



Post-traumatic urbanism: Repressing Manshiya and Wadi Salib

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A B S T R A C T

Trauma is defined as a wound or an injury caused by an act of violence on one's body, or as a severe anxiety caused by an unpleasant experience. The victims of traumatic events may develop psychological stress disorder, which is manifested in several symptoms: post-traumatic stress disorder. The 1948 Arab-Israeli had caused both physical and psychological trauma. The symptoms of this trauma are still visible today in various Israeli cities. As a result of the war, Israeli cities had annexed formerly owned Palestinian villages and neighborhoods. Along the years, these vacated Palestinian houses were settled by Jewish immigrants, turned to slums and became the target of several urban renewal projects. These renewal projects mainly asked to erase all traces of the neighborhood's Arab past, and to introduce a new urban order. This research focuses on Al Manshiya in Tel Aviv-Jaffa and Wadi Salib in Haifa, two former Palestinian neighborhoods, which were vacated from their original inhabitants. This research surveys the re-planning process of both neighborhoods, its implementation and its current status. Asking whether one can depict symptoms of post-trauma in the urban scheme and in the buildings' architecture. Al Manshiya was torn down completely in the 1970's, in order to make place for Tel Aviv's new central business district. This project was never fully completed, as the symptoms of the post-trauma are manifested in the disconnected grand office buildings, the urban void and the parking lots surrounding them. The majority of Wadi Salib was torn down as well, as several decaying buildings are still standing in the cleared and empty neighborhood. The emptiness, neglect and oblivion emphasize the post-traumatic experience. In the recent years however, several projects asked to deal with the neighborhoods' past and heritage. Even then, the references remained superficial leaving the trauma unattended and not curing the neighborhoods' from their post-trauma symptoms.

1. Introduction

“...The old world we shall destroy to the ground (*olam yashan `adey haysod nachriva*)

From a bended back we will relieve the burden (*migav kafuf nifroq ha`ol*)

Then we will construct our world (*et `olameinu az naqqima*)

Nothing from yesterday (*lo-khlum mitmol*)

Tomorrow is everything (*mahar hako*)...”

(*l'Internationale*, Hebrew version by Avraham Shlonsky, 1945)

These were the words chosen by Avraham Shlonsky while translating Eugène Pottier's *L'Internationale*. Shlonsky's version was adopted by several movements and organizations like *Hashomer Hatzair*, *Hapoel Hatzair* and *Mapai*, which led the formation of the Zionist Ideology in the 20th century, and played a crucial role in forming the hegemonic class in the first decades of the state of Israel (Oz, 1992).

Shlonsky's words corresponded with the ruling Zionist agenda, which asked to promote the rebirth of the Jewish nation in its historic

homeland, upon the ruins of the old diasporal Jewish lifestyle, while the primal landscape of Palestine was seen as the ideal platform for this renaissance. Therefore, the local landscape had to be perceived as pristine, as if it waited for 2000 years until the Jewish nation's return home. Consequently, the Israeli government's agenda in the 1950s and 1960s, was to ignore and disregard all indications to the Arab/Palestinian past of the local landscape. In line with this agenda, as illustrated by Walid El-Khalidi and Meron Benvenisti, places were re-named, people were resettled and the Arab history of towns and villages was repudiated (Benvenisti, 2002, 2012; Khalidi, 1992; Bar Or, 2012).

The 1948 war, aka “War of Independence” by Israelis, or “*Alnakba*” (the catastrophe) by Arabs, began as civil war between local Jewish and Arab militias in British mandatory Palestine, and expanded into a full-scale war between Israel and its Arab neighbors. This war led to the birth of the state of Israel, but also to the birth of the Palestinian refugee problem, as described by Benny Morris (Morris, 2004).

Arab neighborhoods in Jewish cities, which were abandoned by

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their original inhabitants during the 1948 war, formed a burden for Israeli planners and city officials, who had difficulties in adopting the inherited Arab houses and streets. As shown by Sharon Rotbard and Amnon Bar Or, in most cases, these neighborhoods were re planned with the intent to revoke their Arab heritage, turned into a clean slate while promoting the formation of a new urban order upon the ruins of the old one, compatible with the hegemonic Israeli agenda (Bar Or, 2012, 2013; Rotbard, 2005). In line with these claims, the Palestinian-American scholar Saree Makdisi states that: "the attempt to secure a sense of Jewish national homeliness involves an endless process of covering over, removing, or managing a stubbornly persistent Palestinian presence" (Makdisi, 2008). Therefore, when dealing with architecture and urban development, Makdisi argues, just like Rafi Segal and Eyal Weizman as well as Yosef Jabareen, that one of Israeli planners' main objectives is to veil and efface any Palestinian presence in the local built environment (Weizman, 2007; Makdisi, 2010, 2008; Jabareen & Dbiat, 2014). Hence functioning, as Foucault would say, as "continuation of war by other means" (Foucault, 2003).

These former Arab neighborhoods in Jewish towns formed a continuing monument to the trauma of the Israeli-Arab armed conflict, and to the ideological one regarding the historical right over the land. In this paper I would ask to show that the hegemonic Israeli ideology of cleansing the local built heritage from its Arab past was that that led to the eagerness to renounce, neglect and demolish the war torn former Arab neighborhoods in Jewish cities.

This paper focuses on Al Manshiya and Wadi Salib, two Arab neighborhoods in Tel Aviv and Haifa, which were abandoned in 1948, and seeks to reveal how traumatic past events affect contemporary urban everyday life. By surveying the neighborhoods' planning and deconstruction history, this paper aims to show that the Israeli planners aimed to re plan the neighborhoods by ignoring and not treating the trauma's presence (the inherited Arab neighborhoods), and therefore succeeded only in intensifying its symptoms, rendering the area post-traumatic.

2. Trauma and the city

In his 1917 essay, Sigmund Freud claimed that there are two similar yet different responses to loss: *Mourning* and *Melancholia*. Mourning, stated Freud, takes place in the subject's conscious mind and occurs when the subject has to deal with the grief of losing an object of love. Melancholia on the contrary takes place in the subject's unconscious mind and occurs when the subject is unable to identify or fully understand the loss he is grieving. In the state of melancholia, the subject is possessed by the past and is unable to move forward, while in the case of mourning the subject engages the past in a manner that enables him to start over (Freud, 1957).

In line with Freud's theory, American historian Dominick LaCapra differentiates between *loss* and *absence*. Loss, relates to a specific tangible historic trauma, while absence is trans historical and signifies an existential lack (LaCapra, 2001). LaCapra further claimed that there are two possible ways to deal with trauma. In case that trauma is accepted as loss, then it could be dealt with by *working it through*, which resembles Freud's mourning. However, when trauma is conceived as absence, then it is dealt with by *working it out*, which resembles Freud's melancholia. Therefore, historic traumas that are perceived as loss enable their subjects to reconcile with the past, while traumas that are perceived as absence haunt their subjects and lock them in the past (LaCapra, 2001).

Urban systems could also be subjected to trauma as a result of past violent events as Tali Hatuka showed in her 2010 book. According to Hatuka the urban trauma could be *worked through* and treated only if it is perceived as *loss*, and not as *absence*, meaning that in case the city and its community are redeveloped while acknowledging their past, then trauma could be reconciled by spatial transformations and the improvement of conditions (Hatuka, 2010). In line with Hatuka's writing,

it is possible to claim that when an urban area is subjected to a trauma, then its everyday life is disturbed and unable to regenerate, causing it to perform as an exterritorial urban void. Then, as trauma is perceived as *absence*, and the area is redeveloped with a clear intent to obliterate its past, the urban system will be unable to recover from its past, and the trauma will continue to dictate its everyday life.

Furthermore, urban traumas that are ignored or replaced by an alternative narrative are treated as *absence* rather than *loss*, leading urban planners to *work out* and not *work through* the trauma. As a result the trauma is avoided and therefore retained, and it is even amplified and the urban systems to which they belong are prevented from spatial reconciliation. This reconciliation could have been achieved by redeveloping the city while remembering and confronting the trauma. However, as the trauma is repressed the individuals in the urban system are deprived from mourning its loss and are designated to remain in a state of constant melancholia. I would suggest terming these urban systems as post-traumatic environments.

In this paper, I would ask to show how the planners' intent to ignore and efface the history of Manshiya and Wadi Salib had only perpetuated the trauma, and have turned the neighborhoods into post-traumatic environments.

3. Manshiya

The construction of Al Manshiya neighborhood began in the 1870s, as a northern suburb to the developing port city of Jaffa. The majority of its inhabitants were Arab Muslims, though it also had Christian and Jewish minorities (Rotbard, 2005). Al Manshiya was constructed as a modern and planned neighborhood, with two story residential houses, commercial streets and recreational facilities on its seashore (Aleksandrowicz, 2013a).

Due to its railway station, orchards, German Colonies and Jewish neighborhoods on its east, Al Manshiya's further development happened mostly towards north. The growing neighboring city of Tel Aviv halted Al Manshiya's development as it surrounded the neighborhood from its west and north (Rotbard, 2005; Kark, 1990).

Being on the front line between the Arab Jaffa and the Jewish Tel Aviv, Al Manshiya was the host of many ethnic clashes. However, this also allowed it to develop a thriving economy. In its height, the 1940s, Al Manshiya was home to almost 15,000 inhabitants, a quarter of Jaffa's population. It managed to become a large residential neighborhood with a thriving commercial economy (Aleksandrowicz, 2013a).

As part of Arab Jaffa, Al Manshiya was designated, by the United Nations' partition plan of 1947, to become a part of the future Arab state. The municipal border between Jaffa and Tel Aviv that stretched on the eastern and northern outskirts of Al Manshiya was therefore to become an International one (Aleksandrowicz, 2013b).

In April 1948, however, Al Manshiya was occupied by the Jewish *Irgun* militia, which led to the surrender of entire Jaffa to the *Haganah* Jewish forces in the beginning of May that year (Aleksandrowicz, 2013b).

The 1948 war had left the city of Jaffa in general, and Al Manshiya in particular in ruins (see Figs. 1 and 2). Most of the city's Arab population had fled during the war, and later was unable and prevented to return (Morris, 2004). The houses of the exiled Arab refugees were declared as absentees' property, and were confiscated according to the Absentees' Property Law 5710 of 1950 (Berger, 1998). The shortage of dwelling units in Jewish cities, due to the influx of Jewish refugees from Europe and from Islamic countries, had led several refugees to settle in absentees' houses in Jaffa (Aleksandrowicz, 2013b; Marom, 2009), as well as in other vacant Arab villages and quarters in the new state of Israel.

At the same time, a debate had developed in the 1950s regarding the treatment of vacated Arab houses in Israel. While most planners and officials called for their immediate demolition due to so called sanitary and structural issues (Paz, 1998; Gluckstein, 1961), others, like the

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