Original Article

The iron cage of ethnicity: Ethnic urban enclaves and the challenge of urban design

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Abstract   This article describes and analyzes the social construction of the urban space of an immigrant city, with a special focus on ethnic enclaves, by bringing together the languages of urban design and urban-social research. The case of Ashdod has brought me to question the existing theoretical toolbox of social research, with its discourse of segregation–integration and multicultural theory. Following the career of the ethnic category at the junction between city planning and urban history and the way people consume the city's structure, it is argued that the purpose of the narratives spoken in the center of a modern Israeli city is to pave a way into the heart of the imagined community. Having failed in their efforts to belong as equals, Israel's immigrants have adopted a strategy termed here 'distinct participation'. Analyzing their conduct and actions, it is concluded that in order to belong to the national community, they must first become different, and that nothing says 'different' better than ethnicity. This is the iron cage of ethnicity: ethnicity is not only distinctive and compartmentalizing; it is also a laissez-passer. These insights shed new light on the ongoing research into ethnic enclaves in immigrant cities and challenge the role of urban designers that act and involve in cities of immigrants.
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Introduction

'Everybody was walking around in tears, walking around in tears because they saw their grandmother's house. I touched their roots'. This was how Rachelle Katznelson, cultural coordinator for a community center in a neighborhood populated mostly by Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union, described to me the excitement that gripped the visitors to the Jewish Village Festival that she had organized in the city of Ashdod. It was a large production that promised its visitors, 'We will experience the world of Marc Chagall, the shtetl houses, the animals, the fiddler on the roof, the bride and her bouquet; we'll remember our grandfather's house and grandma's smells and tastes. The past will accompany us into the future'.

This article presents an analysis of the activities of urban immigrants that lies at the junction between the urban sociology and urban design. It deals with questions of memory, identity and ethnicity, along with issues of public space, construction of sense of place, and the way people consume and use the city. In terms of methodology, this article lays out the findings of an interdisciplinary study that brings together the urban analysis of city planning and design and ethnographies that focus on the actions of urban individuals and groups.

In my research 'It will be quiet enough when we're dead – now is the time to live': Between planning the modern city and living in it' (Aharon-Gutman, 2009), I discuss the gap between the manifestation of leading principles in urban planning (zoning) and the daily experience of the residents. In this article, I discuss the role of urban designers facing the challenge of immigrant cities. Immigrant cities are in a constant process of change. Its public sphere is an arena of conflicts between different agencies and ideas: past and future; nostalgia and plans for the future; what we were and what we want to become. I argue

that, in order to understand and to act in immigrant cities, social-urban research might meet the world of urban design and vice versa. I bring forth this point of intersection as a response to Griffiths' (2012) introduction, in which he calls for the exploration and development of theory of urban design in a wide social context. Specifically, in this article I attempt to bring to the attention of urban designers one of the most complicated and urgent question that cities face today, namely, the question of urban ethnic enclaves.

Since the 1990s, events such as the Jewish Village Festival have been interpreted in the context of the agenda of multiculturalism. In this article, however, I offer a critique of multiculturalism as a useful framework for understanding the dynamic of urban enclaves in cities of immigration. Criticizing the multiculturalist agenda leads me to rethink differences between ethnic groups and to offer the notion of distinctive participation as a new way of understanding urban enclaves.

The multiculturalist agenda makes a contribution at the junction between the social sciences and urban planning: from the perspective of multiculturalism, events such as the Jewish Village Festival are seen as acts of neighborhood cultural revitalization, as signs of the expression of a distinct voice, as the creation of difference for the sake of cultural development among communities of minorities. It is assumed that a cultural group with a distinct and developed collective identity is a tool for ensuring the individual's freedoms, as playing a crucial role in solidifying the individual's identity, and as an arena in which the individual's actions are invested with meaning (Ganz, 1998, p. 347). The concept of multiculturalism legitimizes ethnic and religious diversity in the western world and demands that the state enable diverse cultures to maintain their coherence (Kymlica, 1995).

Multicultural thinking has brought about a conceptualization of social borders as having the role of delineating between 'us' and 'them'. Mainly because of the claim 'in virtue of difference' (Yonah, 2005a, b), a claim that legitimize the existence of social boundaries as if they were mechanism of protection on subcultures. Analyses based on difference not only document and conceptualize a given social reality; they also contribute to its creation. Yonah, 2005a, p. 160 argues that one of the concrete expressions of multicultural thought is the existence of distinct residential districts, public spaces and education systems.

On the basis of 4 years of ethnography in an immigrant city in Israel, and in the context of that modern nation state's Jewish immigrants, I shall argue that events such as the Jewish festival could not be seen as an indication of the blossoming of a space of difference, as argued from the multiculturalist perspective. I maintain that the cultural leaders among the immigrant groups are not trying to distinguish themselves or create urban ghettos. In contrast to what we might expect, I argue that the act of creating difference is a way of belonging to the national culture and of having a presence in national space. Having failed to be accepted as equals[1], Israel's immigrants at the turn of the millennium adopted a strategy that I term 'distinct participation'. Analysis of their activities shows that in order to belong to the national community they must first set themselves apart, and there is no more efficient mechanism of distinction than gathering around the category of ethnicity. By doing so they create new urban and cultural spaces. That is how the iron cage of ethnicity emerges. The main objective of this article is to show how the creation of an ethnic iron cage shapes the urban environment and vice versa.

Ashdod, that stands in the center of this article, challenge the disciplinary border line between urban design and social science. Ashdod is one of Israel's planned towns. Ashdod founded in 1956, as part of a national plan for the dispersal of the population from the center of the country, known as 'Sharon's (1976) Plan'. Intended to be a garden city with population of 50 000 people, it was planned over 170 ha. However, by the time it came to execute the plan in the 1950s, the government had run out of money. Ben Gurion, the legendary first Prime Minister, turned to wealthy Jews from Israel and the United States to help build the town. He offered them the land in exchange for their assistance in obtaining a loan from the World Bank to build a modern port in the city. Construction was assigned to a company, and, under the direction of architect, Y. Perlstein, the modest proposal for housing 50 000 people expanded into a plan for a city of 300 000 inhabitants, organized into 17 different neighborhoods and spreading over 5000 ha. This plan was completed in 1960 (Brotzkus, 1969), and in 1961 the first construction work began. The blueprint for Ashdod (Frankel, 1990) included: (i) Total separation between zones with different functions (industry, housing and so on); (ii) The construction of a network of main roads in the town, routed outside the neighborhoods to ensure rapid and convenient transport; (iii) Buildings that would ensure a high quality of life to the inhabitants (relatively low density, outlooks to

the sea); (iv) Mono-use but socially mixed neighborhoods, creating diversity in the social fabric, with immigrants from North Africa and Asia housed together. Neighborhoods were designed to encourage social integration and to provide all necessary services at the family level. (v) Economic diversity, achieved by combining different economic levels of housing in each quarter to avoid polarization between the rich and the poor, and by including immigrants from various countries of origin and different religious orientations. (vi) The prevention of environmental degradation, to ensure quality of life.

Each of Ashdod's 17 neighborhoods was designed to house 15–18 000 inhabitants, and each district was separated from the others by main roads. At the heart of each was a commercial center, with schools and kindergartens, and each also possessed a green belt running across it, generally orientated from North to South. There were ring roads within the neighborhoods, creating a circular movement of traffic, and from these, *cul-de-sacs* branched out into the streets containing housing. Just as planned, there were different types of apartments, varying greatly in their size and in the area of land on which they stood.

Research question and central concepts

Generations of researchers have sought to document, articulate and understand the duality in the immigrant's identity; a duality between 'here' and 'there' that has led to urban ethnic segregation. In their efforts to decipher the riddle of ethnic neighborhoods in immigrant cities, researchers have suggested concepts such as segregation, integration, assimilation, modernization and culturalization. This article draws on the tradition of urban sociology as established and developed in Chicago at the beginning of the previous century. Urban sociology investigated the formation of segregated urban spaces and the actions of ethnic groups within them. Theoretically speaking, these groundbreaking studies of segregative neighborhoods in large cities have provided us with a language and theoretical tools with which to document and comprehend how people (mostly minority groups and immigrants) resolve this duality within their identity (Thomas and Znaniecki, 1918; Park, Burgess and McKenzie, 1925; Gans 1962. For more recent studies see Venkatesh, 2000; Wilson and Taub, 2006; Marwell, 2007).

The multicultural vision that acknowledges the power of difference, maintains the view that social boundaries are points of separation, difference and distinction. The theoretical framework that I adopt emphasizes a surprising character of boundaries: boundaries are not only a place of separation, but also a place of contact and friction (Anzaldua, 1987). The very existence of the (urban) boundary requires cooperation, communication, coordination and mutual nourishment (Zerubavel, 1991). Often, the presence of urban frontiers requires the attention of urban designers. Although the boundaries are invisible, they create a unique urban dynamic. Moreover, the existence of a boundary creates the urge to cross it, as Engle (1988) showed in her studies of boundary areas between segregated neighborhoods in large cities in the context of crime and ethnicity.

The concept of 'distinct participation' is a paradox that expresses a simple and surprising principle: you can belong to the national community by adopting an ethnic category. The ethnic category does not threaten national identity; quite the opposite, immigrant groups whose aspirations to equality and inclusion as individuals have been disappointed, revitalize their ethnic identity – not as an alternative, but rather as a pathway for social mobility into the bosom of the nation state. According to the liberal view of citizenship, the individual, and not the group, is sanctified. Acceptance into a democratic nation state founded on migration, however, only becomes possible for them when they are organized as groups. This collective activity is what drives city life. The ethnic category is the most efficient for bringing a group together and demanding membership and existence within cities. It is important to emphasize that different groups use different strategies in making these demands. Thus, the point that I wish to make here is that ethnicity is a central actor in shaping the city.

Theoretically speaking, I suggest the concept of distinct participation to conjoin the immigrants' 'participation' with the element of 'distinction', a linkage that derives from seeing the boundary as place of encounter, and not only of separation and difference. 'Distinction participation' is an action that exposes the Janus-faced nature of the boundary, and its objective is to attain acknowledgment and existence (Taylor, 1992). This action is created at the point at which the members of a group understand that the ethnic category that was so surprisingly attached to them – 'Russians', 'Moroccans', 'Ethiopians' – is

not only the cause and effect of their marginality and segregation, but also their point of contact. Furthermore, once it is institutionalized, their ethnic category is the only way they can take part in society. It has been argued (Caspi and Elias, 2000) that reading newspapers in the immigrant's mother tongue, which for years was interpreted as an expression of segregation and distinction, is actually a way of making a connection with the new space. That is, distinction and participation are not mutually exclusive (Bhabha, 1995); quite the opposite: in the context of immigration, one cannot be understood without the other.

Immigrants to Israel from Africa or Asia who expected to be treated as equals were disappointed. They were excluded and exiled to the periphery. In Ashdod I met a group of North African Jews from the Francophone bourgeoisie who had come to Israel in the 1960s: bank managers, doctors, contractors. All of them describe the process of absorption in Israel as one of exclusion, which Bauman has defined as 'minority individuals suspended in limbo between the promise of full integration and the fear of continued exclusion' (Geoff Dench, in Bauman, 2001, p. 94).

As an *ethnic group*, though, they had a place in the social urban space, especially under the policy of melting pot. The emphasis here is not on 'ethnicity' but rather on the *group*. How is it that 'ethnicity' succeeded where 'gender' and 'class' failed? Ethnicity was found to be an effective category in creating a group because it is seen as 'natural' (Comaroff, 1987): it is marked in one's skin color, facial characteristics, country of birth. The primary force of ethnicity is in signifying social inequality. As such, ethnicity is nurtured both by the excluding groups, which thereby reinforce social inequality, and by the excluded people themselves, who have understood that the power of the ethnic category is not only as a stigma, a social prison, but also as a pathway to cultural and economic mobility (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2009).

The State of Israel's immigrants alternate between the promise of inclusion (particularly as Jewish individuals) and acts of exclusion. Their movement between the two teaches them an important lesson: they are present when their organization as a group that can become an electorate or a significant economic force. *This is the iron cage of ethnicity*. The category enchains and liberates. It puts you 'in your place', one that is both a home and a jail. The notion of the 'iron cage' was first presented by Weber (1905) in his famous

work, *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*. Through this notion, Weber gave expression to a key principle in modernity and capitalism – the idea of dialectical analysis. In the name of rationality, Weber argued, people were trapped in irrational circumstances. Modernity was understood as simultaneously liberating and enchaining. The dialectical approach became foundational to the philosophy and sociology of the twentieth century. Leading figures such as Walter Benjamin and Georg Zimmel developed the concept and applied it to *the* central subject of discourse both then and today – the city.

Structure of the article

In the first section of this article, I shall offer a macro-level analysis of the planning of the city of Ashdod. In this section, I shall present the urban reality as a tension between processes of 'top-down' planning and the political and economic power relations that populated it and made it what it is. In the second part, I shall present a micro-level analysis that asks how the city is consumed (De Certeau, 1984) and how the people who live there interpret it.

In the conclusion, I shall demonstrate how these two dimensions – the macro and the micro, the physical and the cultural – mutually influence one another as they shape and change one another.

Methodology

I knew nothing about Ashdod. My first year of research was exploratory: I intentionally refrained from arranging interviews or in-depth discussions with functionaries or persons from the municipality, and, more significantly, I did not define any concrete fields of research. I would visit the city twice a week, choose a street or an area, and walk, photograph, have casual conversations with people, and closely follow the local press. I gradually began to interview low-level position holders: social workers, committee heads, community center managers and neighborhood activists.

In my second year of research, I moved to Ashdod, renting an apartment in the city on 13, Zionut St. Although I had been living only a 45 minute drive from the town, this move proved critical to the depth of my knowledge of the city. Weeks spent searching for an apartment with estate agents taught me a lot: they are, after all,

the most experienced sociologists of the ins and outs of a city. Living in Ashdod afforded me the opportunity not only to understand it, but also to experience it firsthand.

At the same time, I studied the city's history and urban planning. Ashdod was established as one of Israel's 'new cities', and so its development was carefully documented, and many manifestos were written. As was the case with other modern cities in developed and developing countries (Holston 1989; Mitchell, 1991; Hosagrahar, 2005), the process of urban planning gave physical expression to modernist ideas and outlooks. Accordingly, the character of the city and its inhabitants' lifestyles and customs were minutely described even before Ashdod became a city.

This is what a long-time inhabitant who took part in the establishment of the port and the planning of the town answered when asked what idea the plan embodied:

> It was supposed to be a great city. [The planners] took their example from England. People want to live outside the city center. They want a piece of garden. It's the influence of the American suburbs. They decided to build satellite towns around it, connected with each other, with quick trains to work. A quiet city. Sometimes you can't get into it in cars. That's where the neighborhoods came from, too. Main roads in which the traffic flows quickly and neighborhoods that are social units. They take good care of the family, children and old people. Streets that are *cul-de-sacs*. There are green strips through the whole city, but they've been encroached on and ruined: they've built synagogues and clubs and so on, on them, instead.

This research thus shifts between a study of the imagined city and the city's overall planning, and between the socio-historical processes that shaped the city's reality and an ethnography of the people who live in it.

Ashdod – between planning and history

On my first day in the city, I got lost. I stopped by an idling taxi and asked the driver how to get to the Eighth Quarter. The taxi driver laughed and said, 'It's like they stamped your passport three times and you didn't notice. You passed it miles back'.
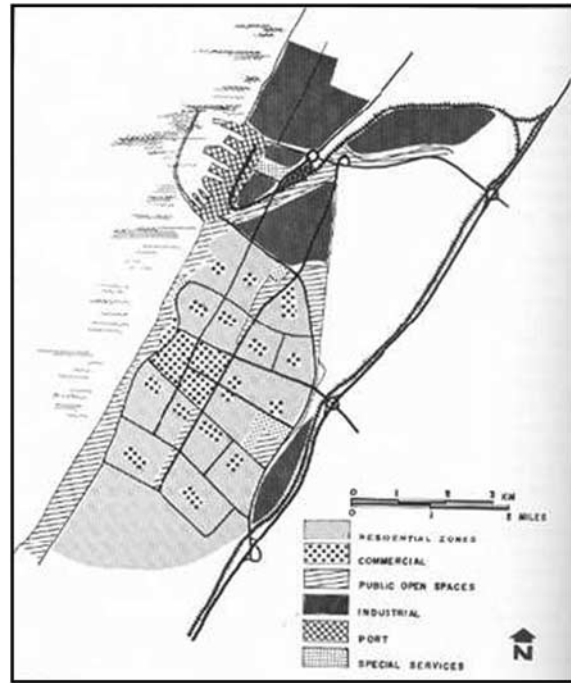

Figure 1: Map of land functions (from Strong, 1971, p. 192).

Even with a superficial knowledge of Ashdod, it is clear that the quarter represents a category in the definition of the inhabitants' identity: 'I'm from the First', 'I'm from the Ninth,' 'I'm from the Seventh' – these are effective tools for social definition within Ashdod. The city is comprised of 16 residential quarters, in addition to which there are two other purpose-build quarters: the City Quarter and the 'Special' Quarter. As well as the division into quarters, Ashdod's urban planning is also faithful to the idea of zoning: there is an industrial area to the north of the city, a area for garages, a bus and train station in the southeast part of the city, and a special trade area on the boundary between the port and the industrial area to the northwest (Aharon-Gutman, 2009). The city was planned around a grid system of main roads that demarcate the different residential quarters, and a secondary system that passes through the quarters and links them together (see Figure 1). The main roads are wide (with two or three lanes in each direction), with the high lampposts positioned in the middle serving as boundary markers within the urban space.

In my research, I have called Ashdod a modern national city (Aharon-Gutman, 2005). For the first time, the Israeli state entrusted the planning and building of a city into the hands of a private company, 'The Ashdod Company'. In 1956, the Company started to build Ashdod, which, based
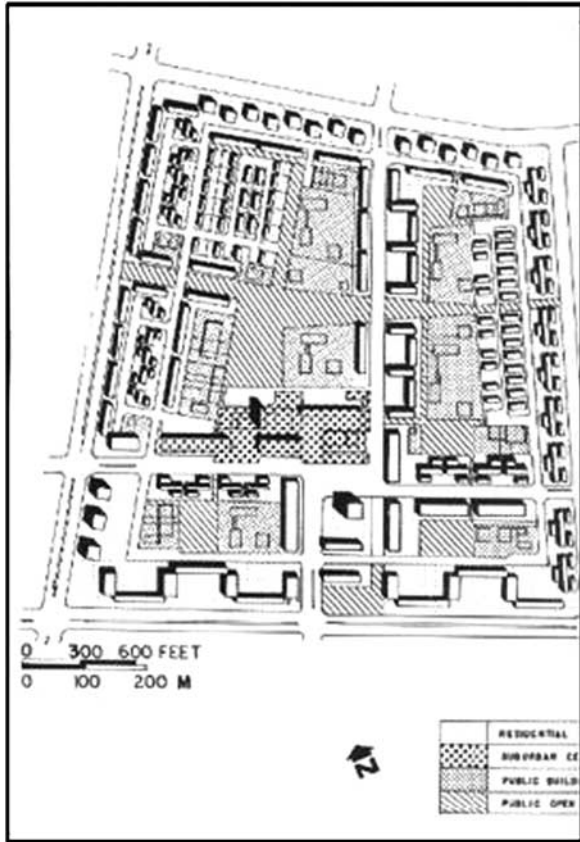
Figure 2: A sketch of a quarter (from Strong, 1971, p. 194).

Figure 3: Rate of population growth. Data from the Department for Strategic Planning and Computing at the Ashdod Municipality (2005).

on the overall urban plan, would be home to around 250 000 people.

The main roads cross the city like borderlines in the heart of the city. An apartment on one side of the road could be tens of times more expensive than one on the other side; children from opposite sides of the road would go to different elementary schools; the residents might pay different rates of municipal taxes; the languages, the local stores and the dress code would be quite different. Every time I crossed one of the main roads the taxi driver's words echoed in my ear: 'It's like they stamped your passport three times', but now I noticed.

As laid out in the overall urban plan, each quarter contains a range of types of accommodation. A minimal area was set aside for detached houses and communal buildings of two stories, but the majority of the land was designated for state-owned public housing projects with apartments of various sizes (between $40\,m^2$ and $80\,m^2$). High rises were built on some of the land.(Figure 2).

As planned, the quarters did indeed take on an autonomous status in the life of the city. The quarter became a municipal unit of administrative organization. M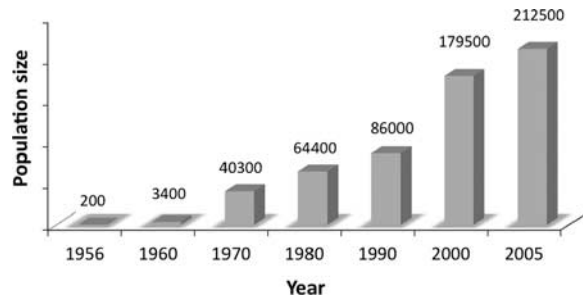ore importantly, the quarter became a unit of social organization. The quarters were defined as the 'natural' catchment areas for schools, such that the city's educational arenas were also shaped by the quarters (Aravot and Militanu, 2000). Each quarter had a committee founded in the 1960, whose management was defined by senior officials in the municipality as 'defusing social landmines'. The city organizes elections in most of the quarters, provides guidance in the lead up to them, and funds them. In quarters with a high proportion of groups seen by the authorities as 'problematic' (such as the ultra-Orthodox quarter), the municipality does not organize the elections for the quarter's committee.

First and foremost, Ashdod is an immigrant society, a characteristic that can be seen in a variety of different ways. For years the city has had the greatest proportion of Jewish immigrants in Israel – around one third of its inhabitants. In 2005, Ashdod also had more immigrants than any other city, with about 71 500.[2] Of all, 55 per cent inhabitants aged 65 or over are Jewish immigrants.[3]

The city's first residents were immigrants from Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, and were joined by small groups from Eastern Europe, mostly Romania and Poland. In the 1970s, immigrants arrived from Georgia, Iran and the former Soviet Union. Between 1990 and 1993, the city's population grew by 38 per cent, almost entirely because of immigrants from former Soviet states. In 2005, immigrants were still arriving in Ashdod, mainly from Western Russia (79 per cent), Eastern Russia (4 per cent), France (4 per cent), Argentina (2 per cent), Ethiopia (4 per cent) and Georgia (2 per cent) (The Department for Strategic Planning and Computing at the Ashdod Municipality, 2005). (Figure 3).

Today the city is home to about 223 000 people. Until the 1970s, the rate of growth was among the highest and fastest in Israel (Maman, 1990, p. 31).[4]

According to the plans for the city, the quarter was meant to encourage social integration, based on the range of types of accommodation. Each quarter was planned to have a shopping area and neighborhood services at its center. However, in the gap between planning and reality, a new urban space was created. The actual realization of the plans – the order of the quarters' construction and the policy for populating Ashdod – seems to have determined the character of the city. Despite the ideology and the planning, which espoused the policy of the melting pot, the rapid construction of the city from north to south created a situation, whereby each group of immigrants populated the constructed areas. This brought about an urban pattern determined by people living in areas based on their countries of origin. The city was not built outwards in circles from the center, but rather from the Northern areas closer to the port and the industrial area southwards. The first quarters to be built were the First, Second and Third, which were quickly constructed and populated. Within a decade, seven quarters were built.

Immigrants from North Africa settled in the older quarters: the First, Second and Third. Native-born Israelis and those of American or European extraction settled in the Fourth Quarter, as well as in particular neighborhoods in the Second and First. A large group of Karaites was settled in the First Quarter.[5] Following the waves of immigration in the 1970s, immigrants from Georgia were housed in the Sixth Quarter, where the highest concentration of housing projects was built. Over time, the housing projects attracted disadvantaged populations (such as rehabilitating addicts and single-parent families), thus positioning the quarter as one of the weakest in socio-economic terms. In the 1980s, following pressure from the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Construction and Housing, an entire quarter – the Seventh Quarter – was allocated to the ultra-Orthodox community. The level of socio-economic deprivation in this quarter is extremely high.[6] Today the neighboring quarters – especially the Sixth, the Third and the Eighth – are becoming more ultra-Orthodox in character. Following the enormous wave of immigration from the former Soviet Union, three quarters – the Tenth, the Thirteenth and the Ninth – were constructed as Russian quarters. This process followed government intervention and the mode of the immigrants' organization – some of them organized in NGOs and were active partners in planning their homes and neighborhoods.

The construction of boundaries between the quarters in Ashdod is particularly effective. It takes place from the 'bottom-up' – a blossoming of ethnic businesses, signs in the various languages, synagogues that serve a particular ethnic group – and from the 'top-down' – the construction of public housing in certain quarters, the building of high schools and so on.

A central actor in understanding the cultural–economic make-up of the city is the housing policy imposed from above. The housing policy is formulated at the meeting point between the professionals (architects and municipal engineers), the regional planning committee, the city construction committee in the local authority and the developers. Decisions about apartment size, the population density of the neighborhood and the allocation of parking spaces determine who will live in those houses. A densely-built quarter with apartments around $70–80\,m^2$ and few parking spaces will be populated by ultra-Orthodox Jews. If during the first wave of construction the quarters incorporated different types of accommodation to ensure integration, during the second wave, in the 1970s, and the third wave, from the 1990s until the present day, housing policy has dictated the target populations of the newly constructed neighborhoods.

However, ethnicity was not the only factor involved in the determining the population patterning of the city. In order to understand the development of the city I adopt Fanon's proposal and include the category of class in our explanation: 'the economic structure is also a superstructure […] you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich. This is why a Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched' (Fanon 1969, p. 31).

With the story of Ashdod, the call to stretch the Marxist analysis is more relevant than ever. The social pattern in the city is not only a function of ethnic segregation, as argued by Osnat (2004). Rather, it is always the outcome of class construction as well. In a port city, class logic finds strong expression in housing policy and urban planning. The port of Ashdod is a rare case where peripheral laborers (non-skilled, recent immigrants or *Mizrahim*) succeeded, as a group, in penetrating the core of the primary labor market and the economic center (Osnat (2004)).

The national industries that were set up in Ashdod (particularly the port and the power station), that were aimed at encouraging workers to move to the city, influenced the housing market

and promoted the creation of class-defined areas. Port laborers organized themselves as a group to purchase the land and built their houses. Workers from the power station, meanwhile, were housed in a neighborhood in the First Quarter. These class-based neighborhoods reshaped the city's social structure and were the site of overlap between the categories of ethnicity, class and the city.

Planning and population processes become real in their outcomes. An examination of the statistical ranking of the various quarters in Ashdod reveals a correlation between the ethnic and class layout of the city.

Yet, this is not a static situation. Ashdod is a city with a high level of mobility, and socio-economic mobility within the city is changing it. Those of the second generation of inhabitants who have succeeded in establishing themselves have moved southwards ('Have you noticed,' many people liked to ask me, 'that only in Korea and Ashdod is the north poor and the south rich?'), while apartments in the Northern quarters (the First and Second) are bought up by weaker populations.

The quarters with the lowest level of segregation are the new, Southern ones (the Eleventh, Twelfth and Fifteenth). These newer quarters are populated by the upwardly mobile middle classes, the children of both Mizrahi and Russian immigrants. Indeed, a new middle class, Mizrachi middle class is taking shape that has been unnoticed by sociologists (see also Cohen and Leon, 2008, on this subject) and that challenges the current research agenda. That is, the power of the ethnic category is weakening in the face of 'religion' and 'class'.

In sum, in this section I have shown how the planners' intention was to build quarters in order to form a social melting pot. However, the quarters became segregative social units defined by the categories of ethnicity, class and religion. Ethnic segregation – the dominant of the three – was created as an outcome of the complex processes I noted above: a pace of construction that brought about a different urban reality to that which was planned (construction from north to south and the lack of a 'downtown', or a center), and the population of the quarters according to 'waves of immigration', which cut short their career as a melting pot. Class segregation was the outcome of the involvement of the industries that constituted the labor market in Ashdod: the port, the power station and Elta. Class segregation intensified over the years because of processes of upward mobility. Second generation double-income immigrant families started moving to the Southern quarters.

Ashdod thus enables intra-city social mobility by offering high-quality accommodation at relatively low prices. This socio-historical dynamic leads us to isolate the moments at which social categories are created and infuse physical spaces with meaning and a social order. In this section of the article, I have described the dominance of the ethnic category and its recent decline in the face of the categories of class and religion. I did not meet a single person in Ashdod who was able to improve the standard of their accommodation but preferred to stay in their quarter out of a sense of belonging to an ethnic group. In the countless conversations I held during the years of my ethnography in the city, I met many people who had moved to the South of Ashdod but whose heart remained in the quarter in which they had grown up. They return to its parliaments and meeting places, and some of them travel to their childhood synagogue on the Sabbath and Jewish holidays. Becoming disconnected from 'our' synagogue, the synagogue to which their father used to go, is a crisis point, but this sentiment is not enough to keep them in the neighborhood.

This description and analysis of the social construction of space in Ashdod would not be complete without turning our gaze on the people, on their actions in those urban spaces and the meaning they give to them. In the second section, I shall document and analyze the ethnic construction of the urban space from the 'bottom-up'. I shall show how people 'consume' (De Certeau, 1984) the physical space, thereby imbuing it with new meaning.

Learning the immigrant city from the 'bottom-up' – What do people do in Ashdod's quarters?

Case study: Memorial ceremony for those who died on the Egoz ship

Every year, on 13 January, the main road in the Sixth Quarter is closed to traffic, plastic chairs are arranged in rows, the local orchestra is brought out, and the pupils from the military school, wearing white uniforms, stand like soldiers during inspection. The national and municipal flags are raised, and the ceremony begins. The ceremony is held in the memory of those who lost their lives on the pre-State clandestine migration ship, *Egoz*, and is held by former underground activists from North Africa. At the 2002 event, the chairman of the organization of underground immigration

Figure 4: The sculpture, 1976, while it was still a modern sculpture, and not yet a monument.

Figure 5: The millitary academy cadets endow the ceremony with a military air.

activists from North Africa related why the national ceremony is held in Ashdod: key activists approached the mayor and asked him to donate a monument in memory of those who died on the *Egoz*. The mayor referred them to a sculpture that was being built in the Sixth Quarter, in a small square opposite a shopping center, with a park on two sides and a synagogue on another, not far from a school. '*But*', said the mayor, *I know that the sculptor meant something erotic, abstract, so see if it suits your needs and if he agrees, the sculpture's yours.* The sculpture does indeed have the shape of a phallic object, with a circle at its base. The organization's representatives were happy with it. *We do not see an erotic sculpture, but rather the hands of our brothers calling us from the water to help them.* The sculptor agreed to the sculpture's new purpose. (Figure 4).

Abstract design, which leaves itself open to its observers' interpretations, gave this ethno-national group the ability of infusing the sculpture with new meanings and fresh content.

The memorial ceremony for the *Egoz* ship (that was held on 13 January 2004) fully adopts the hegemonic formula for memorial and commemoration ceremonies; the ceremony is imbued with state formality. The repertoire of traditional early state songs is predictable and tired. I stand there embarrassed. My embarrassment says more about me than my research subjects. What was I expecting? What was I ashamed of? This report of the *Egoz* memorial ceremony is interesting, but not because of what it contains, but rather because of what is missing from it, because of the 'road not taken', to borrow from Weber. The North African immigrants do not create a cultural alternative, even though they have different traditions of mourning: women's lamentations, the different melody of the prayers – yet the *Kaddish* prayer

was recited according to the European style. Therefore, what appears at first glance to be an act by an ethnic group in a group-defined space actually turns out to be yet another deployment of the Israeli statist memorial tool kit.(Figure 5).

The members of the organization did not create a representative language, a music, an esthetic or content that diverges from the institutionalized national canon. Multicultural thought was not a good handbook for this event: there was no singular cultural feature in the ceremony that in any way differed from the hegemony.

The alternatives were in my head. The road not taken was that which I had been exposed to during my years in the academy, which, during the 1990s, was dealing intensively with identity politics. To the chagrin of many intellectuals, people are involved in their efforts to be accepted that they have neither the will nor the energy to challenge the core and the logic of the national center (Bhabha, 1994). A large number of academics-activists will say that this is the zenith of oppression, that this is the lot of those who have no ethnic awareness or recognition. Many will say that these former clandestine immigration activists from North Africa are trapped down a blind alley. I do not agree with these explanations. I have always seen them as academically patronizing. I look around me, and despite the ceremony's ludicrousness, I am convinced that the social–political–cultural show going on in front of me contains a wisdom that I must understand. What have they understood, and what road have they taken? I decide to let the ceremony be and return to the group of pensioners, whose hair shines white, and whose faces smile a confident smile.

At the convention, before the ceremony, which takes place in a hall at the local community center, the atmosphere is electric. I am exposed to a

well-oiled organization that produces an abundance of documentation – in the form of books and magazines – of its members' activities and their contribution to the establishment of the state. A large group of men with silver hair, accompanied by their wives, greet one another warmly. They ask after one another's children and grandchildren in chiming French. Every year an esteemed guest attends the ceremony. He brings with him the glamour of the state and signifies the importance of the event and its participants. The strict security arrangements and the presence of a large number of journalists put the event 'on the map'. This year, the convention is hosting Minister of Defense Shaul Mofaz. The chairman of the organization addresses him, saying:

> Sitting here, Minister of Defense, are the salt of the earth, people from the Mossad and the security forces. They, their sons and their daughters serve the country and the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) as soldiers, most of them in combat units. Not one refuses to serve. There are no shirkers among us.

The statement, 'we are not shirkers', is not only an expression of loyalty, but also an important representation of a social profile that is not characteristic of these people. The chairman of the organization hands to the Minister of Defense the North African community's deed of trust to the national community: there are no 'refuseniks' among us. At the end of his speech, the chairman addresses the minister directly, and says: 'We, who are from North Africa, will never forget your visit. Let that be clear'.

In other words, the chairman of the organization is pointing to another meaning, one that is no less important than remembering the dead from the *Egoz*, namely, the consolidation of the North African immigrants as a group with institutions, as a public that can be named, that fills halls, as an electorate, and thus as having political value – 'We will never forget your visit'.

It is only a year later, when I am attending the ceremony for the second time, that I understand: no attempt is being made to create an alternative; there is no new call to nationalism, or to a new urban identity. There is a public with a single perennial demand – to belong. Their choice to document and memorialize themselves as former clandestine immigration activists, to document and remember that they too had been part of the illegal immigration enterprise, shows how well they understood and internalized the conditions for entrance into the national community:

participation in the struggle and the aura of the military establishment. However – and this is an important lesson that I learnt during the years I spent studying Ashdod – you can only belong if you take on the ethnic category: and indeed, the organization is one of North African activists who had been involved in clandestine immigration.[7] Jacques, whom I met at the ceremony, understands that while he may have arrived in Israel as a Jew, he immediately became a Moroccan. This 'Moroccanness' not only expunges him from the national community, it is also his entrance pass into it. Therefore, in contrast to the multicultural argument, each time a group speaks in the name of its Moroccanness, or Russianness, it is not doing so in order to promote and develop difference. This event, as well as many others, taught me that the objective of an ethnic group's actions is to enable it to legitimately belong to the national community. This is the core of the logic of distinct participation.

He Wants, he Comes, I Give, he Gets

There is no doubt that the most adept practitioners of distinct participation – revitalizing ethnic culture as a central way of ascending to the public stage and receiving public resources – are the Russian groups. The Russian groups in Ashdod have a multitude of organizations and associations, some based on their members' background as soldiers in the Red Army (The Veterans and Disabled Veterans Organization, the Leningrad Siege Organization), some based on culture, sport or science (Artists–Immigrants, Immigrant Scientists, The Chess Association), parties and committees of quarters. Although multicultural thought would propose that we see this flurry of organizations as evidence of the revitalization or existence of 'Russian culture', in Ashdod I learnt that there is a culture that is sprouting up at the meeting points between languages, customs, beliefs and world views. The Russian immigrants understood that taking part in the military-security discourse is the entrance pass into the national community. A unique situation is created whereby a seemingly marginal social group – elderly immigrants – holds the master key to inclusion within the national community because they had fought against and defeated the army of the Third Reich.

Efraim Peperani speaks almost no Hebrew, and I no Russian. Nonetheless, he was the best teacher I had about the city of Ashdod. His athletic body

and spritely movement belie his 81 years. I run after him, trying to keep up with him. Peperani is a production and organization man, a bureaucrat, with an indefatigable sense of humor and warmth. He is the chairman of the Ashdod chapter of a national organization called The Organization of Disabled Veterans from the War against the Nazis. The organization was set up in Israel in the 1950s with the explicit aim of including groups of Jews – veterans of the Soviet armies – within the Israeli historical context. In 1954 the Israeli parliament, the Knesset, passed the Persons Disabled in War against the Nazis Law, which gave such people health-care benefits, discounts for electrical goods, pension top-ups and more. The massive wave of immigration from the former Soviet Union at the end of the 1990s breathed new life into the organization. 25 000 WWII veterans arrived from all over the former Soviet Union. 'The Ashdod chapter of the organization numbers around 780 disabled veterans and widows of disabled veterans (as of 2006) and functions as part of a nationwide organization. The average age of the members ranges between 80 and 90. Most of them are Russian-speakers who came to Israel during the 1990s. This number is rapidly decreasing from year to year, in 2006 alone 93 members of the chapter passed away. Most members of the organization are unable to regularly visit the clubhouse owing to ill health. Around 50–70 people regularly visit the clubhouse. Efraim is the youngest member of the chapter, and it must be said that he is extremely energetic. He used to be a journalist and a lawyer. Once a week they discuss Israeli current affairs, they celebrate birthdays together, as well as the Jewish festivals and the holidays they used to commemorate in the Soviet Union, such as: International Woman's Day, the civil New Year and others. However, the festival around which the organization's social life is constructed is Soviet Victory Day on 9 May (Leiykin, 2008).

Peperani invited me to the veterans' clubhouse on a day that he has 'office hours'. The veterans' clubhouse is new and handsome, with a lecture hall, a kitchenette with a non-stop supply of tea and biscuits, and an occasional barbershop. In the improvised barbershop the old men cut each other's hair for a token fee. In a corner of the lecture hall an elderly doctor measures the blood pressure and sugar levels of anyone who might be interested.

The walls are covered with hundreds of pictures of various events, including some of Peperani hugging and being hugged by politicians. He

carries out his office hours in a side room. In 1954 a law was passed that recognized Jewish widows and disabled veterans of WWII as equivalent to IDF widows or disabled veterans. As such, they are entitled to a number of benefits. Peperani, precisely because our conversation is so limited, sums it up for me: 'He wants, he comes, I give, he gets'. They sit in a long line, holding in their hands the receipt for the television set they bought, or for their medication; waiting for help in filling out forms, renewing their disabled status, raising their disability percentages. Despite his faltering Hebrew, Peperani is totally familiar with the many forms and explains which form to fill in order 'to get'. To get money, to get recognition.

Peperani and his friends are artists of the production and ceremony of memory. In this way they reinterpret the urban space. During the year that I followed their activities I attended countless ceremonies for inaugurating monuments and memorial stones. They do not rest for moment; there is not much time and there is much to do. Their aim is to mark themselves out in space and thereby create their belonging. These goings-on are not just the outcome of the organizations' activities, but rather the reason for them. That is, through these memorial events they raise money and sustain their relevance as an organized electorate in the eyes of the politicians. (Figure 6).

At the Stalingrad siege monument inauguration event I stand at the edge of the group. A passerby stops at my side, a resident of Ashdod who does not belong to any of the Russian groups. 'Believe me', he says, pointing with his chin at the group of veterans standing by the monument, 'I admire those people. They are the real heroes of our people'.

During a conversation with Arkadi Buber, chairman of the Ninth Quarter and representative

Figure 6: Veterans marching on the main street of Ashdod accompanied by the mayor, on the victory day 6 May 2011.
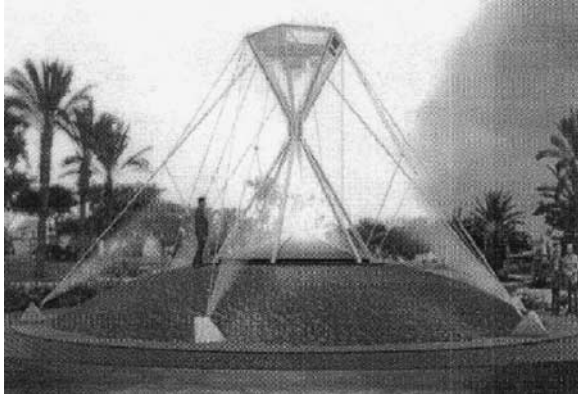
Figure 7: A monument commemorating 100 years to the Kishinev Pogroms. Sculpturer: Miriam Gamburg. Architect: Viktor Divrov.

of the local political party, *Ashdod Beteinu* (Ashdod, Our Home), on the municipal council, he tells me about another monument, one that commemorates the pogroms at the Jewish shtetl Kishinev. He shows me a public appeal for funds for the monument, the cost of which approaches US$85 000. He kindly, yet in a business like manner, brings me to his office in the basement of his house. From the piles of paperwork on his table he extracts the plan for the monument. The monument is shaped as an hourglass, with the Jewish shtetl in relief on the top of the upper triangle. At the base of the lower triangle is a mirror.(Figure 7).

I hold the plans in my hands and sit down. Here is the entire doctrine in form, in lines. The past, the present and the future are part of the same entity. The 'Jewish shtetl', an efficient symbol of the past and the 'cultural property' of Jewish and Eastern European Jews, stands atop and is reflected in the earth of Israel, in the town square. The Jewish shtetl and the Israeli city collapse into a single entity.

The hourglass that the Russian group wishes to erect in the main square in the center of town critiques talk of 'there' and 'here', of segregation and integration. Through its form and symbolism it illustrates that the possibility of our belonging 'here' is rooted in the 'there', it is testimony to the fact that no ethnic identity exists in and of itself, but rather that it only takes on a shape and a sound in relation to 'here'. I recall a conversation I had very early on in my research with the community policeman of the Russian quarters, who had himself immigrated to Israel in the 1990s. The conversation was etched on my memory and heart because of the great frustration and sadness it brought up.

Everyone around the world asks 'who am I' but in Israel what's important is 'who am I here'. There's even a phenomenon among Jewish and non-Jewish immigrants that the Jews, who until now didn't acknowledge their Judaism, go to the non-Jewish immigrants and pull out their Judaism as a trump card. 'Why are you even talking to me? It's not your country'.[8]

As the community policeman teaches us, people's religion, their being WWII veterans or war widows, their tastes – all these comprise their identity. However, only those components that help them make the absorbing country a place that offers acknowledgment will be pulled out of the tool kit of their identity and given representation or notability; only they will survive into the future. It is not important who you are, it is important who you are *here*.

Conclusion

In this article, I have sought to describe and analyze the social construction of the urban space of an immigrant city, with a special focus on ethnic enclaves, by bringing together the languages of urban design and urban-social research. My intention has been to contribute to the ongoing research concerning ethnic enclaves in cities of immigration by creating encounter with urban design. The case of Ashdod brought me to question the existing theoretical toolbox of social research, with its discourse of segregation–integration and multicultural theory. I believe that the new theoretical tool box offered in this article, primarily comprising the iron cage of ethnicity and distinctive participation, can contribute to different cases of urban-sociological configuration in European and American cities of immigration. The linkage between urban and ethnographic analysis requires interdisciplinary thought and an encounter between urban planning and urban anthropology. Different methodologies also come together at this junction: the socio-historical survey that helped me explain macro-level processes of the construction of the space meets the ethnography, which provides us with original and one-off information about people's activities in these spaces.

I argue that urban space should be understood in terms of a tension between professional, political and economic forces operating from the

'top-down', and the actions of people operating from the 'bottom-up', where those actions afford new meaning to physical and social spaces. In this article, I 'mind the gap' between the two, thus offering urban designers to work and act within this gap. Doing so would bring them closer to being translators – agents whose role is to translate the language of everyday life to the language of professionals. Operating by the map that they draw together with urban sociologist, urban designers can become mediators between agencies and arena. By mediating between the private and the public, between future and past, they can make a significant contribution to the cultural construction of urban spaces. Or in our case, a paradoxical construction of space. The monument commemorating 100 years to the Kishinev Pogroms, is a fascinating example to a way to express paradoxical attitude to space and collective identity at the same time. This design is a source of inspiration to both urban designers and social scientists.

Carrying out ethnographic research in Ashdod teaches us that ethnicity is not only a category of separation and difference but that it is actually the doorway into the national community; it is not only a category that distinguishes and excludes, but rather an entrance pass in society. Ethnicity, the point of difference between these groups of immigrants, provides the material for constructing the boundaries between the different groups. These are not boundaries that separate; rather, boundaries are seen as a type of relationship. In this sense, they are not a place of encounter; rather they define a distance that simultaneously signifies dependency and connection. The view of the boundary as relationship is fundamental to the concept between 'participation' and 'distinction'. The concept of distinct participation enables us to express and conceptualize a whole range of contradictory practices, of cooperation and struggle, of distinction as improving one's status in the system of belonging. It is in this sense that ethnicity is seen as an iron cage. As Bauman (2001) puts it, 'ethnic minorities are first and foremost the product of enclosure from outside, and only second, if at all, the outcome of self-enclosure' (p. 90).

The iron cage of ethnicity is created in the space between coercion and oppression and voluntary participation, between the desire to break through the boundaries of one's social cell and the wish to belong, to be enfolded in its warmth. Or in the context of this article: between the distance that it creates from the center and the

opportunity it offers to really take one's place in that center.

Here emerges the second insight concerning urban design: urban border zones are critical spaces in cities. Borders zones generate unique urban dynamics: those are spaces of insecurity, spaces of conflict and frictions. It is an appreciable challenge for urban designers to take into account their role inurban border zone.

My argument is that the ethnic category offers people the advantage of the group. The city's immigrants discover that belonging to a group is the only way to gain recognition by, and to exist within, the national Modern City. I have illustrated the conditions in which the ethnic category became the most efficient category for coming together as a group. This insight sheds new light on the concept of ethnicity, as well as on the conditions in which it becomes a mechanism for exclusion and inclusion – sometimes at one and the same time. Distinct participation illuminates both the obstacles and the possibilities afforded by the ethnic category to its inmates-subjects.

My research constitutes a critique of multicultural theory. The activities documented in this article teach us that their intention is not to create an alternative narrative to the institutionalized one; what is more, they do not mean to provide the impetus for a new collective identity. The objective of the first generation immigrants' activities in their memorial and commemoration associations is to gain access to and become part of the modern national city. Their activities in ethnic organizations and associations that deal with heroism and struggle build a bridge between the ethnic and the national. More importantly, perhaps, they also link the individual with the group. It provides people with a two-fold basis of identity and identification: with what they are and what they were, with the immediate social space in the quarter and the neighborhood, and with the larger space of the state. For them, this is the only action that does not imply concession. As upright as their years allow them to be, as they lay wreaths, congregate, touch and hug one another these people – Moroccan and Russian – are heroes.

Notes

1 'Country of origin' became a useful category for sociologists in describing the ladder of class in Israel, with European and North America Jews at the head of the ladder, followed by the Jews from Asia, then Jews from Africa, Palestinian citizens of

Israel and, at the end of the list, Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Semyonov and Epstein (1987)).

2 This refers to Jewish immigrants who arrived in Israel since November 1989.

3 The 'new' immigrants (who have been in the country for up to 3 years and who arrived between 2002 and 2004) comprise only 6 per cent, around 4350 people. About one quarter of the 'new' immigrants arrived from France. Over one half of the immigrants have been in Israel for more than 10 years.

4 The causes of this fast rate of growth include the high-natural birth rate that characterized the town in its early years. This, however, has come down with time. Nonetheless, in 2004, 8 per cent of families in Ashdod had four or more children, compared with 2 per cent in Rishon LeZion, for instance.

5 As part of a trend to improve their standard of living, a large group of these Karaite Jews has moved to the Eleventh and Twelfth Quarters. During my research period there was a struggle between the Karaites and the municipality on the one hand, and the committees of the new quarters on the other over the Karaites' demand to build a Karaite synagogue in the Twelfth Quarter.

6 This can be seen in every socio-economic measurement: the number of new immigrants living in the quarter, the range of ages, housing density and so on.

7 There were limits on Jewish immigration to Mandatory Palestine, and so Jews were brought in clandestinely by underground activists.

8 Following the expansion of the Law of Return to include third generation Jews, many immigrants from the former Soviet Union who are not recognized by Jewish religious law as Jews arrived in Israel. There were 15 000 such people in Ashdod alone during the research period.

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