

Camp evolution and Israel's creation: Between 'state of emergency' and 'emergence of state'

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the central role of the camp in the early Israeli state period and its spatial and geopolitical evolution. Unlike official Israeli history, which presents the immigrant transit camps as an inevitable improvised response to the unexpected problem of mass immigration, I examine the camp as a strategic modern biopolitical instrument that allowed for the state's profound geopolitical changes and was itself altered according to them. The paper analyses the ways in which the camp facilitated the creation of Israel as a state formed by two seemingly contradictory, but in fact complementary, conditions: on one hand, a product of a chaotic 'state of emergency' and a form of 'ordered disorder' created by mass immigration, and on the other hand, a product of a comprehensive, tightly controlled modernist project combining physical planning and social engineering. This duality reveals the role of these camps as spatial 'black holes' which swallowed the contradiction between the radical geopolitical transformation and the rational self-image of the Israeli state-building project. The evolving and hybrid typologies of the camp in Israel's pre-state and early-state periods expose it as a versatile instrument, highlighting the need for informed spatial and geographical genealogies of the camp in order to illuminate its various transformations.

*Let nothing be called natural
In an age of bloody confusion,
Ordered disorder, planned caprice,
And dehumanized humanity, lest all things
Be held unalterable!*

Bertolt Brecht, *The Exception and the Rule* (1930)¹

INTRODUCTION

In the first few years after Israel was established, during the ‘mass immigration’ period (1948–1951), camps were widely used to concentrate, absorb, distribute and temporarily accommodate newly arrived immigrants. In formal Israeli history, the *machanot olim* (immigrant camps) and the later *ma’abarot* (transit camps) are referred to as an improvised response to the difficulties caused by mass immigration and as a makeshift yet resourceful solution to an almost ‘*force majeure*’ problem (Be’in 1982; Katchensky 1986). This paper questions such an account, and with it, the perception of the role of the camp during the state formation period, by examining it not as an inevitable response to an unexpected problem, but as a strategic modern architectural mechanism which was extensively used in different forms as an inseparable part of creating and populating the new state. I will investigate the establishment of Israel as a state formed by two allegedly contradictory conditions: on one hand, a product of a chaotic ‘state of emergency’ created by mass immigration, and on the other hand, a product of a comprehensive, tightly controlled modernist project combining modern physical planning and social engineering. This duality will enable a view of the *ma’abarot* and other immigrant camps as temporal and spatial ‘black holes’ that swallowed

the contradiction between the rapid, radical historical transformation of population and territory and the utopian, rational and humanist self-image of the Zionist nation-building project. This historical geography will also allow a close examination of the camp as a multifaceted and versatile instrument which evolves according to changing territorial and political needs.

During and following the main historical period discussed in this paper – from the early 1940s to the mid-1950s, when these camps were conceived, established, populated and functioning – the notion of the camp in Jewish and Israeli minds was tied up with the Holocaust camps in Europe. While the paper only deals with the role of the camp in relation to Israel/Palestine, it is important to acknowledge that the Nazi death camps sit firmly in the background as a modern technology which facilitated the Final Solution. The Nazi camps are also used as the core example in the seminal work of the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben on sovereign power and the camp (1998), and the theoretical work on the geographies of the camp which followed (Edkins 2000, Minca 2007, 2015, Giaccaria & Minca 2011). While this paper is historically and theoretically linked to these camps and their meaning, it seeks to develop a new perspective for the camp as a space which does not only exclude and abandon specific populations outside the ‘national body’ (Minca 2015: 77), but also as a space which is used to create a new national body and design for it a new political, territorial, spatial and social reality (see also Katz 2015a, 2015b).

In addition, the subject of the camp in the context of Israel/Palestine is usually discussed in relation to the Palestinian refugee camps created by UNRWA in neighbouring Arab countries following the *Nakba*, or the ‘catastrophe’, of the Palestinians’ mass-displacement of the 1948 war (Ramadan 2013, Sanyal 2014, Martin 2015). While the Palestinian disaster reappears throughout this paper, mainly through the absence of the Palestinians both physically and

mentally from the civil reality created in Israel in the early years of the state, the paper focuses in illuminating the crucial role of the camp related to the geopolitical changes of the *Jewish* population in Israel during the same period. These camps facilitated the profound demographic and territorial changes which were part of the ambitious Zionist project, often on the expense of their inhabitants. As such, the immigrant camps discussed in this paper, mainly the *ma'abarot* transit camps, could be looked at as the distorted 'mirror image' of the Palestinian refugee camps: they appeared in the same years as the Israeli immigrant camps, their population was roughly the same size as that of their Israeli counterparts – 685,000 Jewish immigrants entered Israel in the three years following May 1948, while approximately 700,000 Palestinians became refugees (Kozlovsky 2008: 159; Morris 1987) – and for a few years they created very similar physical landscapes. However, it is important to highlight the opposing political roles of these camps, and therefore the difference in their duration and spatiality. While the Israeli state dismantled the temporary *ma'abara* camps after a few years and left no physical trace of them, as if the immigrants were always part of their new land, the Palestinian refugee camps which exist until present are a physical reminder of the Palestinians' suspended existence as people without a state.

The Hebrew term *ma'abara* (מַעְבָּרָה), *ma'abarot* in plural, is etymologically derived from the word *ma'avar* (מַעְבָּר), meaning 'transit'. The concept of the *ma'abara*, however, has long been expropriated from its original meaning, accumulating other connotations such as neglect, poverty, discrimination, degeneration and an experience of marginalisation in the Israeli society (Shimony 2008: 10). The linguistic gap between the functional intention in the original concept and its acquired meaning indicates the difference between its initial spatial objectives and their social, economic and cultural outcome. This gap, I will argue, is inherent

to the Zionist modernist project, that aimed to create a nation-state that necessitated radical alterations – presuming these could be done while maintaining its humanist values.

The *ma'abara* transit camps, which physically disappeared from the Israeli landscape once the immigrants were settled, are usually acknowledged by Israeli geographers as a brief transition stage, mainly in relation to the creation of the peripheral 'development towns' (Tzfadia & Yacobi 2011: 17; Yiftachel & Meir 1998). These camps are often dismissed as an inevitable byproduct of an unexpected 'natural phenomenon': the unstoppable influx of Jewish people into their new homeland (Brutzkus 1986: 127). The camps abroad, which were used by Zionist organisations and later by Israel to concentrate immigrants before transportation to their new state, are also examined by others as a single isolated phenomenon related to specific sites and periods (Meir-Glizenstein 2011; Picard 1999: 355).

By examining the extensive role of the camp and its evolution during the pre-state and early state period, this paper proposes a new analytical framework for the camp as a crucial modern mechanism which enabled the implementation of the Zionist and later Israel's national, demographic, territorial and spatial strategies. I will analyse the close relationship between the Zionist movement and modernity and its ideologies, practices and ordering devices, showing their inherent contradiction. Consequently, I will argue that the myth of messianic, uncontrolled mass immigration was actually a situation of 'ordered disorder' that created a chaotic 'state of emergency' which was much needed for the engineered 'emergence of state'. This situation allowed the state to use camps in order to bridge the gap between the masses of people brought to rapidly populate the emptied frontier territories and the completion and construction of the state's ambitious modern master plan and its 'new towns', assuming that the dehumanising negative effect of these temporary spaces would vanish together with their physical traces.

It is important to highlight that the significance of this paper is not only related to the camp's crucial geopolitical role in the creation of Israel, but also in tracing its evolution and spatial genealogy. The article examines the frontier *ma'abara* camps as a hybrid camp typology which developed from two different types of camps: the closed and controlled 'immigrant camps' and the frontier 'settler camps' which were used earlier by Zionist 'pioneers' to settle in remote areas. This typological evolution exposes the camp as a flexible, versatile instrument, which its various roles go much beyond its Agambenian perception. In doing so, it manifests the crucial need to thoroughly study the camp's spatial genealogies and geographical histories and developed a deeper understanding of its complex political geographies.

CAMPS AND MODERNITY: THE ZIONIST REALISATION OF UTOPIA

Zionism has developed as a modern national movement with a theological context: the messianic myth of the Jewish 'return to Zion' (Kimmerling 1999). The Zionist ideology appeared as part of the historical category of *modernity* at the same time as other nineteenth-century revolutionary ideologies, representing a secular universal attempt for redemption from a reality of an exiled minority in a rational effort to actively form a new Jewish collective identity. It was part of *modernism* as an aesthetic category, typified by the destruction of the past and the search for new cultural practices, and *modernisation*, as a scientific, economic and sociological category, was an inseparable aspect of its development (Barell & Ohana 2014: 4-5; Ohana 2012: 1). This was expressed in all aspects of the Zionist enterprise from its political and economic institutions to its technological project. It was foremost exemplified in the concentration and transportation of masses of people and their subsequent resettlement in their new land according to a calculated plan. Using modern

technologies to manipulate and reshape populations and territories, the camp was widely adopted by Zionist and later Israeli organisations in order to achieve this ambitious task.

The social and technological changes of modernity have led to the emergence of the genre of utopia, in which perfect modules of desirable communities are imagined. Social utopias, in which thinkers recruit science and technology for the realisation of their cultural vision, arguably represent what Zygmunt Bauman suggests in *Modernity and Ambivalence* (1991) as the essence of modernity: the struggle for order against chaos. Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward: 2000–1887* and Ebenezer Howard's *Garden Cities of To-morrow*, both published in the late nineteenth century, provide examples for social utopias which describe an alternative, well-planned and reasoned perfect social order. Theodor Herzl's book *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State), subtitled as 'Proposal of a Modern Solution to the Jewish Question', which appeared in 1896 and is considered one of the most important texts of Zionism, should also be considered in the context of modernism and utopia. Herzl, known as the 'visionary of the state', transformed Zionism into an organised modern movement in what was written as a manual for nation- and state-building (Kozlovsky 2008: 154). The realisation of the Jewish state was believed to be an unprecedented historical chance to establish an ideal pre-planned society based on organised, logical thinking and on the most advanced innovative technologies:

Everything must be systematically settled beforehand [...]. Every social and technical achievement of our age and of the more advanced age which will be reached before [...] my plan is accomplished must be employed for this object. Every valuable invention which exists now, or lies in the future, must be used. By these means a country can be occupied and a State founded in a manner as yet

unknown to history, and with possibilities of success such as never occurred before. (Herzl 1946 [1896]: 41)

Herzl's vision for the establishment of the Jewish state was dependent on order, a plan based on technologies of systematic calculations which could be accurately executed. By the time this plan came into being, the camp was a modern invention ready to be employed.

Modernity and the camp

According to Agamben, the first civic camps appeared at the end of the nineteenth century as a device of control in order to suppress the popular resistance in the colonies, such as the camps used by the British in the Boer War and by the Spanish in Cuba (1998: 166). These camps were part of Arendt's much-cited 'laboratory of modernity', where new forms of power mechanisms were tested within the colonial matrix (Arendt 1962; Grosse 2006: 38). The instrument of the camp, which was later brought back to Europe, is an inseparable part of modern biopolitics, defined by Foucault as the management of the population 'as a biological problem and power's problem' (2004 [1997]: 245). The camp is also a spatial product of modernisation, as it often employs modern architectural technologies of industrial prefabricated structures organised in the most efficient layout. The camp has mostly been analysed as a biopolitical 'machine of ordering' (Diken & Laustsen 2005: 17) of the nation-state, a space that appears and functions during a factual or a constituted state of emergency (Agamben 1998: 168-70), where the sovereign excludes specific populations in order to 'take care' of the 'national body that must be endlessly purified' (Minca 2007: 89).

However, as we shall see, the camp also allows establishing a completely new geopolitical order almost from scratch. This ordering instrument, which is mostly studied as a space that enables the exclusion of specific populations within a given territory, also facilitated the concentration of a globally scattered specific population in a specific territory and its distribution as a new nation throughout its new frontier. The evolution of the camp will therefore be analysed here in relation to two complementary genealogical roots: the first is related to the Agambenian camp typologies and their role in the concentration and *exclusion* of populations, while the second is related to camp typologies of territorial *expansion* of populations. Both typologies are inherently connected to the biopolitical role of the camp in managing populations and territories based on racial and cultural categories and divisions (Gilroy 2001).

While explaining that modern development's honourable aims are to struggle against ambivalence and achieve order, Zygmunt Bauman stresses the total dependency between the order and the chaos against which order constitutes itself. '[W]ithout chaos, no order', argues Bauman, explaining that chaos, 'the other of order', is a product 'of order's self-constitution: its side-effect, its waste, and yet the condition *sine qua non* of its (reflective) possibility' (Bauman 1991: 7). The endless effort of ordering and classifying generates a process which is 'both self-destructive and self-propelling [...that] goes on with unabating strength because it creates its own problems in the course of resolving them' (1991: 3). Thus, the creation of order, such as the establishment of a new state in which the scattered Jewish diaspora will gather, involves the production of a new chaotic reality wherein the efforts to organise it may create a new chaos, and so on. According to Bauman, the various intensities of the ordering process are influenced by the availability of *force* dedicated to control ambivalence and the technologies applied to reduce it. Retracing the biggest catastrophes of the twentieth century,

there is no doubt that the ‘ordering mechanism’ of the camp, which combines violent means to control and forcefully rearrange specific populations, would appear as one of the main sites where these tragic disasters have occurred.

Nevertheless, many utopias, such as the Zionist vision, employed camps as a central tool to establish and maintain themselves in an effort to transform an idea into a reality, and a chaotic reality into an ideal order. However, while totalitarian regimes use force more easily to impose order, democratic states such as Israel often uses different methods, such as consciously bringing a vulnerable population to a chaotic state of emergency – in order to achieve similar aims.

A COUNTRY OF CAMPS: CREATING AND ABSORBING MASS IMMIGRATION

In the first three years of its existence, Israel’s Jewish population doubled from 650,000 to 1.2 million at a pace that reached record amounts of over 30,000 immigrants per month (Brutzkus 1986: 129). Jewish mass immigration to Israel was conceived and presented as a natural, spontaneous and messianic event of the ‘Ingathering of Exiles’, a miraculous leap in space and time – a myth which was also reflected in the Israeli ‘Scroll of Independence’ as a collective aspiration of the Diaspora Jews to return and unite in their ancestral homeland. However, most immigrants did not arrive in Israel by their own means: it was an active operation of propaganda, transportation and absorption that was initiated, organised and conducted by Zionist institutions both in Israel and abroad. The immigrants that arrived between 1948 and 1950 were assembled into *machanot O’lim* (‘immigrant camps’) until available housing was allocated for them, mainly in Palestinian neighbourhoods, towns and villages which were emptied during the 1948 war, which their original Palestinian residents were prevented from returning to them and became refugees (Morris 1987; Efrat 2004: 515-

17; Kozlovsky 2008: 141). These camps did not merely appear due to a state of emergency of the increasing stream of immigrants; instead, they were a product of an existing detailed plan – the ‘One Million Plan’ – consolidated between 1942 and 1945 in order to absorb one million Jewish immigrants a few years before Israel’s establishment.

The ‘One Million Plan’

In the period before the outbreak of WWII, Ben-Gurion, the founding father of the Israeli state and its first prime minister, switched from the early Zionist utopian idea of a selective, pioneering *Aliyah* (Jewish immigration to Eretz-Yisrael) to the concept of *mass-Aliyah*, an emergency rescue of the Jews in Europe, after recognising the harsh reality lurking on their doorstep (Barell & Ohana 2014: 7). In November 1942, during WWII and following information about the systematic extermination of the European Jewry, Ben-Gurion gathered a national team of experts to prepare a programme for the rapid immigration and absorption of one million Jews in Eretz-Yisrael, then Mandatory Palestine, in less than 18 months. The postwar period was expected to be a crucial historical moment, the timing of which would allow the execution of a radical political plan for the transfer of Jewish population to Eretz-Yisrael in unprecedented numbers (Barell & Ohana 2014: 11; Hacoheh 1994b: 13-14). This ambitious project was a comprehensive plan that included specification of required food, water, housing, industry, transportation, etc., and aimed to cross a demographic threshold. ‘[T]he meaning of a million is making the Jews a majority’ stated Ben-Gurion (Barell & Ohana 2014: 13), and a reliable scientific study was needed to convince the nations of the world that such a mission was indeed possible.

Camps were an integral part of the ‘One Million Plan’. The planners intended for these camps to provide the immigrants with their essential preliminary needs and suggested using vacated

British military camps. It was estimated that a total of 220,000 immigrants altogether would stay in the camps (Hacohen 1994b: 129); it was agreed that they would be employed in public works necessary for their absorption, such as land preparation, road paving and construction of housing, and immigrants' time in the camps will be used for professional training (Hacohen 1994b: 135-36). The plan speculated that immigrants would come from both European and predominantly Arab countries, recommending their concentration in camps according to country of origin; the idea that the absorption of each immigrant group should be separately planned (including time spent in the camp and training for future occupations), was broadly agreed upon by the planners (Hacohen 1994b: 125).

It is important to highlight that the camp's central role in this early pre-state period was that of a technology for the management of the masses, part of a carefully planned scientific enterprise. As such, the camp was conceived as a two-layered biopolitical mechanism planned firstly to absorb Jewish immigrants and secondly to divide them according to their ethnic origin. Thus, the camp was initially considered not only as an absorption facility, but also as a mechanism with objectives for internal order.

The 'Immigrant Camps': Between a Plan and a State of Emergency

The expected mass immigration did not immediately reach Palestine after the end of WWII due both to the extent of the Jewish extermination in Europe and the heavy restrictions on Jewish immigration imposed by the British Mandate. However, three years after its completion, the 'One Million Plan' approached realisation following the Israeli declaration of independence in May 1948 and the decision to open the state's gates to Jewish immigration. As planned and anticipated, the camp had gradually become a central instrument in the absorption process. Several small immigrant camps operated before statehood in the centre of

the country (Brutzkus 1986: 130), and in accordance with the 'One Million Plan', about 30 additional camps opened in former British military facilities. This 'kingdom of camps' (Be'in 1982: 59) was composed of closed, distant facilities, and entry and exit were strictly controlled (Hacohan 1994a: 219). In some cases, entire camps were indeed designated for immigrants from the same country of origin, such as 'Mahane Yisrael', for immigrants from Poland (Darin-Drabkin 1954: 31) or the British Ras el Ain RAF camp, which was adapted as a camp for Jews who came from Yemen. In the way these camps were used to absorb the immigrants while concentrating and controlling them, the 'immigrant camps' could be analysed as similar type to other 'Agambenian' camp spaces such as 'detention camps, transit camps, concentration camps, refugee camps [...] driven by a variable mix of custody, care and control' which involve explicit or implicit forms of violence (Minca 2015: 75).

In 1949, after a record number of 250,000 immigrants entered the country, all housing options were exhausted, and the immigrant camps were filled with increasing numbers of immigrants who remained for indefinite periods of time, many of whom were affected by worsening health problems. People of different sexes, ages and cultures were densely crowded in halls or tents in harsh weather and horrid sanitary conditions, poorly fed by the central soup kitchens of the financially collapsing Jewish Agency (Fig. 1-2) (Segev 1984: 125-28). At the end of 1949, more than 100,000 immigrants lived in these camps – many for over six months – and failure to settle them had become an impossible burden financially and a political problem which threatened the legitimacy of the new government (Ha'cohen 1994a: 178; Katchensky 1986: 70; Kozlovsky 2008: 141). After repeatedly suppressed demonstrations, state officials warned that the camps' inhabitants would create a 'counter revolution [...] in one day one-hundred thousands of such people, which will be concentrated in the camps with no way out [...] will rise up against us, and cause an explosion that would

blow away both the government and the Knesset [Israeli parliament] together' (Segev 1984: 139).² A 1949 report by a foreign relief organisation summarised, 'Historically, the camps in Israel reflect one of the world's most ironic failures: Jews are holding other Jews in camps. It seems that they have learned nothing from their tragedy' (ibid. 130). In January 1950 Levi Eshkol, head of the Settling Department of the Jewish Agency, warned 'We have seen the death-angel staring at us in the face [...] There will be hunger in the camps because there is no money [...] We are standing on the verge of a catastrophe', and suggested that it was necessary 'to conduct the immigration according to a plan [...] satisfying both the needs of the immigrants and the needs of the state' (ibid. 143). However, all suggestions to regulate immigration met a fierce front of political attacks, arguing that they contradicted the Zionist political spirit of faith and patriotism that glorified the state's messianic destiny as 'a fight against all odds'. By comparing mass immigration with the biblical heroic Israelite Exodus from Egypt, Ben-Gurion stated: 'As far as I know, there was no accommodation or occupation ready for the sixty thousand leaving Egypt – and nevertheless Moses did not hesitate for a moment whether he should take them out' (ibid. 144). But despite this expressive remark, it seems that the state needed immigration sometimes more than the immigrants needed the state – in Ben-Gurion's words following the UN decision on Israel's establishment, 'the state lacks one fundamental thing, which is its most severe and serious absent: it lacks Jews, and as long as this absence will not be minimally satisfied, there is no certainty to the existence of the state even after its establishment' (Hacohen 1994b: 235).

Mass immigration was not only driven by Jews' sincere will to immigrate to the new state, but also by strong propaganda from Israeli Zionist emissaries that combined intimidation, temptation and deceit. Tempted by a promised life of wealth in Israel, members of Jewish communities around the world were warned that it could be impossible for them to leave their

current countries in the future. 'People were simply deceived', confessed a state official; 'They lied to me', wrote an immigrant who came from Johannesburg to his mother; 'I want to return immediately. If I will not return in one week I will starve [...] This is a country with no god'. His mother never received her son's letter; it was archived in one of the Mossad files with the label 'Confiscated by the Censor' (Segev 1984: 112-16).

Camps on the way to the promised land

Around 90% of the pre-state Jewish population in Palestine originated from Russia and Eastern Europe, where Zionism had first developed; however, after the Holocaust only around one million survivors were left in Europe. As anticipated in the 'One Million Plan', during the mass immigration period around half of the immigrants were *Ashkenazim* (from Europe and America), who mostly arrived first (86% of the 1948 immigrants), and half were *Mizrahim* (from Africa and Asian countries), who mostly arrived in the later period (71% of the 1951 immigrants) (Sicron 1986).

For both populations, the camps in Israel were not an unfamiliar reality. Many of the European Jews had survived the Nazi camps and arrived in Israel from European Displaced Persons camps or British internment camps in Cyprus, to which about 56,000 Jewish immigrants/refugees were deported by the British authorities in Palestine (60% of them were Holocaust survivors) (Ofer 1996). Transit camps were also a common way in which the Jewish and Zionist organisations and later the Israeli absorption institutions concentrated Jews from European, North African and Asian countries before transferring them to Israel, in which the conditions were often far from being satisfactory. The Geula (redemption) camp in Hashed, Aden (Fig. 3), was operated in 1949 by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), and was designated to gather the Jewish communities of Yemen before

their transportation to Israel, providing them with food, shelter and medicine. However, around 14,000 people were concentrated in the camp, which was designed to hold only 1,000 people and thus failed to provide them even basic conditions. Consequently, more than 400 people – many of whom were children – died in the camp before being transferred to Israel in the ‘Magic Carpet’ operation (Meir-Glizenstein 2011: 150-53).

Another camp was created in Tehran for Iraqi Jews and a camp in Algiers was erected for Jews from Morocco and Tunisia. As described by the Jewish Agency emissary, in the Algiers camp people were

living in density like animals. From top to bottom, even on the stairwell, people sit with their belongings in their hands. They live, cook, fall into illness, give birth and die, men and women, young and old, everyone together. In a room of five square meters live more than fifty people (Segev 1984: 166).

Jews from Libya were sent to a camp near the city of Brindisi in southern Italy, and tens of thousands of Jews from Europe and North Africa passed through ‘Camp d’Arénas’ near Marseille in France, which locals called the ‘Jewish Camp’ (Fig. 4). This camp was leased by Jewish institutions between 1945 and 1962; in the pre-state period, it was used to concentrate European Displaced Persons before transferring them by boat to Mandatory Palestine. In 1948, after Israel’s establishment, 61,000 immigrants passed through this camp – around 60% of the immigrants that year. In later years, the camp was mostly used for North African Jews on their way to Israel (Lisaak 1999: 16-17). These camps abroad, which concentrated, facilitated and later tightly controlled the immigration of hundreds of thousands of Jews to Israel, were the distant threshold of the Israeli ‘open gates’ policy which was altered according to the changing political needs of the state. The horrific descriptions of the reality

in some of these camps shows the difficult aspects of this instrument, in which people are totally dependant on others in the most critical aspects of their lives.

From 'Immigrant Camps' to the *Ma'abara* Camps

At the end of 1949, the Jewish Agency gradually began to dismantle the immigrant camps in Israel; it was decided that as 'one hundred thousand Jews are sitting in the camps and live at someone else's expense',³ food would no longer be provided for the immigrants. The camps were opened, immigrants could stay and live in theme, as there was still a housing shortage, but they now had to work. Iraq's unexpected approval for Jews to leave and the deep financial crisis of the Jewish Agency led Levi Eshkol, the Jewish Agency's treasurer, to suggest a 'revolutionary proposal' in March 1950:

[...] to dismantle the 'immigrant camps' in such a way that, all over the country, where there are any existing settlements, we will attach immigrant-housing to them [...] The immigrants will be employed in foresting works and orchard-planting, preparation-work, terracing and stones removal [...] I see the government as a central partner.

(Hacohen 1994a: 205)

In the summer of 1950, most of the newly arrived immigrants were sent to the rapidly erected *ma'abara* transition camps straight off the ship, and by the end of 1951 more than 250,000 people lived in the 129 *ma'abara* camps (Figs. 5-6) (Efrat 2004: 519). The first camps, in which every family received its own shelter – either a tent or a hut, were erected next to existing settlements in the centre of the country to increase immigrants' chances of finding work. However in 1951, many of the camps were constructed in less-developed areas according to the government's population dispersal policy (Hacohen 1994a: 216). Thus, the

ma'abarot camps evolved as a combined solution to mass immigration; their population had to work, and the camps allowed for immigrants' dispersal to frontier territories.

At this point, we can summarise that mass immigration was not a natural phenomenon, but a result of a political decision made in order to dramatically change the state's demographic balance, coupled with pre-planned large-scale actions in which the camp was a central instrument. The decisions and actions that brought the immigrants in the camps to the verge of a humanitarian disaster could be seen as mere negligence at best; it could also be seen as a calculated risk the government took to achieve its demographic and territorial objectives.

DISPERSING THE IMMIGRANTS, POPULATING THE PLAN

While immigrant camps in Israel and abroad were an essential aspect of the migration's organisation and were used to *concentrate* immigrants before and after their transportation to Israel, the *ma'abara* camps developed a nearly opposite role: to *disperse* immigrants across the country. Around 50% of the *ma'abara* camps were scattered across the landscape (Kozlovsky 2008: 146), and the massive flow of immigrants, which in other countries tends to accumulate in urban entry gates (Plezenshtine and Shahar 1986: 90), was directed by Israeli authorities to inhabit the frontier. Thus, the device of the camp, created to absorb the demographic flood of mass immigration, was adapted to the territorial and planning needs of the new state. Civic 'conquest' of the frontier was also encouraged by the army (the Israeli Defence Force, or IDF), whose teams were involved in planning the civic space. As the head of the Settlement Branch in the Operation Department of the IDF stated in 1953, 'It was clear to us that the war was not yet over [...] as long as the whole country will not be settled and cultivated, we will not have control over its whole territory' (Sharon 2012: 35).

Frontier 'settler camps' in Israel/Palestine

This was not the first time that Zionism used camps to quickly distribute Jewish populations to conquer and then consolidate control of territory. Camps were initially adopted during the first and mainly the second pre-state *Aliyah* waves, when temporary tent-camps were used by idealist Zionist ‘pioneers’ who settled in distant, desolate frontier areas as part of the effort to ‘build the country’ and cultivate the land and thus spread across the territory. The first Zionist communal settlements were composed of small agricultural groups who tended to work and erect tent camps in remote locations, creating the first *kibbutzim* in the 1920s and 1930s (Fig. 7) (Lieblich 1982: 25; Kahana 2011: 261). These type of camps were developed to the well-known pre-fabricated ‘tower and stockade’ fortified camps, of which over fifty were erected in frontier territories during the three years of the Arab revolt (1936-39) (Rotbard 2003). These camps were the first demonstration of both the modernist Zionist attitude to the land and the modernist mechanism for fulfilling it: the land needed to be ‘tamed’, conquered and controlled in order to turn it into a resource and a territory; the camp was the rapidly-erected territorial instrument which enabled this goal to be achieved. Similar to pre-state settler camps, the *Nahal* camps (the Hebrew initials for ‘pioneer combatant youth’), initiated by Ben-Gurion in the first year of statehood were also used for the same purpose. Each *Nahal* camp was called *He’ahzut* (Hebrew for ‘holding on tightly’), and combined military service with the creation of new agricultural frontier settlements, which later became civilian.

Similarly to other camps typologies, the ‘settler camps’ are also deeply rooted in colonial history, for which evidence can be found in places such as Australia, where European settlers created such camps in the late 19th century as an instrument of colonial expansion (Burke *et al.* 2010). Although Rodinson (1973) and Said (1979) argued that Israel should be interpreted as a colonial settler state, it is of course important to note that the Zionist project was different from other colonial projects by the fact that its national goals were prior to territorial

settlement, which in itself was part of an effort for a Jewish collective ethnic survival (Yiftachel 2006: 54). The inhabitants of the *ma'abara* camps, however, were immigrants forced to undertake a mission rather than willing pioneers. Additionally, most of the frontier *ma'abara* camps were erected to fulfil more ambitious goals – urban rather than rural – that had been defined in the framework of a pre-conceived ‘national plan’.

The National Plan

Only a few weeks after statehood, during the ongoing 1948 war, Arie Sharon, then a senior Israeli architect, was invited to establish the Governmental Planning Department (Sharon 1976: 78) and prepare the ‘national plan’ that was often referred to as ‘The Sharon Plan’ or simply as ‘The Plan’, later published as *Physical Planning in Israel* (Sharon 1952). The department, which was attached to the Prime Minister’s office, was comprised of many professional planners, most of whom were architects and engineers who had studied in Europe and were committed to the humanistic ideals of modernism. The plan was regarded as a mechanism to establish Israeli sovereignty over the new territory from a political point of view, but was based on a modernist discourse which regarded society as a set of needs that had to be managed on the basis of ‘scientific’ and ‘professional’ knowledge (Sharon 2006). Modern urban and regional planning was a powerful method to advance development, spatial regulation, social and cultural assimilation and a national modernist ideology, and mass immigration was perceived as an opportunity to implement it:

Since the establishment of the State of Israel a great proportion of land is in governmental and public ownership. This facilitates the possibilities of urban expansion and agriculture settlement, and of *harmonious and well-balanced* population distribution throughout the country. In Israel, however, with its mass

immigration, the process entailed in the “distribution of population” does not involve a transfer of the existing population. [...] The directing of the incessant and ever-growing stream of immigration to undeveloped agricultural areas, and to new urban centres, is a relatively simple task. (Sharon 1952: 4; emphasis added)

Thus, the ideal modernist ‘harmonious and well-balanced’ Israeli settlement plan was intended to reach achievement through the chaos of mass immigration. This chaos was both the problem and the solution, and the camp was the modern ordering instrument primarily applied to manage it.

During the pre-state period, Jewish settlements were based mainly on two polarised components: the three large cities of Tel-Aviv, Jerusalem and Haifa, and the *Kibbutz* and *Moshav* small agricultural settlements. Equipped with full governmental support, newly conquered land and an endless stream of immigrants to settle, the Planning Department intended to change this polarity and to ‘thicken’ the frontier agricultural settlements with urban ones. The plan was designed for a ‘well-balanced disposition’ of a population of 2,650,000 people (a number reached in 1966) that would change the ‘anomaly’ created during the pre-state period in which the ratio of urban to rural populations was the highest in the world. As Sharon explained, ‘When the state was founded the overwhelming majority of the population, totalling 82%, was concentrated in a narrow coastal strip extending from Haifa to Tel Aviv’ (1952: 4); the aim was ‘to spread the population away from the Mediterranean seaboard into the country’s empty areas’ (Sharon 1976: 78) by directing the immigrants into the new regions. Needless to say, the data and aims of the ‘national plan’ relate to Israel’s Jewish population alone (Sharon 2006: 35).

In the spirit of the Regional School, which supported the creation of relatively small, balanced areas based on close interaction between the regional town and its rural environment (Brutzkus 1986: 134), the ‘national plan’ divided the country into 24 planning regions, each envisioned as a separate geographic and physical entity. The desirable model was that of ‘small Central and West European countries, which are economically, physically and sociologically similar to Israel’ (Sharon 1952: 4), in which a large proportion of the population (55-75%) inhabited small and medium-sized towns. The fledgling Israeli nation-state had adopted a settlement pattern that had evolved in Europe through centuries in order to ‘colonise’ the territory with its Jewish representatives and to realize what was thought to be an ideal European natural balance between town and country for the new country (Kozlovsky 2008: 149).

The ‘development towns’ programme, deemed the ‘New Towns’ in the Sharon Plan as in the original British version, was one of the main instruments for the permanent population-distribution policy. Although 20 towns were included in the plan, 28 were eventually created according to European models such as Ebenezer Howard’s ‘Garden City’, Walter Christaller’s ‘Central Place Theory’ and the later Greater London Plan of 1944 (Efrat 2004: 998-999). When Sir Patrick Abercrombie, the author of the Greater London Plan – which envisioned the relocation of a million Londoners into the New Towns – met Ben-Gurion, the Israeli Prime Minister proudly remarked that ‘it was easier to do so in Israel, where we had only to direct the immigrants into the development areas and new towns’ (Sharon 1976: 79). In this mode of action, the immigrants could be described by the term ‘shocked population’ which was coined by James Scott (1998: 256) in relation to enforced planning actions, where planners preferred ‘a “shocked” population moved abruptly to the new setting’ as such a population was easier to discipline to the new order. Thus, although the planners believed in

the humanist ideology of modern planning, by which the ‘right’ planning can create a better world and ‘serve the interests of the individual and the community’ (Sharon 1952: 3), they also supported an aggressive population dispersal policy. Eliezer Brutzkus, one of the ‘national plan’ senior thinkers, described its achievement in relation to the project of the new labourers’ cities in the Stalinist Soviet Union, another relevant planning model, and admitted in retrospect that ‘to be honest, these results were similarly accomplished by us against the free will of the populating subjects’ (Efrat 2004: 996).

Here, we begin to see the contradiction between the noble aims of modernism and the tragedies they produce – designing a new, ‘better’ order and then coercing people into it. Forcing immigrants to settle in a dispersed pattern, the planners were able to achieve the desired town-country balance and simultaneously ensure the internal colonisation of what were considered to be empty national territories, including the areas previously inhabited by Palestinians. Mass immigration was the primary means by which the ‘national plan’ was accomplished; the immigrants served as the ‘human filling’ of the visionary modern planning and territorial aspirations of both professional planners and political leaders.

BRIDGING THE GAP

The ‘national plan’ opens with an outline that presents the ‘Three-fold Basis for Planning – Land, People, Time’ (Sharon 1952: 3), discussing the factor of time as one which does not coincide with the other two factors of land and people. The plan’s attitude to the factor of time is contradictory: on one hand, ‘Planning is by its very nature a slow process, demanding the basic survey of economic causes and careful research into physical and social conditions as a prerequisite condition,’ while on the other hand, it is ‘urgently necessary for the State to treble its population within a few years’ (ibid.). The ‘quicken tempo of development, and

the resultant pressure', warned the planners, 'combine to exert a great and sometimes negative influence on planning proper', which might result in irreparable architectural 'blots on the landscape' (ibid.). In order to avoid a compromise caused by time, the *ma'abara* transit camps were a crucial device; they bridged the gap between the desire to rapidly absorb and disperse as many immigrants as possible and the time required for proper planning and construction.

As far as the planners were concerned, the most important physical characteristic of these camps was their temporariness; their spatial layout was usually a dense grid of small, provisional units, and the planners avoided any additional investment in them (Hacohen 1994a: 216). However, the very creation of the *ma'abara* camps was a wasteful financial policy: the camps required imported prefabricated structures, which were paid for in foreign currency and were almost as expensive as permanent houses built from locally sourced materials and labour (Darin-Drabkin 1954: 35; Kozlovsky 2008: 144). Nevertheless, the camps were seen as the best solution for the time-factor dilemma:

Despite all the deficiencies of the temporary absorption, in aspects of systematic populating and the creation of balanced settlement texture, it gave a crucial extension of time for thought and planning and prevented, at least partially, a hasty creation of permanent facts in the area of urban development, which would have been impossible to change later. (Brutzkus 1986: 129)

The plan of architect Louis Kahn, commissioned in 1949 by the Jewish Agency to develop ideas for the required 400,000 housing units, shows an alternative model. Kahn proposed the creation of semi-permanent shell houses in relatively generous plots which could be rapidly erected and enlarged in the future, allowing the camp to gradually develop into a permanent

settlement (Kozlovsky 2008: 146; Solomon 2000: 13-17). Kahn argued that the creation of permanent homes would cost only one-third more than the temporary, disposable facilities, but his argument concerned more than economic solutions: 'Kahn believed that such an approach was not only practical and cost-effective but profoundly human. Having been an immigrant himself in America, Kahn intuitively grasped the importance of privacy, stability, and roots for the *olim* [immigrants] in Israel' (Solomon 2000: 17). Kahn's plan, however, was never realised; the planners preferred the rigidly-planned modern towns with their 'properly' designed housing blocks, a solution which required immigrants' suspension in the dispensable 'top down' created camps.

Technologies of Control

While temporary absorption worked well for the modernist planners, it did not benefit the camp's residents, who lived in dangerously poor conditions. 'We must receive your attention', wrote a regional doctor in one of the northern frontier camps to the Jewish Agency, 'to the severe sanitary condition in the *ma'abara*, and to the unsuitable sanitary toilet structures; tragedies have already happened, and it is a fact that two weeks ago a child fell into the toilet pit in the *ma'abara* and lost his life. This is the third case in this place'.⁴ The camp's spatial temporariness in itself was one of the main difficulties of the *ma'abara* residents: '[A]n atmosphere of enduring temporariness was created in the *ma'abara*, a transitory situation which destroys family life, destroys the human being [...]' (Darin-Drabkin 1954: 36). The fact that so many lived in these conditions for so long highlights the relations of dependency inherent to life in the *ma'abara* camp which allowed the state's institutions to control many crucial aspects of immigrants' lives. It was clear to the authorities that immigrants would not willingly agree to move to the frontier camps. Thus, they used various methods, including complicated bureaucracy, isolation, deceit and the control over

the immigrants in this 'camp system' in order to bring immigrants to the isolated camps and then to coerce them to stay in their designated remote location (Katz 2015a: 732-733, 738; Kozlovsky 2008: 152; Pelsenstein & Shahar 1986: 94). The fact that the managers of the *ma'abarot* came from the 'outside', often from the more established part of the Israeli society, also contributed to the uneven power relations in the camps.

Although one of the main objectives of the *ma'abara* camps was to introduce immigrants into the labour force, the second objective (dispersal to frontier regions) did not allow immigrants to reduce their dependence on national institutions. In these frontier camps, governmental projects based on manual labour were often the only way immigrants could earn a living; thus, they remained the most vulnerable category of workers (Bernstein 1981: 33). Manual labour was also seen as an ideological and educational mechanism for altering the occupational structure of the new Jewish nation from urban communities of merchants, based on the labour of others, into communities based on the physical labour of their own members: '[C]onstruction acts as a kind of natural vocational school for new immigrants. The majority of new immigrants come from the middle classes and are not accustomed to physical labour [...] Under such circumstances the construction industry acts as an important and desirable transitional stage' (Fig. 8) (Darin-Drabkin in Kozlovsky 2008: 153). These and additional policies of subordination and disempowerment were justified by a strong modern ideology, which was presented as universal but actually supported the economic, social and political interests of the veteran society (Katz 2015a: 733). In addition, the *ma'abara* camps included the active reproduction of power of the dominant political party Mapai, who used its control over immigrants in the camps to increase its political strength (Bernstein 1981: 35-38).

Modern Ideology, Hybrid Typology

More than a million Jewish immigrants arrived in Israel in the first decade after independence – over half of them from Muslim countries, transforming Israel from a predominantly European society into a multi-ethnic state (Ben-Porat 2003: 64). The veteran *Ashkenazi* Israeli population perceived themselves as a modern, European and autonomous society and were ambivalent in their relation to the new immigrants, who were mainly Holocaust survivors and non-Europeans from Asia and North Africa ('the *Mizrahim*') and did not match their self-image (ibid. 68). The *Mizrahi* immigrants were perceived as being too close to the Arab world, threatening to blur the clear Arab-Jewish division and the cultural boundaries of the 'European' state which happened to be placed in the Middle East (Shohat 1999: 14). 'We do not want Israelis to become Arabs', declared Ben-Gurion; 'we are in duty bound to fight against the spirit of the Levant' (Smootha 1978: 88). While the 'melting pot' was the common metaphor for national ethnic diversity, this was in fact not a cultural synthesis, but a large-scale project of cultural assimilation. This was also reflected in the social objectives of the 'national plan'; while recognising the possible advantages of the multicultural mass immigration which offers 'exceedingly diverse cultural and vital patterns' (Sharon 1952: 3), its social goal was to support cultural unity: '[t]his Ingathering of Exiles will consolidate and achieve unity only if afforded a background of physical, social and economic conditions that are both adequate and encouraging' (ibid.). The desirable 'unity', which was aimed to be in the spirit of the dominant *Ashkenazi* 'founding' group, was described by policymakers as the result of a process through which the 'traditional' *Mizrahi* immigrants would adjust to the new modern society.

This process took place in parallel courses of thought and action which complemented each other and pushed the immigrants, mainly the *Mizrahim*, to an almost complete collapse of their previous cultural identity. First, the establishment adopted modernism as the ideology of

a developed culture, which was required in order to create a new, advanced nation, an ideology which was rationalised by the argument of universal validity, and negated the identity of the *Mizrahi* immigrants as coming from an inferior world and culture. Second, this modern ideology which was blind to all other cultural values and needs allowed for practices, such as the *ma'abarot* camps, that actively destroyed the identity of the immigrants. In 1952, the proportion of *Mizrahi* immigrants in the *ma'abarot* reached 82% (Bernstein 1981: 29), initiating a process in which the Jewish population in Israel became ethnically divided (Katzchensky 1986: 75; Kozlovsky 2008: 158). The *ma'abarot* camps have spatially, socially and economically separated immigrants from veteran citizens and limited integration; however the immigrants' difficult existence in the camps was blamed upon their own inability to integrate into the existing society.

Thus, the *ma'abarot* camps, which were presented as an improvised solution to mass immigration, were in fact used to facilitate the 'national plan' by suspending immigrants in frontier areas and enforcing relations of dependence and disempowerment in the camps. Modernism, the foundation of Zionism, provided both the mechanism to subordinate other people (through the camp) and the ideology to justify this subordination, which was done by the dehumanization of immigrants through the negation of their culture; as Deborah Bernstein argues, in the *ma'abara* camps 'the pattern of subordination appears in its most crystallized form' (1981: 28). The influence of the *ma'abarot* on the immigrants is well expressed by the inspector of social services in the Jerusalem *ma'abara* camps:

The very fact that people were directed – to here, to there, that they were told 'do this' [...] was a great humiliation to them. We brought them to extreme passivity [...] the whole public had been crushed [...] And we, actually, had crushed them,

their values, their ability to determine things for themselves. (Bernstein 1981: 39-40)

Suspension in the camps meant immigrants' loss of control over their own destiny, stripped of the ability to act as autonomous subjects and easily manipulated in the favour of the dominant part of society. Modernity served as the ideology, the goal and the tool to shape chaotic mass immigration into an ideal new order, while sacrificing the well-being of the immigrants who served as the 'raw material' for this grand project. While the early Zionist 'settler camps' were formed by voluntary civilian 'pioneers', the frontier *ma'abarot* camps, which many of them were used to occupy and control Israel's newly-conquered territories after 1948, were based on 'forced pioneering' (Katz 2015a: 737). As such, we can say that the *ma'abarot* were a hybrid of the closed 'immigrant camps', which were used for social ordering, and the earlier Zionist 'settler camps', which were used for territorial expansion, combining camps which controlled people with camps which control the land.

The Israeli government invited immigrants to Israel, arranging their transportation to and absorption in their new state so as to enhance Israel's image as 'the ingathering of exiles', its demographic power and its territorial abilities, yet they excluded these people from Israeli society and resources once they got there, despite their role in forming Israel's image, territory, economy and military power. In combining the two types of camp, the *ma'abarot* seems to be a unique spatial phenomenon, an Israeli invention which under the disorder and 'state of emergency' of mass immigration enabled the modern Israeli project to be realised.

ORDERED DISORDER, STRATEGIC CONFUSION: THE ISRAELI NATIONAL
(DIS)ORDER OF THINGS

In *The Shock Doctrine*, Naomi Klein (2007) analyses the ways certain leaders exploit crises in order to advance controversial policies while citizens are too busy recovering emotionally and physically to resist effectively. It is implied that some crises may be created with the intention of pushing through unpopular reforms in their wake, enabling democratic regimes to undemocratically enforce certain policies. Although Klein discusses the method in the context of capitalism and free market policies in the last thirty years, it is possible to compare it with the reality and conditions created during Israel's mass immigration period. While the strategic decision for the 'open gates' policy originated from the need for rapid growth in the country's Jewish population, flooding the country with immigrants created in early 1950 a 'verge of a catastrophe' in Eshkol's words (Segev 1984: 143), which although it put individual immigrants at real risk, formed a humanitarian crisis, and with it the opportunity for the state to forcefully implement its population dispersal policy and its ambitious 'national plan'. The normal, democratic legal order could not allow people to be forced to live in frontier settlements and populate the plan. However, the ordered-disorder of mass immigration created a *de-facto* 'state of emergency' which allowed the *ma'abarot* camps to be created, populated and managed outside the state's normal juridical and governmental order, suspending the 'shocked population' of immigrants there until the frontier development towns were built.

Similar analyses, which describe disorder and confusion as a governance strategy that facilitates the management of specific populations outside the state's democratic order, are used with regard to later Israeli situations related to informal state policies under which various camps form and function. Wendy Pullan (2013) uses the concept 'strategic confusion' to analyse Israeli governance policy in the occupied territories, which deliberately creates a 'logic of disorder' and a system of confusing and deceptive conditions. Shenhav and

Breda (2009) also examine the mode of governance in the occupied territories as a deliberately irrational bureaucratic apparatus, the effectiveness of which is achieved through its unpredictable mechanisms. This is the juridical and governmental 'state of exception' under which the Jewish outposts and other current 'settler camps' are formed. The Negev Bedouin population is also managed in an ongoing temporary 'camp' reality by comparable methods of ever-changing special Israeli governing bodies that are selective in their use of the state's legal order (Katz 2015a). The concept of 'ordered disorder' is used by Yonathan Paz to examine Israel's response to the influx of African asylum-seekers, describing it as a pattern which governs a spectrum of rejectionist responses and accommodating measures (Paz 2011). During the 1990s, a second generation of immigrant camps appeared in Israel's periphery which accommodated the new wave of mass immigration arriving from the former USSR and Ethiopia. In 2005, camps were constructed to temporarily house the Israeli settlers evicted from the Gaza Strip. It seems that camps appear whenever there is a chaotic situation following a drastic territorial or demographic change in Israel/Palestine which is managed outside the state's normal juridical and democratic order.

These different geopolitical situations are similar to the mass immigration emergency of early statehood in the fact that the state acts outside its own normal juridical order in relation to the management of specific populations (e.g. immigrants, Palestinians, Bedouins, African asylum-seekers), creating a blurred system of governance which frequently allows for the increased use of force and is sheltered by a 'state of emergency' that enables legal exceptions. This control method characterised all Israeli policies throughout the 1950s, when the multiple bodies (such as the Jewish Agency, the Planning Department, the army and government offices) and the unclear division of responsibilities between them created an ambiguous and informal mode of action (Sharon 2012: 50). It is not coincidental that the 'national plan'

itself, which was almost fully implemented as a national mega-project, never had a statutory status and never went through any proper legislative procedures (Efrat 2004: 995).

Hence, these governance strategies of ordered disorder and strategic confusion appear to be a pattern of the Israeli 'national order of things' (Malkki 1992: 25) that repeats itself whenever actions that do not comply with the state's values of democracy and humanity – or sometimes even with its own legal order – are required for its ethnocratic objectives (Yiftachel 2006). It is no wonder that different types of camps, whether created for the expansion or for the exclusion of specific populations in a situation of enduring temporariness outside the normal state order, tend to appear under this mode of governance. From the Zionist settler camps before statehood, through the *ma'abarot* camps, until today's settler outposts in the occupied territories, the Bedouin unrecognised settlements and the Holot⁵ detention camp for African asylum seekers in the Negev desert – temporary camp spaces are erected in the twilight zone of ordered disorder as an in-between space of the ever-emerging Israeli ethnocratic order.

CONCLUSION

The story of young Israel is presented as a story of success, an almost miraculous achievement obtained as a joint effort of the Israeli society, hiding not only the now well documented displacement of the Palestinians, but also the resort to coercive methods to direct arriving Jewish would-be citizens. The mechanism of the camp, which enabled the spatial and social implementation of the utopian modernist Zionist ideology, was also the instrument which allowed the state to use force on vulnerable populations, creating a difficult reality for many in the name of this ideology. 'We can say that existence is modern', states Bauman, 'as far as it is effected and sustained by *design, manipulation, management, engineering*' (Bauman 1991: 7); the tragedy of modern mass-population projects, including the biopolitical

mechanism of the camp as one of their central features, lies in their dehumanising effect on the human beings they manipulate, engineer, design and manage. While in the context of the Jewish population and Israel, the Nazi extermination camps and the Palestinian refugee camps are most known and discussed, the camps which are inherently related to the creation and formation of Israel expose a more complex story about the role of the camp in the twentieth century.

As a temporary and transitory space which can be quickly erected, changed or disappear, the camp is a versatile instrument which is evolved and adapted to different geopolitical purposes. Camps were used by Zionist settlers in the early twentieth century to settle in frontier territories and were fortified during the Arab revolt in the late 1930s and transformed to the 'tower and stockade' camps to achieve the same territorial goals. Camps were used in order to concentrate the Diaspora Jews by Zionist organisations in different countries, such as the camps in Aden and Marseille, and were used to absorb these Jewish immigrants in the form of the closed 'immigrant camps'. These camps were later substituted in the open *ma'abara* camps, which were first erected next to existing settlements and later evolved to become frontier transit camps in order to disperse the immigrants to remote, unsettled territories. These isolated frontier *ma'abara* camp, which the immigrants could not easily leave, could be described as hybrid camps composed by the principles of both the expansionist frontier 'settler camps' and the exclusionist controlled 'migrant camps'. These transit camps were the provisional foundations of many of the Israeli 'development towns' such as Kiryat Sh'mona (formed by Halasa *ma'abara*), Beit Shemesh (Har-Tov *ma'abara*), Yeruham (Tel-Yeruham *ma'abara*) and others.

This dense and complex genealogy of Zionist and Israeli camps implies that there is still much to learn about the camp as a spatial and geopolitical instrument which is actively used

by different powers to control and manage populations and territories in Israel/Palestine and beyond (see also Katz 2015a). Historical geographies and spatial genealogies of the camp, in relation to both specific regions and to more encompassing colonial history, are crucially needed in order to better understand this multifaceted and versatile instrument – whether in relation to the past or to the camps’ ever-changing roles and manifestations today.

As *ad hoc* spaces camps were the instrument that bridged the gap between the chaotic ‘state of emergency’ of mass immigration and the well-organised, modernist ‘national plan’. These camps, which combined Israel’s expansionists and exclusionists policies, enabled the construction and immediate population of modern cities ‘from scratch’ and completely vanished after filling their temporary spatial and geopolitical role. However, they left an indelible mark on their past inhabitants, who were essentially stored there until they were used as construction material for the modernist Zionist project. Unsurprisingly, the ‘development towns’ did not achieve their aspired socioeconomic goals (Tzfadia & Yacobi 2011: 11), and the widening gap between them and mainstream Israeli society became a symbol of peripherality and backwardness.

James Scott (1998: 4-5), examining the logic behind the failure of several ‘great utopian social engineering schemes of the twentieth century’, argues that their most tragic consequences originate in a pernicious blend of four elements: the state administrative ordering and simplification of nature and society; a high-modernist ideology; an authoritarian state willing and able to use coercive power to implement these high-modernist designs; and a civil society that is unable to resist these plans. The camp, prevalent in the emergency years of Israel’s early statehood, mass immigration and intensive state-building project, was a spatial instrument combining all four factors, allowing the modernist state ideology to coerce weak immigrants into implementing its high-modernist designs while ordering and

simplifying society. However, the difficult individual and social consequences of these radical violent actions did not disappear along with the camps which facilitated them; many decades later, they remain inextricably linked with the cities that were founded by them and with the ethnically divided Jewish society in Israel.

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¹ Also quoted in Paz (2011).

² All quotes from references in Hebrew have been translated by the author.

³ Ben-Gurion, 1949. Quoted in Segev (1984: 153).

⁴ A letter titled ‘The sanitary condition in Kiryat Shemona ma’abara’, 29 May 1953, from Y. Perl, the regional doctor, Tveria, to the Camp and *Ma’abarot* Branch in the Jewish Agency. The Israeli State Archives, file 149/20 -C, 57.0/2-651, 18/68/6.

⁵ Opened in 2013, Holot [sands] is a semi-carceral detention camp located in the Negev desert, which is designated to detain African asylum seekers (mostly from Sudan and Eritrea). In 2014 the Israeli court ordered the government to close the camp; as a reaction the Knesset legislated a law enabling to hold detainees there for up to one year.