

# IDEOLOGY AND EVENTS IN ISRAELI HUMAN LANDSCAPES: REVISITED<sup>i</sup>

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## *Background*

Over 40 years ago, not long after I had arrived in Israel, Donald Meinig, an eminent American historical and cultural geographer, presented a lecture in the Department of Geography at the University of Haifa. In his presentation, Meinig sketched three symbolic landscapes, which he portrayed as models of American community.<sup>ii</sup>

These landscapes, he explained, were part of the iconography of nationhood, part of a shared set of ideas and memories and feelings that bind people together. However, he observed that whereas the existence of such landscapes seemed clear, they were no more than images; what is more, they were fraught with nuances and different expressions which appear at various levels of social consciousness. In doing this, Meinig was using an approach adopted by the historian Daniel Boorstin in his three-volume classic *The Americans*, in which he sketched the social history of the American experience in 163 chapters contained within 31 sections, almost all of which can be read as stand-alone pieces.<sup>iii</sup>

Even though Meinig identified other symbolic American landscapes, the three he chose to elaborate on were the New England village, Main Street of Middle America and California Suburbia. His rationalization for this choice was that, with reference to idealized communities for family life, these three were the most influential at the national level. In addition, though each was based on an actual landscape of a particular region, all derived from national experience. Each of these idealized landscapes had been simplified, beautified, and widely advertised, becoming in the process a commonly understood symbol, contributing to the shaping of the American scene over wider areas.

Meinig was a scholar of stature with an awe-inspiring reputation and he had an absorbing lecturing style. I was a young man at the start of my academic career and his presentation was pretty persuasive. Put very simply, I had been captivated and won over, so much so that I thought that his idea of symbolic landscapes could easily be applied to the Israeli scene. More than this, I thought it should be.

For me, the timing of this event could not have been more apt. Prior to my arrival, I had steeped myself in literature about Israel and even though

the corpus of material had been almost entirely in English, I thought I understood some things. Eighteen months after arriving as a new immigrant, it was beginning to seem to me that there was a considerable gap between the Israel I thought I had come to know and the one I was experiencing. This jarred. Increasingly, the Israel based on what I had read from the literature both of academic articles published by my erstwhile colleagues in social sciences (especially geography and planning) and the serious pseudo-academic material published by quangos such as the Jewish Agency or the Jewish National Fund, seemed to be highly idealized. (And sometimes it was difficult to ascertain who were the real academics and who the quasi-scholars!)

So, after some thought, I decided to adopt Meinig's model. I had no qualms about using it — after all, they say that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. I gave some thought to what would comprise my idealized Israeli landscapes and set out to describe and explain three elements of the contemporary (1974) Israeli landscape that appeared to me to have achieved mythical proportions. Popularization of idealized images had constructed a caricature of Israeli culture and society and its human landscapes. Israelis were parodied as being a group of paramilitary pioneering immigrants, simultaneously engaged in protecting the borders from enemies whilst reclaiming desert wastes, all in a spirit of an egalitarian and ascetic socialism. Even so, one had to admit that this caricature contained some real-life elements.

I started to write the article some time in 1974. Although at just over 4,000 words without the footnotes, it's a short piece, it took me over a year to complete. I was conscious of the fact that I needed to choose my words very carefully and to say a lot in as few words as possible — which I later learned is part of the art of writing articles. Initially, I had not thought out the conclusions; this was the hardest part of all because I discovered that what I wanted to say wasn't strictly geography — or at least geography as most people seemed to understand it in the mid-1970s.

There wasn't all that much to make use of; the roles of perception and subjectivity in appreciating the environment were not yet widespread among geographers. We need to be aware of this when reviewing something written four decades ago. At the time, there was the 1947 AAG presidential address by John K. Wright on imagination in geography<sup>iv</sup> and David Lowenthal's wonderful pioneering paper on experience and imagination in geography, which had appeared in 1961 almost 20 years before its time.<sup>v</sup>

There was also Wreford Watson's little piece on myth in American landscapes<sup>vi</sup> and Yi-Fu Tuan's *Topophilia*,<sup>vii</sup> which had appeared around the time as I was writing this paper so I was able to use both. Both

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Relph's *Place and Placelessness*<sup>viii</sup> and the essays edited by Lowenthal and Martyn Bowden<sup>ix</sup> came out while I was waiting to hear if my article would be published but I didn't read them until it had been accepted for publication. And Peirce Lewis's brilliant essay on landscapes<sup>x</sup> was only published in the book in which the published version of Meinig's seminar paper appeared, in 1979 and although Grady Clay had been publishing for years, he was beneath my horizon.<sup>xi</sup> I had also read Roland Barthes' essays on myths<sup>xii</sup>, but because in 1975 nobody had suggested to me that they might be relevant to a geographer, I wasn't quite sure what to make of them.

In Israeli geography, divided among quantitative positivists, applied geographers, and historical geographers, there was nobody I knew at the time with whom I could discuss my ideas. Anyway, I was a new immigrant and as Israeli geography has always been less friendly to outsiders than most other disciplines, I was very much working in the dark and on my own.

The article took nearly two and a half years to find an outlet and was published about four years after I wrote it. This was partly because referees were lax and there was a one-year wait for a decision from each of the first two journals I sent it to and partly because (in retrospect, naïvely) I didn't want to change a single word of what I'd written.<sup>xiii</sup> It was eventually published in *Geography*, a journal published by The Geographical Association, the professional association of British secondary school geography teachers.<sup>xiv</sup> This was not perhaps the most prestigious of outlets but a good journal nonetheless. And although I knew that some people would read it (and they did!) I have little doubt that the vast majority of my Israeli peers never saw it and had they come across it at the time, they might not have then quite grasped what I was trying to say.

What follows is the entire original article, followed by a short discussion of the changes in the intervening four decades.

## WATERMAN

Ideology and Events in Israeli Human Landscapes, by Stanley Waterman, first published in  
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### *Abstract*

As a consequence of the role played by agricultural pioneering in peripheral areas of Jewish settlement in Israel prior to 1948, a mythical landscape has evolved in which small development towns and collective villages transform a desert environment. In reality, the majority of the population lives in the three metropolitan areas of Tel-Aviv, Haifa and Jerusalem, the collective village is no longer dominant numerically nor is it a Pioneering agricultural settlement and the call to make the desert bloom no longer serves as a rallying cry for Israeli society. Because of the ethnocentric beliefs in the uniqueness of Israel's achievements and destiny, the reality has been slow in gaining recognition both within Israel and outside, with negative consequences for Israel's development.

*“... Now, more than ever before, we need a strong and devoted pioneering force. The desert area of our land is calling us and the destruction of our people is crying out to us. ... The tasks that lie ahead will require pioneering efforts the likes of which we have never known, for we must conquer and fructify the waste-places (in the mountains of Galilee, the plains of the Negev, the valley of the Jordan, the sand dunes of the sea- shore, the mountains of Judea) and we must prepare for new immigrants.”*<sup>1</sup>

### *Introduction*

The Zionist settlement in Israel during the past century has brought about remarkable changes in the landscape, probably the most drastic to have taken place in the long history of the region. This is particularly true of the last 30 years since the foundation of the State of Israel. Moreover, many of these changes and the processes that brought them about have been documented so that it should be possible to build up a detailed picture of what has taken place.<sup>2</sup> So important has the past been in guiding the emerging Israeli society that the most common framework for presenting Israeli culture, society and human environments is a variant of a model developed early in the history of the State as a goal for the development of Israel. This presents a basic image of an agrarian, pioneering Israel.

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Since 1948, three major processes have been changing Israeli society, all of which have been presented in an idealized manner. Immigration, which yielded a population different from, unsuited to the promotion and ignorant of the ideals of the majority of the preceding period, is most often presented simply as an “ingathering of exiles”. Urbanization and industrialization, which gave rise to factors opposed to the ideals of the rural-based agrarian elite of the pre-State period, have been treated respectively as a continuation of pioneering and hardly at all.<sup>3</sup>

These images of Israeli society and its expression on the landscape result from the passage of information through filters, many of which were designed to project or transmit such idealized images to specific populations. Some filters, such as government publications and news media, overtly project distorted images; others, such as social science literature, are more subtle and intangible, often the result of unsuspected personal bias based on individual human experience or beliefs.<sup>4</sup>

Popularization of ideal images has constructed a caricature of Israeli culture, society and landscapes in which Israelis are drawn as a group of paramilitary pioneering immigrant people, simultaneously engaged in protecting its borders whilst reclaiming desert wastes in an egalitarian spirit of ascetic socialism.<sup>5</sup> Three landscape elements are contained in this caricature, each reflecting an aspect of the goals for Israeli development set at the beginning of statehood. The beliefs emanating from these can be crudely, but explicitly stated as follows:

- (1) Population dispersal has succeeded and large populations reside in peripheral regions. Inhabitants of agricultural border settlements and peripheral development towns are pioneers.
- (2) The *kibbutz* (collective) is the most important form of rural settlement.
- (3) Seventy years of pioneering have “made the desert bloom” into an irrigated paradise.

This paper seeks to examine some of the inaccuracies contained in these beliefs.

### *Population Dispersal*

Israel is a highly urbanized, metropolitan, country. In 1978, over 85 per cent of the population of Israel (90 per cent of the Jews) lived in urban places.<sup>6</sup> This situation will probably intensify as most immigrants settle in towns, rural to urban migration continues and rural settlements officially change their status on reaching specific size and as their functions

change.<sup>7</sup> There is nothing inherently surprising about the fact that Israel is one of the world's most highly urbanized countries. However, Israeli ideology and settlement policies since the beginning of the century have been decidedly anti-urban. Manual labour, a pioneering spirit and a "return to the soil" through agriculture, the traditional ideology of Labour Zionism, have formed the motor for the driving forces of society.<sup>8</sup>

In 1948, Israel had a "typically colonial" settlement system, overweighted towards large urban centres.<sup>9</sup> Forty-nine per cent of the population lived in the cities of Tel-Aviv, Haifa or Jerusalem, which together accounted for 58 per cent of the Jewish population. There were several smaller towns, only one of which had over 20 000 inhabitants, with over 500 rural settlements at the bottom of the hierarchy. To normalize the system by inserting settlements intermediate in size between the major cities and the smaller settlements, the policy of population dispersal was initiated. Other factors were also involved in the promotion of this policy. There was the pragmatic necessity of checking the expected large-scale urban growth in the Tel-Aviv area which contains excellent agricultural land and in much of which, in contrast to the rest of Israel, land is privately owned and thus liable to speculation.<sup>10</sup>

Additional demands for instituting the population dispersal policy arose from the needs of security, politics and ideology. Israel had to protect its border areas, indicate its readiness to settle areas under its sovereignty and to continue to promote pioneering.<sup>11</sup> The "New Towns Programme" formed the means by which this strategy was to be carried out. Planned urban centres, especially in the arid South and non-Jewish North, were to absorb the new immigrants thereby dispersing the population and providing services for established and newly founded rural settlements.<sup>12</sup> Ideologically, it was hoped that the New Towns would possess and retain a pioneering spirit, which would provide new immigrants with motivation and prove capable of drawing established Israelis from the large cities which were anathema to the ideology of Labour Zionism.<sup>13</sup> Geographically, this directed emphasis from the core to the periphery of the settled area.

The literature generally suggests that these policies have been successful. Data are usually presented in support of this view. By the late 1970s, New Town population exceeded half a million (approximately 17 per cent of Israel's population). On the other hand, the combined population of the cities of Tel-Aviv, Haifa and Jerusalem was about 950,000, some 26 per cent of the total population and a proportion approximately half of that of 1948 (Table).

But the statistics are misleading. The greatest absolute growth has taken place around the major cities, especially Tel-Aviv. By 1978, four

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cities in the Tel-Aviv region each had a larger population than Beersheba, by far the largest development town; four others were larger than the second development town, Ashdod (Fig. 1).

The combined population of the three major urban areas is between 1.7 and 2.2 millions (depending on Metropolitan definitions).<sup>14</sup> This is double the population of the combined central cities and proportionally seems to represent little change from 1948 (Table) but, in fact, it marks a deterioration, since then because of the amalgamation of small, relatively isolated settlements into an integrated urban system. This process in the Tel-Aviv area and to a lesser extent in Haifa (paralleled by the politically motivated push to develop a reunited Jerusalem as Israel's capital) has been the opposite of the centre points of planning objectives, representing a strengthening of the core (Fig. 2).

*Table*  
POPULATION OF METROPOLITAN AREAS IN 1948 AND 1977 IN THOUSANDS  
(Metropolitan areas defined by 1977 figures)

	Year	
	1948	1977
Total population of Israel	873	3653
Total Metropolitan population	582	2201
Tel-Aviv	381	1420
Inner ring	331	1030
Outer ring	50	390
Haifa	117	405
Inner ring	102	254
Outer ring	15	151
Jerusalem	84	376
Metropolitan population as percentage of total population	66	60
<b>Tel-Aviv</b>		
Inner ring:	Tel-Aviv, Ramat-Gan, Holon, Bat Yam, Petah Tiqva, Bnei Brak, Givatayim, Herzliyya, Qiryat Ono	
Outer ring:	Rishon-le-Zion, Rehovot, Ramat HaSharon, Raanana, Ramle, Lod, Natanya, Kfar Saba	
<b>Haifa</b>		
Inner ring:	Haifa, Nesher, Tirat HaCarmel	
Outer ring:	Qiryat Bialik, Qiryat Yam, Qiryat Motzkin, Qiryat Ata, Qiryat Tivon, Acre	

SOURCE: *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, vol. 29, 1978, p. 29.

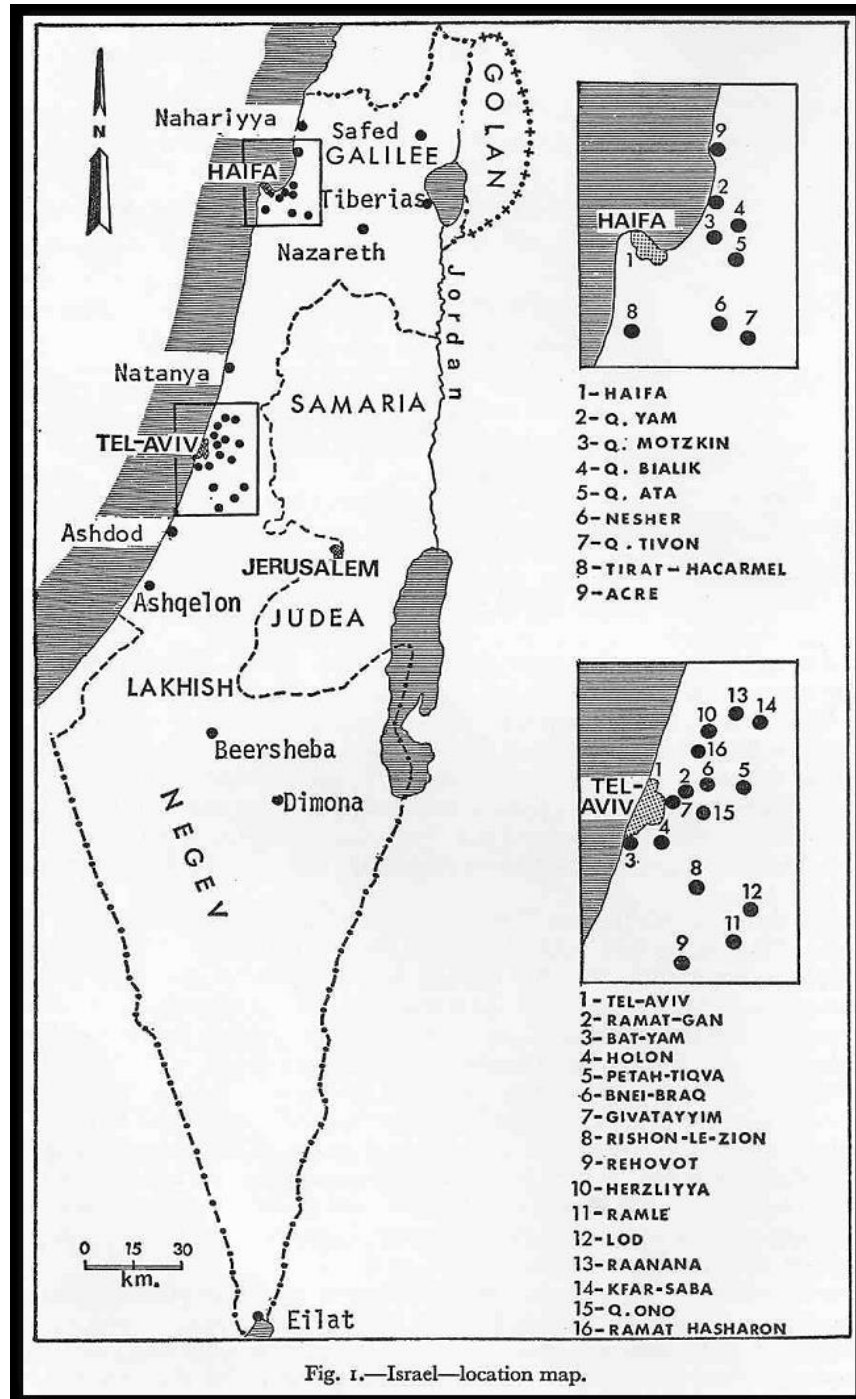


Fig. 1.—Israel—location map.



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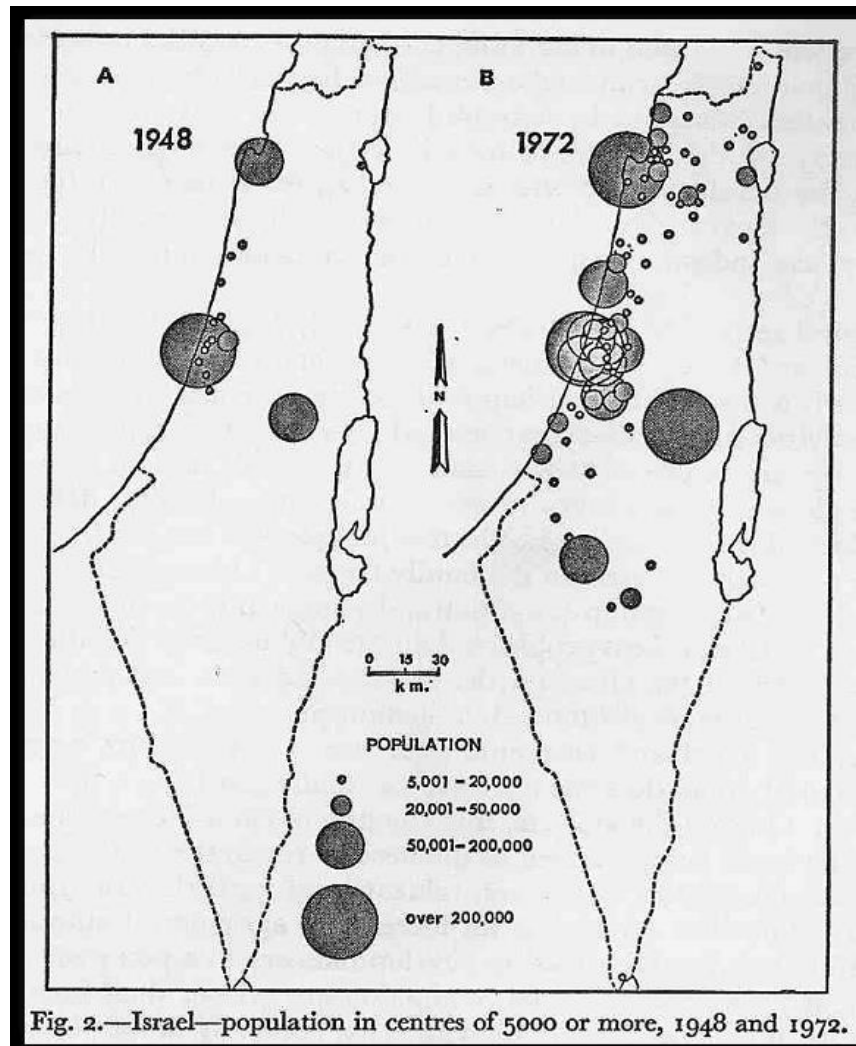


Fig. 2.—Israel—population in centres of 5000 or more, 1948 and 1972.

In this light, the effect of the New Towns on national population distribution is not as it seemed at first. Though the New Towns help in facilitating population dispersal as demanded by national plans, the overall effect has been to stem the relative numerical growth of the metropolitan areas. That this has been the major, though not inconsiderable, achievement of the population dispersal policy and the New Towns Programme has been admitted.<sup>15</sup>

Most of the inhabitants of the New Towns are immigrants drawn from the Sephardic and Oriental communities and occupy a lower social and economic rank than the general population. As a result of the gap between “core” and “periphery”, population turnover has been high and might have been higher had the potential migrants sufficient funds to utilize in their choice of residence.<sup>16</sup> Lack of urban amenities sufficient to retain or attract large numbers, a result of the Zionist bias against the city, and proximity to larger cities, reflecting Israel’s small size and efficient transportation system, has also contributed to the relatively poor success rate of many New Towns.<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, Israeli governments have been unwilling or unable to control urban developments in the central Coastal Plain, even tracts of state- controlled land having been released for urban improvements. Perhaps because the Labour governments that ruled Israel until 1977 did not appreciate or care about the dangers of uncontrolled metropolitan growth or were reluctant to encroach upon alien territory, it is not surprising that little positive was done to prevent large-scale urban developments in that region.<sup>18</sup>

Because of the attention bestowed on the New Towns and the predisposition against the city, problems in the large cities have suffered a benign neglect on the part of the government.<sup>19</sup> In this respect, Jerusalem suffers less than Tel-Aviv or Haifa because of historical and political interests, a single local authority and a tradition of town planning inherited from the British Mandate. This has led to a situation in which large urban areas, especially Tel-Aviv and its region, have grown constantly, attracting additional population.<sup>20</sup> Industry and services have been an integral part of this growth.<sup>21</sup> Problems arising from metropolitan expansion, such as co-operation in local government, integrated planning of services, social problems and the human effects of industrial growth have only begun to be considered serious and pressing, although they have existed for many years.<sup>22</sup>

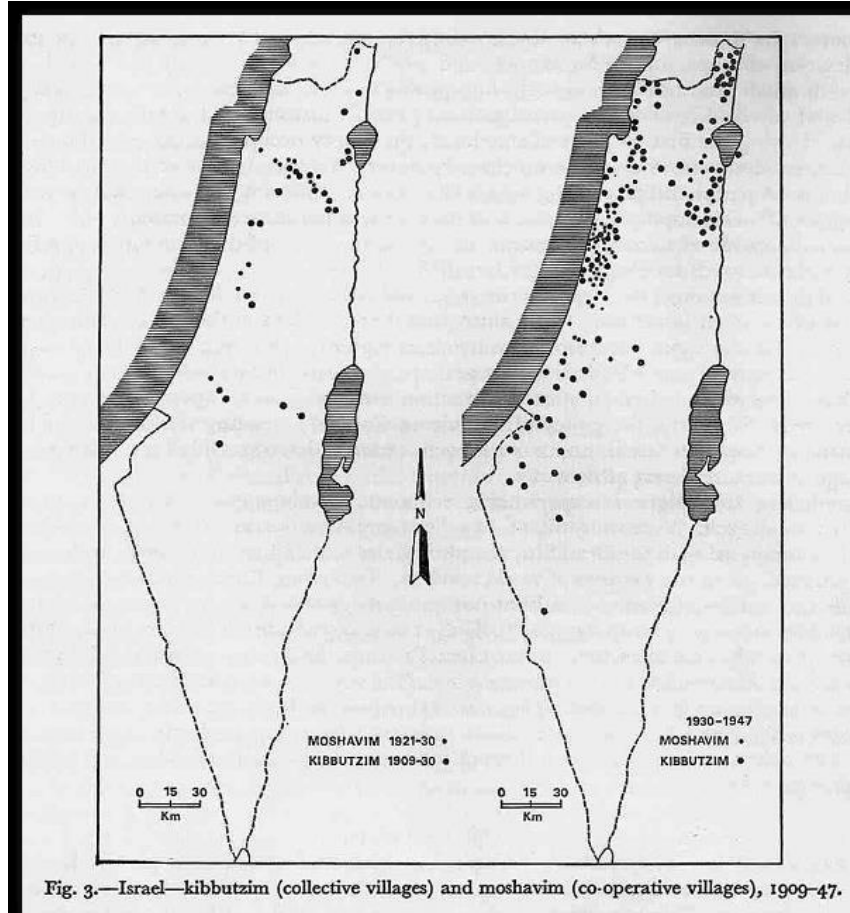
### *Rural development*

As Israel is not a country of small towns, neither is it one of *kibbutzim*. These collective villages, implying both idealistic lifestyle and efficient use of resources, have attracted much attention, especially in the West.<sup>23</sup>

During the 1930s and 1940s, the kibbutz played an important role as a border settlement, actively expanding the Jewish ecumene and defending those areas already settled (Fig. 3).<sup>24</sup> Kibbutzim provided a disproportionately large share of Labour Movement leaders. This trend continued into the next generation and provided Israel with two

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generations of political leaders with all the advantages for increase of reputation that this brings.<sup>25</sup> The kibbutzim represented a microcosm of Jewish society in Palestine and were treated with reverence and awe, their idealism and asceticism providing goals towards which other elements of the population aspired but could not attain.<sup>26</sup>



To some degree what was true of the kibbutzim 30 years ago is appropriate today. They provide leaders in politics, the army and other sectors beyond their numbers. However, their share of the population has fallen by two-thirds from 9 per cent in the late 1940s.<sup>27</sup> More significant, however, are the changes in Israeli lifestyles since then. Living standards have risen as the economy developed and within this milieu the structure of the kibbutz has not remained static. No longer a rural border outpost

with an agricultural way of life, the kibbutz economy has industrialized and the spartan and unique way of life has been ameliorated.<sup>28</sup>

As a pioneer rural settlement, the kibbutz has largely been replaced by the *moshav* (cooperative smallholders' village), a settlement type almost as old as the kibbutz.<sup>29</sup> The *moshav* is essentially a co-operative agricultural society governed by regulations designed to control certain activities such as co-operative marketing, purchasing of heavy equipment and collectively working certain privately held lands.<sup>30</sup> Its growth curve rose sharply when, with intensive land settlement programmes of new immigrants who had little agricultural experience or ideological motivation, the collective lifestyle was less useful to their absorption on the land than the *moshav*, based on the family farm.<sup>31</sup> Although the pre-1948 *moshavim* comprise the wealthiest single group of agricultural settlements, the *moshavim* are faced with a more pressing set of development problems than the *kibbutzim* in the attempt to raise rural living standards. Much of the effort on the *moshav* has gone into making good, efficient farmers of what one anthropologist termed "reluctant pioneers".<sup>32</sup>

On the whole, the social and economic structure of the kibbutz permits change and innovation more readily than does the *moshav*, essentially involving a shift of members from one job to another. Outside the kibbutz, introduction of rural industry has been restricted to a few industrially based co-operatives, as the need to retain the family farm has hampered such progress in the *moshavim*. Moreover, relaxation of formerly strict rulings on the non-hiring of external labour has resulted in an increase in agricultural output on the *moshav* whereas on the kibbutz it has been used to develop industry to a point where, on a majority of the *kibbutzim*, returns from industrial production are greater than from agriculture.<sup>33</sup>

Compounding the problems of the *moshavim* is the relatively lower place they have occupied traditionally in the Israeli power structure as compared with the *kibbutzim*, although the situation is changing. In the past, the *kibbutzim* exploited their position to extract concessions from the authorities. For instance, water allocations, calculated on the basis of worked farm units in the village, are distributed on the *moshav* according to the number of family farms; on the kibbutz, the unit is two adult members whether employed in agriculture or not.<sup>34</sup> Without diminishing the role played by the kibbutz in Israel's development or its position in Israel today, many resemble towns more than they do other villages in terms of economic structure and type of employment of their inhabitants.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, several *kibbutzim* have changed their lifestyle from a collective one to resemble the *moshav-shitufi* (collective *moshav*), an

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increasingly popular settlement type, in which economic enterprises are collective but social life is family based.<sup>36</sup>

A re-evaluation of the term “pioneer” in the Israeli context is called for by these changes. Given the problems of the moshav, those associated with its search for a place in a changing situation are perhaps closer to that ideal than the majority of the kibbutzim, which exude an air of self-satisfaction, a function of past pioneering spirit and present prosperity. What was a young, revolutionary, progressive settlement in the past seems not to match the businesslike, establishment-oriented conservative settlements that are the reality of the 1970s, though there is considerable reluctance in Israel to recognize this.<sup>37</sup>

### *Conquest of the desert*

The desert in Israel is the Negev, which occupies over half of the area of the State (1949 borders). Most of this region is unpopulated. However, the dimensions of the region have changed. Sixty years ago, the Negev included areas that today are close to the outer fringes of the Tel-Aviv Metropolitan Area; development of the Lakhish region east of Ashqelon over 20 years ago was once thought of as opening up the Northern Negev rather than as a classical example of regional development in Southern Israel as is the case today.

Contrary to popular belief, the desert has not all been conquered, nor for that matter has most of settled Israel been won from the desert. In the story of “making the desert bloom”, promotion has once more been active. Though conquest of the wilderness and reclamation of desert land evoke images of ascetic pioneers labouring in a strange and harsh environment, most land reclamation in Palestine was of long neglected wastes of swamps and coastal sand dunes rather than of any Sahara-like deserts.<sup>38</sup> The appeal of the story lies in the connotations of idealism and efficiency.

Like other pioneer areas, the importance of the Negev has been romanticized and exaggerated, in keeping with its status as a development symbol. Like the kibbutz and development town, exploitation of the Negev is tied up with agriculture and rural development. These have encountered problems of which the main are lack of water, isolation and substitution by other pioneer zones. Settlement of the Negev was connected closely with exploitation of water resources from the Jordan River and transfer outside its basin.<sup>39</sup> However, even 10 years ago, most of Israel’s known water resources were already in use, thus inhibiting further agricultural expansion on a large scale in water-deficient areas.<sup>40</sup> Instead of a wider geographical diffusion of agriculture, emphasis is placed on more economic and efficient use of resources in those areas

where the greatest returns might be expected and in intense specialization of crops, mainly for export.

Though much land has been brought into productive use, the desert remains as a psychological and physical barrier to the realization of the Zionist vision of populating the whole country. During the first 20 years of statehood, the Negev occupied a place in the national consciousness similar to that of the nineteenth-century American West or the Scandinavian Northlands. A peripheral pioneering area is almost essential to a healthy national growth and development.<sup>41</sup> Developing the desert and making it a paradise still presents older Israelis with a goal capable of raising excitement, being a cornerstone of the philosophy of a former Israeli leader towards building a better Israel.<sup>42</sup>

Part of the attraction of the Negev in the 1950s and 1960s was as a “last frontier”. However, the “last frontier” in Israel has proved elusive, so that the place of the Negev as the premier frontier zone in the 1970s has been taken by other regions such as the Golan Heights, Judea and Samaria or the Jordan Valley. While perhaps physically less forbidding than the Negev, these have provided greater emotional attraction and satisfaction, opening up new Jewish frontier areas. Similarly, the policy of “judaizing Galilee”, meaning the increase of Jewish settlement in Northern Israel, appears in recent years to have provided a greater national challenge than more desert settlements.

Nevertheless, the Negev is experiencing economic development though of a kind not originally envisaged. Because most of Israel’s mineral resources are there (the chemical industries associated with the Dead Sea, the phosphates and copper ores), their exploitation is being pursued, given the vagaries of world markets. Two cities, Beersheba and Dimona, have succeeded as industrial centres and Eilat has based its development on its port facilities and tourism. Moreover, peace with Egypt will, if fully realized, provide the Negev with an additional function as supply-base for a large part of Israel’s army. Stationing of families and provision of services should stimulate further the economy of the region to a level unknown before. Thus, instead of developing as a pioneering agricultural region on the fringe of the Jewish ecumene, the Negev is likely to achieve its success as an industrialized region and urbanized area, something of an enigma to the founding fathers of the country, the Zionist leaders and idealists of an earlier generation.<sup>43</sup>

### *Conclusions*

Uniqueness, whether expressed by biblical and historical associations or by the Zionist settlement and the creation of the State, has been the

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principal factor to have attracted interest in Israel.<sup>44</sup> This attraction to the unique has tended to blur the sharpness of the realities of human settlement in contemporary Israel. At any scale our conception of the world around us is partly objective and partly subjective. The subjective part, structured by our experience, imagination and fantasies, is kept in check by the objective part, the real world. Moreover, we are increasingly aware of the role of the subjective in helping us shape our images of the real world and hence the real world itself.<sup>45</sup> The part of imagination and imagery in creating known landscapes was pointed out over 30 years ago by J. K. Wright.<sup>46</sup>

Even scientific writing is not free from subjective influences though the scientific method reduces the influence of subjectivity through systematic methods of observations and measurement of phenomena and processes.<sup>47</sup> Decisions must be taken on the problem to be investigated, how to portray it, the scale of study, the choice of analytical tools.<sup>48</sup> Intuition, as always must play its part in scholarly pursuits. Yet Wright indicated that objectivity and subjectivity are not antithetical and argued for “realistic subjectivity” and “intuitive imagination” as legitimate tools for converting *terrae incognitae* into *terrae cognitae*.<sup>49</sup>

In Israel, those writing about the transformation of landscape and environment, as with other aspects of society and culture, have mostly used alternative forms, termed by Wright “illusory subjectivity” and “promotional imagination” which are recognized as the building blocks of myth. Myth is subjective imagining dominated by partiality and self-interests, Mythology is theorized as a collective accord with the world not as it is but as it wants to be.<sup>50</sup> Ethnocentrism has played an important role in the continuance of uniqueness as a factor in the expression of Israel’s human geography, the illusion of superiority and centrality probably being necessary to the sustenance of culture and the prosperity of small nations.<sup>51</sup> Thus, ethnocentrism gives rise to national myths, providing an idealized version of what the nation consists of or should be.

The population dispersal policy, the collective village and the development of the desert have all been seen as singular Israeli efforts and achievements, as ethnocentric attempts of a small nation to succeed against tremendous odds. To a point, the national myths arising from such ethnocentrism serve to strengthen culture, providing society with an ideal towards which to aspire. But although Lowenthal noted that the past is cherished as a collective guide to behaviour and that the general consensus changes slowly, he also pointed to the transience of the shared world view and the ability of each generation to find new facts and concepts to interpret it.<sup>52</sup> Slow alteration in the general consensus leads to changes in the perceived world being out of phase with those in the real

world. In Israel's case, this problem is compounded, as history and circumstances have provided society with a powerful and long-lasting frame of reference for collective experience and collective goals. Thus, the likely result of shattering illusions by a rude encounter with reality is the decline of culture.<sup>53</sup> The Israeli meeting with reality has been abrupt and the nation inadequately prepared to accept it. Three generations of Labour Zionist ideology, ethnocentric uniqueness and the myth of a pioneering, rural society successfully metamorphosing into a pluralistic, pioneering society based on small urban centres and guided by similar ideals is at considerable odds with the metropolitan society that does exist.

Finding the facts and concepts to tackle the new realities in Israel has been difficult, involving a dilemma of reinterpreting national goals, directions and priorities.<sup>54</sup> Replacing the illusory subjectivity and promotional imagination of the mythmaker with the realistic subjectivity and intuitive imagination desirable for understanding the nature of a situation and for seeking ways to change it raises many awkward questions. If the problems that Israel shares with other nations are stressed over its own unique problems and if its unique history is mitigated, what will make Israel different — a “light unto the nations”? And what is left to appeal to the nation itself as an overall national ideal? Is the myth so strong as to prevent recognition in a proper manner of the cultural, social and geographical realities?

Such are the dilemmas facing Israel on entering its fourth decade of statehood. They are not simply rhetorical or polemical but are being posed by individuals capable of influencing the nature of decisions that will be taken during the coming decade and after. Some issues are being confronted directly. Problems such as slum clearance, social and environmental planning, regional government in metropolitan areas, planning for the minority sector, are being investigated. There is a recognition that frontier areas other than the desert have problems, less romantic but of a more pressing nature, if Israeli dreams are to be realized.<sup>55</sup> In the short run, much of this is due to little more than the pressure of events forcing recognition upon those most closely associated with them. In the longer term, it is the result of an ability to question myths and to take a more detached view of the events that have taken, and are taking, place.

Older scholars in Israel grew up in or immigrated to the country during the most active period of nation-building and state-building. Many of them gave part, if not all, of their energies to these processes. Moreover, many non-academics, even more intimately involved in the various settlement and development programmes, contributed heavily to the literature during the first 30 years. Consequently, the literature,



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including geographical writing, has unwittingly perpetuated national myths and been lax to change them. As a result, scientific, official and popular literature reflected these biases. Relatively recent is the involvement of individuals not active in the early stages of nation-building in changing perspectives on the problems of Israeli society and culture. As their subjectivity is of a different kind from that of their predecessors, it yet remains to be seen whether the myths that they will create will once more close the gap between the ideal and the reality.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> D. Ben-Gurion, "The imperatives of the Jewish revolution", in A. Hertzberg (ed.), *The Zionist Idea*, Atheneum, New York, 1971 pp. 617-8.

<sup>2</sup> For examples of the geographical changes see Y. Ben-Arieh, *The Central Jordan Valley*, Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 1968; D. Nir, *La Vallée de Beth-Chéane*, Armand Colin, Paris, 1968; Y. Karmon, "The drainage of the Huleh Swamps", *Geographical Review*, vol. 50, 1960, pp. 168—93. For more general topics, see S.N. Eisenstadt, *Israeli Society*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1967; H. Halperin. *Changing Patterns in Israeli Agriculture*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1957; E. Spiegel, *Neue Städte/New Towns in Israel*, Karl Kramer, Stuttgart, 1966; R. Weitz and A. Rokach, *Agricultural Development—Planning and Implementation*, Reidel, Dordrecht, 1968; D. Willner, *Nationbuilding and Community in Israel*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1969. See also *Atlas of Israel*, English Edition, Ministry of Labour, Jerusalem, 1970, especially Section VIII.

<sup>3</sup> See D. Lowenthal, "The place of the past in the American landscape", in D. Lowenthal and M.J. Bowden (eds.), *Geographies of the Mind*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1976, p. 107.

<sup>4</sup> Much of the literature on changes in the Israeli scene has been written by decision makers and not by independent observers. See S. Reichman and R. Gerson, "Uniqueness and generality in Israeli geography", in D.H.K. Amiran and Y. Ben-Arieh (eds.), *Geography in Israel*, I.G.U. National Committee, Jerusalem, 1976, pp. 24—35. The Israeli government and bodies such as the Jewish Agency, the Jewish National Fund and the World Zionist Organization keep up a steady flow of information.

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, T. Prittie, *Israel—Miracle in the Desert*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1967; E. Samuel, *Structure of Society in Israel*, Random House, New York, 1968; J. Scofield, "Israel—land of promise", *National Geographical Magazine*, vol. 126, 1965, pp. 395—434.

<sup>6</sup> *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, vol. 29, 1978, Table ii/9, p. 41.

<sup>7</sup> A. Sofer and Y. Bar-Gal, "Urban elements in non-Jewish villages in the north of Israel", in D. H. K. Amiran and Ben-Arieh, *op. cit.*, pp. 275—96.

<sup>8</sup> E. Cohen, *The City in the Zionist Ideology*, Institute of Urban and

Regional Studies, Jerusalem, 1971. Labour Zionism was the major trend in the Zionist Movement.

<sup>9</sup> E. Brutzkus, *Physical Planning in Israel*, privately published, Jerusalem, 1964, p. 15.

<sup>10</sup> A.S. Shachar, "Israel's development towns: Evolution of a national urbanization policy", *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, vol. 28, I 97 I, p. 364; Atlas of Israel, Hebrew Edition. Ministry of Labour, Jerusalem, 1956—60, Map 6/XI; E. Brutzkus, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

<sup>11</sup> A.S. Shachar, *op. cit.*

<sup>12</sup> A. Sharon, "Planning in Israel", *Town Planning Review*, vol. 23, 1952, pp. 66—82; E. Brutzkus, *op. cit.*; E. Spiegel, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>13</sup> E. Cohen, *op. cit.*; E. A. Altman and B. R. Rosenbaum, "Principles of planning and Zionist ideology", *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, vol. 29, 1973, pp. 316—25.

<sup>14</sup> S. Reichman, "On the determination of the unit of enquiry in geography", *Studies in the Geography of Israel*, vol. 8, 1972, pp. 91—100 (in Hebrew).

<sup>15</sup> D.H.K. Amiran and A. Shachar, *Development Towns in Israel*, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, p. 10; E. A. Altman and B. R. Rosenbaum, *op. cit.*; R. Sarly, "Failure of the new towns", *Built Environment*, vol. 3, 1974, pp. 612—6.

<sup>16</sup> A. Berler, *New Towns in Israel*, Israel Universities' Press, Jerusalem, 1970, pp. 175—6.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 167—8; J. Ash, "The progress of new towns in Israel", *Town Planning Review*, vol. 45, 1974, pp. 387—400; A. Kirschenbaum and Y. Comay, "Dynamics of population attraction to new towns: the case of Israel", *Socio-Economic Planning Sciences*, vol. 7, 1973, pp. 687—96; Y. Don and H. Hovav, "The measurement of population mobility—a case study of an Israeli development town", *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, vol. 20, 1971, pp. 703—21.

<sup>18</sup> The private landowners of the Coastal Plain, were, for the most part, in political opposition to the Labour Zionists.

<sup>19</sup> See E. Isaac, "A deteriorating urban core: ideology and economics in the landscape of Tel-Aviv", *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, vol. 52, 1961, pp. 113—6.

<sup>20</sup> See D.H.K. Amiran and A. Shachar, "The towns of Israel", *Geographical Review*, vol. 51, 1961, pp. 348—69.

<sup>21</sup> S. Reichman, "On the validity of the spatial distribution plans of Israel's population", *City and Region*, vol. 1, 1973, pp. 26—43 (in Hebrew).

<sup>22</sup> For instance, the *Israel Today* booklet series, Jewish Agency, Jerusalem, 1958—75, designed to inform the general reader outside Israel on Israeli society did not deal with urban problems as such, but continued to reprint booklets on Immigrant Absorption, the Kibbutz, the Negev, the Moshav and Soil Reclamation every few years.

<sup>23</sup> M.E. Spiro, *Kibbutz, Venture in Utopia*, Schocken, New York, 1955; B. Bettelheim, *Children of the Dream*, Macmillan, New York, 1969; H.F. Infield, *Co-operative Living in Palestine*, Kegan Paul, London, 1946.

<sup>24</sup> U. Paran, "Kibbutzim in Israel: Their development and distribution",

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*Jerusalem Studies in Geography*, vol. 1, 1970, pp. 1—36.

<sup>25</sup> D. Avni-Segre, *Israel—A Society in Transition*, Oxford University Press, London, 1971. He notes that the “kibbutz became quite naturally an aristocracy of ideals” (p. 75) and “the kibbutz was in fact, a little state run by an elite drawn from an already select Zionist society” (p. 74).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>27</sup> E. Kanovsky, *The Economy of the Israeli Kibbutz*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1966, pp. 19—20. In 1948, 49 per cent of the Jewish rural population was in collectives.

<sup>28</sup> D. Horowitz, *The Economics of Israel*, Pergamon, Oxford, 1967, Chapter 3; E. Kanovsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 58—67; A. Antonovsky and A. Arian, *Hopes and Fears of Israelis*, Academic Press, Jerusalem, 1972, Chapter 8; “Industry on the kibbutz”, *Israel Economist*, July 1976, pp. 32—3; J. Darom, “The industrialization of the kibbutz”, *Midstream*, December 1968, pp. 13—23.

<sup>29</sup> G.H. Blake, “The origins and evolution of Israel’s moshav”, *Kulturgeografi*, vol. 109, 1969, pp. 293—310; *idem*, “The emergence of the Moshav Ovdim in Palestine, 1882—1921”, *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, vol. 64, 1973, pp. 169—80.

<sup>30</sup> D. Weintraub, M. Lissak and Y. Azmon, *Moshava, Kibbutz, Moshav*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1970; Y. Don, “Adaptation of co-operatives to economic changes: the Israeli experience”, *Journal of Farm Economics*, vol. 49, 1967, pp. 119—30; E. Baldwin, *Differentiation and Co-operation in an Israeli veteran moshav*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1972.

<sup>31</sup> D. Weintraub *et al.*, *Immigration and Social Change*, Humanities Press, New York, 1971, pp. 1—22.

<sup>32</sup> A. Weingrod, *Reluctant Pioneers*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1966.

<sup>33</sup> E. Kanovsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 62—7; E. Baldwin, *op. cit.*; *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, vol. 25, 1974, Table xiii/41. p. 409.

<sup>34</sup> See S. Pohoryles and A. L. Szeskin, *F.A.O. Research in Contemporary Changes in Agrarian Structure: Case Study Israel*, Tel-Aviv University, Tel-Aviv, 1973, Chapters 3 and 4.

<sup>35</sup> *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, vol. 29, 1978, Table xii/14, pp. 358—9.

<sup>36</sup> Y. Bar-Gal, “The moshav shitufi — a chapter in social geography”, *Horizons in Geography*, vol. 1, 1975, pp. 71—80 (in Hebrew); Y. Talmon-Garber and Z. Stup, “Secular asceticism; Patterns of ideological change”, in S.N. Eisenstadt, R. Bar-Yosef and C. Adler (eds.), *Integration and Development in Israel*, Israel Universities’ Press, Jerusalem, 1970, pp. 469—504; E. Kanovsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-44.

<sup>37</sup> See E. Marx, “Anthropological studies in a centralized state, the Bernstein Research Project in Israel”, *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, vol. 17, 1975, pp. 131—50; E. Cohen, “Paradox of the kibbutz”, *Built Environment*, vol. 3, 1974, pp. 617—20.

<sup>38</sup> W. C. Lowdermilk, “The reclamation of a man-made desert”. *Scientific American*, vol. 202 (3), 1961, pp. 66 ff; R. Halliday, *The Skills to Make the Desert Bloom*, Anglo-Israel Association, London, 1964.

<sup>39</sup> M. A. Garbell, “The Jordan Valley plan”, *Scientific American*, vol. 212

(3), 1965, pp. 23—31.

<sup>40</sup> A. Rokach, "Land and water", in J. Ben-David (ed.), *Agricultural Planning and Village Community in Israel*, UNESCO, Paris, 1964, pp. 13—22; N. Raphaeli, "Israel's water economy", *Land Economics*, vol. 41, 1965, pp. 361—4.

<sup>41</sup> I. Bowman, *Limits of Land Settlement*, Council of Foreign Relations, New York, 1937, p. 1.

<sup>42</sup> A. Avi-Hai, "David Ben-Gurion's political philosophy", *Encyclopedia Judaica Yearbook 1973*, pp. 88—98; and "Ben-Gurion speaks", *Encyclopedia Judaica Yearbook 1974*, pp. 123—36; D. Avni-Segre, *op. cit.*, pp. 149—50.

<sup>43</sup> Reichman, *op. cit.* (1973), points out the specific success of population dispersal in the South because of localized resources such as minerals and ports. See also D.H.K. Amiran, "Environmental constraints and opportunities for development", in D.H.K. Amiran and Y. Ben-Arieh, *op. cit.*, pp. 9—23.

<sup>44</sup> For an elaboration, D. Ben-Gurion, *Israel, A Personal History*, Sabra Books, New York, 1971, pp. xvii—xxii.

<sup>45</sup> J.W. Watson, "Image geography; The myth of America in the American scene", *Advancement of Science*, vol. 27, 1970, pp. 71—9.

<sup>46</sup> J.K. Wright, "*Terrae incognita*—the place of the imagination in geography", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 37, 1947, pp. 1—15.

<sup>47</sup> A. Kaplan. *The Conduct of Inquiry*, Chandler, Scranton. 1964. p. 387; I. Scheffler, *Science and Subjectivity*. Bobbs Merrill, Indianapolis, 1967, chapter 1.

<sup>48</sup> D.W. Harvey, *Explanation in Geography*, Arnold, London. 1969, pp. 55—61; Chapter 19; A. Buttimer, *Values in Geography*, Association of American Geographers, Washington. 1974.

<sup>49</sup> J.K. Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>50</sup> R. Barthes. *Mythologies*, Paladin, London, 1973, pp. 109—59.

<sup>51</sup> Y-F. Tuan, *Topophilia*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs. 1974, p. 31.

<sup>52</sup> D. Lowenthal. "Geography, experience and imagination: towards a geographical epistemology", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 51. 1961, pp. 241—60.

<sup>53</sup> Y.-F. Tuan. *op. cit.*, p. 31.

<sup>54</sup> E.A. Altman and B.R. Rosenbaum. *op. cit.*

<sup>55</sup> See D. Soën (ed.), *Urban Renewal: An Interdisciplinary Symposium and Social Problems in Urban Renewal*, IPD Tel-Aviv, 1968—9 (mimeographed): I. Kimhi, "Poverty zones in Jerusalem", *Studies in the Geography of Israel*, vol. 8. 1972, pp. 65—90 (in Hebrew); A. Gonen, "The suburban mosaic in Israel". in D.H.K. Amiran and Y. Ben-Arieh (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 163—86, especially for works in progress; E. Torgovnik. "Urban political integration in Israel", *Urban Affairs Quarterly*, vol. 1 I, 1976, pp. 469—88; A. Sofer and Y. Bar-Gal. *op. cit.* The most useful collection of statements on the present state of Israeli society is M. Curtis and M. Chertoff (eds.), *Israel: Social Structure and Change*, Transaction Books, New Brunswick, 1973.

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### *Discussion*

On reading this paper again after an interval of many years, several thoughts and questions come to mind. What was I thinking of when I decided to use the term ‘landscape’ and how did I go about selecting these three symbolic landscapes 40 years ago? Were these symbolic landscapes representative at the time? If they were, was I just lucky and if they weren’t, what might have made better choices? In other words, did I get things more or less right? Were they just symbolic or were they really iconic? How much was my reading of the Israeli landscape and my explanations for how this reflected Israeli society coloured by my Diaspora background — beliefs, images, prejudices or, more likely, ignorance? What iconic landscapes might an Israeli-born or Israeli-trained geographer have presented had s/he thought of posing such a question?

Of course, it is tricky to answer these questions; it is difficult to provide satisfactory or meaningful responses. In fact, it’s probably impossible as hindsight is such a powerful modifying filter that it interferes with every effort to provide reasonable explanations. So much has changed. Yet bearing in mind that the paper was completed in 1975 and the voters rejected the Labour Party in 1977, I might not have been that far off track. Of course, the whole premise on which I based the article might have been grossly flawed. Given that I concluded that the world of the pioneering ascetic socialist living on the periphery had become a myth, it strikes me now that it may very well have been a myth long before that if, indeed, it had ever really existed.

First, there are differences to the self. Though I am the same person, with the same name and the identity number I had in 1975, I am different. In 1975, when I completed the paper, I had been in Israel for less than three years and was not yet an Israeli citizen. In 2015 I have lived in Israel for over four decades; I had an active academic career, raised a family, served in the army, and paid a lot of taxes. There was then, as there is now, the vexed question asked by myself and by others about myself as to whether I am an ‘Insider’ or an ‘Outsider’. I think that in 1975 there is little doubt: I was looking at Israel from the perspective of an outsider even though formally I was on the inside. By 2015, this as somewhat of a moot point; I think my insideness is, to use Ted Relph’s terminology, empathetic. Yet observing events from a vantage point 40 years on and with the value of retrospection, to think that I might have been able to finger iconic landscapes and try to explain why the imagined landscape reflected something wrong with Israeli society required more than a little *chutzpah*.

Second, since 1975, human geography has gone through several paradigmatic shifts. The romance with logical positivism and the accompanying quantitative methodologies was already beginning to wane by the mid-1970s. A new concern with the subjective was beginning to emerge, expressed in such topics as mental maps and environmental perception. Then, towards the end of the 1980s, heavily influenced by several [then] young British geographers, the so-called cultural shift in geography began to have an impact on the way we looked at things. This occurred at about the same time as other geographers had joined in the love-fest of postmodernism, rejecting rigid genre distinctions, favouring reflexivity and ambiguity, and celebrating the idea of fragmentation and incoherence. And, as a consequence of the universal changes in human geography, Israeli geography was towed along in their wake, allowing new issues to be addressed and in ways that differed from what had previously passed as acceptable practice.

Third, it is difficult to visualize the landscape as it was four decades ago even though it has been heavily documented. There are of course numerous novels, short stories, songs and poems; there are countless articles in newspapers and magazines; there are radio and TV documentaries; there are as many photographs and films. For a start, the population, then just under 3 millions, was less than half of today's. Even the most cursory observation reveals that the construction of houses, industrial plants, office buildings, and the growth in transportation and ancillary infrastructure has altered the landscape quite radically over four decades.

In essence, the Zionist project was a futuristic scheme with a pair of contradictory messages. On the one hand, the socialists wanted to demonstrate that although they were Jews, they could accomplish things in a way that was different to how Jews were expected to: thus socialism and asceticism in preference to capitalism and hedonism, agriculture and pioneering on the rural periphery rather than trade, commerce and comfort in the urban centre. It was bundled with a clear message to Diaspora Jews that the old ways — the traditional life of Jews in the *shtetls* and ghettos and the new lifestyles of the New World — had corrupted the Jewish people. This was the dominant message until the voters ejected the socialists in 1977, setting the national tone and agenda and controlling the dissemination of much of the information about Zionist activity. The mantra revolved around *difference*. To other Jews, their message was: 'Jews should be different and this is how it is possible.' However, to the gentile world, the message was subtler, the implication being that Jews *could* be different. The transmutation of Jews begged innovation and experiment. It was an example to the rest of the world of what could be

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accomplished with effort, an ideal towards which the rest of the world could aspire — in Zionist jargon, Jews could become ‘a light unto the Nations’.

However, although the socialist Zionists called the tune for more than half a century, they never went unchallenged. Curiously, the principal socialist institutions—political parties, settlement movements, agricultural cooperatives, and many of their intellectuals—were based in Tel Aviv. The socialists played it down even if they could not ignore it totally. Despite this, Tel Aviv was outside the socialist loop because it embodied almost everything that socialist Zionism wished to change. It was a city; it was the hub of Jewish settlement in Palestine; and politicians and intellectuals who did not buy into the socialist brand of Zionism controlled it.

Tel Aviv was indeed the other focus of the Zionist venture. In retrospect, the city and the metropolis that has mushroomed around it has been more of a long-term success than the socialist institutions. Its allure differed from the appeal of socialist Zionism. The city grew by dint of private initiative and investment; the iconic drawing of lots for plots in *Ahuzat Bayit* had been a private initiative.

In essence, Tel Aviv appealed to Jews by asking them why they needed to make their mark in the gentile cities of North America or Central and Western Europe when they could come to Palestine and make it as Jews in a Jewish environment. They could participate in the rebirth of the Jewish people in a home-made Jewish city; what is more, they did not have to break their backs as socialist pioneers working the land to do this. Tel Aviv stressed a new brand of secular Jewishness. It was, as Maoz Azaryahu (2006) has so colourfully explained, the first *Hebrew* city. Right from the start it had pretensions of playing in major leagues when it was no more than a greenhorn; it aimed to be a Jewish New York, Paris, or London (maybe all three together) on the eastern Mediterranean littoral. Expressed differently, from the 1920s when it was hardly more than a small town, Tel Aviv believed it was a World City — spiritually, if not physically.<sup>xv</sup>

Israel underwent a fundamental shift from the early 1980s as it gradually lost its illusory patina of ascetic socialism born in Europe (perhaps it was a delusional gloss), replacing it with a free market approach to prosperity rooted in North America, a form of capitalist hedonism. In consequence of this and other lifestyle-related factors, the gap between the better off and the less fortunate in Israeli society has widened substantially. The explanations for this are complex and as well as encompassing the usual economic, social and political reasons, they also encompass cultural ones.

Tel Aviv's time came when the efficacy of the socialist model had run its course. By the 1980s, Israel was well on the way to abandoning the European mentality on which it was founded and adopting a variant of the American, which included individualism, free markets, free movement. But the message was substantially different to what had preceded it. Whereas the socialists placed the emphasis on being different from both Diaspora Jews and from gentiles, the message that Tel Aviv transmitted was *similarity*. To the Jews, it was: 'you can do the same thing here, only in a more fulfilling manner' whereas to the gentiles, it was: 'we can be the same as you, in our way, and as good as you, if not better.'

Not that the socialists gave up without a fight. With their penchant for frontier pioneering, they were quick to find the new edge of settlement on the Golan Heights. And when messianic nationalism took off after the Six-Day War, and pressed for Jewish settlement in the West Bank (Judaea and Samaria) and Gaza, Labour-led governments supported them; they were ideologically incapable of refusing. And when right-wing governments, which encouraged such settlement for nationalist motives rather than pioneering ones, followed them, settlements were created throughout the length and breadth of what were to become — to the rest of the world at any rate — the Occupied [Palestinian] Territories, with all the political baggage that this has entailed over the past almost half century.

The Americanization of Israel legitimized the metamorphosis of Tel Aviv<sup>xvi</sup> (and other cities in central Israel that lacked Tel Aviv's iconic cladding) into the Dan Region metropolis. High-rise apartment and office buildings sprang up like mushrooms after the rain; suburbanization flowered with the blossoming of small tract houses in the towns and cities around Tel Aviv; industrial parks based on footloose hi-tech industries heralded the arrival of Israel, but especially the metropolis, as part of the integrated, globalized world that had come to be by the 1990s. The emergence of the service sector is also apparent to even a casual onlooker and economic, social and cultural factors, all of which underlie and impact on the landscape have been transformed, too. Just look at the expansion of the tourism sector and the quantity and quality of restaurants.

Of course, there was infrastructural change to accommodate and integrate the whole. The Ayalon Freeway runs through the metropolis from north to south and does its best to facilitate movement. The ambitious Trans-Israel Highway—also a private initiative—has been partially completed to link the periphery with the centre. An extended and improved railway system puts Haifa under an hour and Beersheva less than 90 minutes from Tel Aviv, respectively—40 times a day in the case of Haifa. The train allows people to live an easy 60 km commute away



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from their place of work in the Dan Region, pulling places within this radius ever more into the ambit of Tel Aviv. Some believe that this is to Israel's detriment. Even the iconic kibbutz has adapted to suit the times. Whereas even by the mid-1970s most kibbutzim had some industry, 40 years on, most not only have sophisticated industry but have been privatized, providing their quasi-rural residents—as well as those in many moshav dwellers—with the ultimate in exurban environments.

### *Conclusion*

So, was I both impudent and imprudent 40 years ago? And if I or someone else were to write a paper set in 2015 rather than 1974 and in a similar vein, what might the likely outcome be? What might constitute symbolic or iconic landscapes now? Could three such landscapes be found based on a reading of the literature in geography and adjacent disciplines? And if so, what would they say about Israeli society and culture?

But before attempting to devise an answer, let me say a little more about my choice of symbolic landscapes in 1974. For reasons already noted—self, the state of the discipline and apparent state of both country and inhabitants—the choice of new towns, kibbutz and desert was based as much on ignorance as on knowledge. For instance, when I used the term landscape I was probably thinking of a visual landscape (it's hard to remember exactly). I was aware of landscape from the work of Carl Sauer and the Berkeley School, had been an aficionado of W.G. Hoskins' work on English landscapes and was becoming aware of the work of J.B. Jackson.<sup>xvii</sup> And although I understood that 'landscape' was an important concept for others—architects, painters or photographers, for instance—I was oblivious both to the complexities associated with the term<sup>xviii</sup> and the underlying intricate involvement of society and culture in both the production and interpretation of landscapes. By the end of the lengthy process of writing and re-writing that short paper in 1974/75, I was beginning to appreciate this. It took several years more to become more fully aware.

Because of these intellectual lacunae, I was oblivious to such landscape symbolism in memorials to resistance or to the fallen, or monuments to heroism such as *Yad va-Shem* or *Tel Hai*. For that matter, I also paid no heed to Arab landscapes, or to religious or biblical components. Although they were quite visible, there for all to see and with an unhidden symbolism, I never considered them. I suppose I didn't regard them as *iconic* enough and, in retrospect, without fully appreciating it that was what I was really about at the time.

For the reasons already intimated—changes to self, developments in the discipline and modifications to both the country and its inhabitants—finding iconic landscapes is undeniably more difficult now than then. Human geography is more diffuse with the geographers more individualist, less concerned with singing from the same hymn-sheet. The issues they write about—borders and boundaries, water and the environment, metropolitan growth and transportation, social issues such as segregation, cultural issues such as memorial space—may deal primarily with Israel but are usually placed in a much broader and generalized framework than before. The Israel/Palestine issue, including the relations between Israel and a future Palestinian state are often placed within a comparative framework, too. Even the approach to historical geography, that most Zionist of sub-disciplines, has opened up to critical approaches. The bottom line is that if indeed there are any iconic landscapes, they would illustrate less how Israel *differs* from other places, drawing attention to its shared *similarities* with other countries. But once more, perhaps I might be entirely wrong and we may have returned to an alternative unique view of Israel.

From the literature, it seems as if the only currently discernible iconic landscapes relate to Tel Aviv and ‘the Occupation.’ The former is related to the fact that Israel is very much a part of the globalized world in which we live and the Tel Aviv metropolis contains the epitome landscapes of that relationship. Moreover, much has been written and published about landscapes of resistance, the settlements and the visible barrier that separates Israeli and Palestinian territories and people. The Israeli settlements in the West Bank, the traffic arrangements facilitating movement between these settlements and impeding passage between Palestinian ones, and the wall and fence that constitute the ‘Separation Barrier’ are currently attractive topics, especially among so-called ‘progressive’ and ‘liberal’ (read: post-Zionist and anti-Zionist) circles. This purportedly illustrates Israel’s emergence as a unique state in the negative sense, a worthy successor to *Apartheid* South Africa. Although this attracts much attention from non-Israeli social scientists and polemicists, several Israelis have jumped on this international bandwagon, too. For a small and vocal group of Israeli geographers this is just one of the outward expressions of a highly inequitable, unjust and undemocratic society organized by and for an ‘ethnocracy’ of mainly secular Ashkenazim, which discriminates relentlessly against all the country’s minorities—Arabs, *Mizrahim* and *Haredim*—in housing, education and employment opportunities.<sup>xix</sup>

Like their precursors of four and five decades ago, these socially and politically conscious intellectuals and academics are sure that they have

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captured the ‘truth’ and as they attempt to right the wrongs they perceive by drawing attention to Israel’s ills, playing on the sentiments of the world, they draw yet another caricature of Israeli landscapes, society and culture. It appears that in the past 40 years we have come full circle — from those who attempted to portray Israel as different and unique by stressing those elements they regarded as presenting Israel at its most positive to once more illustrating Israel as different and unique, but this time by emphasizing the negative.

Yet, truth is elusive. In the words of William Cronon, the American environmental historian, discussing the ways historians have interpreted the American West:

Like all historians we configure the events of the past into causal sequences—stories—that order and simplify those events to give them new meanings... When we choose a plot to order our environmental histories, we give them a unity that neither nature nor the past possesses so clearly. In so doing we move well beyond nature into the intensely human realm of value.<sup>xx</sup>

Cronon claimed that whatever the overt purpose of a particular story ‘it cannot avoid a covert exercise of power; it inevitably sanctions some stories while silencing others’ (1349—50) and that the various stories have hidden agendas that influence what the narrative includes and what it excludes (1352). And to quote Cronon again: ‘it remains possible to narrate the same evidence in radically different ways or indeed to selectively seek evidence that will lead to a pre-determined conclusion’ (1376).

There is truly nothing new under the sun.

### *Notes*

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<sup>ii</sup> Donald Meinig, 1979 “Symbolic landscapes — Some idealizations of American Communities”. In D.W. Meinig (ed.) *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes*. (New York: Oxford University Press), 164—92

<sup>iii</sup> Daniel J. Boorstin, 1958 — 1973. *The Americans*. 3 volumes. (New York: Random House)

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<sup>iv</sup> John K. Wright, “*Terrae incognitae* — the place of the imagination in geography”, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 37, 1947, pp. 1—15.

<sup>v</sup> David Lowenthal, 1961, “Geography, experience and imagination: towards a geographical epistemology”, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 51, 241—60.

<sup>vi</sup> J. Wreford Watson, 1970, “Image geography: the myth of America in the American scene”, *Advancement of Science*, 27, 71—79.

<sup>vii</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, 1974, *Topophilia*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs.

<sup>viii</sup> Edward C. Relph, 1976, *Place and Placelessness*. London: Pion.

<sup>ix</sup> David Lowenthal and Martyn J. Bowden (eds.), 1976, *Geographies of the Mind*, Oxford University Press, New York.

<sup>x</sup> Peirce F. Lewis, 1979, Axioms for Reading the Landscape. Some Guides to the American Scene. In D.W. Meinig (ed.) *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes*. Oxford University Press, New York, 11-32

<sup>xi</sup> Grady Clay, 1973, *Close-Up: How to read the American City*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

<sup>xii</sup> Roland Barthes, 1973, *Mythologies*. Paladin, London.

<sup>xiii</sup> I had a difference of opinion with the then editor of the journal over using the word ‘boosterism’, which Boorstin had used for the enthusiastic promotion of social artifacts in 19th century American society and landscape. She claimed that it was not an English word but it existed in American English and exactly described the way Israel was selling itself. I lost, the editor using her prerogative and replacing it with the sterile word ‘promotion’.

<sup>xiv</sup> Stanley Waterman, 1979, Ideology and events in Israeli human landscapes. *Geography* 64, 171—81

<sup>xv</sup> Maoz Azaryahu , 2006, *Tel Aviv: Mythography of a City*. (Syracuse University Press)

<sup>xvi</sup> Arnon Soffer and Evgenia Bystrov, 2006, *Tel Aviv State: A threat to Israel*. (Haifa: Reuven Chaikin Chair in Geostrategy, University of Haifa).

<sup>xvii</sup> See C. O. Sauer, 1925; 1963, The morphology of landscape. In C.O. Sauer, *Land and Life*. (Berkeley: University of California Press); W.G. Hoskins, 1954, *The Making of the English Landscape* (Harmondsworth: Penguin); J.B. Jackson, 1997, *Landscape in Sight: Looking at America* (New Haven: Yale University Press).

<sup>xviii</sup> John Wylie, 2007, *Landscape*. (Abingdon: Routledge); see also Grady Clay, 1994, *Real Places: An unconventional guide to America’s generic landscape*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) and Simon Schama, 1995, *Landscape and Memory* (London: Harper Collins).

<sup>xix</sup> Oren Yiftachel, 2006, *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press.)

<sup>xx</sup> William Cronon, 1992, A place for stories: nature, history and narrative. *Journal of American History*, 78 (4), 1347-1376.