Planning, imaging and their hidden agenda. A case study

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Kfar-Saba – a town 20 km' north-east of Tel-Aviv, Israel – was transformed in the 1980's into the ultimate point of reference of real estate concerns, with the slogan "5 minutes away from Kfar-Saba". Furthermore: "from practically 'nowhere' [it was transformed] into a source of inspiration as powerful as the Crusaders town of Acco" (Koren, 1997:143). The successful metamorphosis of the town image was largely attributed to the (re)planning by the town-architect Yossef Kolodny, later awarded the prestigious Rechter Prize-1984 by the Israeli Association of Engineers and Architects. Interestingly, however, the winning "Kolodny" or "revision" plan has never acquired the status of an official outline plan. Rather, it was a virtual image, implemented through hundreds of minute detailed plans, carefully controlled by the town architect.

How and why did this unprecedented procedure work for Kfar-Saba? How did it contribute to the marked change in the town image? Which overt agenda did it serve? Which hidden agenda? These and related questions were addressed by the present research, revealing a unique case of planning as generator of urban re-imaging.

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A critical approach

The *urban image* issue has been part of the planning discourse since the 1960ies, when Lynch revealed its structural cognitive components. It was followed by socio-historical research that put special emphasis on post-industrial urban re-presentation (e.g. Ward, 1998; Kearns and Philo 1993), and concluded, so far, with post-colonial critique (e.g. King, 1966; Dovey, 1999). Lynches approach was directed towards a-historic, value-neutral aspects of the urban image, post-industrial cases were interrogated for their efforts toward economic sustainability, and the cultural perspective has been seeking answers to questions of social justice and cultural equity.

Any actual instance of urban re-imaging by planning necessarily includes all those three facets and employs a variety of means to tackle the triple set of components thereby implied. These forms also the descriptive coordinates of the present research on Kfar-Saba. In addition we assume that not unlike any other urban agenda, the one which motivated the re-planning / re-imaging of Kfar-Saba is interpretable in terms of power relations between interested parties, and that beneath its overt intentions there is a hidden agenda. Therefore, the research includes a critical analysis, namely the uncovering of the conditions and motives, which rendered the specific re-imaging of the town worthy and desirable.

The *revision* plan of Kfar-Saba

Kfar-Saba was an agricultural village ("Moshava") with 19,000 inhabitants in 1962, when it changed its administrative status and became an urban municipality. Comprehensive planning started immediately and concluded in 1970 with the approval of Outline Plan Kaf/Sameh/1/1. This plan, by architect A. Duday, determined land uses, floor rates, buildings heights etc. for the town center, residential neighborhoods and industrial areas. It didn't, however set the number of residential units, and therefore its potential capacity could be variously interpreted.

As soon as 1972, only two years after the approval of Kaf/Sameh/1/1, the town council declared the necessity of "serious and basic amendments in the outline plan" (Council protocol, 18/10/1972). Nevertheless, the changes were to be implemented not through overall re-planning but "according to local detailed plans within the framework of the outline plan" (ibid). The following years witnessed hundreds of local changes to the outline plan, all of which had to comply with the *revision*, entirely envisaged only in the imagination of the town architect. A

completely transformed Kfar-Saba emerged, of environmental and aesthetic quality for the able. The usual apartment size even in the densest neighborhoods was 100 sqm (vs. 70 sqm in governmental housing), and high quality finish was mandatory, including artificial stone pavement of parking lots.

Change of plan and change of image went hand in hand, attractive for the affluent and unaffordable for lower income populations, such as new immigrants and needy young couples.

While the change of other "moshavot" (pl. of "moshava") into urban areas was incremental, indefinite and sporadic, (Efrat, 1988; Gonen, 2000), the overt agenda of the Kfar Saba *revision* advanced a controlled image, both rural and urban, local and European, rooted in ancient history and modern, green/natural and designed/cultural. Much of the image construction made use of architectural attributes, such as arcades, terrace housing, red roofs, and window boxes, all formally defined by the *revision* plan. Interestingly, the historical evidence of Kfar-Saba origins in the Hashmonay independent kingdom (Roman period) was also assembled by the town architect. (Kolodny, 1989)

The hidden agenda which generated the *revision* plan was twofold, socio-economic and socio-political: on the one hand it was related to economic motivations, taking into account existent and future real estate values of building lots, residential units, businesses etc. Much of the land in Kfar-Saba, and especially in its center was privately owned. Affordable mass housing, even on state owned land was a threat for the rising image of private projects. On the other hand, the 1970's were characterized by immigration absorption and population dispersal policies by the government. Kfar-Saba leadership, historically related to the Labor ruling party, was not interested in losing its privileged position due to confrontation with official policy by straightforward rejection of immigrants. As such, the radical change of KS/1/1 had to be accomplished under low profile acts.

Fig. 1: "Kolodny Scheme" for Kfar-Saba by Kolodny and Liany, 1980s.

בית דו-קומתי הופך לבית קוטג'ים.

בית תלת-קומתי הופך לדירות
פרוסות וקוטג'ים מעליהם.

בית בן ארבע קומות הופך
לבית של קוטג'ים על קוטג'ים.

אחרי.   לפני.

Fig. 2: From plain housing to European image. (Kolodny, 1982)

Thus, the *revision* was a carefully designed, rather unusual planning procedure in the best economic interest of the local elites. This agenda was hidden behind the overt aim of improving life and environmental quality: "… the town elders decided to have an overall revision, aiming at the construction of a green town which ensures quality of life to all…" (Groll, 1997:12).

Further examination of the town history shows that the economic agenda itself had had its preceding manifestations, but also that the town imaging had always covered up another yet deeper and heavier threat than the socio-economic one.

A brief history of Kfar-Saba images in S.W.O.T. terms

SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It is a tool employed in strategic planning, management and marketing, and applicable for the present research needs too: any urban re-imaging is probably motivated by weaknesses and /or threats which need to be overcome, by strengths to keep or enhance and by opportunities to take advantage of.

The history of Kfar Saba may be roughly divided into 6 chronological periods:
1.Marketing of a village that doesn't yet exist.
This period consists of image construction between the 1892 Jewish land acquisition and first actual establishment of the village in 1903.

2. The agricultural village (1903-1939)
This period is characterized by recurring patterns of agricultural settlement after total destruction by the neighboring Kalkiliah and Arab Kafr-Saba inhabitants and during British-Othman fights in W.W.I.
The opportunities were pioneering settlement and agricultural production, mainly citrus

fruit, besides land speculation. Interestingly, the late 1930s' also witnessed successful organization and struggle of workers against the farmers' council of landowners. Kfar-Saba earned a reputation of "an island of progress" (Naor, 1987:53). However, the image of a dangerous place, prone to destruction remained a constant backdrop threat .
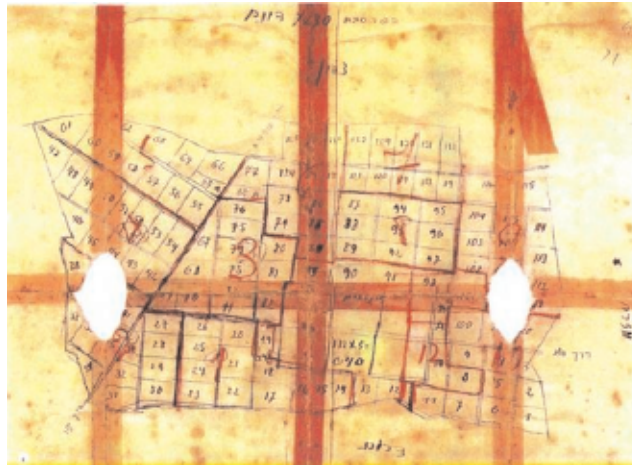

Fig. 3:   "The first plan" 1905. Underlay for reparceling. (Kolodny, 1889)

3. Moshava (1939-1962)

The struggle of socialist workers against landowners was replaced in this period by the dualism "Vatikim - Olim" (native Israeli – new emigrants). "Vatikim" were the ruling class, well to do, Ashkenazim (of East-European origin). "Olim" were Sfardim (of North African origin), dwellers of the remote Eastern housing projects and of lower socio-economic and cultural status.

Law and order, organization of public and welfare services and investment in infrastructure marked this period, starting with the first democratic council elections in 1939. After W.W.II and Israel independence in 1948-9, the opportunities were growth and development. Strengths were embedded in the close connections of local elites to the political hegemony. Agriculture gradually gave way to agriculturally based industries, and the Moshava carefully projected an image of honesty, modesty and clinging to the essentials (Keren, 1950:7). The 1948 war however, clearly located Kfar-Saba as a border town. Former insecurity did not disappear: recurring terror acts from the then Jordanian area caused casualties, damage, and frustration. Responses of Israeli army did not change the weaknesses of the situation.
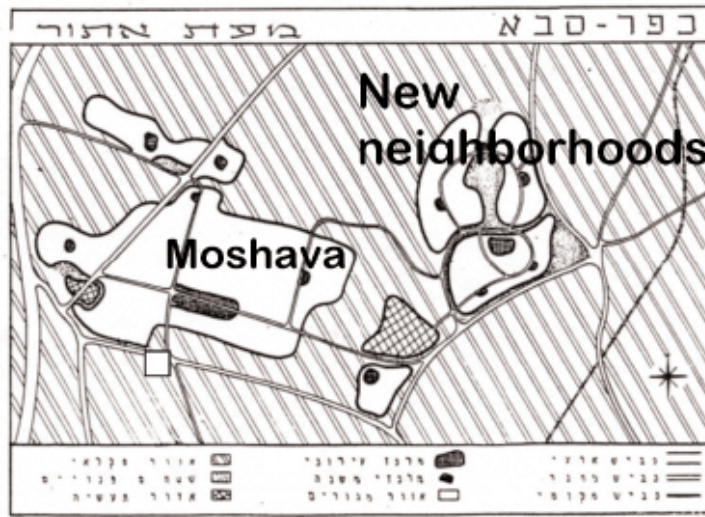
Fig. 4: The new neighborhoods outside the Moshava. Polacheck scheme, 1956.

Fig. 5: "Big Ma-abara" - temporary huts , early 1950s (Archive of Kfar Saba; Engel, 1973).

4.Town (1962-1972)

Two events opened up new opportunities in this short period: Kfar-Saba's administrative transformation from Moshava to Town in 1962, and the 1967 Six Days War, which ended up with the Israeli occupation of the West Bank. The first opened up the way to intensive urbanization, and the second veiled the border location and threats. Outline Plan Kaf/Sameh/1/1 originated in this period.
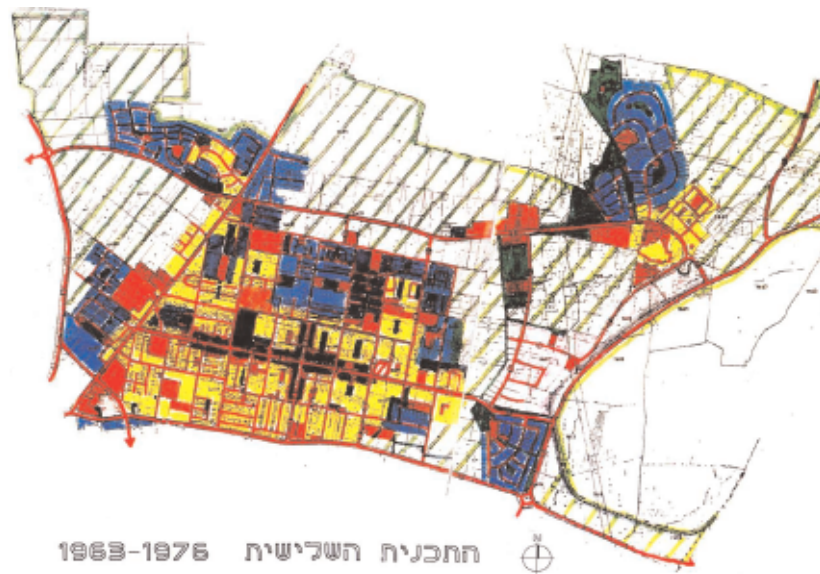
1963-1976   חתכנית השלישית

Fig. 6:   Outline Plan Kaf/Sameh/1/1

5.Green-town (the *revision* - 1972-1997)
    This period, as described above, became the "golden age" of Kfar-Saba. Not only were previous threats of terror distanced, but also the border became a source of opportunities: commercial relations with Kalkiliah where everything between vegetables and dental treatment was cheaper.

1976-1995   חתכנית הרביעית

Fig. 7: "Kolodny Plan" – G.I.S. Compilation, 1997

6.Future town (1997 ....)

In the mid 1980s Israel reality started to undergo profound metamorphoses: economic change from welfare state to privatization and free market economics; The first "Intifada" (Palestinian uprising); vast immigration waves from the former U.S.S.R. and from Ethiopia.

Fig. 8: Concept of masterplan for "Kfar Saba – University Town" (Groll, 1997)

Kfar Saba found itself amongst competing neighboring towns that developed their own re-imaging strategies. The government developed its policy for immigration absorption and exercised pressure to increase all planned residential densities in towns. All these formed threats that could not be met with the *revision*. Kfar Saba set out to re-invent itself again through planning a new Master Plan. Threats were reinterpreted as opportunities: extend the town northbound to include state owned agricultural land and a higher education campus. As such – the revision approach could be kept, higher density requirements could be re-directed towards Northern developments and a new advantageous image could be cultivated: Kfar Saba – University Town.

In 2000, with El-Akza Intifada, Kfar-Saba tried to deny its accelerated return to the insecure-border-town image, but the wide spreading slogan "5 minutes from Kalkiliah" seems to summarize the present situation.

Planning, Images and Agendas

The history of Kfar-Saba started as a map, a plan, and a division of land into agricultural lots. It was promoted in Europe as an economic opportunity due to land fertility, with the hidden agenda of easy profit through real estate speculation. What was really hidden however, was the conflict with the surrounding Arab population.

This pattern of threefold construction and imaging on the basis of physical planning seems to have formed the paradigm of the place over the last hundred years, whether as agricultural village, Moshava, town, Green-town or University-town.

Physical planning, which started as a survey, always accompanied the changing phases of Kfar Saba and was connected to its image (re) construction. The survey was followed by building regulations, then by 3 consecutive Outline Plans, the *revision* virtual plan, which was the most efficient of them all in terms of re-imaging, and the recent Master Plan.

The overt agenda for the changing images has turned around the virtues of the local population   and the high qualities of the surroundings. Population virtues have evolved from pioneers to dedicated workers, to socialists, to the modest and honest, to the loyal, to the rooted in place, to the well to do. The place and surroundings have been promoted as fertile, pretty, central, green, carefully invested.

The power relation that is uncovered beyond the changing realities and images of Kfar Saba is between the have and have-not; rich and poor; land owners and workers; native Israelis and new immigrants; Ashkenazi and Sfardi.

The assets of those who have have varied between land plots, water, agricultural based industry, businesses, and political power. Occasionally – the have-not mixed with the powerful to transform the local elite vis a vis newcomers, and to take advantage of new rules of game.
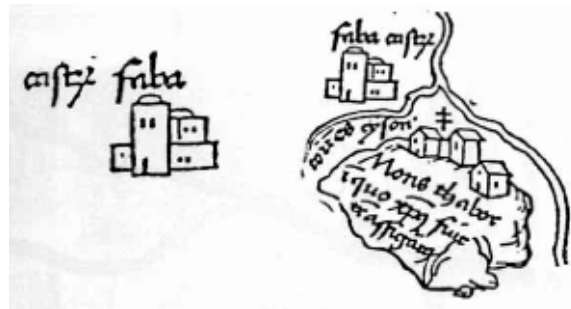

Fig. 9: Re-presentation of Kfar Saba on a map from 1486 (Kolodny, 1989)

However, the deeper power relation that has influenced all the images, either spontaneous or carefully (re)constructed is the national one: between Jews and Arabs, between Israelis and Palestinians. Along most of the periods this power relation has continually been challenged through violent acts: terror, fighting, total destruction.

As a threat it has been so powerful that the strategy frequently adopted for re-imaging was denial or overlooking. The promoted images had to be powerful enough to distract attention from the deepest hidden agenda. The close Arab or Palestinian presence had to be distanced

in space and time. Therefore, the origins of the name "Kfar Saba" (literally: grandfather's village) had to be traced and retraced in Israeli ancient history, and the town location had to be (re)defined as the center of the Sharon fertile area.

Time will tell if the threefold paradigm of Kfar Saba imaging will be replaced with less threatening challenges.

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