities of the modern world, in the same manner as others use language or psychoanalysis. Being essentially a Marxist, Lefebvre writes about the role of the working classes in the city. They are the ones who can create urbanity through participation, what Lefebvre termed "oeuvre". Oeuvre is the collaboration through which the working classes produce the urban space and claim their Right to the City<sup>12</sup>. It is the work done by differences, the task of building a space where social clashes are tangible –

the only space where urban society can thrive. In his book *Thirdspace* (1996), the urbanist Edward Soja stems from Lefebvre's trialectics of spatiality, and suggests a kind of a real place that encompasses all three types of space: perceived, conceived, and lived<sup>13</sup>. Thirdspace is thereof both an actual place and an articulation of social practice, hence it is real and imagined at the same time. Similar to heterotopias, it is a space where all places are, only here the emphasis is on the procedure of producing space, and less inclined to metaphors on social relations. At any rate, thirdspace is a space of simultaneities; subjective and objective, abstract and concrete, of everyday life and unending history – the latter being particularly relevant to the aforementioned case study. In the city, this is the place where social relations are realized and urban society unites in a struggle for its Right to the City. Most importantly, this kind of space constitutes diversity, which is needed for exercising the urban right to be different. Thus, the way to a heterogenic urbanity made of differences is via space, which is a by-product of history and society as well as a mean of producing them – and we come back to the concept of the Spatial Turn. A space that accommodates varied meanings can evoke alternative perceptions of the built environment.

Other Space in Tel Aviv, as in any other city, would be an actual location where the urban continuum, in all of its layers, is disturbed. The site of Someil, which has become different from the city as it evolved around it and has also been continually a home for populations that are perceived as different, is acting in the role of the Other in Tel Aviv. The benefits Other Space brings to the city are in evoking and encouraging alternative identities and subjects that are Others. Only such a place, and just for as long as it remains in its capacity as different, may reflect all that is planned around it and have the potential to question common local conventions

on urban space and history – like, in this case, Jewish upper-middle classes who inhabit Bauhaus buildings in a Modernist plan.

## **NEW SPACE**

Now, what is being implemented in the actual space is a whole different matter. In the year 2004, the municipality of Tel Aviv initiated an urban renewal project for Ibn Gvirol Street, a main thoroughfare in the city. The new design, made by Moria-Secely architects, is a self-declared New Urbanistic project, as is evinced by two main features: The street is modified in favor of pedestrian traffic and mixed use is encouraged. Practically, the sidewalks were broadened to twice their original width at the expense of the road and obstacles were removed from them. The street section was divided along its width into parallel strips, each of them dedicated to a different type of use. Across the section there are the store fronts, then a strip for window shopping, cafés sitting, a clear strip for fast walking, a bicycle route, and along the road a service strip with bus stations and resting areas. This division is identical on both sides of the road. The intention was to rearrange the space as a mean to induce mutual awareness among the different users in the public realm, a property that the planners thought was lacking in the urban space of Tel Aviv. The longitudinal strips intensify the most impressive feature of Ibn Gvirol – the street-section, which is uniform almost to the full length of this two miles street. The form was created when the street was planned and built quite swiftly in the 50's, instead of being developed slowly over time. The planners chose to emphasize the section, which is not only recognizable as part of the street's image, but also has some virtues in terms of urban design; arcades in front of the stores shade the sidewalk and resolve a common Israeli problem of allowing a convenient walking experience in difficult climate conditions of extreme heat.

Aspiring to introduce order into the chaotic Israeli public space, the designers were influenced by the original function of the street as a formal space and as an axis of municipal institutes. That is why they decided on planting a row of palm trees in the center of the road in a fixed rhythm, and, more notably, on defining a fixed layout for all of the cafés' winter enclosures. This firm solution came as a contrast to the Israeli tendency of "over initiative", or lack of continence. The idea was that the street is so packed and diverse with users that it could use some "dignity"<sup>(Fig. 4)</sup>. By the planners' own admission, had this project been in a different urban environment with a different design, material and behavioral culture, like Paris or London, there would be less need for such a strict approach<sup>14</sup>. This statement is crucial because it implies a contradiction between New Urbanistic principles and the means for achieving them. How can one determine which local features to stress? A certain architectural form that has become identified with the urban space, or rather the public's demeanor within it? Was there a way to keep both in the new design?

As part of the planning process, several points along the street were marked as places where the spatial continuity is breached. They were given special treatment and turned into focal points, stressing the otherwise continuous plans. However, the site of Someil was never part of that list. In fact, it was seen as a gap in the sequence, unrepresentative of the local urban form. Furthermore, now it is considered to be incompatible with the planning principles of the urban renewal there, and a disturbance in the typology. It is still constantly comprehended as a vacant lot, a non-place, that is absent from the street's context.

The new design was preceded by a plan from 1997, made for the former village site of Someil itself. Ya'ar architects, who won the competition arranged by the city, regard themselves as leaders of New Urbanism in Israel. They saw this site as an opportunity, an unfulfilled piece of land, "empty" at the time of the beginning of their work on the project. They wanted to create

a new place in a space that "craved" planning<sup>15</sup>. Their plan obliterates the village space and it was given a Hebrew name, "Semel" (meaning "symbol"). The design shows some distinct New Urbanistic intentions, such as focusing on pedestrians, mixed uses and building to a "human" scale. It comprises residential and commercial uses, along side some new and existing areas for public services. Keeping the high rises part of the plan adjacent to one side of the site, furthest from Ibn Gvirol Street, low rises are aligned on a network of pedestrian paths and provide an overall moderate volume to the large project. The paths continue the surrounding streets, allowing them to cross the site, and thus complete a missing piece in the urban grid. The existing hill, on which the original village was built, is eliminated and replaced by a moderate grade which allows for continuity of the surrounding building forms. The site front to Ibn Gvirol Street emulates other parts along the street and thus subtly integrates into it. The purpose of this design was to apply a typical local city block to the site and to assimilate this place as much as possible into the existing urban environment, with the strongest element being Ibn Gvirol Street and its street-section.

Looking at these plans from the Spatial Turn point of view, the site of Someil holds great instructive potential as for how the city can be composed of different overlapping spatialities. This place may be a hole in the center of the city, but it is filled with contents. Preserving the street-section might be intelligible, in terms of urban design, but what about preserving the unique situation of varied populations, ages of buildings, and urban histories? These goals must not be mutually exclusive. A common criticism against New Urbanism seems suitable here: there are dangerous outcomes in making everything new. Admittedly, the history of this place will probably not allow building a project in one stroke, since there are complex issues of land ownerships and so forth, hence evading complete and fast gentrification. But these kinds of

urban problems should contribute to the plans and inspire a different approach all together – one that at least considers to use planning to intensify breaches in the urban whole instead of abolishing them.

### **NEW URBANISM: BETWEEN SOMEIL AND TEL AVIV**

Indeed, the neo-traditional forms that New Urbanism is so often criticized for are absent from the design in this case study. Yet, to assume that this unbrace is plainly a progress achieved in the process of importing New Urbanism to a new place would be to dismiss an important lesson. Instead, we should inquire the range of possibilities that the planners faced here. In fact, should we try and turn to local planning traditions in Tel Aviv, we will be confronted with conflicting memories. Arab villages were a given spatial reality met by Jewish settlers who departed Jaffa in 1887 to found Hebrew neighborhoods, which later on evolved to the city of Tel Aviv. The British concept of the Garden City was the source of the first expression of professional urban planning in the city, and came in the form of the 1927 overall town plan made by the Scottish biologist sir Patrick Geddes. Modernist orthogonal grid was the dominating method for planning new quarters in the 1950s, when orchards and fields of evacuated Arab dwellings were appropriated to resolve housing distress in the bursting city until urban sprawl highlighted in the 60s. And so, New Urbanism is forced to ask anew the very question it was based on: Where, or more precisely – when, need it go back to? Moreover, deciding in this matter may result in one of the New Urbanistic slandered deficiencies: Permanency of one timeline<sup>16</sup>, deriving the space of its function as a Foucauldian heterochrony. Moreover, neo-traditional forms are a setback in retrieving "good old" urbanism since their attraction is in their exotic image and has nothing to do with the community values they used to represent<sup>17</sup>.



Attempting to establish a sustainable community, while clinging to a Modernist figure in a place that was utterly changed by it, is at the least problematic.

For planners to determine where their loyalty to local history lies is a political commitment. It means that the whole and the sanctity of the urban texture are compromised in the name of representing varied historiographies in a city that invented for itself a well conceived identity. Postmodern planning should be expected to at least reflect this dilemma.

Here, we are facing a place that is located in the heart of the city, yet it is practically isolated from it. Someil impedes total homogeneity of space and society. All the same, the New Urban plans diminish its essence. The wish for locality appears to remain an imported principle, rooted in the North American nostalgia for a compact European town and then dismissed as incompatible with the Israeli urban space. Understandably, the New Urban counteract to Modernism must assume different shapes in different places, still, there should be more to it than this reduced version of perceiving the site as a ripped fabric that needs to be stitched up. What happens here is this: In the name of New Urban design, the planners turn to the dominating local design and adopt forms that were devised in the spirit of Modernism – the very same universal placeless norm of planning that its rejection was the *raison d'être* for establishing New Urbanism. Once the urban renewal project is completed and the site is built according to plan, this space will dissolve not only into the spatial continuum, but also into the social, ethnic, economical surroundings. Nothing will be left of Someil, but also – and more importantly – nothing will be left of this place's Otherness.

Like many other metropolitan areas around the world, Tel Aviv is coping with issues of introducing mixed use and affordable housing to the city space, thwarting gentrification, and varied urban complexities. New Urbanism acknowledges diversity as a key measure for dealing

with such issues. Although there might not be a strong argument for architectural conservation of the few buildings remaining in Someil, there is nevertheless a crucial significance to this place. Along with other sites in the city space of Tel Aviv that used to be Arab villages, it is in fact reminiscent of a spatial order that preceded the city. These Other Spaces are necessary for elevating reflections on the local space and its history, and for providing Tel Aviv, a fairly young city which had already forgotten some parts of its past, with an opportunity to consider the course of its growth.

## **CONCLUSION**

There is an internal conflict recognizable within New Urbanism: a clash between the concept of placeness (or the act of place-making) associated with history and the notion of spatial justice in relation to diversity. Importing New Urbanism raises the question of settling spatial-justice with spatial-history. The movement stands for the ideal of local community values and it strives to strengthen community ties and sense of locality. Given the movement's interest in the past and in local planning traditions as a response to Modernism, this means inevitably siding with a certain historiographic narrative. When combined with the desire for social justice, this approach gives rise to other postmodern planning advances such as advocacy planning and public participation. Of course, when these are applied to actual projects there is always the risk of affiliating spatial justice to a specific group in the city and its view of urban space. At the same time, New Urbanism calls for diversity and spatial justice, which are even more difficult to settle with the inclination to locality. How can planning empower sense of locality in the community and at the same time awaken it to tolerate alternative ways of understanding its own space? These contradictions can only find resolution within Other Spaces, where the sense of

community derives from acknowledging differences and harnessing them to the end of working together in creating a just society. When New Urbanism does not allow for the existence of Other Space, it is not only failing by its own standards, waiving diversity as well as locality, but it also reveals how the city rejects ambiguity concerning its self image.

In the Israeli spatial reality in particular, one cannot ignore the intrinsic political meanings of space. Planning principles that oppose categorizing space in a top-down process or the ambition to produce conditions for mutual awareness between varied urban dwellers have not only social, economic, or ethnic meaning but also one of national identity. Other Space can subvert consensual perceptions of space and thus affect spatial politics. A space such as the site of Someil has the power to teach us forgotten histories just by being there, left to its own devices. First, we must recognize Other Spaces in the city; places that at least to some extent function as heterotopias. Then, we need to approach them (and yes, maybe even plan them) within the framework of their capacity as Different, and mark this characteristic as a goal to be achieved by planning. By leaving certain places in spatial ambiguity, we can draw attention towards the questioning of popular knowledge on how the city developed and why. If we can manage to do so, we will create an opportunity for challenging a variety of spatial-social conventions on a much larger scale than that of the city itself. This could possibly introduce the Spatial Turn into the political discourse in Israel. Where space is so entangled in national politics and in maintaining national identity, questioning its integrity may rattle some worn out modes of (spatial) thinking.

Therefore, if we wish to plan for diversity, if at all possible, we need to look for heterotopias in urban space and facilitate places that function relatively as "Others" in the city.

*Oded Haas is grateful to the Azrieli Foundation for the award of an Azrieli Fellowship*



Fig. 1. Bird's eye view of the site of Someil (bottom left corner). Ibn Gvirol Street is crossing the photo, with Tel Aviv city hall in the background.



Fig. 2. A photo taken from within the site of Someil, looking in the direction of Ibn Gvirol Street.

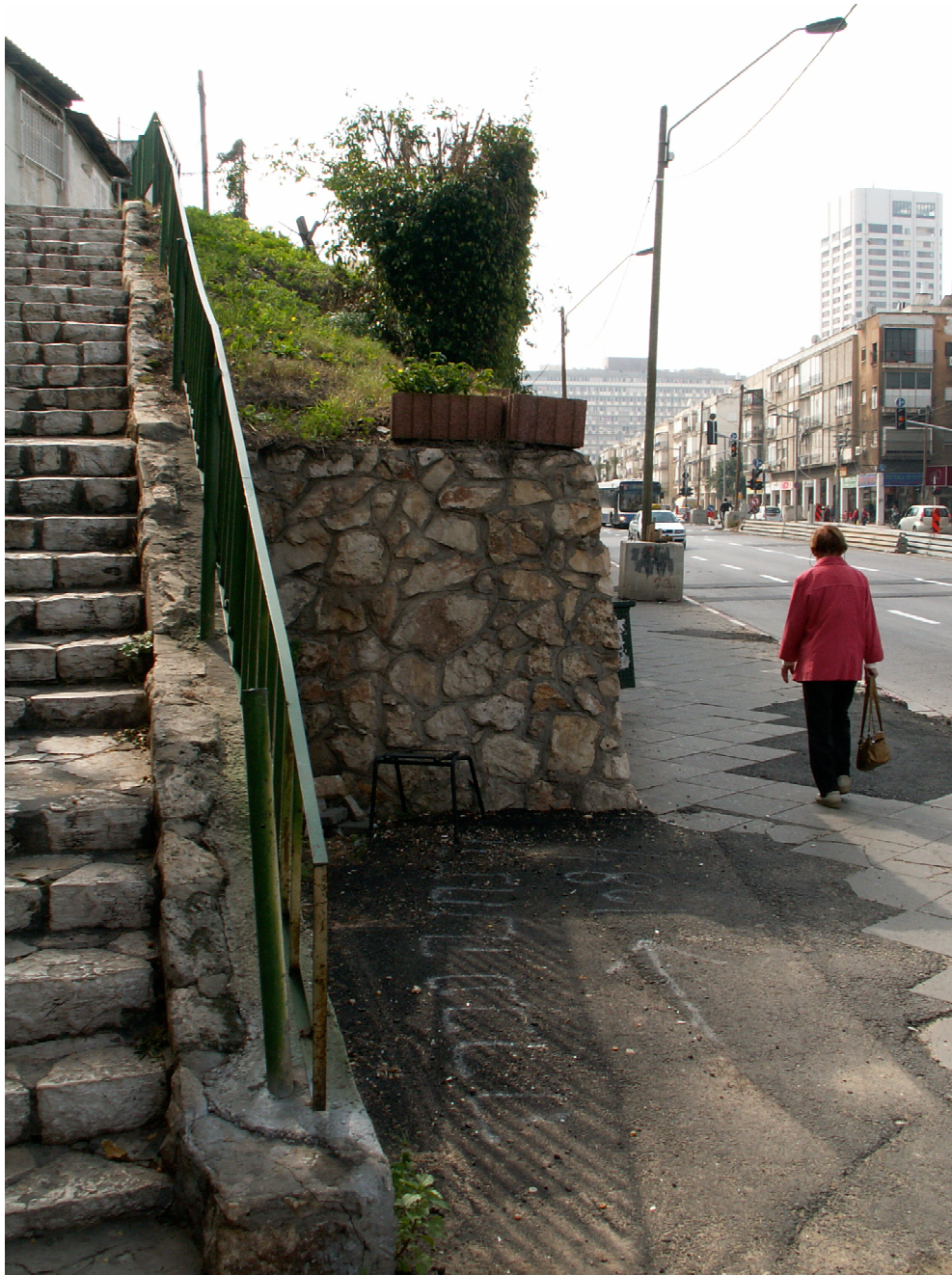


Fig. 3. Walking on the edge of the city: Ibn Gvirol Street on the verge of Someil. The original hill is still adjacent to the busy street.



Fig. 4. The renovated and "dignified" Ibn Gvirol Street.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

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1. Edward W. Soja, "Writing the City Spatially", *City* Vol. 7 No. 3 (2003): 272. Soja is referring to a growing transdisciplinary interest in cities, pronounced by scholars who "interpret what they study using a spatial perspective". He point out Henri Lefebvre who puts space first, and sees "all the complexities of human existence, especially cities, through assertively spatial lenses."
2. The most influential work by Jane Jacobs in this context is her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961).
3. Peter Marcuse, "The New Urbanism: The Dangers so Far", *DISP* 140 (2000): 5.
4. For a thorough response to some of this criticism see Cliff Ellis, "The New Urbanism: Critiques and Rebuttals", *Journal of Urban Design* Vol. 7 No. 3 (2002): 261-291.
5. Data on abandoned Palestinian villages is found mainly in alternative sources of information. Zochrot ("remembering") organization is "a group of Israeli citizens working to raise awareness of the Nakba, the Palestinian catastrophe of 1948". (<http://www.zochrot.org>). PalestineRemembered.com is an on-line resource for stories, images and data concerning Palestinian historiography.
6. For the issue of Mixed towns in Israel, see Daniel Monerescu and Dan Rabinowitz, *Mixed Towns, Trapped Communities: Historical Narratives, Spatial Dynamics, Gender Relations and Cultural Encounters in Palestinian-Israeli Towns* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007).
7. For further discussion see: Naseer Aruri, *Palestinian Refugees: The Right to Return* (London: Pluto Press, 2001).
8. Michel Foucault, "Des Espace Autres", trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Architecture/Movement/Continuité* (1984).
9. Henri Lefebvre's concept of the Right to the City is articulated in his book *Le Droit à la Ville*, published in French in 1968.
10. Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, trans. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p.51.
11. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1974), p.4.
12. Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, trans. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p.101.
13. Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1996), p.156.
14. Arch. David Secely, in an interview conducted as part of the research on Someil, on November 9th 2009.
15. Arch. Tali Ya'ar, in an interview conducted as part of the research on Someil, on November 18th 2009.
16. Peter Rowe, *Civic Realism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), p.224.
17. Alex Krieger, "Arguing the 'Against' Position: New Urbanism as a Means of Building and Rebuilding our Cities", in Todd Bressi ed., *The Seaside Debates* (New York: Rizzoli, 2002), p.57.