Estranged Natives and Indigenized Immigrants: A Relational Anthropology of Ethnically Mixed Towns in Israel

DANIEL MONTERESCU *
Central European University, Budapest, Hungary

Summary. — Ethnic relations between the Palestinian and Jewish communities in ethnically mixed towns in Israel are marked by class divides, political fragmentation, and perception of alienation vis-à-vis place and other. Analyzing patterns of communal identity politics, this article revisits the spatial history of Jaffa since 1948. Against theories of urban ethnocracy predicated on the convergence of state policies and capitalist accumulation, which in turn engender longstanding spatial segregation between Jews and Arabs and between new and old residents, I argue that it is precisely the indeterminate “contact zones” between communities and spaces that constitute the political and cultural realities in these cities. Proposing a relational reading of these spatial dynamics, this article shows that in contradistinction to the basic premise of the nation-state, in Jaffa as well as other mixed towns, the coupling between space and identity collapses. The concepts of “spatial heteronomy” and “stranger relations” are proposed to characterize the challenge raised by ethnically mixed towns to the Jewish state and to the ethnonational logic that guides it.

The dialectic duality embedded in relations between individuals and collectives calls to bridge the gap between micro-sociology and macro-sociology, and to understand these intersecting relations as emerging from their “webs of affiliation” (Simmel, 1955) which associate as they separate rival urban actors. Similarly, for Lefebvre, the “specificity of the city” stems from its function as a space of mediation between micro and macro. “The city is a mediation among mediations” (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 101)—it contains the “near order” of primary relations, and is contained by the “far order” of state and government. These considerations reveal the mixed city as a live social laboratory for analyzing the restless relationship among its individual residents, the local communities, nation and state. The Jaffa case study suggests that more than one hegemonic regime of ethnonational control, it is precisely the failure of mediation—namely the failure of the State to define the mixed town as a Jewish city, as well as the failure of the Palestinian community to effectively mobilize it as a Palestinian city—which constitutes the political and cultural

1. CLAIMING THE MIXED TOWN: TERRITORIAL STRUGGLES AND IDENTITY POLITICS

This essay interrogates the relations among space, society, and communal politics in Jewish–Arab “mixed towns” from an anthropological and historical perspective. Analytically, I offer a dialectical reading of the urban, national, and class scales of position and action that produce Jewish spaces within Arab spaces and Arab spaces within Jewish ones, rather than one nationally-homogenous urban space (as in Bat-Yam) or two divided parts (as in Jerusalem). The argument I put forth is thus not a liberal argument of multicultural peaceful coexistence nor is it an argument of urban ethnocracy as total exclusion (Yiftachel & Yacobi, 2003). Within this theoretical context I would like to suggest a third alternative that perceives Jaffa as a relational field in which nationalism and urbanism, identity, and place are simultaneously contested and confirmed in everyday interactions (Brubaker, Feischmidt, Fox, & Grancea, 2006; Emirbayer, 1997). Folding power and class into spatial analysis, such an approach exposes on the one hand, the structural power relations embedded in the production of urban space, but on the other hand, does not overlook the internal contradictions in each social position and its unintended consequences. Addressing inter- and intra-communal relations between different populations in Jaffa the paper deconstructs the reified notions of ethnically bounded “communities,” and the politicized concepts of indigenous locals and alien immigrants. Following the lead of relational sociologist Simmel (1971) and philosopher Lefebvre (1996) the city is conceptualized as a “space of mediations,” which pits state against community through differential scales of governmental rule, capital, and identity. Thus for instance, Simmel insists that it is dynamic relations (rather than substances) that constitute sociality, which he characterizes as “concrete abstraction” (1971, p. 69). Rejecting the notion that one can posit discrete, pre-given units such as the individual, class, minority, and state or nation as ultimate starting points of social analysis, in this reading urban actors are not persons who are “individuals” first who then subsequently enter into “relationships.” Rather it is their entering into relations that helps create them as persons and political subjects (Munro, 2005, p. 246).

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realities in Jaffa. The following vignette illustrates this reciprocal failure and the conflicts that ensue.

In 1998, commemorating 50 years to his death in the battle over Jaffa, the City of Tel-Aviv-Jaffa named a street after Jewish militant (National Military Organization, a.k.a. Irgun) and football player Natan Panz, located at the core of a predominantly Arab residential neighborhood. Soon after the ceremony, which was attended by the Prime Minister and Mayor, Islamic Movement activists placed, next to the new street sign, a green metal plate inscribed with a Quranic verse calling the believers to seek atonement for their sins—“Do penance with your God, for He is Oft-forgiving” (Figure 1). In 2003, on a square planned by the Municipality in the midst of the same street, a statue was erected in memoriam the same ultra-Zionist combatant.2 The stormy debate which ensued denounced the municipal authorities not only for dismissing the Arab history of the city, but for hurting the feelings of the residents and thus further alienating them from their lived space.

These struggles are part of an ongoing campaign over the ethnic and cultural identity of urban space in mixed towns. Street naming is a political act of territorial marking, often triggering heated debates (Azaryahu & Kook, 2002). Street names constitute “spatial texts” that imprint historical events and public figures in the local collective memory (Pinchevski & Torgovnik, 2002). Of late, the issue of street names in Israel’s mixed towns made the headlines when the mayor of Ramle (another mixed town) disregarded requests by Arab residents to change some of the street names from Zionist symbols (e.g., national poet “Bialick” or “the Ghetto Fighters”) to Arab and Islamic figures (e.g., “Sultan Suleiman” or “Tawfiq Ziyad”). The mayor was recorded saying “if they don’t like it, let them go to Jaljulia [an all-Arab village], which is an Arab name. Why would I rename a street because one Jamal or Muhammad wants me to? Let him change his god.”

The political history of street names in Jaffa has known many a turbulence. In the aftermath of the 1948 war, street names (e.g., King Georges or Al-Hilwa) were deleted and converted to numbers. Then, with the 1950 annexation of Jaffa to Tel-Aviv, they were clustered according to the “group system” (Shitat Ha-Kvutzot) already in effect in Tel-Aviv since 1934. In Jaffa, the “group system” subsumed different categories of street names: (i) the Righteous Gentile (figures from world heritage such as Plato, Aristotle, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Dante, Racine and Louis Pasteur, as well as non-Jewish literary figures who have influenced Israeli culture, such as the French poet Lamartine, who had dedicated in his “Journey to the East” an eulogy to Jaffa and its Jews); (ii) Biblical Names (such as Pinhas, Yochanan, Hiram the King of Tyre, Tarshish, Yefet); (iii) Names from the New Testament (such as Simon the Tanner); (iv) Names from the Greek Mythology (e.g., Andromeda); (v) Names from Zionist and Jewish History (such as Rabbi Yehouda of Ragouza, the Immigrants of Zion, the Work of Israel, the Tribes of Israel, Isaac’s Fear); (vi) Geographical Markers (such as the Port, the Red Sea); (vii) Plants, Zodiac Signs and Miscellaneous (such as the Necklace, Pisces, the Dolphin); and finally (viii) Four Arabic Names (Ibn-Sina, Ibn-Rushd, Al-Baytar and ‘Abd El-Ghani, of which the first two were medieval philosophers, the third was Jaffa’s mayor in the 1920s, and the fourth was a Jaffan who died while protecting a Jewish girl attacked by a Palestinian armed with a sword in the 1980s). The relative absence of representative Arab names has been a constant bone of contention. These tensions have politicized what has already been an unresolved spatial order, derived from the persistent non-correspondence between the layout of unmistakable Jewish street names such as “The Rabbi of Pshista” or “The Work of Israel,” and the Arab population that inhabits them.

Conversely, Jewish residents also express their discontent from the changing demographic make up of the city and the growing Palestinian population. Attesting to this unease is a graffiti posted recently on a wall in one of Jaffa’s mixed neighborhoods. Stating, in English, that “Jaffa [sic. misspelled Hebrew for Jaffa] is the Jewish City Too” the graffiti invokes the Star of David to make an ethnonational claim on the city. This claim over space and entitlement however is qualified (“Jewish City Too”), and refrains from making an exclusionary territorial statement. Tellingly, it expresses political distress and faint protest against the increasing visibility of Arab residents in neighborhoods hitherto identified as “Jewish” (Figure 2).

These visual representations and the communal struggles underlying them, show that the debate over the identity of the mixed city, after one hundred years of conflict, is far from being resolved. Estranging the Palestinian local population and indigenizing the Jewish immigrants, these struggles produce “projects of nativization” that reconfigure the ethnological categories of rival communities. The ambivalent relations chaining Jaffa to the Jewish metropolis of Tel-Aviv embody the historical tension between ethnic distinction and institutional integration, apparent as the simultaneous assertion of Palestinization intertwined with practical Israelization (Rekhes, 1998). These dynamics underpin the dilemma of the representatives of the Arab minority in mixed towns, who make claims to the city and call to recognize its cultural and

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Figure 1. Sign posted by the Islamic movement on Panz Street (photo by author, 2007).

Figure 2. Jewish faint claim over the city—graffiti in the Jerusalem Blvd. mixed neighborhood (photo by author, 2007).
political distinction. As we shall see, these dialectic processes permeate all walks of life in Jaffa, from identity discourses on the place through demographic processes and political power relations in the city. Developing an analytic vocabulary of ethnic mix, the paper proposes the concepts of “spatial heteronomy” and “stranger sociality” to conceptualize the relations between space and society in Jaffa. The article concludes with an analysis of the ethnic identity politics between and within the Arab and Jewish communities, which only deepen the social and class based divides in the mixed town.

2. THE BRIDLED BRIDE OF PALESTINE: THE HISTORY OF JAFFA AS MIXED TOWN

Ethnically mixed towns emerged out of the superposition of the old Ottoman sectarian urban regime and the new national, modernizing and capitalist order. Reconfigured as a new city-form under Israeli rule, the mixed town was in actual fact a fragmented amalgam of Ottoman, British and Palestinian urban legacies (Monterescu & Rabinowitz, 2007).

The Ottoman city was predicated on the logic of religious communalism and ethnoconfessional separation (Braude & Lewis, 1982; Gottreich, 2003). While some public spaces were ethnically neutral, residential patterns corresponded by and large to the administrateur millet system of patronage and classification. Consisting of separate ethnic quarters that housed religiously defined communities regulated by imperial law, it had cultural difference semiotically marked and socially recognized within the material and symbolic walls of the “Old City.”

But the dynamics which produced this ethnic configuration were short-lived. Whereas late 19th century saw the old millet-based correspondence between spatial boundaries and social grouping being blurred, a new form of public space emerged which was exceedingly informed by a new national—rather than denominational—awareness. While the new public sphere, which emerged under British colonial rule, resulted in a certain level of ethnic mix (Bernstein, 2007), ethnonational competition between Jews and Arabs was clearly feeding an exclusionary demand for spatial segregation and territorial control which escalated during the bloody events of 1921, 1929 and the Arab Revolt (1936–39). The struggle over land and identity reached its dramatic peak in the 1948 war, with the conquest of these towns and their declaration as “Israeli cities” with a residual Arab minority (for a detailed description, see Rabinowitz and Monterescu (2008)).

An integral product of these intertwined urban histories, Jaffa has long been a city of acute social contradictions and political tensions that cannot be reduced to categorical dichotomies such as immigrants versus natives, hegemony versus resistance, foreignness versus locality. An instantiation of what geographer David Harvey termed “creative destruction” Jaffa defines a binational and colonial “contact zone” (Pratt, 1999), that reproduces different forms of urban mix—Arabs and Jews, veteran residents and newcomers, Mizrahim and Ashkenazim, rich and poor. It encompasses a heterogeneous variety of historical neighborhoods and new residential quarters alongside gated communities and luxury projects often built on the ruins of previously demolished Arab houses. Jaffa is physically located at center of the metropolis but inhabits in fact its margins. For its Palestinian inhabitants and working class Jewish residents, its recent comeback to the center of public attention and urban action is a mixed blessing as it jeopardizes their “right to the city” (Lefebvre, 1996).

Inextricably linked to the national scale, the history of Jaffa was tied to Tel-Aviv. The complicated relations between these two rival cities unfolded through five distinct historical phases: (1) the founding of Tel-Aviv in 1909; (2) the violent escalation of the conflict from the 1920s to the 1940s; (3) Jaffa’s conquest in 1948 and its official annexation to Tel-Aviv in 1950; (4) the three decades of disinvestment and “slum clearing” up to the 1990s; and (5) the present neo-liberal phase of gentrification and resistance to it (LeVine, 2005; Mazawi & Khuri-Makhul, 1991). Faced with Zionist expansion, Jaffa, the former Arab metropolis, underwent radical demographic changes: the majority of its Palestinian population—including most of the local elite strata—was forced into exile during the hostilities of 1948. Only 3,500 (5%) remained of an Arab population that was estimated to have previously numbered 70,000 (Golan, 1999). At the same time, Jewish mass immigration from Northern Africa and Europe poured into Israel and settled in the emptied city. Jaffa, which had been a regional seaport and international trade-center under late-Ottoman and British rule was transformed overnight into the notorious and dilapidated “Quarter 7”—Tel-Aviv’s “Arab neighborhood.” This radical urban transformation turned Jaffa from an Arab city with a Jewish minority of 30% (35,000 Jews out of a total population of 110,000 in 1947), which today has become a mixed city with a Palestinian minority of 30% (15,000 out of 45,000 in 2000 by official statistics). Once the “Bride of Palestine” (’Arus Falastin) and hence Tel-Aviv’s enemy, then its disinvested “Arab backyard,” Jaffa is now embraced by its “daughter-turned-rival” global city (Alfasi & Fenster, 2005; LeVine, 2005). Heraldng this rediscovery in terms of corrective historical justice, Tel-Aviv Municipality has recently launched a neo-liberal planning policy of “affirmative action” (Peleg, 1999), which further depoliticizes its creeping gentrification. From the outset of the 20th century to the present, these troubled relations exhibit a recurrent pattern of dialectic opposition that reflects Jewish-Israeli culture’s inability to come to terms with the unsettling presence of Jaffa’s Arabness (Monterescu, 2009).

The public policies and urban practices that reconfigured spatial policy in Jaffa have fashioned throughout the years new managerial ideologies and implemented new planning cat-

egories aiming at tailoring the Jaffa space according to the changing agenda of the municipal establishment. However, ever since the conquest of Jaffa in 1948 this pattern of governmental policy suffered from a lack of resources and from short-sighted systemic planning. According to the municipal establishment’s ever-changing policies, the correspondence between the planned goals and the socio-spatial reality has always been partial and unstable. For these reasons Jaffa is characterized, more than any other area in the Tel-Aviv metropolis, by the parallel existence of paradoxical and opposed urban processes that produce a heteronomous and complex space (Kemp, 1999; Meinecke, 1970; Ruggie, 1993). The Jaffa urban space is heteronomous because it produces and maintains, on different scales, contradictory spaces that undercut a univalent correspondence between social boundaries and spatial boundaries and between class and nation. Consider this systemic complexity on three planes: first, the Tel-Aviv discourse on Jaffa; second, the historical-urban dynamic; and third, the implications of the neo-liberal municipal policy since its inception in 1985.

First, for Tel-Aviv, Jaffa is both a space of negation and a space of identification, hence the Tel-Avivian discourse on Jaffa is Janus-faced: on the one hand, Jaffa is portrayed as nationalistic, Islamic, or criminal; on the other hand, Jaffa’s image is imbued with artistic, gastronomic, multicultural and
historical tropes. Thus the 1990s, concurrently with the renewed interest in the city via gentrification, has seen the crystallization of a new set of images of Jaffa as a attractive and fashionable place, vis-à-vis the familiar negative images. A telling example of the exoticized urban renaissance of Jaffa was published in the local magazine Zman Tel-Aviv entitled “How did Jaffa Become Little Paris” (August 31, 2001):

Among the alleys and the walls, with an ambiance of port and pirates and a sweet and salty odor, Jaffa entertains a very lively theatre scene: How did it happen that Jaffa became little Paris? What is not provided by ideology is complemented by real-estate prices. But the result is impressive at any rate: in the past two years, Jaffa became a remarkable center for theaters. In the past few years different theatre groups have invaded there: the Gesher theaters, Notzar company, the Klippa theater, the theater club, Mayumana House, the Arab–Jewish theater and the old Hassimta theater is still alive is well. Thus behind the curtain of T.A. there are things happening on stage, which makes Jaffa a much more vibrant scene than the tiny apple.

In 2000, for a few months after the October Events, also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada Jaffa was again essentialized as a miserable, abandoned and nationalistic city. In a relatively short time however, Jaffa’s twofold image was revived as a real estate agents and political forces came together in an attempt to bring about “normalization” to the city. Through the conceptual lens of heteronomy, a spatial analysis of the image of Jaffa enables us to describe the tension between fusion and distinction, engulfment and spatial separation, which has characterized the relations between Tel-Aviv and Jaffa throughout the past century.

Second, on the plane of the urban dynamic, a survey of the spatial history since 1948 shows that different demographic, geographic and planning trends has produced in Jaffa Arab spaces within Jewish ones (e.g., the evacuation of the Jewish residents from “Ajami in the 1960s turned it, to the planners” dismay, to an Arab enclave or the growing numbers of Palestinians settling in Jerusalem Blvd. since the 1990s) and Jewish spaces within Arab ones (due to gentrification). Throughout its urban history, Jaffa saw both the systematic demolition of historical neighborhoods (the Old City and Mandsbiye) and the intensive construction of new ones on the East Side (C. Jaffa and D. Jaffa); the concerted eviction of both Jewish and Arab residents but also the institutionalized reconstruction of districts; systematic neglect and disinvestments but also affirmative action. The urban history of Jaffa points to the existence of simultaneous and contradictory processes that promote social encounters and multicultural demographics alongside national confrontation and widening class gaps. The combination of these paradoxical consequences, partly planned and partly unintended, constructs the Jaffa space as a heteronomous system that obeys no hegemonic organizing principle of ethnos, class, planning or demography.

The third plane punctuates the contradictions in the municipal policy since 1985. The founding of the “Jaffa Planning Team” and the new interest in real estate in Jaffa marked an institutional neo-liberal definition of the urban situation. This turning point signaled the establishment’s interest in an area systematically neglected since the occupation of Jaffa and the establishment of the state. Urban renewal is paradoxical for it leads, on the one hand to the influx of a young and dynamic Jewish population that might revive the city and turn it into a mixed-income and lively residential quarter; and on the other hand, it has inevitably caused the significant appreciation of real estate in ‘Ajami and Jabalye and consequently pushed many Arab inhabitants eastwards (from ‘Ajami to the Jerusalem Blvd. district a.k.a the Heart of Jaffa) due to its small-scale uneven development (Smith, 1984). Consequently, for the Arab citizens gentrification is perceived as one of the main threats that deepen the gaps between rich and poor and between Jews and Arabs in Jaffa. These gaps destabilize urban order and polarize the positions taken in the struggle over the definition of the image of Jaffa and its landscape (Montrescu, 2009a).

Thus the new policy’s internal contradictions exacerbate the problematic condition of the Palestinian community as a “double minority” excluded twice over—on the national and urban scales. These contradictions present themselves in the parallel narratives of the municipal establishment and the Arab citizens as well as in the operative logic that guides them. Collaborating on a short-term basis to achieve pragmatic goals but failing to reach a principled agreement on the image of the city and the relationship between governance and residents, each side produces linear narratives that display divergent logics: the Palestinian narrative argues for a continuous effort of Judaization, economic transfer, and “anti-Arab” ideology, driven by a geo-political conception whose goal is the transformation of the local demographic balance through the erasure of the area’s cultural features (Mazawi & Khuri-Makhul, 1991); while the establishment’s municipal narrative is driven by a professional–rational planning logic and by ideologies of development, law-enforcement, and gentrification. For the Palestinian inhabitants, projects like the “Andromeda Hill” gated community, as a radical marker of gentrification, embody the threat of Judaization (Montrescu, 2009a). Concomitantly, public housing projects like “Build Your Apartment” are perceived as part of a “patchwork” policy that fails to meet the existential needs of the Arab community. Despite the City’s declared goals—enforcement of urban order, utilization of the real estate potential, urban development, and the “strengthening” of the population—its policies create de facto a dynamic of negative migration, de-Arabization, and widening class gaps.

In sum, the City policy reflects neo-liberalism’s general paradox: on the one hand, a yearning for coexistence and a “new Middle East” marketed as “affirmative action” to the Arab population; and on the other hand, a laissez faire policy on the entrepreneurial and real-estate plane, which reproduces the socio-economic inferiority of the veteran populations. At present and in the foreseeable future, the “invisible hand of the market” under its new guise will continue to press the Arab citizens down to the bottom of the ladder of stratification and frustration. This new form of exclusion reproduces social and spatial fragmentation and adds to the already unstable ethnic and class structure of the city (see Rabinowitz, 1997; Shafir & Peled, 2000; Yiftachel & Yacobi, 2003).

3. THE CONCEPT OF SPATIAL HETERONOMY AND THE GEOGRAPHY OF DIVIDED CITIES

Ethnically mixed towns in Israel emerged, as we have noted, from the Ottoman millet system, which then evolved through the melting pot of the ethnonational conflict to become modern national configurations. In the first half of the 20th century and, more dramatically, since 1948, these cities were reconstructed as a new city-form. Bearing traces of previous existence, the mixed town is in actual fact a fragmented fusion of colonial as well as local Palestinian and Israeli urban spaces (Montrescu & Rabinowitz, 2007).

Demographic processes, geographic changes and planning policies in Jaffa created Jewish spaces within Arab ones (due to gentrification) and Palestinian spaces within Jewish ones
(due to Jewish out-migration and Palestinian eastward relocation). As a result, Jaffa’s spatial logic is characterized by an absence of clear correspondence between national-ethnic boundaries and spatial ones. This urban regime, which I propose to term “heteronomous space” can be defined as a paradoxical terrain whereby constituent parts follow divergent, sometimes mutually contradictory logics.\(^8\) Borrowed from Friedrich Meinecke’s work on medieval pre-national territoriability, which allowed for simultaneous and overlapping identifications (Meinecke, 1970), the concept of spatial heteronomy (cf. Foucault, 1986; Ruggie, 1993) captures the “anomaly” of mixed towns in relation to the ostensibly clear-cut ethnonational logic of the nation-state.

*Inter alia,* the concept revisits the geographical model of “urban ethnocentrism” mostly common in the research on contested cities (Yiftachel & Yacobi, 2003). These studies identify three “engines” that regulate urban order: capital accumulation, modern governance and the drive for ethnic and national control. However while Yacobi and Yiftachel see these processes as responsible for the increased of ethnic control, my argument is that in Jaffa the unresolved tensions between these urban mechanisms are precisely what disable the possibility of urban ethnocracy and the ability to efficiently control urban space. In this sense spatial heteromorphy points to the failure of the state to enforce in practice its nationalizing project in mixed spaces.

In light of this criticism, one must examine how ethnic spaces in other cities are administered from a global perspective. Addressing the problem of urban segregation, geographers have usefully devised means of classifying different modalities of the “urban ethnic spectrum,” from assimilation (US cities of the early 20th century) through pluralism (late 20th century Toronto), segmentation contemporary (US Black ghetto), and polarization (Jerusalem and Belfast), all the way to cleansing (Sarajevo in the early 1990s).\(^9\) Within this simplified classification, Palestinian–Israeli mixed towns would probably range between polarization (Lydda, Ramle), segmentation (Jaffa, Acre) and pluralism (Haifa), while in Lydda indices of segregation and poverty are the highest and Jaffa and Haifa, which display more varied socio-spatial patterns, with Haifa especially offering pockets of more equitable distribution of wealth and access to property, amenities, and political influence.\(^10\) Despite their importance, this functionalist models replay an analytic bias that derives form their insistence on a linear and dichotomous conceptual framework, describing stratified spaces by unidimensional concepts (segmentation vs. integration, Palestinization vs. Israelization, resistance vs. oppression). While the segregation paradigm is crucial to conducting an initial classification of cities, characterized in the model as coherent entities, they offer little insight to understand the matrix of social relations within urban spaces. To address this diachronic and synchronic variability I propose the perspective of relationality, developed by Lockman (1996) and Stein and Swedenburg (2004). Deconstructing the methodological nationalist position (Beck, 2003; Wimmer & Glick-Schiller, 2002) that operates by fixating social agents as independent oppositional actors (settlers vs. natives, colonizers vs. colonized), a relational perspective seeks to transcend the tyranny of national categories over anthropological analysis. The proposed analysis of Jewish–Arab mixed towns, while not disregarding the internal processes inherent to each community, avoids the “blind spot” of the dual society paradigm and takes the relationship between the Jewish majority and the Palestinian minority as its central object of study. Moreover, in this view the Palestinian “minority” becomes not merely a passive ethnonational group marginalized by the state but a key and active agent in the historical making of Israeli society and the Palestinian–Israeli conflict at large.

Let me briefly sum my argument about heteronomy and the spatial logic of the nation-state. Rather than taking the disjointed, essentializing, and exclusionary territorialities fetishized by states and urban governance systems in ethnonational regimes at face value, the notion of spatial heteronomy questions models premised on such dichotomies. The concept, however, suggests not a denationalization of nation-based citizenship (as some writers on globalization were suggesting) but an internal, binational challenge to it which productively employs its “contact zone” (Pratt, 1999) to create a “new geography of power” (Sassen, 1996). This new geography, far from being over-determined by national identities and state ideologies, operates through quotidian spaces of interaction, which enfold nation and class, both within and between ethnic communities.

The logic of heteronomy describes systems whereby parts are subject to divergent modes of growth, behavior and development. This reading calls to “unbundle” notions of territoriability which conflate spatial units and national units (Ruggie, 1993, p. 176). In Jaffa, spatial fragmentation is such that within an area no larger than two square kilometers one finds seven totally different forms of spatial organization: (1) Old Jaffa (a.k.a. the “Artists’ Colony”); (2) the housing projects built in the 60–70s for Jews (shikunim in Hebrew or shikumat in Arabic); (3) the Al-Nuzha/Jerusalem Boulevard mixed lower-income neighborhoods; (4) the Palestinian neighborhoods of ‘Ajami and Jabilie; (5) the new gentrified gated communities of Andromeda Hill and Jaffa Courts; (6) individual gentrifiers’ houses in ‘Ajami that are quite different from gated communities; and finally, and (7) enclaves such as Byararat Dakke and Abu-Seif, where kin-based Palestinian communities have built compounds in what remains of the old orange groves. The high density of heteronomous space is perhaps unique to Jaffa. Its principles, however, are common in other mixed towns as well.

4. THE EFFECTS OF HETE RONOMY: IDENTITY POLITICS AND PROJECTS OF NATIVIZATION

Urban heteronomy is a product of dialectic relations between society and space, which disrupt the correspondence between social boundaries and spatial divisions. On the one hand, throughout the years, social processes such as immigration, forced relocation and demographic interchange have recreated unresolved spatial facts on the ground. The entangled and implicate relations (Portugali, 1993) between the Palestinian and Jewish national movements played out in these cities as the byproduct of the conflict’s unintended consequences.\(^11\) Thus under social conditions of forced coexistence, the mixed town remained a historical binational anomaly, which points to the limits of the Judaization plan. The unique demographic make up of these cities constituted a problematic reality, which cannot be analytically exhausted by unidimensional ethnic terms. Conversely, spatial processes, such as the Urban Renewal Plan and gentrification escalated social confrontation and reproduced an unprecedented urban complexity that only exacerbates the political implications of the Jewish–Arab encounter.

Far from fostering peaceful harmony or any form of unproblematic coexistence, the main defining characteristic of the heteronomous living space is its systemic instability and incoherence. This feature of mixed towns is characteristic
of a larger systemic divisiveness in both Jewish and Palestinian societies in Israel, whose main expression is the fragmentation of the political system. Bereft of the power to impose social control and urban order, the State often views these spaces as pockets of anarchy, while for the local residents, the present situation allows no mass mobilization (as had been organized by the Communist Party until the 1980s), progressive class-coalitions or even non-factional organizing within the local communities. In the case of the Arab community, these divisions are even more fraught as it suffers from deep and quasi-anomic fragmentation on the political, organizational and social level.

Structurally, therefore, the institutional-cum-spatial force field in mixed towns is lacking a clear center of power—an instability that pushes each interest group to develop local ideologies and particularistic politics around local issues and particular identities “dissociated from anything beyond themselves” (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2001, p. 31). Thus the new Jewish residents and the Municipality emphasize the need for law-enforcement without adequate handling of the systemic failures which are the reasons for crime in the first place, while the Islamic Committee caters to the sectarian interests of the Muslim community without involving the Christian population. This breakup of forms of solidarity previously organized around progressive ideologies or party affiliation and the subsequent crystallization around particularistic identities came to be known in social theory as “identity politics” (Calhoun, 1994). In Jaffa we can identify three general identity groups which follow this pattern: the Palestinian community (which also can be divided into religious and class-based sub-groups), the new Jewish residents (called by many “new Jews” or simply “Northsiders”), and the older Jewish community (made up of working class immigrants from the Balkans and North African who immigrated in the 1950s). Each group is engaged in a different “project of nativization” that aims at constructing a discourse of rootedness and authentic “locality,” which in turn serves to legitimate their respective political agenda and identity-based claims for the city (Holston & Appadurai, 1999).

5. THE PALESTINIAN POPULATION: IDENTITY WITHOUT COMMUNITY

The organizing principle of the Palestinian population draws negatively on a deep sense of enduring discrimination and on a positive demand for civil equality coupled with an ideology of historical belonging and “original” or “indigenous” locality. Faced with the existential challenge of collective survival and politico-cultural distinction (wjudd), this discourse of rootedness has been successful and encompassing enough to overcome rampant communal divisions that would otherwise undercut any efficient political coalitions—between Muslims and Christians, between religious movements and secular ideologies, between the associations of the Islamic Council and the League for the Jaffa Arabs (Al-Rabita), and finally between the ex-communist Hadash party (The Democratic Front for Peace) and the nationalist Balad party (The National Democratic League). More than sixty years after the Nakba, it is clear that the Palestinians in Jaffa have succeeded in defining their local identity in the most stable manner. Thus for Arab migrant laborers from the Galilee or the Triangle who chose in the 1960s to settle down in Jaffa, a presentation of self and an adoption of a “Jaffan” identity became often self-evident. More significant is the total integration and enculturation of the second generation children of migrant laborers and even of “collaborators” (“umala”) from the West Bank and Gaza who come to perceive themselves as “Sons of the City” (Ibn Yafa) for every cultural and political purpose. This acceptance is possible for the city offers economic resources and employment opportunities otherwise unavailable in the Arab villages, and culturally because Jaffa is seen by its inhabitants as “Umm Al-Gharib” (the mother of the stranger), namely a city with open borders, which allows the “stranger” (labor migrants and even collaborators) to enter its gates. The politico-geographic consequence of this project of nativization is that the overwhelming majority of the 15,000 Jaffa-born Arabs express an urgent need to maintain community cohesiveness and rarely chose to reside elsewhere.12

This ideology of autochthonous belonging is accompanied by a crisis-laden discourse of nostalgia, which presents Jaffa as a fallen city licking its wounds. This double discourse of urban identity is the only site enabling a unified front of social solidarity. In all other issues pertaining to communal, sectarian and class-based politics, the Arab population remains split over funds and control between the Islamic Council on the one hand and the secular Association for the Jaffa Arabs. A local intellectual summed up this predicament, saying: “Jaffa is an identity without community. People in Jaffa are stuck—it’s a broken society that cannot pull itself together.”

A graphic expression of this collective structure of feeling was designed by the members “Young Leadership” group of activists who posted a graffiti on the main Yeffet Street (Figure 3). The scene portrays the murder of a drug addict amidst the city going up in flames, a group of women mourning over a grave, a mother holding a baby and a helpless old man. Under the headline “Violated Rights” (Huquq Mafruma), the text posted on the same wall, voices the general state of mind in Jaffa vacillating between hope and despair attests to the depth of the crisis:

Saber is a patient boy – he has dreams but has difficulty fulfilling them. He is a part of a whole that wants to move on – stuck on a wooden horse. All his life he has been trying to move on and break the barrier. Now Saber is old and holds a hammer. But he is old and does not have the force any more. He breaks the barrier and dies. And in the graveyard he finds equality – everybody is dead, everybody is together…the woman and her baby steps towards the light and the warmth, she does not forget her past but continues to march on. We too will continue to march, but we have not reached the end yet – we are still stuck.

Figure 3. A graffiti on Yefet Street displaying a murder scene of two junkies against the background of city on fire (photo by author, 2005).
6. THE VETERAN JEWISH COMMUNITY: NEITHER IDENTITY NOR COMMUNITY

Jewish presence was formed in Jaffa in a period while the city was recovering from the trauma of the 1948 war. In line with the Zionist myopia of the Palestinian presence and the Arab history of Jaffa, these Jews saw the city as an “empty shell” to be filled with communal content. A Hebrew-language guide-book to Jaffa, prepared in 1949 for potential Jewish immigrants about to settle in the town, reflects the incongruities associated with this rapid urban transformation:

The massive immigration (‘Alliah) brought about the creation in Jaffa of a Jewish settlement (Yishuv) of 50,000 or more – the largest urban community created by the current ingathering of the exiles. This New-Old Jewish city is like a sealed book – not only for most Israelis living elsewhere, but also for those living in near-by Tel-Aviv and even for many of the residents of Jaffa itself. [...] (Names of quarters and streets were revoked and changed in Israeli Jaffa to the extent that it now has a new face [...] Jaffa has already become an Israeli city but not yet a Hebrew city [...] This is not the normal process of building a new city. Here the empty shell – the houses themselves – were ready-made. What was left to be done was to bring this ghost town back to life [...]. Mysteriously, Hebrew Jaffa is nothing but the legacy of Arab Jaffa prior to May 1948.

Ambivalently viewed by the establishment in the wake of the war as disobedient squatters and as a social burden, but also as the Jewish strategic counterbalance in Arabizing Jaffa, these immigrants—numbering about 40,000 newcomers from the Balkans and North Africa—managed to create ex nihilo a lively proletarian community, which came to be known in its heyday in the 1950s and 1960s as “Little Bulgaria.” That many old-time Jewish and Arab Jaffans still express nostalgic longing for the “ideal” neighborly relations that existed before the 1948 war and during the first decades afterwards—when “we really lived together and shared the same houses”—attests not only to their naiveté and the post-traumatic political repression of the Palestinian remnants in Jaffa, but also to the denationalizing and depoliticizing power of intimate residential proximity. Beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, however, the Jewish inhabitants took advantage of the available possibility for social and spatial mobility, thus perceiving Jaffa as a temporary stop on the way to better living and housing in Bat-Yam, Holon or Tel-Aviv. The main rhetoric of this communal discourse invokes a sense of internal disintegration and the loss of control over the city for Jewish Russian and Arab residents. An old Bulgarian resident thus expresses her frustration: “Jaffa was once a Bulgarian city but what the Jews took by force, the Arabs take by money.” In contradistinction to the Palestinian residential pattern, the majority of the second and third generations of Jews in Jaffa chose to leave the city, whose communal institutions gradually disintegrated. Failing to maintain a strong discourse of rootedness, this weakening population positions its withering local identity vis-à-vis the wealthy Jewish gentrifiers and the Arab population alike. With the loss of the communal institutions in Jaffa, and in tandem to the integration of the veteran Jewish population in the larger metropolitan space of great Tel-Aviv, the “Jaffan” collective identity has been undermined and the distinction between Jaffa and South Tel-Aviv has been blurred. From the stigmatic vantage point which stereotypes Jewish Jaffans as “Southsiders,” the latter perceive the new gentrifiers as “Northsiders,” namely as agents of the well-to-do and alienated North Side.

7. THE NEW JEWISH GENTRIFIERS: COMMUNITY IN SEARCH OF IDENTITY

The third group advancing a distinct project of nativization and identity politics is represented by the gentrifiers, who began to purchase real estate in the city since the mid 80s. Consisting of predominately “bourgeois bohemians” (Bobo), this population has been driven by a neo-liberal multicultural ideology on the political level, and on the cultural-urban level by a romantic desire to return to “authentic” neighborliness in search of “high ceilings and internal space,” as one resident had it. The communal organization that represents this population is “Jaffa, Belle of the Seas,” also known as “Jaffans for Jaffa.” Composed of members of liberal professions, such as architects and journalists and school teachers, this group shifts uneasily between a clear preference for class distinction and a desire to be an integral part of the local social world. The principles followed by this group and its civilizing mission to turn Jaffa into a bourgeois space, emerge from their Hebrew-language monthly magazine (published since April 2003, see Figure 4).

Entitled significantly “My Jaffa,” the magazine features alongside the Hebrew title its translation into Arabic (Yafati), in addition to the subtitle “distributed in thousands of copies in Jaffa, Tel-Kabir, Neve-Tzedeck and Florentine” (the last two being heavily gentrified neighborhoods in South Tel-Aviv). The tension between the bilingual title and the Hebrew subtitle reflects the gentrifiers’ ambivalent effort to address the Arab audience (which includes recruiting Arab board members) on the one hand, and to secure distribution in the network of regenerated neighborhoods undergoing a similar gentrification processes in Tel-Aviv (Neve-Tzedeck, Florentine) on the other hand. This ambivalent strategy, which approaches the Jaffa Arabs (in a magazine written entirely in Hebrew) while addressing Jews in parallel fashionable neighborhoods, reflects this population’s dilemma of locality. For this reason, although they recurrently declare that they are true Jaffans and Jaffa is indeed “theirs,” they remain in a class position distinct from most of Jaffa residents and send their children to schools in Tel-Aviv. While this group is well organized a social community and an interest group (vis-à-vis the City) it remains in search of local identity which reconciles Tel-Avivan bourgeois with the authenticity of desired Jaffan locality.

Figure 4. A representation of the changing marketing strategy of the magazine “My Jaffa” (Right: April 2003 Issue and Left: April 2004 Issue).
Faced with the dwindling veteran Jewish community and the rising force of the “new Jews,” Palestinian collective action is organized around an indigenous discourse of “the right to the city,” which remains in the end of the day deeply divided. Unable to stand up to the market forces of real estate and to the gentrification plan, its position is constantly negotiated in relation to the Jewish communities in Jaffa, producing in the process circumstantial coalitions over local issues. Estranging the Palestinian natives and indigenizing the Jewish immigrants these respective projects of nativization further disrupt any unified definition of the city as either Jewish or Palestinian.

8. SOCIALITY AND STRANGENESS: IMPLICIT RELATIONS IN A CONTESTED CITY

While the political analysis of uneven development and power relations between Palestinians and Jews tends to reify the notions of ethnic communities, an ethnographic gaze reveals the implicated nature of interethic relations. The fragmented composition of the Palestinian and Jewish communities in Jaffa, the embedded existence of mixed neighborhoods, and the fact that neighbors, employer or employee can just as well be Jewish or Palestinian, problematize the politiciized dichotomous distinctions between “us” and “them,” “here” and “there,” familiarity and otherness. In his Modernity and Ambivalence (1991, p. 60) Zygmunt Bauman frames this blurring of distinctions within Simmel’s theory of strangeness:

There are friends and enemies. And there are strangers. The stranger disturbs the resonance between physical and psychical distance: he is physically close while remaining spiritually remote. He represents an incongruous and hence resented synthesis of nearness and remoteness.

National minorities and cultural “strangers” are first and foremost products of the modern state’s exclusionary logic, which is predicated on the perpetuation of collective alterities (Isin, 2002). For the Palestinian citizens of Israel this logic corners them as a “trapped minority” between the Israeli state and the Palestinian nation (Rabinowitz, 2001). Following this line of argument, “strangeness” can be understood as a conceptual borderland between communities, categories, and cultures, and Jaffa—as a space that produces and inhabits instances of “strangeness.” This notwithstanding, strangeness cannot be reduced to being a product of a classification principle of the nation-state with respect to a national minority. Rather, in Jaffa it functions as the basis for social interaction and transaction. In other words, the relationship underlying “sociation” in Jaffa is neither one of friendship, nor of enmity, but a complicated synthesis of both (Simmel, 1955).

The designation of Palestinians in Jaffa as a collectivity of strangers enables us to understand daily phenomena and paradoxes that are otherwise obscured by “methodological nationalism.” A central expression of the ambivalence of strangeness in Jaffa presents itself in accounts of elderly Palestinians who have personally experienced the Nakba, and who in its aftermath found themselves as close neighbors of new Jewish residents in town. These stories are at the same time narratives of identification and of othering, thus offering a clear view of the unintended consequences of urban nationalism.

In the chaos that characterized Jaffa immediately after the war and well into the 1950s, Arab and Jewish families often ended up squatting together in luxurious pre-war Palestinian houses, now haphazardly chopped up into small flats. Rivals on ethnonational grounds but struggling with common economic hardships, these families were often forced to share kitchens, bathrooms and other facilities. Significantly, notwithstanding the existential difficulties, this period is nostalgically evoked by Jaffa’s veterans as a period of a joint Arab-Jewish struggle for survival, complete with class solidarities of sorts. The hardships of the 1950s and 1960s thus created social proximity and an a-political cover of fraternity, which often conceals the asymmetry in power between the two communities. In a similar vein, life stories told by elderly Palestinians are often realistic and disillusioned, at times even cynical, combining bitterness over the outcomes of the 1948 war with recognition of the advantages granted to aged persons by the (Israeli) welfare system.

A series of life-story interviews I conducted in recent years brings out the complexity and ambivalence of these narratives. One particularly illuminating and paradoxical story is that of Subhiyye Abu Ramadan. Subhiyye was born in Tel al-Reesh—a village just east of Greater Jaffa which after 1948 became part of the new Jewish neighborhood Tel-Giborim, within the Municipality of the new town Holon. Subhiyye belonged to a poor family which leased land from the famous Jerusalemite Khalidi family, growing vegetables on their farm in Jaffa’s market. Her narrative begins with an account of what happened in April 1948, as the frontline closed on Tel al-Reesh:

There was a lot of fighting going on. The bullets got even to our house. All the neighbors left (Rahalu). No one stayed fearing the shootings. And then we moved to the Coptic Monastery in Jaffa. The rich people left the city earlier. Those who remained were only the poor. We used to grow vegetables and we had no money so we stayed and we came to Jaffa. My father is crazy, had he stayed in Tel Al-Reesh, the house would still be ours today…the Jews would never drive us out— at the time, there was no Amidar [the governmental housing company] nor the Custodian of Absentee Property. We could have entered any house we wanted – including the houses of the rich. But my crazy father decided to settle in the orange grove near the Coptic Monastery. The houses were empty and the Jews didn’t ask for a “Kushan” [certificate of land ownership] – they only conducted a census and registered us. Abu Laban’s fancy green house became a military base. We were left with nothing because my father was a coward. He was afraid to squat a new house – in the end he was left with no honor and no land (La ‘Ard wa-la Ard).

Subhiyye, who was 14 years old at the time, was soon forced by her family to marry a cousin:

When the Jews entered Jaffa, everyone talked about Deir Yassin. They corrupted the girls (khurabu el-banat) and killed the men in Deir Yassin. In Jaffa they filled a vehicle with naked women (Mshalain) and drove around ‘Ajami to scare the people. That is why many girls who were married, so the Jews won’t corrupt them. I got married during the war with no wedding ceremony. We were afraid of the Jews so we just signed the marriage contract.

In the years which followed Subhiyye and her family found themselves living in proximity to Jewish immigrants. Her memory of that time is counter-intuitive:

After the wedding my husband and I moved to live in ‘Ajami – we found an empty house and we entered. In ‘Ajami we lived in the same house with Jews. My door was here, and theirs was there. The kids grew up together. We used to cook together and eat together. And ever since the Jews moved in, we remained friends with them. The (Palestinian) landlords of the house and those who had owned the orange grove had left. And with the Jews who came we had no quarrel. Then the Jews left ‘Ajami and bought better houses in Rishon or Bat-Yam. Since that time place, the Arabs who remained are constantly fighting with each other (bitqatalu): this one curses the other, the other hits him… Arabs together are no good. Arabs and Jews together get along [the word Subhiyye used here was Mistadrim, a Hebrew word].

Subhiyye’s uncompromising position did not pass over other facets of the Palestinian nationalist doxa. To the
astonishment of her nephew, who was present at the interview, and to the fury of her daughter who called and argued with her. Subhiyye kept on dismantling the nationalist discourse as she numbered the merits of the welfare state and cast her arrows of criticism at the Arab “tyrants.” Ultimately she even discredited the most legitimized claim for the “Right of Return”:

The Palestinians who left Jaffa don’t deserve to come back here. I’ll tell you why! [...] The Arabs let us to be humiliated (lo-bahadalo), and Thank God we weren’t humiliated. How is it that we weren’t killed?

When Gaza opened in ’67 they started to covet what we have here. Before the Jews came, what were we? We lived like dogs! If I’d left, I’d be dead.

Subhiyye, who has since been widowed, remarried and widowed again, has had 11 children. She spent 20 years of her life in Lydda, in a smaller and even more impoverished residual Palestinian community some 20 miles east of Jaffa. More recently she moved back to Jaffa, where she now lives on her own in an apartment she owns, supported by an old-age pension from the state. Recently, after years of meticulous savings, she managed to fund her own pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj), which further adds to her sense of empowerment and independence. Her perspective on the welfare state is reflective of this proud personal position:

One of my sons is in prison now, he has six children, and they get an allowance from the state. They eat and drink and dress better than when he was working. In the days of the Arabs and the English old women were barely getting any charity – today old women do not need to work or to beg and are not dependent on their children.

Subhiyye’s story offers a gendered insight into the relations between the political upheavals and patriarchal oppression, as well as into the impact of the Israeli welfare state in the lives of independent women struggling to keep their families together. Her critique of the unyielding patriarchal order that barred her and poor young women like herself from an education is sobering. She has not forgiven her father and her brother for forcing her into an unwanted, premature marriage at 14, and towards the patronizing middle and upper classes. Her account thus gives voice to a non-hegemonic Palestinian narrative, representing an uneducated underclass which refuses to idealize its pre-48 condition, insisting on a sense of betrayal from both the Arab states which failed to come to their rescue and the Palestinian families which failed to live in solidarity which each other. Her position reflects multiple strangeness and structural inferiority, deep frustration and lack of nostalgia to Ayyam Al-‘Arab (“the days of the Arabs”) in pre-48 Palestine, revealing an unfamiliar and often silenced facet in the intra-Palestinian discourse on and within Jaffa.

Some might dismiss Subhiyye’s account as a narrative of betrayal and collaboration or as an unrepresentative story of an old woman whose age got the better of her. Thus Swedenburg’s study of the memories of Palestinian combatants in the Great Revolt (al-thawra al-kubra) of 1936–39 interprets this type of narratives as “collaborationist,” “accommodationist” rhetoric, which “repeat well-known Zionist ideologies,” and “cave in to Zionist pressure” (Swedenburg, 1995, p. 139).

My concern here, however, goes beyond these initial dichotomies. Instead, I contend, anthropological analysis should seek to uncover the particular conditions of possibility of the social field in Jaffa that are producing such counter-intuitive and often paradoxical discourses.

These narratives, I argue, reflect a complex perception of identity in terms of both the Palestinian “self” and the Jewish immigrant “other” (compare, Bishara, 1992). As such, they express an ambivalent subject position (Bhabha, 1994): subordi-

9. CONCLUSIONS: LOST IN TRANSLATION: MIXED TOWNS BETWEEN MEDIATION AND TRANSACTION

The scholarly and political discourse around ethnically mixed towns in Israel/Palestine is predicated on the tropes of indigenousness and immigration and their respective claims for territorial legitimacy and ownership (Kimmerling, 2004). Reproducing reified notions of ethnonational communities in a state of chronic conflict, methodologically nationalist scholarship has laid the basis for the model of the “dual society” (cf. Shamir, 2000), which posits the existence of two essentially separate societies with distinct and disconnected historical trajectories. As relational historian Lockman argues (1996, p. 12):

The Arab and Jewish communities in Palestine are represented as pri-mordial, self-contained, and largely monolithic entities. By extension communal identities are regarded as natural rather than as constructed within a larger fields of relations and forces that differentially affected (and even constituted) subgroups among both Arabs and Jews… This approach has rendered their mutually constitutive impact virtually invisible, tended to downplay intracommunal divisions, and focused attention on episodes of violent conflict, implicitly assumed to be the sole normal or even possible form of interaction.

Unpacking the implications of these claims, this paper seeks to link social and spatial processes, which are constitutive of interethnic relations in Jaffa. Focusing on socio-spatial relations, my argument has been that an indeterminate dialectic cycle exists which relates social to spatial processes and vice versa. Spatial heteronomy therefore enables social fragmentation, and sectarian identity politics constitutes heteronomy. One theoretical vector from the social to the spatial begins with the mutually constitutive relations between the Israeli and the Palestinian national movements. Following historian Lockman (1996) and geographer Portugalii (1993) I maintain that the two groups and their identities were constituted in a series of dialectic oppositions and homologies which not only opposed each other, but at the same time...
dialiectically created each other, in dynamic but constantly asymmetrical relations of power. As inter-group relations play out on the ground, the mitigating factors associated with demographic intermixing and the blurring of ostensibly essentialist images corrupt any possibility for mono-nationalist definitions of the urban situation. These processes, compounded by unresolved ethnic relations, economic tensions and public policies produce the cultural and political urban regime I call “spatial heteronomy.” Proceeding from the other end of the dialectic, I argue that spatial heteronomy produces a sociality of stranger relations. The combination of demographic interpermeation, unintended consequences of municipal policies, systemic spatial fragmentation and the failure on the part of national definitions to define the full span of urban situations, corrupts the correspondence between spatial boundaries (that would delimit neighborhoods) and social boundaries (of a certain class or ethnicity). Thus, rather than inhabiting segregated social worlds, spatial proximity keeps strangers, aliens and allies, within which Alfred Schutz termed the “horizon of relevance” (Schutz, 1971)—a twilight zone of borderline sociality whereby nobody is truly friend or enemy (Simmel 1971).

Jaffa presents two axes of self-defeating dialectic mediation between the city and the state. One is vertical, mediating local, national and transnational/diasporic strategies of mobilization and identification. The other, horizontal axis, illuminates the reciprocal workings of nationalism and class-based forces. Looking at the vertical axis first, we see that while the ideal typical model of the European nation-state and the logic of nationalism had evolved in a structure of symbolic amplification (Sahlins, 2005), predicated on the nationalizing of the local and the localizing of the national and the increasing differentiation of national cultures and spaces (Sahlins, 1989), cases such as Jaffa, where contradictions between the national and the local are anything but resolved, profoundly challenge this complementarity. Having failed to mobilize support from the Palestinian Authority or, for that matter, from others in the Arab World, Palestinians in Jaffa are too deeply implicated with Israel and its institutions to aspire for a meaningful autonomous Palestinian assertion of the collective self. Community organizing, cultural practices and political behavior remain fragmented, exemplifying a complex, synchronic dialectic of schismogenesis and homology (Bateson, 1972).

As for the horizontal axis, the mediation between nation and class is best exemplified in action and reaction surrounding gentrification. From a methodological nationalist perspective, one might have expected a natural coalition between Jewish residents in Jaffa on account of their shared national-religious identity. In reality, however, a deep (and deepening) social and ideological division is apparent between Jewish residents, which clearly stems from class and intra-Israeli ethnic cleavages. One counter-intuitive result of this is that the residents’ association representing most Jewish gentrifiers turns to the Palestinian community leaders for cooperation (only to find that there as well their Ashkenazi and middle-class characteristics set them apart).

Engendering particularistic sectarian identity politics, spatial heteronomy produces a social field whereby no single governing principle determines the formation of coherent political or civil coalitions. Trapped in diverging projects of nativization, ad-hoc coalitions between the wealthy and the poor, the Israelis and the Palestinians, private entrepreneurs and public sector are situational, and seldom congruent with the ethnonational logic of the state.14

My point in this essay has been to suggest that while urban social theory, with Lefebvre (1991, p. 101), has defined the specificity of the city as “a mediation among mediations”—containing the near order and contained in the far order—certain types of cities, pace Lefebvre, disrupt such mediation and assume their identity by the act of disrupting. In the Israeli-Palestinian contested terrain, when vertical governmental superimposition between city, state and nation fails, the organizing logic which governs social relations in the mixed town gives rise to a regime of pragmatic transaction and symbolic exchange among entrepreneurs, state officials, and common residents, Jews and Arabs. In everyday life, for women like Subhiyye, this crisis of representation dissipates a nationalist definition of the urban situation and enables her to open the cultural “tool kit” of nationalism and modify its hegemonic repertoire—its scripts, practices, and subjectivities (Alexander, 2004; Swidler, 1986). Cultural strangeness thus inhabits the incongruent and heteronomous space between a regime of mediation and a regime of exchange. In Jaffa, where social control over collective identity is relatively weak, mediation works in inverse proportion to transaction. This article has identified Jewish–Arab mixed towns as an understudied and distinct phenomenon in Middle-Eastern history and urban anthropology. Within this framework, it posits mixed towns as a challenge to the hegemonic ethnonationalist guiding principles of the Israeli state, which fails to maintain homogeneous, segregated and ethnically-stable spaces. This failure, I argue, results in the parallel existence of heteronomous spaces in these towns which operate through multiple and often contradictory logics of space, class and nation. Analyzed relationally, these spaces produce peculiar forms of quotidian social relations between Palestinians and Israelis, engendering counter-hegemonic local narratives that challenge both Palestinian and Jewish nationalisms.

Such processes have largely gone unnoticed in studies of Israel/Palestine, a field dominated by “methodological nationalism” and its tendency to equate the nation-state with society and political culture. Perceiving relations between Palestinians and Israelis as a zero-sum game, this paradigm often loses sight of processes of mutual determination continuously at play between Palestinian and Jewish communities, as well as the political cultures and the urban spaces they occupy. Acknowledging these interstitial processes and their counter-hegemonic potential by no means ignores the oppressive power of the Jewish State and (Palestinian) resistance to it. It does however give voice and visibility to the productive negotiation of cultural identities and social worlds even at the core of one of the region’s most violent conflicts.

NOTES

1. The status of East Jerusalem is perhaps the strongest case for distinguishing the divided city from the ethnically mixed town. In addition to the explicit project of Judaization, which is more implicit in mixed towns, post-1967 Jerusalemites are not Israeli citizens but merely permanent residents. The unabashed state violence Palestinians encounter on a daily basis dissuade even the most optimistic activists and analysts from any wishful thinking of equal footing and interaction.

3. See, Yoav Schtern’s article (Ha'aretz, 30/11/2006). “The Mayor of Ramle apologized for what he said against the Arabs.”

4. The Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem, as well as segments of Middle Eastern cities still recognized as “Jewish Quarter” (Harat al-Yahud) are relics of this regulated urban pattern.

5. The notion of Tel-Aviv as Jaffa’s modern “daughter” is central to the Zionist discourse on the city. See the article in ‘Al Ha-Mishmar (October 21, 1949) entitled “Tel-Aviv and Only Tel-Aviv”: “What is Tel-Aviv to us? 40 years ago, on a sand hill south of the past-laden city of Jaffa, a daughter-neighborhood was born, a new branch of an old tree. This branch soon grew and developed into a magnificent fully-blown tree, a mother city in Israel (‘Ir va-Em).”

6. The examples are plentiful and varied: this was the case with the relocation of Jewish immigrants in Jaffa after 1948 (Golan, 2001), thus it was in the evacuation policy of Jews to the housing projects in the 1960s which reconstituted ‘Ajami as an Arab space. This was also the case with the urban renewal policy of the 1960–70s, which demolished the existing infrastructure but provided no new one, and finally also with the gentrification project that does not take into account the urban poor and the political implications of Palestinian exclusion.

7. Concomitant with Jewish gentrification of ‘Ajami and Jabalye, the eastern Jerusalem Blvd. district has been transforming since the 1980s to a mixed neighborhood, and presently half of the population consists of Arab citizens.

8. For Kant, heteronomy is the opposite of autonomy. Whereas an autonomous person is one whose will is self-determined, a heteronomous person is one whose will is determined by something outside of the person, such as overwhelming emotions. Etymologically, heteronomy goes back to the Greek words for “other” and “law.” Focusing on the problem of social and spatial order, I maintain that heteronomy should be distinguished theoretically from Foucault’s concept of heterotopia, “of effectively realized utopia […] a sort of place that lies outside all places and yet is actually localizable” (1986), such as cemeteries, fairgrounds, gardens and ships. This section and the concept of heteronomy draw substantially on Ruggie’s genealogy of state borders and space in modernity (1993).

9. Geographer Boal (1999) devised a classification system for the study of ethnically mixed cities which he designated the “Scenarios Approach,” where a scenario is defined as an imagined set of ethnic circumstances in a particular city.

10. The main case study for Yiftachel and Yacobi’s analysis, Lydda/Lod is indeed the paradigmatic case of urban ethnocentrism with high segregation rates and a radically disempowered Palestinian community subject to concerted attempts of Judaization. Jaffa however has only one third of its 20,000 strong Arab population living in a predominantly Palestinian quarter (‘Ajami), while another third lives in the mixed area of Jerusalem Blvd. The rest is scattered in the eastern part of the city (Tel-Aviv Municipality Statistical Bureau, 2006). Finally, Haifa, which entertains a predominantly well-off Christian population, became the home for an emerging urban middle class of liberal Palestinians who settle in previously Jewish-dominated neighborhoods and thus display a third residential pattern. See Falah, Hoy, and Sarker (2000).

11. The term “implicate” denotes “enfolded inward” (Portugali, 1993, p. xiii), suggesting the enfolding or imploding of neighboring societies and the territories which they inhabit into each other. This notion suggests that the histories of Israelis and Palestinians, as societies and individuals, are not definable and cannot be understood independently of each other (1993, p. 39).

12. An additional reason for the extremely low rate of Arab out-migration is the prevailing sense of rejection on the part of the Jewish majority in Tel-Aviv and neighboring towns.

13. The term “strangeness” draws on a rich sociological and philosophical tradition. Beginning with Simmel’s famous short essay “Der Fremde” (1908) where it is conceptualized to describe an individual “social type” which exhibits a “distinctive blend of closeness and remoteness, inside and outside” (Simmel [1908], 1971, p. 149), through Schutz’s phenomenological elaboration (1964), it was further developed by Bauman (1991) and Beck (1996), who generalized the concept to theorize a collective cultural condition that is symptomatic of “high” modernity. The current analysis reframes strangeness from a relational perspective in the context of urban nationalism and colonial encounters.

14. The Andromeda Hill gated community, for one example (see www.andromeda.co.il), was facilitated through an ad-hoc coalition between elements in the Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate (who owned the land and were eager to sell some for a profit), a Jewish-Canadian entrepreneur and Tel-Aviv’s municipality, all joining forces at the expense of the weak Palestinian community (see Monterescu, 2009a).

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