Urban Planning and Ethnic Diversity: Toronto and Tel Aviv

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Summary
Israel and Canada are multiethnic societies that employ assimilationist and multiculturalist approaches respectively to the management of ethnic diversity. This article briefly compares the two approaches and how they are expressed in the planning processes of Tel Aviv and Toronto. Our preliminary investigation shows that despite significant policy differences toward immigration and multiculturalism, for the most part urban planning in both cities remains blind to cultural diversity. Even in a seemingly multicultural planned and coordinated environment, as in Toronto, the physical planning system does not initiate plans that deal directly with ethnic issues, whereas the Tel Aviv example reveals a planning system that is officially blind to ethnic diversity within mainstream Jewish-Israeli society. Those two case studies illustrate that urban planning has yet to find a suitable approach for dealing with ethnic diversity.

Sommaire
L'Israël et le Canada sont des sociétés multiethniques qui emploient respectivement une approche assimilatrice et multiculturelle pour composer avec la diversité ethnique. Cet article compare sommairement ces deux approches et leur expression dans les modes de planification de Tel Aviv et de Toronto. L'étude préliminaire révèle qu'en dépit de différences politiques profondes à l'égard de l'immigration et du multiculturalisme, la planification urbaine dans les deux villes reste essentiellement aveugle à la diversité culturelle. Même dans un environnement qui semble planifié et coordonné sur le plan multiculturel, comme à Toronto, le système de planification physique ne donne pas lieu à des plans qui abordent de front les questions ethniques, tandis que le cas de Tel Aviv révèle un système de planification qui tourne officiellement le dos à la diversité ethnique d'une société primaire juive-israélienne. Ces deux cas montrent que la planification urbaine n'a pas encore trouvé une approche convenable pour composer avec la diversité ethnique.

Increasing waves of international immigration have created multicultural cities that challenge conventional approaches to urban planning. The main challenge is dealing with diversity, as "city governance has vacillated between celebrating and enhancing diversity, on one hand, and regulating and repressing it on the other." Israel and Canada are multiethnic societies that employ assimilationist and multiculturalist approaches respectively to the management of ethnic diversity. This article briefly compares the two approaches and how they are expressed in the planning processes of Tel Aviv and Toronto.

The Role of Official National Policy
Planning is generally defined as the formulation, formation and application of spatial public policy. We consider within this definition state approaches that create a "national ethos" in regard to immigration and its "proper" place in shaping the national space. Consequently, we assume that the government's approach toward ethnic relations derives from the national ethos and is likely to influence planning policies. Both tools (government policies and urban planning) are likely to be used to shape the city, with the potential level of impact ranging from tolerance, prosperity and "celebrating diversity" to xenophobia, segregation and ethnic conflicts. Urban planning may accept, enhance, oppose or digress from the government’s ethos, which in turn may provide feedback for this ethos and alter the attitude toward immigration.

Following this premise, we wish to discuss the following two sub-hypotheses. First, spatial control over immigration will be more prevalent in Israel, as a state that embraces an assimilationist policy in comparison with the more liberal, multicultural Canadian approach. Second, and related, we hypothesize that the state’s approach will be diffused more forcefully within the centralized urban planning system in Israel than in Canada’s decentralized system.

Canada and Israel: Can They Be Compared?
Canada and Israel employ different official approaches toward immigration: multicultural and assimilative, respectively. Until recently, Israel attempted to impose a new national Israeli-Jewish identity on immigrants from a diversity of ethnic backgrounds. This was perceived as an inevitable step in the process of nation building, one that would ensure social cohesion on a national scale in a society that felt threatened by external forces. Heterogeneity in Israeli society, as a practical reality, was never encouraged or acknowledged; on the contrary, Israel cherished the creation of a common ethos, and considered heterogeneity an adversary that should be challenged. In the last decade, this approach underwent...
change, but only in the degree of its intensity as opposed to a genuine shift. We define the Israeli approach as ethnocratic, being an immigrant-settler society with a clear historical mission of nation building while, at the same time, it denies recognition of ethnic diversity among Jews.

Conversely, since 1971, Canada has adopted a multicultural policy. This policy "supports and encourages the various cultures and ethnic groups that give structure and vitality to our society." The federal government, via the Multiculturalism Act (1998) and the Canadian Heritage Office, implements this policy, and it is discernable in every domain including education, culture, housing and urban planning. Despite salient differences in the size, shape and composition of the waves of immigration to Israel and Canada, their impact is similar: the creation of multicultural societies. This impact is the departure point for our brief comparison.

Comparative Reflections

This comparison is based on documents, a census analysis and interviews in Tel Aviv, Israel, and Toronto, Canada. Here is what we found.

National Policy and the Decision on Locating Immigrants

In Canada, immigration policy is determined by the federal government, which does not distribute new immigrants to particular locations. Each province is free to decide on its immigration policy. Ontario has not made any tangible official policy in the course of the last decade, and therefore a new immigrant is free to choose any place in the province. One out of every three immigrants to Canada in the last decade has chosen to settle in the city of Toronto where the city's population includes 13.2 percent recent immigrants.

On the other hand, the Israeli government still determines the location of housing for immigrants, in spite of the fact that a new policy was introduced during the 1990s, according to which immigrants are free to choose their place of residence in Israel based on a fixed monthly stipend. In practice, this policy has proven ineffective, as immigrants were coerced to move away from the central, more expensive regions, because the allotted stipend enabled them to reside only in the peripheral, less costly regions. The distribution of recent immigration clearly shows that the large concentrations of new immigrants do not reside in Tel Aviv or in the Tel Aviv metropolitan area. Large concentrations of recent immigrants are situated in small cities in the north and south of Israel; 5.2 percent of all immigrants to Israel in the last decade have chosen to reside in the city of Tel Aviv. New immigrants comprise only 12.5 percent of Tel Aviv's population. Consequently, the state's intervention in the allocation of immigrants decreases the potential diversity in central cities such as Tel Aviv.

Can Urban Planning Make the Difference?

Canada, and in particular Toronto, promotes multiculturalism as a citizenship value. In his inaugural address, Toronto's mayor, David Miller, asserted that the city governance "...embrace[s] innovation and creativity, diversity and beauty," to name just a few of the city's values. Nevertheless, in our empirical investigation we found that this assertion is hardly noticeable in the city's actual planning practice. Despite certain sympathy toward multicultural planning, no clear definition of the term exists in theory or practice. The city's planning system accommodates and facilitates expressions of ethnic identity in the public space; however, there is no active support of, or any substantial declaration on, the issue of ethnic communities and identities in the official plan. The slogan "diversity is our strength" is emphasized several times in the introduction to the official plan, yet, when planners were asked in our interviews if they could pinpoint any part of the plan that enhances this statement, no concrete answer was forthcoming.

Toronto's planners assume that "good planning" should disregard ethnic considerations when planning a certain location at any level. In our research, few cases were found in which ethnic issues were debated in the course of urban physical planning. The debates were mainly about zoning issues related to places of worship and parking lot ratios in shopping centres. In these cases, both formal and non-formal mediations were employed. Ethnic demands that were acknowledged by the planning system often found their way into minor amendments and changes in local bylaws.

While the planning rhetoric is indeed different in Tel Aviv, we found greater similarities in the practice of planning in the two cities. Despite the change in the ethnic composition of the city and the presence of recent immigrants in Tel Aviv, only slight attention is given to cultural diversity within the Jewish immigrant society. The common reaction of planners to the issue of referring to cultural differences among new immigrants and between them and the veteran citizens is one of disregard. Tel Aviv's planners claim that the City's logic is economic, with plans being evaluated mainly by their contribution to economic growth. Where there are differences between recent immigrants and other groups, the planners claim that they can address these issues with existing policy tools.

Conclusion

The lack of an immigration policy in the province of Ontario can be described as a model of laissez faire. Nevertheless, this "non-policy" is being formed by the federal policy of multiculturalism which, in spite of its unclear implications and practices, creates a place for potential synergy. Indeed, Toronto attracts immigrants from all over the world, with their "footprints" visible in the city's physical and social landscape. Immigration absorption is the state of Israel's raison d'être, which perceives Jewish immigrants as essential to the goal of nation building and for the territorial Judaization of Israel/Palestine. Hence, immigrants are allocated throughout the entire state and, in many cases, they are assigned to the periphery.

Even in a seemingly multicultural planned and coordinated environment, as in Toronto, the physical planning system does not initiate plans that deal directly with ethnic issues. It looks as though the formal physical planning system has difficulties addressing cultural diversity, and the different demands that may arise in a multicultural society. As
Sandercock\textsuperscript{15} concludes, “Local policies in relation to the built environment have lagged behind the rapidly changing demographic realities.” Planners in both cities assume that, in the name of “good planning”, the planning system cannot or should not address ethnic differences directly. Therefore, the logic of most analyzed plans is economic, using a systematic “good planning” process. This enables economic growth with some degree of formal equality. Despite the sympathetic rhetoric, there is no proactive or active attitude toward ethnicity or ethnic diversity, even in the Toronto case.

The Canadian planning system has led to the current condition by accommodating the needs and requests of ethnic communities via bylaws, and processes of negotiation and mediation in cases in which ethnic diversity confronts the planning system. Very little active multicultural urban planning is apparent in plans for Toronto.

The Israeli planning system is officially blind to ethnic diversity within mainstream Jewish-Israeli society.\textsuperscript{14} Planners and plans do not identify potential confrontations between different demands on the grounds of ethnic diversity. Attempts are made to characterize immigrants in every area of the planning process; however, the implications of the immigrants’ unique attributes are not being translated into planning language. The role of new immigrants in strengthening and reinforcing a Jewish state is well engraved in Israeli society. This ideology leads urban planners to ignore the diversities that may possibly characterize the city in the hope that they will fade with assimilation.

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References and Notes
3. Both societies are also bi-national. However, this article concentrates on policies toward recent immigrants and, as such, emphasizes the ethnic/cultural aspects rather than the national aspects.
7. Some other provinces recently joined Quebec in selecting its potential immigrants (according to a set of standards such as language skills, economic abilities, education, etc.) and designating them to certain locations in the province.
8. Immigrants from 1990 to date.
9. This policy, called direct absorption, replaced the policy that assigned immigrants to certain locations in the province.
10. The percentage of the population of Tel Aviv from Israel’s population is 6.2 percent, whereas Toronto’s population is 8.2 percent of Canada’s total population.
13. During the mid-90s, Tel Aviv absorbed many non-Jewish immigrants, many of them illegal, better known as immigrant guest workers (foreign workers in Hebrew terminology). Despite their temporary nature and owing to an expulsion policy attempted by the state, all the plans that deal with neighbourhoods characterized with a high percentage of “foreign workers” award special attention to this community with practical applications.
16. This statement does not refer to Israel’s planning policies toward ultra-Orthodox and Orthodox Jewish groups that are differentiated, mainly through the construction of segregated localities, neighbourhoods and services. In addition, ethnic diversity is highly conspicuous in Israel’s treatment of its Palestinian–Arab minority, which has been discriminated against by the planning and land systems. See: Yiftachel O. Planning and social control: exploring the “dark side.” Journal of Planning Literature 1998;12(2):395–406.

The two examples this article briefly compares show that urban planning has yet to find suitable approaches for dealing with ethnic diversity. In light of the changing face of cities and the intensification of a multicultural reality, the development of such approaches appears to be a timely, scholarly and professional task.

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