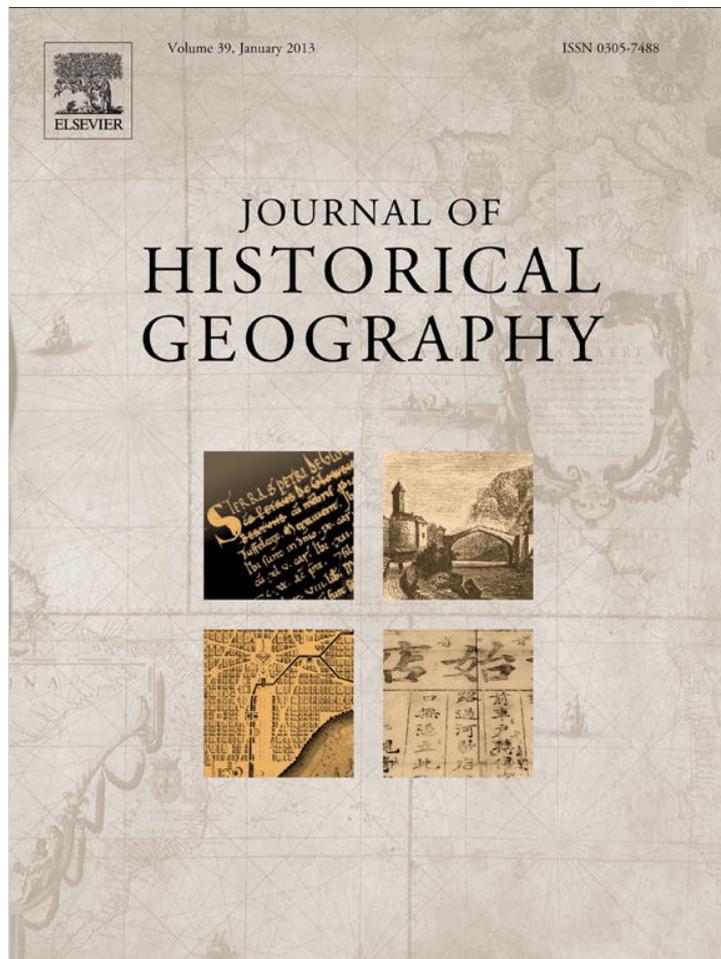


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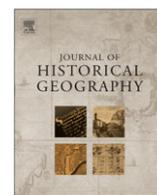
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Journal of Historical Geography

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jhg

Territorial stigma formation in the Israeli city of Bat Yam, 1950–1983: planning, people and practice

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Abstract

The paper analyses the process of territorial stigma formation in the case of the Israeli city of Bat Yam. Focusing on the period of 1950–1983, it argues that the stigma was constituted historically by a combination of three distinct attributes, namely its accelerated urban growth and (a lack of) appropriate planning, the (ethnic) composition of the population, and everyday practices of deviant conduct, primarily crime. Taken together, these produced the city as a socio-spatial mélange in which physical disorder, ethnic 'others' and explicit illegality reign. Using a wide range of primary and secondary sources, the paper seeks to refine understanding of the discursive mechanisms by which images of (types-of) people are juxtaposed with those of (types-of) places at particular historical junctures to create and sustain territorial stigmas.

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Keywords: Territorial stigma; Israeli cities; Ethnicity; Environment; Planning

Stigma is not something which dissolves in one minute, but I think we're on the right track....The media, too, has changed its treatment towards Bat Yam. No longer a god-forsaken city.¹

In recent scholarly literature, the phenomenon of city branding is often explained with reference to processes of economic neo-liberalization that force urban administrations to re-invent the local in order to improve its image, stimulate urban development and attract new residents, tourists and investors alike.² For some places, such processes may prove particularly daunting, due to their entrenched reputation as dangerous, disorderly, or deviant.³ For particular neighborhoods or whole towns, high rates of crime or specific ethno-racial composition – and often both – are often presented as potential impediments to regeneration, preventing

the construction of a revitalized image.⁴ And while a fair body of literature exists that explains the formation of positive urban images, mostly through the lenses of the so-called 'cultural economy',⁵ relatively few studies pay attention to the social construction of stigmatized places.⁶

Drawing upon Loïc Wacquant's work, this paper analyzes the formation of a 'territorial stigma' in the Israeli city of Bat Yam. Focusing on the period between 1950 and 1983, it argues that the stigmatization process was fashioned historically by linking up three distinct place-related and people-related attributes, namely planning, population, and everyday practices of behavior.⁷ Firstly, under the heading of planning, I am concerned with the accelerated process of urban – both population and physical – growth which city managers promoted during its formative years. Within less

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¹ Interview with Mayor Ehud Kinnamon, To get rid of the stigma, *Two Cities* (February 1986).

² G. Evans, Hard-branding the cultural city: from Prado to Prada, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27 (2003) 417–440.

³ E. Avraham, Media strategies for improving unfavorable city image, *Cities* 21 (2004) 471–479.

⁴ R. Pain, Place, social relations and the fear of crime: a review, *Progress in Human Geography* 24 (2003) 365–388.

⁵ G. Richards and J. Wilson, The impact of cultural events on city image: Rotterdam, cultural capital of Europe 2001, *Urban Studies* 41 (2004) 1931–1952; A.J. Scott, *The Cultural Economies of Cities: Essays on the Geographies of Image-Producing Industries*, London, 2000; R. Paddison, City marketing, image reconstruction and urban regeneration, *Urban Studies* 30 (1993) 339–349; S.V. Ward, *Selling Places: The Marketing and Promotion of Towns and Cities, 1850–2000*, London, 1998.

⁶ But see E. Goode and N. Ben Yeuda, *Moral Panic: The Social Construction of Deviance*, Oxford, 2009.

⁷ I chose this period for two main reasons; first, because it corresponds approximately with the mayoralty terms of the city's first two mayors, David Ben Ari (1950–1964) and Menachem Rothschild (1964–1974 and 1978–1983); and second, because Mayor Ehud Kinnamon (1983–1993) campaigned strongly against this entrenched stigma, partly reversing some of the qualities associated with it. His tenure, corresponding to what Goffman termed 'stigma management' merits a separate analysis and is therefore excluded from this paper (E. Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, New York, 1963, chapter 2).

than two decades, this dual process of what some described as 'unregulated growth' exhausted more than four-fifths of the city's available land, earned it the dubious title of 'the most densely populated city in the Tel Aviv metropolitan area', and secured its image as a poorly planned, indeed physically disorderly environment. Secondly, the process of stigmatization operated with reference to the ethnic composition of the local population, which, from the mid-1950s onwards, saw a gradual shift from *Ashkenazi* to *Mizrahi* dominance.⁸ Aided by an Orientalist, deeply essentializing discourse concerning the nature of the young(er), masculine ethnic body which had come to gradually dominate urban space, an inextricable link was produced by the media between *those* (young Mizrahi) people and *that* place, further augmenting the territorial stigma. Thirdly, ineffective planning and ethnically distinct population gradually became associated with a predisposition to certain deviant practices. Rationalized as inherent to the culture of the growing Mizrahi population and explained against the backdrop of rapidly deteriorating physical conditions (a phenomenon which Wilson and Kelling famously termed 'broken windows'),⁹ itself a consequence of the unregulated growth process, practices of petty and organized crime provided a final justification for a fear-filled discourse that reinforced the territorial stigma. Taken together, this formation rendered the city a socio-spatial *mélange* in which physical disorder, ethnic 'others' and illegal conduct reigned. Referred to by one city administrator as the 'Wild West along the Mediterranean',¹⁰ Bat Yam's case is emblematic of how certain types of planning, people and behavioral practices converge in particular socio-historical junctures to create and sustain territorial stigmas.

The following paper is divided into three parts. First, I survey the literature on the emergence, evolution, and persistence of territorial stigma. I then briefly set the city's geo-historical context, locating it within the broader spatial history of the greater Tel Aviv area. It is argued that the situation of Bat Yam, namely its position relative to adjacent cities within the metropolitan area, most notably Tel Aviv to the north, has played an important role in its stigmatization process. A crossbreed between the self-declared 'white city' of Tel Aviv, whose claims to being a European style, liberal, bourgeoisie urban center have been well documented,¹¹ and Jaffa, a mixed city whose Arab heritage has rendered it Tel Aviv's ambivalent alter-ego,

evoking simultaneous desire and fear, Bat Yam (and to some degree its neighboring cities in the southern part of the metropolitan area) was stigmatized as the 'other'.¹² Neither neatly planned and euro-culturally sophisticated like Tel Aviv nor mysterious, exotically Orientalized and culturally inspiring like Jaffa,¹³ Bat Yam was to become the metro's forgotten periphery, the disrespected, graceless home of mostly lower middle-class Mizrahi Jews often depicted in the Tel Aviv-based media as the undesirable 'national average'.¹⁴ Finally, an analysis of the three aforementioned bases of stigmatization is presented, invoking the inherent linkages between physical processes of poor urban planning, ethno-class population composition and practices of deviant conduct. Using a wide range of primary and secondary historical sources, including personal interviews, local, regional and national newspapers, official protocols of city council meetings, and various city-commissioned reports, the paper traces the historical roots of one of the most persistent stigmas in Israeli urban history.¹⁵ The paper concludes by discussing some potential implications of these inter-related processes in the formation of territorial stigmas.

Theoretical notes on stigmatized places

In his classic book, Erving Goffman defined stigma as a deeply discrediting attribute.¹⁶ Tracing its roots to the Greek tattoo-mark, 'a brand made with a hot iron and impressed on people to show that they were devoted to the services of the temple, or...that they were criminals or runaway slaves',¹⁷ a stigma not only reduces the identity of an individual to a single characteristic, but further constitutes a social impediment, a major axis along which all other characteristics are measured and evaluated. Goffman identifies three different types of stigma, namely that of the body, of individual character, and of tribal affiliation. While the first two are personal, associated for example with disability, ugliness or flawed character, tribal stigma is collective, stemming from one's descent and affecting whole ethnic, religious or national groups.¹⁸ Subsequent conceptualizations of the term have further emphasized the link created between the individual and her aversive – bodily and other – attributes, as well as the spatial and temporal situatedness of both stigmatized practices and associated social responses.¹⁹

⁸ Ashkenazim are Jews originating from Europe and North America; Mizrahim are Jews hailing from the Muslim countries of the Middle East and North Africa.

⁹ J.Q. Wilson and G.L. Kelling, Broken windows: the police and neighbourhood safety, *Atlantic Monthly* (March 1982) 29–38.

¹⁰ Personal interview with Shmuel Penn, former City Engineer, Tel Aviv, 3 December 2010.

¹¹ M. Azaryahu, *Tel Aviv: Mythography of a City*, Syracuse, 2007; M. Levine, Re-imagining the 'white city': the politics of world heritage designation in Tel Aviv/Jaffa, *City & Society* (2004) 221–228.

¹² While the city of Holon – and to a much lesser extent Rishon LeZion – have also been stigmatized, as evident for example in the demeaning acronyms of *Hubat* (Holon-Bat Yam) or *Hay-Bar* (a Hebrew synonym for Zoo, which also stands as an acronym for Holon, Bat Yam, Jaffa, and Rishon LeZion), the process was qualitatively different. Holon, for example, whose territorial jurisdiction is more than double that of Bat Yam was never conceived as particularly dense or poorly planned, partially because its population growth was significantly slower. Moreover, studies show that the city had a higher share of middle class, educated Ashkenazim in its population (S. Rollbant, *Holon: Ways for its Social and Economic Advancement*, Tel Aviv, 1966). Only in the early 1980s, as economically mobile upper-middle-class residents who left in search for better housing opportunities were replaced by lower middle-class families from other towns, including Bat Yam, did the city acquire its infamous stigma. In contrast to Bat Yam, Holon has successfully shaken its stigma, owing to a highly successful rebranding process embarked on since the 1990s (see E. Avraham, *Campaigns for Promoting and Marketing Cities in Israel*, Jerusalem, 2003, 81).

¹³ Despite, or perhaps because of its annexation to the city of Tel Aviv, Jaffa was quickly stigmatized as well. However, due to its unique situation – the only mixed town at the heart of the (overwhelmingly Jewish) metropolitan area – its stigmatization process took quite a different path than Jewish towns. As Monterescu (2009) shows, the discursive formation of Janus-face Jaffa rendered its 'double image as either a nationalist, Islamist, and violent town, and hence a threat to the Zionist political project, or conversely, as an authentic, deeply historical, and multicultural site of encounter and political action...' (671). See D. Monterescu, The bridled bride of Palestine: Orientalism, Zionism and the troubled urban imagination, *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 16 (2009) 643–677.

¹⁴ G. Sammet, What is new with the national average?, *Haaretz* (4 January 1989) 11. The degrading acronym *Hubat* was conceived in the early 1980s by the local newspapers in Tel Aviv who sought to stigmatize their residents and thereby prevent them from frequenting the city's 'hip' clubs and bars. See E. Zandberg, *Hubati in Tel Aviv*, *Haaretz* (9 October 2005).

¹⁵ National newspapers included *Haaretz*, *Yediot Achronot*, *Ma'ariv*, and *Davar*; Local newspapers used were *Bat Yam*, *Two Cities*, *Bat Yam/Holon*, and *Ha'ir*.

¹⁶ Goffman, *Stigma* (note 7).

¹⁷ L. Osborne, Beyond stigma theory: a literary approach, *Issues in Criminology* 9 (1974) 71–90.

¹⁸ Goffman, *Stigma* (note 7), 3–4.

¹⁹ E.E. Jones, *Social Stigma: The Psychology of Marked Relationships*, New York, 1984; J. Crocker, Social stigma and self-esteem: situational construction of self-worth, *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 35 (1999) 89–107.

In a recent contribution, Link and Phelan critique earlier efforts to theorize stigma on two major grounds. First, they are critical of studies that do not take account of the 'lived experience' of the stigmatized; and, second, they challenge what they see as a 'decidedly individualistic focus', one which directs attention to the stigma itself rather than to the label(s) affixed to it by others. It is the producers of the stigma and the discursive and social strategies used to produce it, they suggest, that we ought to study rather than the people at which these behaviors are aimed. Their conceptualization thus emphasizes techniques of labeling, stereotyping, separation, loss of status, and discrimination, all of which 'co-occur in a power situation that allows the components of stigma to unfold'.²⁰

Over the years, social scientific literature has dealt with a broad array of stigmatized circumstances at both the individual and collective levels. Sociologists and social psychologists in particular have studied stigmas associated with mental illness, cancer and HIV/AIDS, unemployment, welfare, and African-American single mothers, to name just a few categories.²¹ Considerably less attention, however, has been paid to spatial stigmas, namely those associated with particular geographical sites. A notable exception has been research which explores the stigmatization of specific neighborhoods as hubs of high crime and deviance. It is to this strand of the literature to which I now turn.

In accounting for the stigmatization of neighborhoods as deviant places, scholars have normally resorted to either people-based or place-based theoretical formulations. That specific social behaviors, most notably crime, are the primary reason for the emergence of the image of places as deviant has been a key premise of the human ecological approach, which traces its roots to the Chicago school.²² The anti-social behavior of residents, the argument goes, itself often linked to the cultural traits of particular ethno-racial minorities, generates a stigma of place-based deviancy, constituting an indelible mark which overshadows all other place-based qualities. More recent theorizations, while not entirely dismissing people-centered explanations of the persistence of deviance, have nonetheless shifted the focus away from what some have termed social Darwinist formulations. As Stark notes, 'while many people live in bad slums, most do not become delinquents, criminals, alcoholics, or addicts',²³ so alternative approaches have emphasized instead the socio-structural impediments faced by residents of poor neighborhoods, rather than their innate cultural traits. Prominent among these was social disorganization theory, which turned attention to the communal (rather than individual) basis of place-based juvenile delinquency. Shaw and McKay, for example, singled out the critical role of communities in mitigating deviant behaviors and attributed persistently high crime rates in specific urban

neighborhoods to the dysfunctional character – or the entire absence – of organizing communal mechanisms.²⁴ Others have followed suit, accentuating the lack of cohesion among residents and the absence of social capital and social control at the neighborhood level, which undermine local capacities to organize collectively and fight place-based social ills.²⁵

A second strand of the literature on the interface between place and deviancy has been more concerned with the built environment. In this context, the 'broken windows' theory of urban decline hypothesizes that apparently minor characteristics of physical disorder may lead to crime and urban degeneration. Unrepaired broken windows are signifiers of disorder, because they 'signal that no one cares'. Under such conditions, even 'good neighborhoods' may change over time, breed socially deviant behaviors, and stigmatized.

A stable neighborhood of families who care for their homes, mind each other's children, and confidently frown on unwanted intruders can change, in a few years or even a few months, to an inhospitable and frightening jungle. A piece of property is abandoned, weeds grow up, a window is smashed. Adults stop scolding rowdy children; the children, emboldened, become more rowdy. Families move out, unattached adults move in. Teenagers gather in front of the corner store. The merchant asks them to move; they refuse. Fights occur. Litter accumulates. People start drinking in front of the grocery; in time, an inebriate slumps to the sidewalk and is allowed to sleep it off. Pedestrians are approached by panhandlers...Such an area is vulnerable to criminal invasion.²⁶

Subsequent studies have further examined the link between specific physical attributes of place, most notably neighborhoods, and delinquency, particularly of young people.²⁷ Probing into the question of why some neighborhoods experience continuous high rates of crime despite positive demographic changes, Stark takes a revised human ecological approach and turns attention away from reductionist 'kinds of people' explanations. He identifies several physical attributes that play a role in sustaining neighborhood crime and deviancy, including visible signs of dilapidation alongside high rates of population density and transiency. Local residents, it is argued, respond to these visible, place-based characteristics, often with moral cynicism, which further loosens local level social control and increases motivation to engage in socially deviant practices. Stark's human ecological approach is particularly important in deconstructing the link between stigmatized places and people while evading an environmentally deterministic approach. As he argues, it predicts 'that the deviant behavior of the poor would vary as their ecology varied'.²⁸

²⁰ B.G. Link and J.C. Phelan, Conceptualizing stigma, *Annual Review of Sociology* 27 (2000) 365–385 (366).

²¹ P.J. Fink and A. Tasman, *Stigma and Mental Illness*, Washington DC, 1992; L.B. Fife and E.R. Wright, The dimensionality of stigma: a comparison of its impact on the self of persons with HIV/AIDS and Cancer, *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour* 41 (2004) 50–67; T. Vishwanath, Job search, stigma effect, and escape rate from unemployment, *Journal of Labor Economics* 7 (1989) 487–502; R. Rogers-Dillon, The dynamics of welfare stigma, *Qualitative Sociology* 18 (1995) 439–456; T. Besley and S. Coate, Understanding welfare stigma: taxpayer resentment and statistical discrimination, *Journal of Public Economics* 48 (1992) 165–183; R.L. Jarrett, Welfare stigma among low-income, African American single mothers, *Family Relations* 45 (1996) 368–374.

²² R.E. Park, E.W. Burgess, R.D. McKenzie and L. Wirth, *The City (University of Chicago Studies in Urban Sociology)*, Chicago, 1925.

²³ D. Stark, Deviant places: a theory of the ecology of crime, *Criminology* 25 (1987) 893–910.

²⁴ C.R. Shaw and H.D. McKay, *Juvenile Delinquency in Urban Areas*, Chicago, 1942.

²⁵ O. Simcha-Fagan and J.E. Schwartz, Neighborhood and delinquency: an assessment of contextual effects, *Criminology* 24 (1986) 667–699; D.S. Massey and N.A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, Boston, 1993; W.J. Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, The Underclass, and Public Policy*, Chicago, 1987; R.J. Sampson and W.B. Groves, Community structure and crime: testing social-disorganization theory, *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (1989) 774–802.

²⁶ Wilson and Kelling, Broken windows (note 9), 32.

²⁷ T. Leventhal and J. Brooks-Gunn, The neighborhoods they live in: the effects of neighborhood residence on child and adolescent outcomes, *Psychological Bulletin* 126 (2000) 309–337; R.J. Sampson, J.D. Morenoff and T. Gannon-Rowley, Assessing 'neighborhood effects': social processes and new directions in research, *Annual Review of Sociology* 28 (2002) 443–478.

²⁸ Stark, Deviant places (note 23), 904.

In a series of recent publications, Loïc Wacquant examines the emerging fusion of stigmatized places and people.²⁹ Arguing that the transatlantic neo-liberal regimes of recent decades have laid the socio-political grounds for the emergence of a new type of advanced human marginality, he conceptualizes territorially stigmatized places like the Black American Ghetto and the French working-class *banlieue* as specific spaces in which the former overwhelmingly concentrate. Socio-spatially isolated and bounded zones of marginality reserved for urban outcasts, these new 'blemishes of place' are not historically de-contextualized. Rather, as he shows, the new spatial component of the stigma is congruent with people-centered historical formulations that use long-conceived markers of social identities. As such, the territorial conception of stigma is superimposed upon already existing markers of ethno-national origin, class affiliation or racial composition of area dwellers. In addition to these historically conceived indicators, the inhabitants of such areas now reluctantly carry the collective stigma attached to their places of residence like a tattoo marked on their physical bodies.³⁰ Indeed, as Wacquant illustrates, a central component of the territorial stigma is its fixation. Such place-orientated labels are so strongly affixed that they become integral to the person's personal identity, an indelible sign which, during social encounters with others, frequently begets questions like 'How can you live there?'³¹

The stigmatization of places is so persistent that, over time, it matters little if their various attributes – the degree of dilapidation and physical degeneration, residents' ethno-racial homogenous composition, or the immanency of deviant practices and behaviors engaged by publicly – indeed exist. Increasingly, specific parts of town lying beyond the railroads, whole neighborhoods, or particular residential sub-units carry 'a taint of place where only the detritus of society would tolerate living'.³² The othering and criminalizing of urban outcasts is, perhaps not surprisingly, immanent to the stigmatization process. A disparaged, faceless crowd, those people are forever 'the downstairs neighbours, the immigrant family dwelling in an adjacent building, the youths from across the street who "do drugs" or are engaged in street "hustling", or the residents over on the next block whom one suspects of illegally drawing unemployment or welfare support'.³³

Ties between people, place and certain deviant practices are invariably socially constructed, products of what Wacquant sees as 'discourses of vilification [that] proliferate and agglomerate about them, "from below", in the ordinary interactions of daily life, as well as "from above", in the journalistic, political and bureaucratic (and even scientific) fields'.³⁴ These discourses and, quite often, the public policies that follow and are put in place to penalize a wide range of specific sub-populations, be they delinquent youth or welfare receiving single mothers, are instrumental in disciplining social precariousness and making room for projects of renewal and regeneration.

In what follows, a brief geo-historical contextualization of Bat Yam precedes an examination of the vilifying discourses that have ushered in its stigmatization process. My analysis illustrates how a triangular discourse of visible physical characteristics, ethnic make-up and deviancy has been historically linked up, fashioning as it may a territorial stigma. And while I do not suggest that the territorial stigma of Bat Yam is as deep and disturbing as that of the Black American Ghetto, I do argue that its marginality has been produced using a plethora of quite similar discursive mechanisms. The process of highlighting its allegedly flawed physical environment, the character of the people inhabiting it, and their everyday practices not only unleashed the kind of stigma current urban administrations still attempt to destabilize, but further served as a self-fulfilling prophecy, one where negative representations produced 'the very cultural anomie and social atomism that these representations claim were already there'.³⁵

A brief history of Bat Yam

Like many cities in contemporary Israel, Bat Yam traces its roots to the early decades of the twentieth century. The end of World War I finds Jewish settlers in Palestine in the midst of a wave of national (re)-awakening. The Balfour Declaration and the ensuing British colonization raised hopes amongst the Jewish community for better political and economic prospects. It also encouraged an increasing number of Jews who resided in crowded cities – both Jewish and mixed – to venture out by establishing smaller ethnically segregated communities. In the early 1920s, mounting ethnic tensions in Jaffa and the challenge of maintaining a strictly religious lifestyle in secular Tel Aviv motivated a group of Jewish orthodox families to purchase a few hundreds dunams of land south of both cities.³⁶ The new town, originally named *Bayit Vegan* (literally, a house and a garden), reflected its founders' quest for a better quality of life, implicating its residents in a complex set of relations with both Tel Aviv and Jaffa from the outset.³⁷ The former was too expensive and secular, while the latter evoked feelings of insecurity. As Ben Yisrael argues, 'Relations...were highly dualistic from the outset...In the eyes of early settlers Tel Aviv was the embodiment of planned beauty and modernism yet its secularity and cultural homogeneity threatened them...Jaffa on the other hand was their home, yet as it became increasingly hostile, it forced them to leave'.³⁸

Developments over the next two decades exacerbated the dualistic intra-urban relations as social and economic links between residents of the small Jewish town and their Arab neighbors were occasionally interrupted by violent hostilities.³⁹ The 1947 UN Partition Plan set off a series of deadly clashes between members of Jewish militias who established a line of outposts in the town facing Jaffa. In April 1948, a large-scale operation was carried out by the *Hagana*, during which its forces captured Jaffa

²⁹ L. Wacquant, Territorial stigmatization in the age of advanced marginality, *Thesis Eleven* 91 (2007) 66–77; L. Wacquant, Ghettos and anti-ghettos: an anatomy of the new urban poverty, *Thesis Eleven* 94 (2008) 113–118; L. Wacquant, *Urban Outcasts: A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality*, Cambridge, 2008; L. Wacquant, The penalization of poverty and the rise of neo-liberalism, *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research* 9 (2001) 401–412.

³⁰ Wacquant, Territorial stigmatization in the age of advanced marginality (note 29), 68.

³¹ Pred, 2000, 129 (quoted in Wacquant, Territorial stigmatization in the age of advanced marginality (note 29), 68).

³² Wacquant, Ghettos and anti-ghettos (note 29), 116.

³³ Wacquant, Territorial stigmatization in the age of advanced marginality (note 29), 68; see also Wacquant, The penalization of poverty and the rise of neo-liberalism (note 29), 14.

³⁴ Wacquant, Territorial stigmatization in the age of advanced marginality (note 29), 67.

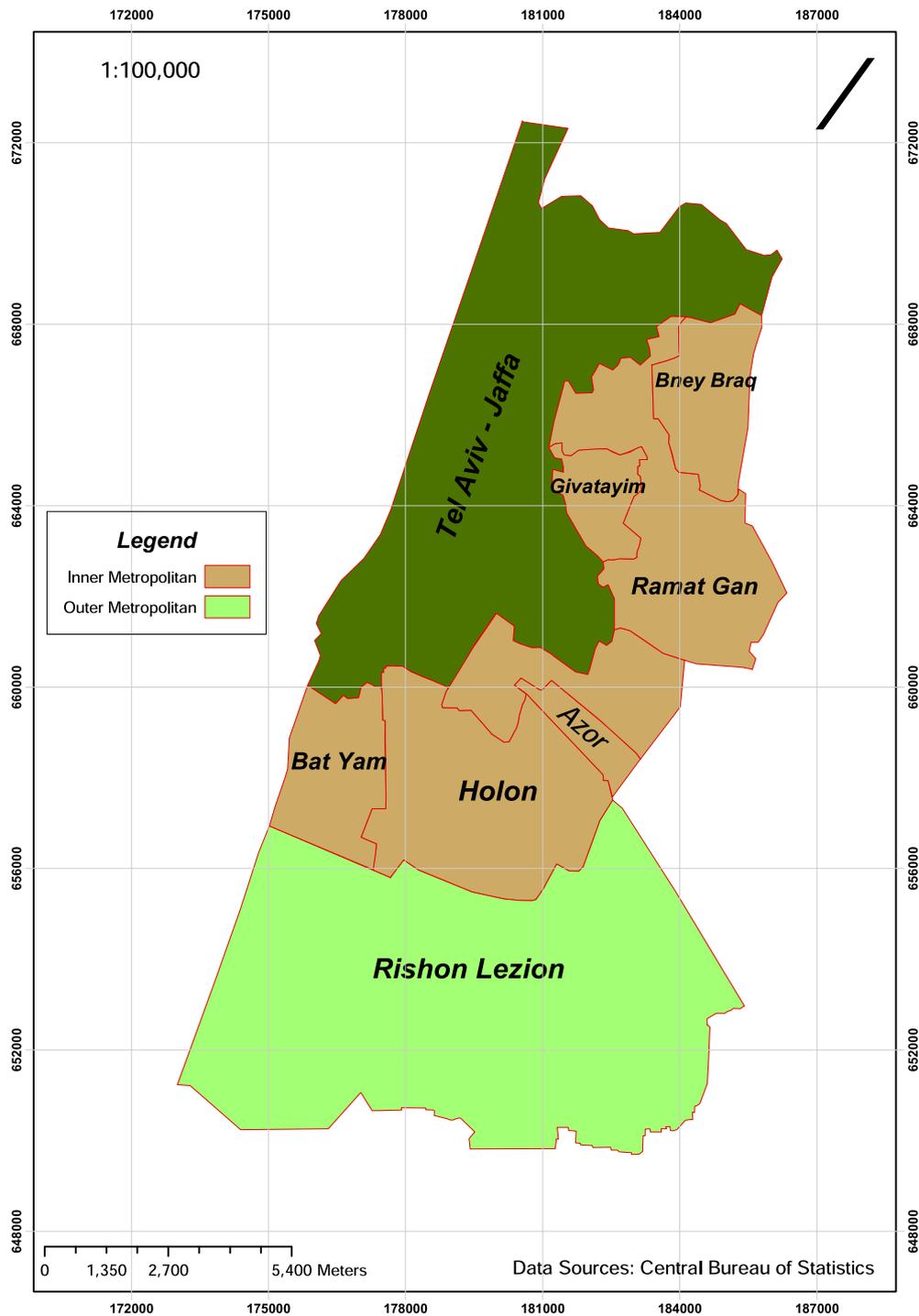
³⁵ Wacquant, Ghettos and anti-ghettos (note 29), 116.

³⁶ Y. Olitzki, *Facing off a Hostile City: The Story of Defending Bat Yam*, Tel Aviv, 1984 (in Hebrew).

³⁷ Y. Olitzki, *Bat Yam: Establishment, Doubts and Development: 1919–1950*, Bat Yam, 1954 (in Hebrew).

³⁸ A. Ben Yisrael, *On Urban Imagination, Memory and Forgetting: A History of Bayit Vegan/Bat Yam, 1920–1950*. Report submitted to the City of Bat Yam, June 2011 (author's copy).

³⁹ D. Haran, *History of the City of Bat Yam: A Lexicon*, Tel Aviv, 1998 (in Hebrew); Y. Ziv, *Bayit VeGan: Family Stories*, Bat Yam, 2005 (in Hebrew).



Map 1. Major cities in the Tel Aviv metropolitan area (Dan Bloc).

and several other neighboring Arab villages.⁴⁰ As the majority of Jaffa's Arab residents fled the city, Bat Yam soon began absorbing its own Jewish refugees who flocked into the newly created state. Within less than five years (1948–53), more than 20,000 displaced Jews, mostly from Poland and North Africa settled in the city, which

roughly doubled its territory following the war. A developmentalist agenda pursued by its early mayors in the next three decades (1953–1983) turned Bat Yam from a negligible town on the margins of Jaffa to a vibrant urban community of 130,000 people at the heart of the Tel Aviv metro area, also known as Dan Bloc (see Map 1).⁴¹

⁴⁰ Official Site of *The Hagana*. Available at: <http://www.hagana.co.il> (last accessed April 12, 2011).

⁴¹ While the exact boundaries of the Dan Block (Gush Dan) are contested, it is widely accepted that besides the core city of Tel Aviv-Jaffa, its inner circle is composed of Bat Yam, Holon, Ramat Gan, Givatayim, B'ney Brak, and Herzliya as well as some smaller local councils. Rishon LeZion, mentioned earlier, lies within the more remote, or external circle of the metropolitan area.

While proximity to Tel Aviv was generally considered a positive attribute by local leaders, who saw it as a springboard to economic development, it often projected negatively on the urban image of Bat Yam and adjacent Jewish cities, most notably Holon.⁴² In this respect, Bat Yam was in fact one, albeit central, link in a broader network of stigmatized cities, which Israeli media outlets (newspapers, journals, radio stations, and later public television) – many of which either physically located in or predominantly staffed by people living in Tel Aviv, often portrayed as its binary opposition. The discursive formation of these cities as ‘others’ was deeply rooted in the cultural superiority felt by Tel Aviv toward its periphery – both near and far. As Azaryahu eloquently notes, ‘Stressing the inferiority of the periphery raised the value of Tel Aviv in a kind of a zero-sum game’. Not surprisingly, it was toward the next-door neighbors from the urban periphery, primarily Bat Yam, that much of the patronizing treatment and, indeed, distasteful representations were geared. The territorial stigma, which linked people and the places from which they originated, depicted residents of the southern periphery as grotesque, cultureless crowd of wannabes who were taking over the city’s most refined establishments, and threatening its most precious cultural assets.⁴³ From the 1950s onwards, the city has undergone a systematic process of stigmatization, and its residents have been portrayed as ‘[S]uburban ticks, [symbols] of everything distasteful, inferior, tacky, imitating, unnecessary, a malignant hump on the back of... Tel Aviv’.⁴⁴

Inasmuch as stigmatization was exogenously produced, it is hardly surprising that its basic tenets – both physical and human – sharply contrasted, or were imagined as such, with those of other cities, primarily Tel Aviv. The discursive presentation of a poorly planned, densely populated Mediterranean urban center inhabited by ethnically and socio-economically ‘others’ and dominated by a culture of crime and dependency was not only instrumental in producing Tel Aviv’s self-image as a carefully planned Euro-city with mature, sophisticated and high-culture consuming residents,⁴⁵ but further sustained the environmental deterministic stigma that ties physical and human environment together. The remainder of this paper explores the process of territorial stigmatization through the tripartite themes of planning, people, and practice.

Planning: the stigmatization of place

The buildings were built in such a way that even if one were to close all the blinds in his apartment he would still feel the penetrating gazes coming from the balcony across the street, where a half-naked neighbor sits, waving a piece of newspaper to cool himself down and watching with great interest what’s happening in the apartments in front of him.⁴⁶

Like many Israeli cities, Bat Yam also absorbed a large number of Jewish immigrants in the 1950s and 1960s who were settled in new housing projects. Several factors made it a particularly sought after destination for the construction of such projects. Given its close proximity to Tel Aviv, the city offered new residents a reasonably easy access to a variety of employment opportunities. Its considerable, newly acquired land holdings were also an important consideration for builders – public and private – aspiring to build extensive neighborhoods in order to (cheaply) accommodate new arrivees. Yet central location and cheap land were attributes shared by other Israeli towns, which had not experienced similar growth rates during that time.⁴⁷ What partially explains the phenomenal pace of Bat Yam’s growth is its first mayor’s agenda that sanctified urban development through territorial expansion, and the absorption and settlement of new Jewish migrants. While both these goals had been leading principles in the Zionist ideology and shared by most municipal leaderships, Mayor Ben Ari’s zealous stance often stood out. Not only did he push strongly for annexing additional territory to the city, but made extraordinary efforts with national leaders to ensure massive migrant absorption.⁴⁸ The Mayor thus pleaded with national leaders to set up an additional transitory camp in Bat Yam, later explaining his approach by saying, ‘The new *Ma’abara* will bring us new development and more people. We have to give [new residents] a warm welcome and...encourage others to come’.⁴⁹ This unprecedented act exposed him to severe criticism by members of his own local council, but more importantly was to have long-lasting effects on the city’s image.⁵⁰

Densely populated, physically rundown, and devoid of any viable economic foundations, the *Ma’abara* soon became a hallmark of unplanned, socially degenerated and poor environment, which reflected on the entire city. Occasional media reports described its ‘old, miserable huts that are spread over a significant area [of the city]...separated by isolated and distorted asphalt roads... [and] muddy fields growing only thorns and weeds’.⁵¹ References to ‘disease... and poverty-stricken families’, ‘children playing amidst rusty nails...and rats running freely between the huts’ contributed to the discursive construction of the *Ma’abara* as an ex-territory forsaken by the state, the municipality and the relevant planning authorities.⁵²

Even as municipal efforts to evacuate the neighborhood by offering residents alternative housing solutions accelerated in the 1970s, the legitimate process of negotiation between the parties was described in militaristic terms, often likened to a civil war.⁵³ Reports of violent mass protests and clashes with police forces over what some residents described as ‘humiliating offers’ by the state exacerbated the urban stigma as the *Ma’abara* was presented in the media a place of disorder, a chaotic environment, equally devoid of proper planning and law-abiding citizens.⁵⁴ The juxtaposition of

⁴² As a recent city-sponsored book notes, Holon was often ridiculed for the fact that ‘the best show in town is the road to Tel Aviv’ (I. Aharoni, *Turning Sand into Gold: The Story of Holon*, Holon, 2007).

⁴³ M. Azaryahu, *Tel Aviv – The Real City: A Historical Mythography*, Sede Boqer, 2005, 162.

⁴⁴ Y. Farid, From here it all looks like a very narrow Bat Yam landscape, *Politika* 23 (1988) 41.

⁴⁵ On planning in Tel Aviv see N. Marom, *A City with a Concept: Planning Tel Aviv*, Tel Aviv, 2009. On Euro-culture and order in the city see A. Helman, European Jews in the Levant heat: climate and culture in 1920s and 1930s Tel Aviv, *Journal of Israeli History* 22 (2003) 71–90.

⁴⁶ D. Alfon, Bat Yam: the next door neighbor syndrome, *Koteret Rashit* (20 August 1983) 20.

⁴⁷ Population-wise, neighboring Holon has only grown threefold during the first decade of Israeli independence.

⁴⁸ The Mayor waged a long and bitter battle with neighboring Rishon LeZion over 900 dunams along their municipal border, eventually winning the contested area.

⁴⁹ Protocol of the Local Council Meeting, 12 December 1956.

⁵⁰ Thus, for example, while Holon’s only camp was established in 1951 and dismantled gradually between 1953 and 1958, remnants of Bat Yam’s largest camp were still in place in 1990.

⁵¹ N. Friedman, Bat Yam’s *Ma’abara*: it’s a shame to get money from the Ministry of Housing, *Ma’ariv* (19 March 1982).

⁵² N. Dovrat, Bat Yam’s *Ma’abara* goes to war, *Ma’ariv* (21 December 1976).

⁵³ S. Ella, We’re tired of being second class citizens, *Yediot Achronot* (15 August 1979).

⁵⁴ I. Ronel, An apartment for a hut, *Ma’ariv* (19 March 1976).

disruptive place and people was to continue unabated in the following years.

While the Ma'abara became a symbol, Bat Yam's stigmatization as a poorly planned and built physical environment was embedded in the very essence of its accelerated urban development process, which made the city one of the most densely populated cities in the country.⁵⁵ A point in case was the first public housing project in the neighborhood of Amidar, which became especially notorious for its up hazard construction and the quality of housing.⁵⁶ Built in less than a year (1949–50), and quickly populated by Jewish refugees, it became a symbol of haphazard planning practices. In addition to the long delays in connecting the neighborhood to the regional sewage, water and electricity systems, most houses were built on lower grounds than the adjacent roads, causing severe flooding in winters.⁵⁷ Despite promises by successive Mayors to upgrade its physical and social infrastructure, the coming decades saw no real improvement. As a growing number of economically viable residents – mostly Ashkenazim – moved out, some shops were closed, local crime rates increased, quality of communal services quickly deteriorated and the neighborhood down spiraled, soon becoming the least desired area in the city, as reflected by property values.⁵⁸ A 1987 report likened the neighborhood to a modern-day Ma'abara, singling out lack of planning as a key cause for its deterioration and stigmatization.

Sometimes it seems like the neighborhood is a transitory camp of concrete and cement, replacing the old tent camps ... a combination of the demand for quick and cheap housing and unimaginative planning created an almost improvised neighborhood...with no regards to the high birth rates among families coming from Arab states; without thinking of the needs of the population in terms of public gardens, educational institutions, and development of human environmental infrastructure.⁵⁹

Attempts at better planning marked the experience of most subsequent neighborhoods of the city, including for example Ramat Yosef and Ramat Hanasi.⁶⁰ Yet, there too, reports concerning low-quality construction practices, urban density and scarcity of open public spaces occasionally re-surfaced.⁶¹ Even official municipal complaints about the disservice done to the city by the highly biased media reports did not stop a series of articles on four different neighborhoods, which unflatteringly described one as 'a desolate desert in the middle of the city' and another as 'a neighborhood you live in only until your economic situation improves'.⁶² All were strewn with details on the poor provision of public goods and services – including health, education, and public transportation – in the city, pessimistically summing up the condition of Bat Yam as a place 'excelling in greyness, and lacking aesthetics or cleanliness',

and declaring 'there are few decent corners in this densely built and planning-absent city'.⁶³

Increasingly, poor planning associated with the early days of statehood has given way to reports of illegal planning practices, referred to as 'weak enforcement of planning and building laws'.⁶⁴ While city officials attributed it to the need to bypass bureaucratic bottlenecks and provide quick housing solutions to an exponentially growing population, evidence show that such borderline practices did not always go hand in hand with large migration waves. In fact, violations were often part of a construction frenzy, which the city encouraged as a way of boosting the local market at times of economic slowdowns. In 1958, for example, as immigration rates were particularly low and oversupply of housing pushed property values down, the Deputy Mayor admitted that although 'there are [new] vacant apartments, [construction] pace has not slowed down, and we've submitted new [residential housing] plans'.⁶⁵

More critical from the city's standpoint was the number and severity of planning and building law violations reported as being committed within its jurisdiction, often in projects it was heavily involved in. From the late 1960s, a great number of reports exposed myriad violations that enabled local developers and builders to secure lucrative residential and commercial building contracts without public tenders, construct a higher number of housing units per plot than allowed by the 1965 Israel Planning and Building Law (IPBL), and change land uses retroactively and without obtaining proper permits. An exceptionally harsh report by the state comptroller linked these dubious operations to the urban reality, concluding '[T]oday Bat Yam has the highest building density in the country, and suffers from a shortage of public spaces – because the City has not strictly enforced the rule of law in the area of building authorization and monitoring'.⁶⁶

While some of these illegalities, which over time earned Bat Yam the unflattering nickname 'city of contractors' (*Ir HaKablanim*),⁶⁷ were clearly done without the city's approval, others were the result of policy oversights, or, worse, its own collaboration with the local construction industry. Real estate developers were thus often permitted to exceed legal building rights (i.e. build a larger number of apartments per floor) in exchange for their agreement to co-fund public projects like schools, parks or roads. The Comptroller's report identified 'severe building violations, including the provision of excessive building permits in exchange for monetary (or equal in value) benefits to the City, which compromised overall [urban] planning consideration'.⁶⁸

Flexible enforcement benefited all parties involved, as the city enjoyed a stock of mostly cheap, low-quality apartments it could easily sell to impoverished Jewish newcomers who wished to reside close to – but could not afford to live in – Tel Aviv, private land owners saw their land values quickly rising as a result of the

⁵⁵ Thus, for example, the Central Bureau of Statistics reports that the city has the highest population density in the Tel Aviv metropolitan area (11.2 per dunams, compared with 7.9 in Tel Aviv and only 3.6 in Holon).

⁵⁶ N. Dovrat, Amidar neighborhood – a model of neglect, *Ma'ariv* (7 March 1977).

⁵⁷ Poor sanitary conditions in Amidar constitute health hazard, *Kol Ha'am* (1 June 1954).

⁵⁸ Y. Ginzburg, *Residential Turnover in Public Housing: Amidar in Bat Yam and Givat Olga*, Jerusalem, 1966.

⁵⁹ A. Shiloni, A fancy slum, *Haaretz* (9 March 1986).

⁶⁰ Acutely aware of the negative image of Amidar's planning process, Mayor Ben Ari promised things have changed and the new neighborhood of Ramat Yosef would be 'a spotless whole of a planned and complete unit', Protocol of the City Council meeting, 26 May 1959.

⁶¹ See One hundred Ramat Hanasi residents sued Shikun U'Pituach, *Bat Yam* (6 January 1968).

⁶² N. Dovrat, Ramat Hanasi – a neighborhood you live in temporarily, *Ma'ariv* (11 March 1977).

⁶³ N. Dovrat, A street of builders and real estate brokers, *Ma'ariv* (7 March 1977).

⁶⁴ Personal interview with Shmuel Penn (note 10), December 2010.

⁶⁵ Protocol of City Council meeting, 31 March 1958.

⁶⁶ *Israel State Comptroller Report*, Jerusalem, 1976.

⁶⁷ Personal interview with Shmuel Penn (note 10).

⁶⁸ M. Barash, The hotel was built without building permit or monitoring, *Yediot Achronot* (25 January 1976).

potential gain to builders, and the latter squeezed their profits to the maximum by building a higher number of apartments per plot than conceived by IPBL. Such concessions of convenience soon made headlines, solidifying Bat Yam's stigma as a dense, poorly planned, and now law compromising, urban environment. As one journalist covering municipal affairs noted,

Bat Yam deviated from the main way, having made excessive arrangements with builders in exchange for benefits, such as rehabilitating welfare cases, or building schools and other public institutions. Sometimes it [the City] was given whole buildings by developers in below construction values or entirely free, and in exchange awarded them higher building rights in the same building or elsewhere.⁶⁹

Whether record high densities caused by ill-conceived, ostensibly illegal planning practices were ultimately the result of pressure exerted by profit-seeking builders on local civil servants or reflected a much needed policy response to a real housing crisis in the wake of waves of in-migration, they soon made headlines and became an important component of its territorial stigma. By the 1970s, reports about a city in which physical chaos reigned, open public space was a scarce commodity and legally borderline deals were struck daily between greedy builders and corrupt municipal administrators, coalesced into a daunting place-based stigma. Bat Yam's urban character and chaotic planning were particularly threatening to neighboring Tel Aviv, which, as one journalist noted, 'is the best urban product we have managed to come up with... [but it may be] just a temporary achievement in its way to becoming a kind of Bat Yam'.⁷⁰ The thoughtfully-planned and constructed Tel Aviv, which came to be known as 'a city with a concept', stood in sharp contrast to the haphazard and illegitimate planning process in Bat Yam, deepening the former's positive self-image while securing the latter as a stigmatized place.⁷¹ And it was not long before residents of the now physically defamed city became a demographically stigmatized group, a distinct social category of urban dwellers whose personal identity could not easily be disentangled from the city they lived in.

People: urban ethnicity, class and culture

Bat Yam has become over the years the trash can of the Tel Aviv metro area, not so much because of the people living in it, but because of the stigma affixed to them.⁷²

As in most pre-state Jewish settlements, the population of Bat Yam was predominantly of European descent and on the eve of Israel's independence, over 80% of its estimated population of 2000 was Ashkenazi. A decade and a half later, and despite large flows of European Jews, more than a third of the city's 45,000 residents were either first or second generation Mizrahim.⁷³ In addition to refugees from Libya and Egypt, a growing number of mostly young Mizrahim moved to Bat Yam during the 1950s, taking advantage of its low-priced public housing.⁷⁴ Later on, following the state's decision to dismantle transit camps in Tel Aviv and its vicinity, the city received a great number of mostly low-class Mizrahim who were channeled to its new public housing projects.⁷⁵ The rapid socio-demographic transformation has not always been well-received as concerns over the so-called 'different mentality' of the new residents were regularly voiced by veteran residents and city officials.

The Orientalist discourse associated with accounts of these developments had two distinct yet inter-related dimensions; one accentuated Mizrahi cultural 'otherness', highlighting the changing nature of urban culture following their settlement. Particular attention was given to micro-sociocultural spaces, which constituted everyday points of interaction between 'old' and 'new' residents. These spaces, including coffee shops, movie theaters, parks and ordinary street corners were invariably portrayed as dominated by the inferior Mizrahi culture. Though not the majority, the enhanced Mizrahi presence in public spaces catalyzed the city's stigmatization as an environment populated by 'cultureless' individuals. As one public intellectual hinted, the demographic transformation had made it 'a very noisy city, with a wild lifestyle, which characterizes societies lacking inner [cultural] content'.⁷⁶ A particularly negative discourse in the national media centered on young Mizrahi males. Given their visibility in mundane urban spaces, owing in part to sheer demography,⁷⁷ young Mizrahim were frequently represented as agents of 'street (sub)-culture' and racially profiled as perpetrators of crime. Young Mizrahi masculinity, reportedly dominating the urban landscape, was often contrasted with the aging veteran Ashkenazi bodies of Tel Aviv, exacerbating Bat Yam's image as its binary opposition and solidifying its people-based stigma.⁷⁸

The Orientalization of the city also highlighted the disproportional number of low-class Mizrahim among the urban population, often identifying them as welfare and tax exemption recipients.⁷⁹ Not unlike the experience of ethno-racial minorities in other countries where the social stigma of welfare has both economic and familial dimensions,⁸⁰ namely questioning recipients' work ethic and their

⁶⁹ A. Shiloni, Construction deviants from Bat Yam, *Haaretz* (5 February 1976).

⁷⁰ Sammet, What is new with the national average? (note 14).

⁷¹ Marom, *A City with a Concept* (note 45).

⁷² R. Amikam, Jaffa is crying, *Ma'ariv* (28 May 1995) 2.

⁷³ *Master Plan for the Educational System in Bat Yam*, Jerusalem, December 1971.

⁷⁴ Public housing projects were common in the 1950s and 1960s, as the young Israeli state sought to provide affordable housing solutions to the large number of incoming Jewish migrants (mostly Mizrahim). Quickly constructed and poorly maintained, public housing soon became synonymous with social degeneration and physical neglect. A national 'neighborhood rehabilitation' plan embarked upon in the late 1970s was hardly successful in rejuvenating these projects. See R. Kalush and H.L. Yone, National home/personal home: public housing and the shaping of national space in Israel, *European Planning Studies* 10 (2009) 765–779; N. Carmon, Three generations of urban renewal policy: analysis and policy implications, *Geoforum* 30 (1999) 145–158.

⁷⁵ Ginzburg, *Residential Turnover in Public Housing* (note 58).

⁷⁶ Only a think tank of public figures will promote quality of life in Bat Yam, *Mabat LeBat Yam* (1976).

⁷⁷ Since in comparison with Ashkenazim, Mizrahi families had on average a larger number of children – who are normally heavy users of some of these public spaces – it is not unlikely that the share of especially young Mizrahim frequenting them was high relatively to their share in the total urban population.

⁷⁸ As Biger and Shavit note, 'The demographic freeze of Tel Aviv... which [was] caused by outmigration of young people and aging [of the veteran population] stood in sharp contrast to the continuous growth in the [young] population of... [other cities] in the metropolitan'. G. Biger and Y. Shavit, *The History of Tel Aviv (Vol. 4: Metropolitan City (1974–1993))*, Tel Aviv, 2002.

⁷⁹ Many residents are qualified for tax relief, *Bat Yam* (October 1964) 4.

⁸⁰ Jarrett, Welfare stigma among low-income, African American single mothers (note 21).

adherence to social norms of family planning and parental responsibility, low-class Mizrahi in general and those in need of government support in particular were described as a burden on the urban economy. More importantly, their specific place of residence – the city, and often certain neighborhoods – became important proxies of their stigmatized social identities. Ethnic culture, class, age, and place of residence have been gradually intertwined, cementing Bat Yam's stigma as a place devoid of high culture and dominated by the culture of poverty and welfare, further securing the links between type-of-people and type-of-place. In the remainder of this section, I attend to this dual construction of Mizrahi culture and the extent to which it reinforced the territorial stigma.⁸¹

Stigmatizing everyday spaces of Mizrahi culture(lessness)

A 1964 op-ed in a local newspaper detailed the experience of residents who attended movie theaters in the city. Complaining about patrons' cultureless behavior, it read

Visiting [movie theaters in Bat Yam] has become a nightmare, which a normal cultural human being can't tolerate... For those who came here from other human and cultural cities in Israel or abroad, this situation causes indescribable suffering, frustration and disappointment'.⁸²

Another article, citing enraged residents who described 'the thugs that have taken over our last cultural spot', pleaded theater owners to ensure police presence at all screenings 'to restore public order' and ensure that 'the civilized public continues to go to the movies'.⁸³ While neither referred directly to ethnicity, both were sprinkled with details, which revealed their Mizrahi identity. Hair and dress style, vocal intonations, guttural speech, and place of residence were sufficient clues. Describing fights, cigarette smoking, screaming and whistling, another journalist noted, 'the action often spills over from the screen...and not just to the front rows where residents of suburbia sit'.⁸⁴ Abundant in local and national press throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the juxtaposition of anti-social conduct, Oriental (lack of) culture and the urban environment produced an inherent connection between ethnicity and particular spaces in the city. Aged, ethnicized and gendered, movie theaters have been discursively constructed as spheres dominated by young Mizrahi males and bemoaned as lost public spaces to be avoided at all costs by culturally refined individuals.

Two additional sites became increasingly connected with the new urban culture and, by association, with the new residents. One were coffee houses; in contrast to their positive image as meeting places for the creative class of mature, secular, liberal Ashkenazi artists and intellectuals in Tel Aviv,⁸⁵ coffee houses in neighboring

Bat Yam were portrayed as their binary opposition – spaces of unproductive leisure, indolent conduct reserved for young, unemployed and mostly uneducated Mizrahi. Rather than Europeanized, coffee shops in Bat Yam were Levantinized, seen as gathering places for alcohol consumption and partaking in backgammon or card games.⁸⁶ The musical construction of coffee shops was also important in understanding the process of stigmatization. The contrast between the loud Mizrahi and often Arabic or Turkish music, which emanated from restaurants and coffee shops, was depicted as the binary opposition to the quiet, ambient music dominating the sophisticated food establishments of Tel Aviv. As one official admitted, the dominance of 'a blurry mix of Turkish and Greek singers and loud music' ought to be replaced by 'quiet', 'tasteful' music that is 'pleasant to one's ear'.⁸⁷ The 'culture of coffee shops', which some described as dragging the city down, was invariably seen as catering mostly to young and low-class Mizrahi described as 'jeans-wearing youngsters of 16–20 years of age, with gel in their hair and hands in their pockets'.⁸⁸

Finally, the beach was another key site in which the Orientalization of the city was discursively constructed. Historically considered an asset of great economic value to the city, it never lived up to expectations.⁸⁹ Corruption, chronic mismanagement, and environmental neglect turned the city's greatest quality into an economic fiasco. But as the surplus to be extracted from the beach-centered tourism economy failed to reach the public, it did benefit those who expropriated it for their own illegal businesses, notably in its northern section where illegal restaurants, kiosks and other unpermitted establishments, which the city failed to do away with, mushroomed. As the manager of the local Department of Tourism acknowledged, though the city had ordered their demolition several times, it was helpless against 'construction criminals'. In a rare interview in 1971, he frankly proclaimed, 'the sad truth is that the beach has become the Wild West', and suggested establishing a special police force to restore order along it.⁹⁰

The beach of Bat Yam became associated with a further set of illegal activities in the form of youth violence, including hooliganism, fighting and stabbing. So-called 'dubious nightly activities' like public displays of couples' intimate affection, and criminal conduct, like prostitution, theft and drug use, received much attention in local, regional and national media. Similarly associated with specific ethnic, class and age-related labels, these have contributed to the stigmatization of the beach as a liminal space and a central locus of year-round illegality. According to one view, the beach was attractive to low-class youth, mostly high-school dropouts coming from poor (Mizrahi) families because it provided them with, 'cars to break into, couples to harass, and fancy clothing, watches and money on the sand [to steal]'.⁹¹

⁸¹ The links between ethnicity and culture in Israel have been widely documented. The binary division between high Ashkenazi and low Mizrahi culture and the importance of possessing the former in order to achieve socio-economic mobility has been substantiated, most recently by A. Khazoom, *Shifting Ethnic Boundaries and Inequality in Israel: Or, How the Polish Peddler Became a German Intellectual*, Stanford, 2008. With an exception of Development Towns (see E. Avraham, *Media in Israel, Center and Periphery: Coverage of Development Towns*, Jerusalem, 2000 (in Hebrew)), relatively few studies have attended to the ways by which this division has played out in creating a place-based social stigma.

⁸² *Bat Yam* (October 1964) 2.

⁸³ H. Tal, Only imprisonment will restrain the hooligans, *Bat Yam* (June 1965) 2.

⁸⁴ See N. Dunevitch, Action in the movie theater, *Haaretz* (2 April 1971) 2, in which the author refers to thugs in the movie theaters of Tel Aviv as 'residents of the suburbs'.

⁸⁵ See B. Karmiel, *The Coffeehouses of Tel Aviv: 1920–1980*, Tel Aviv, 2006.

⁸⁶ In contrast to recent conceptualizations of Levantinism as a liberating, political-cultural hybrid construct, references to Bat Yam as a Levantine city normally carried negative, Orientalizing associations. On the former see J. Kahanoff, What about Levantinization?, *Journal of Levantine Studies* 1 (2011) 1–17.

⁸⁷ Why Bat Yam is Bat Yam: an urban profile, *Koteret Rashit* (20 August 1983).

⁸⁸ Crime in Bat Yam isn't different than the norm, *Bat Yam* (December 1964) 2.

⁸⁹ A widely used slogan in the 1950s was 'Our Future lies in the Development of the Beach'.

⁹⁰ Z. Harel, The robbery of the beaches, *Haaretz* (12 May 1981).

⁹¹ N. Dunevitch, Nine year old criminals, *Haaretz* (12 February 1971) 23.

Stigmatizing the (ethnic) culture of welfare

Notwithstanding the actual number of 'welfare cases' sent to Bat Yam in the 1950s, their settlement in the city exacerbated its stigma in two ways. Firstly, the absorption of a large number of economically dependent families was a heavy financial burden, which the city was unable to cope with. While national immigrant absorption institutions covered their initial settlement costs, it was the city's responsibility to take care of their housing and employment needs thereafter. This was a cause of concern for many local politicians who feared the city's dwindling resources would not suffice to handle too large a number of poor arrivees. Noting their rate of arrival far exceeded that of other cities of comparable population size, and arguing the costs of their settlement overburdened the modest municipal budget, which was already stretched by its poor tax collection rates and the large number of residents entitled to tax relief,⁹² Mayor Rothschild threatened to send welfare cases back to their original places of residence.⁹³ This harsh stance notwithstanding, as late as mid-1970s Bat Yam remained a preferred destination for welfare cases transferred from nearby cities.⁹⁴ The concentration of welfare cases in a small number of already deprived neighborhoods, secured its image as an economically unviable place reserved for the have-nots.

The other significant dimension of the welfare stigmatization process was that which associated welfare recipients in the city with violence and crime. Local authorities, unable or unwilling to provide some newcomers with adequate housing and employment, sometimes had to cope with welfare recipients resorting to violent means in order to obtain these rights.⁹⁵ While such incidents were neither frequent nor severe, they were often described at length in the media. A particularly recurrent image was that of welfare recipients as economically unproductive parasites who free ride the system, living off tax money paid by hard working local residents, and often terrorize local bureaucrats into providing them with additional benefits.⁹⁶ A sub-type of this stigmatization pertained to youth in welfare receiving families who were frequently said to have been linked to criminal conduct. Reports on children dropping out of school and engaging in petty crime in order to provide for their extended, welfare-dependent families were common. One journalist noted that while such patterns were present among youth throughout the city, it is particularly common among those in distressed neighborhood where welfare families reside. There, she argued, they obtain money by 'stealing necklaces off of other children's necks, forcibly remove watches from their wrists, and extort them'.⁹⁷

In contrast to the discussion of planning above, which highlighted the stigmatization of the city based on its physical characteristics, the social construction of Bat Yam's 'otherness' was based

upon the composition and character of its population. As I have shown, young, low-class Mizrahi men were often singled out and depicted as human representations of the cultureless city. Lacking some forms of culture and possessing others, the people of Bat Yam soon became 'the others' of Tel Aviv metro – a faceless crowd as cultureless, unsophisticated, and unrefined as the city they lived in.

Practice: criminalizing the city

The third component of the territorial stigma attached to Bat Yam was that which criminalized the city, discursively constructing it as 'a hotbed for law breaking, crime, and violence'.⁹⁸ Despite persistent denials by local administrators and law enforcement professionals alike, crime remained a defining character of the city well into the 1980s.⁹⁹ Over the years, two distinct yet inter-related types of crime have been associated with Bat Yam; firstly, petty crime, including break-ins, car theft, burglary, and hooliganism, and secondly, organized crime, most notably infrequent acts of murder, kidnapping, and business extortion. Qualitatively different, both accelerated the territorial stigmatization of Bat Yam in general and of certain neighborhoods in particular, classifying them as *terra non grata* for all but their own residents.¹⁰⁰

In April 1970, a two-page article in Israel's leading newspaper documented the journalist's nightly experience in Defenders' Square, the city's commercial center. Titled 'Nights of Bat Yam',¹⁰¹ the article detailed the 'other side of the metropolis', in which, 'a reality like no other place in Israel exists'.¹⁰² Condemned by city officials as 'distorted' and 'unsubstantiated', the article nonetheless provided a vivid account of urban deviancy where prostitution, drug abuse and gun fighting are a nightly spectacle and moral disorder reign.¹⁰³ The following is an excerpt, which illustrates the rendering of Bat Yam as a mixed bag of physical neglect, poor planning, ethnic others and criminality.

Everything is flooded here now, in this early evening hour, with neon lights and the smells of the smokes of steakhouses and the boiling oil of the falafel stands...in the theater across the street 'outburst of passions' is shown...[surely] a coincidence. Inside the theater a sweet and heavy smell of *Hashish* lingers...In the midst of the main plaza inside the mall prostitutes are walking around...In the mall [there is] a discotheque...here the police does not bother them. They can seal deals quietly and go to work... [In the past] there was a gun fight, in a coffee shop. Gang members disagreed on who gets what, and opened fire on each other. In the middle of the city. No problems...Why so many of these events, and many others, happen in Bat Yam? There are hubs of [urban] neglect. Hubs which draw crime and law breaking, like the

⁹² Many residents are qualified for tax relief (note 79). According to the 1973 State Comptroller report, Bat Yam had one of the lowest rates of municipal tax collection in Israel, reaching only 43% of its potential. Neighboring Holon, for example, collected over 65% in the same year (see Delays in Collecting Private and Business Municipal Taxes is the major factor in debt of cities, *Ma'ariv* (27 May 1976)).

⁹³ Excessive concentration of the needy in Bat Yam, *Bat Yam* (November 1964) 1.

⁹⁴ Mayor Volker: many welfare families have been transferred to Bat Yam, *Davar* (3 June 1975).

⁹⁵ See A bomb exploded outside the apartment of the manager of Bat Yam's urban surveillance department, *Ma'ariv* (6 July 1975).

⁹⁶ M. Ronen, I need not work, because I receive welfare, *Yediot Achronot* (30 July 1975) 7.

⁹⁷ N. Dovrat, Bat Yam 1979: the covert report on overt crime, *Ma'ariv* (21 December 1979) 5.

⁹⁸ Dovrat, Bat Yam 1979 (note 97).

⁹⁹ See Crime in Bat Yam is no higher than normal, *Bat Yam* (December 1964) 2; Nurit Dovrat, Mayor Rothschild: articles on crime in Bat Yam hurt its image, *Ma'ariv* (30 December 1979) 6.

¹⁰⁰ Dovrat, Bat Yam 1979 (note 97).

¹⁰¹ The title alludes to Fellini's *Nights of Cabiria* (1957), which tells the story of Cabiria, a good-hearted prostitute. The movie takes place in Ostia, an impoverished suburb of post-World War II Rome, supposedly describing the dark side of urban life.

¹⁰² N. Dunevitch, Nights of Bat Yam, *Haaretz* (17 April 1970) 19.

¹⁰³ Goldman, Crime rate will decrease if the public would help us, *Bat Yam* (May 1970) 2.

Ma'abara, with its asbestos-built houses..., [which] the Ministry of Housing refuses to dismantle.¹⁰⁴

Set against the background of some easily identified Oriental cultural icons (*Hashish, Falafel*) and explained out by referring to the degenerated residential quarters that are home to a predominantly Mizrahi population, crime in Bat Yam was not only ethnicized, but further constructed as having a young and masculine body that carried it out. The all too familiar juxtaposition of (low-middle) class, (young) age and (Mizrahi) ethnicity was used to rationalize the pervasiveness of crime throughout the city. As one police officer explained 'few know that Bat Yam has many "Defenders' Squares"... [that are dominated by] bored young men and women, bums [who constitute] potential material for deviance and criminality'.¹⁰⁵ In this respect, Mizrahi youth were often singled out as the main perpetrators, attributing their propensity for criminality to their so-called 'culture of poverty'.¹⁰⁶ Juvenile delinquents – tagged as 'socially neglected' youth from 'distressed families' – were said to have been responsible for much of the petty crime that plagued the city in the 1970s. Citing an academic report, one journalist described the average juvenile delinquent as being

Male, 8 years of age...born in Africa or Asia, or in Israel to parents who immigrated after 1948, most of whom from North Africa...A third child in a family with multiple children (four or more). The father...is an unskilled manual laborer. The mother is a housewife. He lives in an urban settlement, one of the new settlements (mostly development towns)... His first offense is theft or breaking in...[which] he commits alone or with a partner, [usually] during school year or on a long vacation.¹⁰⁷

The ethnicization of crime often resulted in a distinctively different discourse concerning young Mizrahi and Ashkenazi criminals.¹⁰⁸ It further mobilized the social geography of the city in order to explain how and why crime levels were more prevalent in certain parts and not others. Low-class Mizrahi youth residing in close proximity to newer neighborhoods, where affluent new European migrants lived, were signaled as responsible for the fast growing crime rate in some neighborhoods. Explaining the underpinnings of this 'new social urban geography' and the motivation of young Mizrahim to engage in criminal activities, the Regional Police Commander noted, '[In Bat Yam] there is a concentration of new [Russian] immigrants enjoying rights and certain material welfare next to [older] poverty-stricken neighborhoods and a transit camp. The Old [Mizrahi] low-class residents stare [at the new immigrants] and envy them'.¹⁰⁹

Petty crime of the early 1970s notwithstanding, it was the events of the following decade that stabilized Bat Yam's stigma as a stronghold of the netherworld, a place dominated by emissaries of organized crime. In addition to traditional explanations such as local population make-up and the social neglect of urban

neighborhoods, high rates of serious crime were reasoned by both absolute and relative arguments; alongside explaining crime in Bat Yam as a product of its population, it was often singled out as a locus of regional crime, a deviant hub of the metropolitan, which attracts criminality from other cities while, simultaneously, exports it outwards. Attending to its quality as a node of crime, one journalist argued that Defenders' Square 'is well known in the [Tel Aviv] metro area as a meeting place for professionals [burglars]',¹¹⁰ while the local police commander explained that the majority of criminal acts were carried out by out-of-towners, especially 'those coming into the city from the southern neighborhoods of Tel Aviv' due to 'the relatively short distance and improved communication and transportation channels between the two cities'.¹¹¹ Unlike petty crime, which was often belittled and rationalized as being integral to urban life, heavy-duty crime was explained out by the city's absolute and relative location. In this respect, proximity to southern Tel Aviv and Jaffa in tandem with 'a distressed neighborhood mentality' have turned the city into a stronghold of regional crime, which the local police was unable to handle.¹¹² Criminals from neighboring Jaffa, Tel Aviv, Holon and even Rishon LeZion, it was argued, were acutely aware of this enforcement void, often moving some of their illegal engagements to Bat Yam.

Bat Yam's image as a hub of regional criminality proved detrimental to the reputation of the city. Despite reports showing that urban crime was usually proportional – qualitatively and quantitatively – to its relative size, a series of high-visibility killings with suspected links to organized crime in the early 1980s fixated its territorial stigma. An exceptionally brutal double homicide in the city's industrial zone and the unsolved decapitation of a 12-year old girl kidnapped in the street outside her home, were particularly instrumental in solidifying the city's image as a dangerous place, where 'mothers forbid their children to leave the house on their own'.¹¹³ Though both acts – and many others which became associated with the city – were allegedly performed by non-locals, they were soon labeled local acts by the Israeli police. Overtime, and regardless of the residential origin of city-based perpetrators of illegal acts, they have blended in with the dominating stigma of a crime-ridden city.

Conclusions

Urban scholars have long traced the process through which neighborhoods are stigmatized. Two types of explanations have traditionally been proposed to account for the persistence of such reductionist views. While place-based explanations emphasize the type of physical environment in place, especially its aesthetic look, people-based accounts highlight the reputation of certain groups, distinguished by economic class and/or ethno-racial affiliations, in explaining the persistence of territorial stigmas. Their actual effect notwithstanding, these explanations give rise to and reproduce the

¹⁰⁴ Dunevitch, Nights of Bat Yam (note 102).

¹⁰⁵ H. Tal, Bat Yam fights criminality, *Bat Yam* (March 1982) 2.

¹⁰⁶ O. Lewis, Culture of poverty, in: D.P. Moynihan (Ed.), *On Understanding Poverty: Perspectives from the Social Sciences*, New York, 1969, 187–220.

¹⁰⁷ Dunevitch, Nine year old criminals (note 91).

¹⁰⁸ Thus, for example, the difference between young perpetrators of petty crime in Bat Yam and neighboring (predominantly Ashkenazi northern) Tel Aviv was eloquently described by one police officer as the difference between 'marginal youth' and 'good kids who strayed', respectively. Others further admitted that the legal system is ethnically biased, as prosecutors in the Court for Juveniles are punishing only 'disturbed boys from primitive families and minorities', while they seldom pursue 'young defendants coming from "a good family" in Northern Tel Aviv' whose parents 'have connections that can close the file' (see N. Dunevitch, Every Hooligan is a King, *Haaretz* (15 January 1971) 9).

¹⁰⁹ Jaffa Region Police Commander: we should all fight crime, *Bat Yam* (July 1971) 1.

¹¹⁰ Dunevitch, Nights of Bat Yam (note 102).

¹¹¹ Jaffa Region Police Commander (note 109).

¹¹² I. Tal, Why Bat Yam is Bat Yam, *Koteret Rashit* (20 August 1988).

¹¹³ Search after disappeared girl to intensify, *Yediot Achronot* (24 March 1982).

stigma, giving it a life of its own. As Wacquant notes, 'Whether or not these places are dilapidated, dangerous, and declining matters little: the prejudicial belief that they are suffices to set off socially detrimental consequences'.¹¹⁴

This paper has sought to contribute to the debate over territorial stigmatization in three main ways. Firstly, it has highlighted the interconnectedness between types-of-places and types-of-people explanations, and shed light on the myriad ways by which they are intimately interwoven, continuously (re)-producing the stigmatizing discourse. Secondly, by scaling up the stigmatization process itself to consider the scale of the city as a whole, rather than focusing, as in many studies, on particular neighborhoods or parts of town. As I have shown, the pattern of social geography – both within and beyond the city – is critical to our understanding of spatially uneven stigma. In the case of Bat Yam, the unevenness had a dual effect: internally, as some neighborhoods were more negatively portrayed than others; and regionally, where the uneven stigmatization was instrumental to and embedded in a metropolitan-wide process of social construction whereby certain cities – primarily Tel Aviv – became synonymous with positive attributes of people and place, while others – most notably Bat Yam – have been socio-physically defamed. Thirdly, by examining an often neglected dimension of place-based explanations, namely the planning process, I hope to have furthered our understanding of the

relations between stigmatization and what Pred famously called the becoming of place.¹¹⁵ In historical terms, the city's Broken Windows, namely its low-quality, poorly planned and rundown residential quarters in fact preceded the arrival of so-called distressed populations and certainly their constructed deviance. The planning trajectories of both 'developmentalism' and 'illegality' have coalesced with ethnicity and criminality to earn the city its long-lasting territorial stigma, which urban campaigns still attempt to dislodge. In this respect, the past decade especially has witnessed an all-out re-branding effort in Bat Yam. Through catchy slogans, a local Biennale, and multiple projects of residential regeneration, some of which specifically aim to dismantle and rebuild entire city blocks in order to 'attract stronger populations', marketing experts and city officials alike are seeking to undo some of the long-established links between the image of the physical environment and (some of the) people inhabiting it.¹¹⁶ Whether their attempts at eradicating the stigma of place will be successful remains to be seen.

Acknowledgments

I thank the Editor and two anonymous reviewers for their highly valuable comments. I also wish to thank Avihai Aizic Schwartz for his assistance in producing the map.

¹¹⁴ Wacquant, Territorial stigmatization in the age of advanced marginality (note 29), 68.

¹¹⁵ A. Pred, Place as historically contingent process: structuration and the time-geography of becoming places, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 74 (1984) 279–297.

¹¹⁶ 'Bat Yam: Renewing, Exciting' (a Hebrew rhyme: *Mitchadeshet, Merageshet*).