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The protest within protest: Feminism and ethnicities in the 2011 Israeli protest movement

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SUMMARY

This paper develops one aspect of the (gendered and feminist) right to the city, that of inclusion of people of diverse identities as part of the politicization of public spaces by activists. It analyzes these processes in the activities of Levinsky camp in southern Tel Aviv during the 2011 Israeli protest movement. Using the (gendered and feminist) right to the city and spatial activism concepts, the paper intervenes in current debates in that it presents practices of inclusion blurring the boundaries between “private” (hidden) people, actions and issues and publicizing them. These practices are analyzed in three stages of the camp’s history: its construction; its functioning as a political space and the paradox of inclusion that emerged. In doing so, the paper emphasizes how the Mizrahi feminist activists at Levinsky articulated new ways of inclusion in their spatial activism, enabling different groups to join together with the feminist leaders for political and spatial action who maintained its momentum for a while.

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Introduction

This paper deals with a process of politicization of urban spaces and asks under what conditions such a process can take place. In particular, it analyzes the gendered and feminist influences on the politicization of the Levinsky public park spaces in southern Tel Aviv into protest camp spaces during the 2011 Israeli protest movement. Further, it suggests that by applying the notions of the “right to the city” and “spatial activism”, a feminist understanding of the process could be revealed. In that, the study aims to shed light on a marginalized group – a part of the Israeli protest that advocated practices of political inclusion silenced by the middle-class protesters’ focus on “consensual” issues such as the high cost of living and housing prices. Following that, we demonstrate how the right to the city was exercised by *Achoti – for Women in Israel* – an NGO fighting against gender, Mizrahi¹ and class inequalities.

Achoti also took advantage of their privileged status as Jewish citizens to fight for the right to the city of disadvantaged groups, particularly non-citizens (undocumented immigrants and refugees, especially women). We argue that by doing so, *Achoti* demonstrated a feminist option of promoting equality as a global rather than national value through promoting the right to the city.

Our two core concepts – (gendered and feminist) right to the city and spatial activism – help understand *why* the protest took place and *why* the right to the city was in fact what the protesters pleaded for, albeit without using this specific terminology. These concepts are also helpful in supporting the argument that politicizing public urban spaces means publicizing private, hidden and silenced issues, people and actions as part of the historical feminist struggle against these patriarchal dichotomies. The latter concept – spatial activism – helps understand *how* public spaces are politicized and *what* the relations between public and political spaces are.

In doing so, the paper aims to extend beyond current debates on urban protest movements, the right to the city, and spatial activism in the following ways. Firstly, it suggests new

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perspectives related to the Lefebvrian concept of the right to the city, as well as to the role of women in realizing these rights, particularly with regard to the changing meanings of private/public actions and spaces by challenging the boundaries of perceived private or 'privatized', public or 'publicized', legal or 'illegalized' people (Staehele, 1996, 2008). Following that, the paper presents an alternative understanding – “the feminist and gendered right to the city” (paraphrasing “the right to the gendered city” (Fenster, 2005a, 2005b)) – to emphasize our argument that the Mizrahi feminist activists at Levinsky Park articulated new ways of inclusion in their spatial activism. These involved not only women, but also people of multiple gender, ethnic, national and class identities – whom Fraser (1990) referred to collectively as “subaltern counter publics”. Secondly, the paper examines women's activism in a social protest movement that calls for promoting *general* social justice and not only women's justice. This is different than most cases presented in the literature, where women are the initiators and sole leaders of social protest movements or promote only or mainly women's justice and solidarity (for the Spanish case, see De Botton, Puigvert, & Sanchez-Aroca, 2005; for the Israeli case, see Blumen & Halevi, 2009; Halperin-Kaddari, 2004; Helman, 1999; Herzog, 2008; Sasson-Levi & Rappaport, 2003; Sidi, 2009; Zilber, 2002). Lastly, by presenting the paradox of feminist activism's right to protest in the context of safety and harassment issues (Fenster, 1999), the paper problematizes the right to the city using the new notion of spatial activism.

In what follows, the two core theoretical concepts of the right to the city and spatial activism are introduced. We then present the history of the Israeli protest movement, from its early beginnings in the Rothschild Boulevard encampment in central affluent Tel Aviv, followed by the Levinsky encampment in the poorer south, as counter-gendered and ethnic protest discourse and practice. Next, we elaborate on our ethnographic methodology during the protest period. The following section analyzes the role of the feminist Mizrahi activists in building and organizing the Levinsky protest camp, the politicization of public spaces and the paradox of inclusion between the gendered and feminist right to the city and the right to safety. It is important to note at the start that the suggested theoretical, methodological and practical analysis is based on one case study only – that of the Levinsky camp and its resultant political activism. We have neither sought to analyze all the camp's feminist activities nor think it is necessary for a discussion on the gendered and feminist right to the city that focuses on inclusion, given that spatial activism was so explicit in the Levinsky camp but perhaps less so in other camps.

The paper concludes with comments on how, by focusing on the feminist Mizrahi right to the city and its spatial activism, the concept of the *gendered and feminist right to the city* is developed. The final part of the paper suggests directions for future research.

The right to the city and spatial activism in protest movements

The literature on urban social movements has been growing rapidly in the last decade, with a recent focus on identity issues. Tyner and Rice (2012), for example, argue that the so-called Arab Spring movement homogenizes the role of ethnic identity groups such as Berbers, Tuaregs, Kurds, Bedouins and others, and confuses geographic and historical understanding of those

roles. Other recent works, such as Lee (2009) on Tiananmen Square, Swyngedouw (2011) on post-democratization developments of post-Althusserian political thought, and Yacobi (2007) on NGOs' role in reshaping the public sphere, focus on how activism and protest reconstruct urban public spaces. However, this literature has tended to underemphasize the role played by gendered and ethnic identities in such processes.

Such emphasis can be found in several studies on women/gender and social movements published in the 1990s and early 2000s (e.g. Bagguley, 2002; Ryan, 2013; Safa, 1990; Stephen, 1997; Wright, 2006, 2008). These feminist works on protest movements use the public–private dichotomy to illustrate what Kandiyoti (1988) calls “patriarchal bargaining” – a constant reconfiguring of the boundary between public and private, and the meanings of publicity and privacy in activism (Staehele, 1996).

Below, we use this line of thinking to illustrate how practices of inclusion as part of the right to the city meant distorting the boundaries between private and public spaces. The concept of public/private has originated in the women's movements of the 1960s and 1970s. However, it is still a contested category for universal and specific forms of gender oppression (Landes, 2003), used in current feminist literature to illustrate the paradox of urban spaces in modern democratic contexts. These spaces are constructed around the exclusion of women or the paradox of a patriarchal private sphere within liberal nationalist states (Thompson, 2003), “which have granted women the basic political rights of citizenship but deny them equality in religious and personal spheres” (Landes, 2003, p. 29). Wright (2006) illustrates a similar paradox faced by female activists in Mexico in that “in taking their protests to the public sphere ... they are publicly declaring the right of women to exist in the public sphere... Yet as they take to the streets they are vulnerable to attacks that they are ‘public’ women... “prostituting” themselves by venturing beyond the domestic sphere...” (p. 279). This means that even when women activists challenge and dismiss such private/public perceptions, they cannot fully escape their implications on their everyday life. A recent tragic example of such complicated situations has been the experiences of Egyptian women who went out to the streets of Cairo following the call of some women activists and experienced sexual harassment and assault (Juris, 2012).

In conceptualizing the right to the city, Lefebvre (1991, 1992) seeks to challenge the formal and legal status of citizenship by basing it on a normative definition of inhabitance as a right granted to all city dwellers. He also lays down two other rights: the right to appropriate urban spaces and the right of city dwellers to fully use them, to live in any urban space, play and work in it, represent it, characterize and keep it (Purcell, 2003). In addition, he states that city dwellers have the right to play a central role in city politics (Staehele, 2008; Staehele & Mitchell, 2008; Dikec 2002).

Harvey (2008) analyzes the right to the city in relation to use and dispersion of surplus or urban goods such as affordable housing, adequate infrastructure, workplaces and satisfactory services, and argues that cities are essential for maximizing economic activities. Neoliberalism, he suggests, has given a different meaning to the right to the city, referring exclusively to the right of the elitist minority that influences and dictates surplus production that meets its demand. Thus, the right to the city depends on collective power to reshape urban processes

(Routledge, 1996), and includes the right to difference (Dikec, 2001), a complementary right defined as “the right not to be classified forcibly into categories which have been determined by the necessarily homogenizing powers” (Lefebvre, 1976:35, as quoted in Dikec, 2001). However, as Dikec notes, Lefebvre's emphasis was on the “be” rather than the “different” of the right to be different. Accordingly, his definition is only loosely related to the notion of power and control, failing to challenge power relations of any type (ethnic, national, or cultural) (Mitchell, 2003).

Particularly relevant for our purposes is the fact that Lefebvre's definition ignores *gendered* power relations as dictating and affecting the realization of the right to the city (Fenster, 2005a). Indeed, as argued by Fenster (2005b), the *public* right to the city cannot be thoroughly investigated without examining how women and others achieve the right to use and participate in *private* spaces, especially at home, and in that, challenge private/public patriarchal boundaries to exercise their right to the gendered city.

To begin with, we claim that the activities of the protest camp were neither “defined by two or more powers with conflicting interests, willing to recognize this and conduct negotiations for compromise” (Grinberg, 2007, 21), nor were they a Habermasian (1989) public sphere reflecting on the “natural order” of the capitalist market. Instead, we wanted to find out whether its activities represent the Arendtian understanding of public space as “collective political action”, in which action is “a human exercise of personal freedom, a combination of ‘I will’ and ‘I can’” (Arendt, 1998). We also wanted to find out whether public spaces became politicized as a result of Achoti's activities which aimed to promote inclusion as part of their fight for the gendered and feminist right to the city, and a global rather than national right to the city. Achoti did not explicitly refer to the right to the city in its action statements, but practiced it in its activism.

To clarify once again, we use the concept of right to the city to emphasize its inclusive nature (especially of non-citizens) because it reflects the feminist actions at the Levinsky protest camp. By that we introduce the situated knowledge of the gendered right to the city of inclusion at these particular moments and events at the camp. Thus, we do not include in our analysis other feminist rights such as the right to work (Benjamin, 2011; Dahan Kalev, 2012) or the right to housing (Benjamin, 2014) referred to by Harvey (2008; see above), because they were not so central to the camp's agenda, as opposed to other protest camps in Israel's inner city neighborhoods (Misgav, 2013).

Activism is one of the answers to our first question: how to perform and realize the gendered and feminist right to the city? At Levinsky camp, activism motivated the politicization of public spaces as part of realizing that right. The activists were also motivated by the moral obligation of each individual, as the liberal communal theory suggests (Etzioni, 1968; Hans, 2006), and their actions brought together the private, public and nongovernmental sectors, giving rise to new physical and social meanings, a new dynamic, and new roles for the activists themselves (Larner & Craig, 2005).

We argue that the camp focused on feminist ideas of empowering Mizrahi women and transforming existing Ashkenazi practices and supremacies by publicizing and politicizing the tensions between political action, democracy, and activism,

mainly within the local context of the neglected downtown neighborhood. This activism, influenced by the perceptions of individuals with regard to injustice, is part of the implementation of democracy by the citizens and by active involvement in political life (Young, 2001). Laclau and Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* ([1985] 2004, 36) and other theories which define activism as deconstructing and challenging an existing hegemony (Fraser, 1990; Fenster, 2009; Young, 2001) help us shed light on the significant meanings of the feminist and gendered right to the city in publicizing and incorporating women and actions, despite having been criticized for their rigid dichotomy of government and civil society (Brown, 1997).

As shown below, these approaches emphasize that different types of power and suppression generate a diversity of sites and spaces of protest and resistance (Katz, 2003), and that effective response to “power” requires not only creative ideas but also *creative geography* (Wright, 2008, 384). Consequently, we argue that the Levinsky camp's activism is spatial. *Spatial activism* is defined here as collective social action undertaken in public space that challenges power relations within and among different groups. The literature dealing with activism and space distinguishes between *geography of activism* and *activist geography*. The concept of *spatial activism* suggested here corresponds to the existing research on both. Geography of activism usually refers to different models of activism in space, distinguishing between the different goals and types of activism (environmental, gender, etc.) and its various spatial scales (national, urban, neighborhood, etc.). The basic idea is that activism is not only a social but also a spatial phenomenon, and that moreover, geographers have a key role to play in developing and understanding it. Hence it is associated with another concept – activist geography, or action to change oppressive power relations where geographers are involved (Ward, 2007).

Spatial activism, thus, (re)constructs physical, social and cultural spaces, i.e. it affects and is affected by the (re)production of space. The dominance of feminist activism helps understand its spatialities – or *how* the feminist and gendered right to the city is realized. We assume that it strives to transform gendered power relations on various *spatial* scales, such as the body (Baum, 2006; Kotef & Amir, 2007), neighborhood (Enke, 2007; Martin, 2002), and city (Blumen & Halevi, 2009). Moreover, we argue that both the right to the city and spatial activism refer to rights of the disadvantaged that are not only physical but also (and perhaps primarily) symbolic.

This definition is based on how geographers have recently understood activism (e.g. geography of activism and activist geography), and on the argument that all social relations are inherently spatial and activism is about the transformation of sociopolitical relationships (Lefebvre, 1992; Massey, 2005; Soja, 2010), as demonstrated in particular by multiple feminist scholars and geographers (e.g. Blumen & Halevi, 2009; Enke, 2007; Staeheli, 1996, 2008).

The protest movement in Israel: the Rothschild and Levinsky camps

Background

The protest movement in Israel was part of a wave of protest that swept the world since 2011, starting with protests against the authoritarian regimes in the Middle East and North

Africa (Filk & Ram, 2013), followed shortly afterwards in Europe, particularly in Spain and Greece. Although the official agenda of the local protest movement was the high cost of living and housing, it is worthwhile to briefly introduce the main conflicts in Israeli society before moving on to analyze it.

Israeli society is characterized by deeply entrenched national (Jewish–Palestinian), ethnic (Ashkenazi–Mizrahi Jews), gender, religious, and class disparities. The ethnic division is second only to the national one, and likewise has deep historical roots and class implications and continues to affect class divisions among Jewish Israeli citizens (Kimmerling, 2008; Peres & Ben-Rafael, 2007; Smooha, 1993). The ethno-class division between Mizrahi and Ashkenazi citizens has deep historical roots. Before Israel became a state in 1948, most of its Jewish population had been Ashkenazi, but afterwards massive immigration from Asian and African countries shifted the ethnic balance. Some scholars wrote about the oppression of Mizrahi people within the labor market even before 1948, and years after the mass immigration of the 1950s (Bernstein & Swirski, 1982; Swirski, 1989). Others wrote about the spatial division of Ashkenazi Jews living in the center of the country while Mizrahi Jews living mainly in the periphery as a result of state policies dictated by the Ashkenazi elite (Tzfadia & Yacobi, 2011; Yiftachel & Tzfadia, 2004).

The neoliberal economic policy adopted in Israel since the mid-1980s, and in a more extreme form since 2002–2003, made this twin ethno-class gap even wider (Ram, 2007). The Oslo Accords between Israel and the Palestinians also worsened this gap by pushing labor-intensive factories, located mainly in the Mizrahi periphery, out of the country. At the same time, cheap Palestinian labor was replaced with migrant workers (Ram, 2007; Tzfadia & Yacobi, 2011). These processes affected the Mizrahi marginalized population, particularly in the poorer areas of Tel Aviv, where the last decade saw a massive influx of African refugees and migrant workers (Tzfadia & Yacobi, 2011).

In light of this socioeconomic situation the rise of the protest movement was quite understandable. In Tel Aviv, it started in the upscale Rothschild Boulevard area, where young Ashkenazi activists encamped in protest against housing prices. This was followed by the Levinsky camp and other Mizrahi encampments in the urban periphery (Misgav, 2013).

The Rothschild encampment

On July 14, 2011, a few weeks after the movement started out in Spain and shortly before it spread across Europe and America (Juris, 2012), young Daphne Leef decided to demonstrate against the recent increase of her rent. She invited her Facebook friends to join her in setting up tents in Rothschild Boulevard.² The boulevard's lack of symbolic national resonance and down-to-earth association with urban life attracted a broad and diverse collection of protesters (Wallach, 2013). Dozens of young people joined, most of them members of new generation suffering from the effects of a neoliberal political economy (Grinberg, 2013). Within a few weeks, hundreds of tents were erected (see Photograph 1), and the protest spread to Jewish impoverished neighborhoods as well as the mixed city of Jaffa to the south (Monterescu & Shaindinger, 2013; Misgav, 2013). Gradually, the protest spread to other parts of the country, gaining 92% public support (Wallach, 2013).



Photograph 1. The Rothschild boulevard main protest camp (July, 2011).

The process and agenda of the main camp were, from the outset, consensual and avowedly apolitical.³ There was no clear ideology or hierarchy. The media initially viewed it as a big party of “spoiled Ashkenazi rich youngsters, who are a bit childish in their demands for a better quality of life” (Schechter, 2012, 55). Later, the initiators began to formulate the movement's agenda, careful to avoid any controversial issues such as ethnicity, gender, or nationality, and claiming that their protest was not political (Ophir, 2012).⁴

Superficially, this enabled the protest to become consensual (Wallach, 2013), but the movement's consensual nature remained a major source of conflicts throughout its short lifespan. Schechter (2012) elaborates on the internal conflicts in the movement, reflected, for example, in the argument about whether to sing the national anthem at the end of every demonstration. This emphasizes the strong Jewish national conformity of the Rothschild camp (Gordon, 2012), which as we argue was challenged in the Levinsky camp erected 10 days later. We claim that the Levinsky camp presented a counter-hegemonic agenda focusing on ethnic (especially Mizrahi) and feminist issues, and establishing a clearly political space of protest (see Filk & Ram, 2013; Marom, 2013; Schechter, 2012; Misgav, 2013).

Levinsky Park and Achoti Mizrahi feminist movement

While the first camp in Rothschild represented the young generation and the middle class (Filk & Ram, 2013), the camps that followed were established by diverse protesters (Misgav, 2013). Locating the second protest camp in Levinsky Park was intended to highlight the discrimination against marginalized areas in southern Tel Aviv. The park's very location was symbolic of oppression. It was built in 2006 on the ruins of an overcrowded and neglected neighborhood established in 1924 by Mizrahi immigrants and evacuated in the 1950s. In the 1960s, it became a bus depot, and in the 1990s it was turned into a garbage dump, before finally becoming a temporary living space for homeless people, drug addicts (Marom, 2009; Rothbard, 2005), and increasingly also African migrant workers, refugees and asylum seekers (Hatuka, 2010; Keshet & Meiri, 2003). Transformed into a political protest space, the park has thus become a “camp for all”.

The Levinsky camp was erected by *Achoti* (“My Sister”), a movement founded in 2000 by Mizrahi feminist social activists who acknowledged the need to place social justice issues at the center of public discourse and promote solidarity with women from disempowered socioeconomic classes. The movement's aims include giving voice to the majority of women in Israel and promoting tolerance, equality, human rights and dignity among women from disadvantaged and low-income groups in Israel's cultural and geographic peripheries, particularly Mizrahi, Palestinian, and Ethiopian women as well as political refugees and migrant workers (Keshet & Alon, 2014). *Achoti* perceived itself as a feminist organization and declared 2000 as “the year of the female worker” and initiated its flagship project of promoting working-class women (Dahan Kalev, 2007). It was a pioneering movement as “for the first time, working women not situated at the center of power and decision-making were positioned at the center of discourse and action” (Reina-Bendrihen, 2014, 140). Inspired by black and third-world feminism (Lavie, 2011; Shiran, 2002), *Achoti* started as a movement for working, lower-income Mizrahi women living in marginalized areas distinguishing itself from other, mainly Ashkenazi middle-class NGOs which operated mainly in central urban areas (Dahan Kalev, 2007; Dekel, 2014; Keshet, 2005). This agenda changed in 2006, when Shula Keshet was appointed as the movement's chairperson. Then, *Achoti* opened itself up for more women, especially artists and academics both Ashkenazi and Mizrahi, and its focus shifted, in many ways, to more cultural identity-based activism. Many of the movement's new members live and work in Tel Aviv where its headquarters are located.⁵ Furthermore, *Achoti* is the only feminist movement in Israel that currently draws its membership from all segments of society (Lavie, 2014; Shiran, 2002). One of the movement's two offices was opened in 2006 right next to Levinsky Park (Keshet & Alon, 2014), and subsequently played a major role in shaping and producing its spatial activism.

Methodology

On July 23, 2011 we were invited to join *Achoti*'s activists in erecting their protest tent in Levinsky Park. From that time, we were able to undertake reflexive ethnographic research, since one of the authors participated in the camp life from the outset, while the other visited it from time to time. Throughout the 10 weeks of the camp protest, participant observations were conducted on a nearly daily basis. Our methodology is based on Megaron's (2006) claim that ethnographic participant observation is largely neglected by political geographers, although it has the potential to open new research directions and understandings of the geopolitics of spaces.

The following relies mainly on field observations and our field diary. In qualitative researches such as this the narratives from the field diary aim to represent or stimulate thinking about something beyond the story. Most observations include clear elements of participation, such as dining with the activists and participating in decision making, together with documenting their impressions and experiences, following what Juris (2012) called “embodied activism”. Our discussion is also informed by 15 in-depth interviews with *Achoti* activists conducted several weeks after the camp had been evacuated by the municipality in early October 2011. The two core concepts

used here – *gendered and feminist right to the city and spatial activism* – have emerged as the main categories of the thematic analysis of both the ethnographic data and the interviews.

This research fits into the long tradition of feminist research and ethnography in that it perceives any social research as political in the sense of its determination to expose power relations (Behar, 1995). Accordingly, it does not separate academic research from activist work for social change (DeVault, 1999). As such, it serves as an *activist geography* since we, as geographers, took an active part in the protest and identified with its political agenda (Ward, 2007).

Findings

Levinsky protest camp: beginnings

From day one, we noticed that this action of erecting the Levinsky camp was clearly the most explicit way of politicizing a public park space. We claim that this rapid transformation took place by virtue of *Achoti*'s activism, not only because their physical occupation of the park was transformed into a power struggle between the protesters, police, and municipality (Grinberg, 2007), but also because they challenged the traditional exclusion of women from liberal public spheres (Fraser, 1990), and initiated a protest that was not solely about women and gender issues, but also about identity and local urban issues. The camp thus became a political space from its very start because it allowed women, the poor, people of color, LGBT people, Jews and Palestinians, refugees, single mothers and migrant workers to assemble as visible, present and active people and act in a way that enhanced their visibility among the protest movement's more hegemonic participants.

However, immediately after the tents were erected the camp was destroyed by the police and municipality inspectors dismantled and confiscated property. Nevertheless, the protesters did not give up and erected it once more, showing the movement's determination, resistance and commitment to publicize and politicize “hidden” people and agenda:

The inspectors had destroyed the camp and taken the equipment. Before sunrise and after the camp's site was cleaned from the rubble that they had left behind, Achoti's feminist activists called everyone and asked them to come at eight that evening to Levinsky Park in order to rebuild the camp. New tents were erected, and a discussion was held about the protest and the struggle, using a megaphone. Whoever wanted to could speak, and people talked about protests and social struggles in different places... In the evening African refugees and homeless people who wandered around the park sat inside the camp with many activists, whose number kept increasing all the time (Field diary excerpt, July 25, 2011).

Clearly, *Achoti*'s activists insisted on inclusion from day one. From then on, Levinsky camp represented the agenda of the residents of poor neighborhoods and emphasized inclusion in exposing hidden, invisible, and “privatized” identities. This politicization aimed at showing that women and others not only belonged in public spaces, but could also transform them into politically *inclusive* spaces, challenging patriarchal power relations and hegemonic power in general.

This activism emphasized the gendered definition of the right to the city as including women and “others”, which in turn led to the expansion of the *gendered city*. In the following quote, *Achoti* chair Shula Keshet insists on this inclusion as justifying the construction of the Levinsky camp separately from the Rothschild main camp:

We didn't join the Rothschild camp because it was perceived as a middle-class protest... there is no comparing their “deprivation” and ours. If we had joined the Rothschild camp we and our agenda would have disappeared in the general protest. We wanted to remind everyone about the struggles of disadvantaged groups over the last 60 years... There is a struggle about the housing problem, as there is in Rothschild, but our struggle is also about other issues... There is nothing more activist than that: to come and build within the context of the [general] tent struggle (Interview, November 11, 2011).

Keshet does not use the concept of “the right to the city” but in fact refers in her own words, here and elsewhere, to the feminist extended right to the city, to the rights of homeless people and African refugees, and to women’s struggle for greater visibility and inclusion. We read her rationale for erecting a separate camp as a struggle for realizing the rights of people of difference to be included. We argue that her agenda represents what Harvey (2008) calls “democratic management”, that is publicizing people and issues concerning life in the city, and the collective power of all users of urban spaces. Her agenda emphasizes that the right to the city is for all those whose presence in the city is ignored, silenced and thus privatized.

This has been reflected in practice in the inclusive and democratic management of the protest camp under the leadership of *Achoti* activists, but with no clear power hierarchy, enabling all to raise and promote issues either by discussing them publicly or by organizing activities such as protest parades. Thus, we suggest that *Achoti*’s manifesto is the inclusion of all ethnicities, i.e. *gendered and feminist right to the city*. Applying this concept helps us emphasize that politicizing public spaces is part of the struggle for the right to the city by its diverse inhabitants and this is precisely the rationale for erecting this separate camp. Thus, from the outset, this action gave voice, space and publicity to everyone affected by the city’s neoliberal regime which denied them proper housing and access to work, services, and infrastructure like those in the more affluent north.

From public park to political camp

At this stage, there was no danger of being evicted, the number of people involved was growing, and discussions became more intense. The influence of *Achoti* activists decreased slightly as the camp expanded, but the feminist voice remained dominant and *Achoti* remained central. A scene from one of the meetings illustrates these multiple identities and the symbolic expression of the camp as a political space:

It's late at night, the camp is quiet. The tents are arranged differently so that the camp has grown from two rows into one big circle. Fifteen people are sitting in a circle on the lawn. A Mizrahi woman activist is sitting on a chair, reading out a text about the civic struggle and Mizrahi culture. Around her stand

an unusual mixture of people... a young ultra-Orthodox Jew, a young man from a kibbutz, a Thai person speaking Hebrew, two Ethiopians camp members, the chairperson of Achoti, two young Israeli female activists of Achoti, an Israeli transgender man, an Israeli musician from a nearby neighborhood with his girlfriend and a few others. A discussion develops about discrimination and protest, about identity, culture, budgets for education, and about the camp's role in changing the country's priorities and women's role in it (Field diary excerpt, July 30, 2011).

This scene illustrates the multiple identities in the camp that are not so visible in public spaces, let alone in the context of a political discussion. The feminist agenda has succeeded in including the marginalized people in a “discursive space” that changes norms of inclusion and exclusion, opinions on legal issues, interactions and power relations between people (Whitzman, 2007).

In this way, the Levinsky Park was politicized by feminist activism challenging the distinction between the excluded and included, legal and illegal, constituting new forms of inclusion. It also challenged the social construction of publicity and privacy (Staehele, 1996) by collectively performing acts that we usually think of as private, such as cooking, eating, sleeping, and washing dishes (see also Roseneli, 1995).

Many of these tactics had been first used by the women of Greenham Common in Cardiff in 1981 (Creswell, 1996; Feigenbaum, Frenzel, & McCurdy, 2013), and applied later for other purposes elsewhere. In Israel, for example, these practices were also used by homeless, poor and disabled protesters, single mothers (Lavie, 2014), as well as reservist soldiers and families of captive soldiers. However, we see these practices in the Levinsky camp differently as this political/feminist form is part of a larger social protest movement, and also as these tactics, in this context, reflect a different and uniquely inclusionary agenda. Indeed, the media described the feminist spirit of the camp as “divert(ing) the Israeli agenda from military and economic belligerence to civic interests and demands for change in the spheres where mainly women carry the burden – health, welfare and education. Here in Levinsky, women make the decisions in most cases, even more than in Rothschild camp where women are also prominent among the protest’s leaders” (Saar, 2011, August 9).

Hence, the camp was a political space where different, usually marginalized or “hidden” people met and acted together. It became a forum for women and men who would never have met and acted together, and these activities changed opinions, perceptions and ideas, and motivated common action (Chatterton, 2005; Routledge, 1996). One of the activists demonstrated this idea when she said:

I knew about gays and lesbians before, but I never heard the word LGBT before joining the camp's activities, and I did not know there were so many more identities such as transgenders, and through the camp, the meetings, the assemblies and activities I've learnt many amazing things – a new discourse – and got to know new people (Field diary excerpt, August 22, 2011).

Other ways of appropriating and politicizing public spaces – cycling, parades, lectures, a photographic exhibition on housing,

poetry readings, music, drag shows and films were part of Achoti's concept of creating common ground that enabled inclusion. This allowed many activists to create shared activities in the camp, many of which involved culture and fun (Shepard, 2005:

It's a Friday evening gay event of the LGBT community in the camp. A big rainbow flag is hanging above the central arena of the camp. Several dozens of people sit in a circle and discuss issues of the LGBT community, especially "spatial" issues such as housing, safe and unsafe spaces, etc. Later there are musical performances and a drag show, followed by a movie (Field diary excerpt, August 19, 2011).

The program for each day was put up on the board at the camp's entrance. These events also attracted people who came for the cultural activities and were thus exposed to the messages of the protest. They also met the activists and park dwellers outside the camp. Yael from Achoti described these in retrospect activities as "fun":

At the beginning of the struggle in Levinsky I went there, and I must say it was a good way to have a good time on Saturday. This may sound cynical but it is also quite serious, and the issue is complicated. On one hand it annoys me to see people doing things only because they are nice and fun and comfortable, but on the other hand, does it matter if it is comfortable or not? Who says that protest and activism can't be fun? (Interview with Yael, November 29, 2011).

Finally, another unique way of publicizing "hidden" (private) issues were two "broomstick parades", in which activists from the southern neighborhoods marched to Levinsky camp with brooms and cleaning materials to symbolize "cleaning up" dirt and neglect, not of private homes but of public areas, addressing not only the physical level, but also concerning welfare, education, etc.

The paradox of inclusion

It's eight in the evening, a "camp assembly" of about 50 people of different ages, ethnicities and genders are sitting here, among them transgenders who joined the camp and built a tent decorated with flags and slogans... [see Photograph 2]. Veronica, a Congolese refugee, has become a prominent woman in the camp. Some religious Jews from a nearby neighborhood and an [Israeli] social activist from another neighborhood join in and discuss women's safety issues. Some of the people want to discuss the issue of refugees and migrant workers, homeless people and drug addicts, who come to eat here and "threaten people's safety". One of the female participants argues that "this is not Rothschild camp, here all sorts of people come. We decided that this is an open camp for everyone, so everyone should be accepted. They were in the park before us and will stay here after us" (Field diary excerpt, August 1, 2011).

Efforts led by Achoti and other camp activists to promote a gendered and feminist right to the city that is inclusive of marginalized groups created a safety dilemma. The problematic aspect of inclusion – obscuring the differences between private



Photograph 2. The big sign at the entrance to the camp saying in Hebrew: "The Roar of the South—The Southern Neighborhoods Camp". In the background the LGBT rainbow flag and symbols.

and public – was exposed and a challenging paradox revealed. Achoti's feminist agenda did create a space for all. However, this freedom also created a safety problem, amplifying racist voices and giving rise to bitter discussions about the right of certain groups to participate in the protest: should refugees, who had lived in the park before the protest started, eat in at the camp? Should drunkards, prostitutes, and drug addicts be welcomed or excluded? Some camp members argued that since the camp had "invaded" their territory, it could not be forbidden to them. Others claimed that women's safety in the camp was also important. Still others said that many urban spaces were forbidden to women due to certain cultural and social codes, so that it was vital to ensure open and safe access for women in the camp:

Seven in the evening: a discussion is starting now under the title [on the billboard at the camp's entrance] of "Creating a safe space for women in the camp". A woman activist says that she is "afraid here". A decision evolves on how to make the camp a safer place. A decision is reached to place guards in night shifts, who will check everyone who enters the camp at night hours" (Field diary excerpt, August 9, 2011).

This paradox remained unresolved until the very last day. In a way, it reflects the dilemmas inherent in the Lefebvrian right to the city and the principle of total inclusion, the realization of which could come at the expense of people typically vulnerable to violence in public spaces. At Levinsky, the dilemma led to power struggles followed by some transgender participants leaving and raising the question whether the feminist right to the city was an ideal shattered due to threats to personal safety.

Discussion and conclusions

To examine the (feminist) protest within the 2011 protest movement in Israel, we have focused on Mizrahi activism to promote inclusion of all identities, referred to here as the gendered and feminist right to the city. In particular, we have looked at how the Levinsky public park was turned into the Levinsky political camp by obscuring the distinctions between

private and public, legal and illegal, regarding people, actions and spaces. We have deliberately focused on one aspect of this right – inclusion – because of its centrality to the agenda of the Levinsky camp. We suggest here that this key aspect represents “the protest within the protest” of the Mizrahi feminist activists that expresses their own fight for inclusion in Ashkenazi-dominated Israeli society, and in urban space, as much as their agenda to include other identities, especially non-Jews or non-citizens.

Our analysis reveals how the gendered and feminist right to the city challenged historical patriarchal boundaries. It shows how women activists gave new, more inclusive meanings to controversial or forbidden issues. It also presents the problem of enacting the right to the city while respecting women's rights to safe spaces. Thus it challenges the Lefebvre (1991, 1992) notion of the right to the city which does not properly address identity – in this case gender and ethnic identities – as an obstacle to be overcome, and the safety paradox created by its realization. The politicization of public spaces reflects a “spatial strategy” (Secor, 2004), in which identities, boundaries and configurations of belonging are set and then deconstructed. Rights, argues Secor (2004), derive from taking responsibility and commitment to help shape the city as a work of art. In a similar vein, realizing the gendered and feminist right to the city is precisely committing to give voice to hidden agendas and people.

In conclusion, this paper contributes to the existing debate on the private/public aspects of the right to the city by firstly, introducing the *feminist and gendered right to the city*, a new inclusionary form that encompasses marginalized populations, actions and spaces.

Secondly, the paper emphasizes *power* as dictating inequalities and suppression, thereby transcending its limited conventional definition and exposing the politicization of the Levinsky public park spaces. This is done by showing how such feminist meanings of spaces challenge existing social constructions of public and private, enabling people of different gender, sexual, ethnic, religious and also national identities (Gordon, 2012) to interact in a way that could not have happened had the camp not existed or had a non-feminist agenda been developed. In many cases the camp linked different struggles and social classes and provided them with moral and even financial support. Thus, it represents a new pattern of feminist protest, and an extension of the notion of Mizrahi feminist identity (Dahan Kalev, 1999; Motzafi-Haller, 2001; Shohat, 2003). We claim that this new pattern differs from other protest encampments in Tel Aviv's urban periphery (Monterescu & Shaindlinger, 2013; Misgav, 2013) in that the other camps were focused on housing agendas. They were led by homeless and Mizrahi female activists protesting against the neoliberal regime that had left them without a decent place to live, as “excluded Citizens” (Benjamin, 2014). In the Levinsky camp, on the other hand, the housing agenda was not in the forefront (Misgav, 2013), but was another issue related to Mizrahi oppression and the Mizrahi feminist agenda. It should be noted, however, that the activities in Levinsky later contributed to the establishment and organization of the public housing movement, with its ethnic, national, gender and political dimensions (Tzfadia & Benjamin, 2014; Misgav, 2013). From this perspective, the Levinsky camp, together with other encampments in the urban periphery, served as a “base camp for action”, where

the planning for protests and organization took place (Feigenbaum et al., 2013).

Thirdly, the paper presents the paradox that arose from the inclusionary nature of the gendered and feminist right to the city and the challenge it posed in terms of safety and harassment, which is critical to future mobilization efforts of feminist activism.

Fourthly, the paper demonstrates how the Levinsky camp and its environs functioned in a way reminiscent of the Arendtian concept of public space of collective political action that produces discourses, emotional experiences, arguments and crises. It was greatly influenced by the Mizrahi feminists who established it. It was spatial activism that ultimately realized the *Mizrahi-feminist and gendered right to the city*, not only politically and economically, but also socially and culturally. In this respect, the Levinsky camp became a political space that emphasized the inclusion of gender, ethnic, national and other identities (see also De Botton et al., 2005). As Soja (2010, 109) asserts, space can be a meeting place for movements and struggles that cannot join together except by creating and motivating political acts and activism that maintained its momentum for a while.

Finally, we suggest that further research be undertaken to develop the theoretical notions of politicized space, right to the city and spatial activism. For example, further research could examine the extent to which the sense of activism crosses social boundaries so that those outside the protest recognize politicization and activism as inclusive or transformative. Future research can also shed light on questions of continuity: are those who participated in the protest as their first step in activism still involved in forms of activism or do they still exercise their right to the city individually?

Endnotes

¹ Mizrahi and Ashkenazi are ethnic divisions within Jewish society in Israel. The former are those born in Asian or African countries, and the latter in Europe or America – and their descendants. These differences are not purely geographic, but have significant cultural, socioeconomic and power implications.

² Over the last decade this boulevard has become the embodiment of Tel Aviv's affluent, secular bourgeoisie with its espresso bars and cyclists – unlike Tahrir Square's embodiment of nationalism (Ramadan, 2012).

³ In reality, the camp became more and more political as the protest proceeded.

⁴ Ophir (2012) proposes a redefinition of “political”, claiming that despite the protesters' efforts to remain consensual, the actual and verbal accusation of the government as problematic is itself political.

⁵ These activities came together with a continuation of more class-based projects that aim to empower women in the periphery, such as the project with Ethiopian Women in Kiryat Gat or the fair trade project that sells products made by lower-class women, Mizrahi Jews, Ethiopians or Palestinians.

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