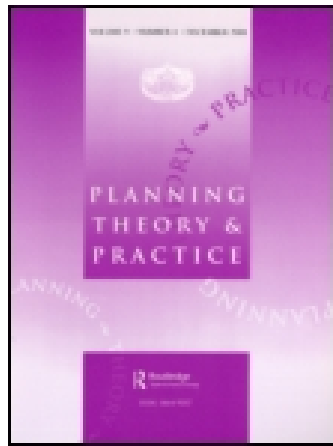


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## Memory and place in participatory planning

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## Memory and place in participatory planning

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This paper looks at the role of memory in exploring multiple meanings of place, and its active empowering role in participatory planning processes. A team of scholars from the Planning for the Environment with Communities Laboratory at Tel Aviv University's Department of Geography and Human Environment (PECLAB) was invited by the Bat Yam municipality to initiate a participatory process with residents of Meo'not Yam Neighbourhood to formulate a consensual renewal plan. During the project's three years (2010–2013) dozens of meetings and in-depth interviews with residents were held, as well as surveys conducted to understand the residents' sense of place and wishes for their neighbourhood. One of the main methods was to remember and discuss the neighbourhood's past, with reference to its future development. This discussion is the focus of the paper.

**Keywords:** memory; participatory planning; place; empowerment; community

In what follows, we elaborate on the complex relationships between memory, place and planning, and discuss the link between past memory and future planning encountered in the project. The paper argues that exploring individual and collective “spatial memory” is critical to community-based planning, especially when significant spatial changes are proposed. However, as shown below, the use of memory to understand a sense of place can be challenging. “*Forgetting together*” with idealisation of the past can become real obstacles in the planning process or in reaching a consensual plan (Baum, 1999).

Another aspect of participatory planning highlighted here is the potential of personal memory for empowering and mobilising residents individually or collectively (Rocha, 1997). Residents' empowerment and capacity building was not one of the municipality's stated objectives at the start of the project, but was included later. This was because planning was considered not only as a process that provides residents' practical needs (such as infrastructure improvement, expansion of flats) but also (and sometimes primarily) as a process that enables strategic changes in social and power relations between community members (Fenster, 2009a). As argued in this paper, such changes are essential to enhance the residents' ability to deal with prospective regeneration initiatives by the municipality or private developers who are usually motivated by profit. The latter were not part of this project although some had already expressed interest in the neighbourhood as it is located near the beach and the city centre.

The paper then takes the next step in the research on the importance of place in planning and the significance of resident involvement in such processes. Using memory, it reveals not only the complexity of relations between memory, place and planning but also how important it is to work with communities undergoing major regeneration changes. It also brings to the forefront the notion of antagonism and conflicts in participatory planning but shows that, despite the fact that only a small number of residents took active part in the process, their involvement made them

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knowledgeable representatives of the residents and those who negotiate at present with potential private developers on various options for the neighbourhood.

When analysing each expression of memory of a place, we highlight the difficulties and controversies arising from them – among the residents, between their lay knowledge and the professional knowledge of the PECLAB team, as well as between personal memories on the one hand, and planning documents and archival materials on the other.

The first section reviews how memory is related to place and to planning with communities. Next, we elaborate on the methodology of working with the community. The following section describes the planning systems in Israel and Bat Yam followed by a brief description of the neighbourhood's character and regeneration alternatives. We then analyse the visual, cognitive and more than representational memory expressions. Finally, we discuss the relations between place, participatory planning and memory, debating whether memory and forgetting are essential components in participatory planning and in individual and community empowerment.

## **Place, participatory planning and memory**

### *Place*

Because planning is also about “the interconnection of people and places, activities and territories” (Healey, 2005, p. 5), place matters when discussing issues of planning, while the memory of a place is one of the ways to understand the meanings and emotions around it. Despite their importance, “little has been written about the ways in which places enter into planning practice and thereby matter in planning theory” (Beauregard, 2013, p. 8). This paper aims to fill this gap by exposing the particular understanding of a place called Meo'not Yam by its residents, planners and the municipality representatives, and highlight contradictory place representations among the residents. Beauregard (2013) distinguishes between space, place and site. Following Casey (1997), he defines space as endlessly and essentially ethereal. Space also defines a place. Places exist because “people and things occupy them, give them shared meanings and situate them in collective memory” (Beauregard, 2013, p. 16). Thus, places are not empty but filled with the tangible and non-tangible, including memories of people, events and feelings. In contrast, a site is defined as “a place re-cast in professional terms” (Beauregard, 2013, p. 15). Meo'not Yam is conceived here as a place and not a merely physical site. It is a place within the context of planning – that is, its socio-political and economic conditions do shape the planning process but we also ask whether it is the place of the expert or of practice, represented by documents, plans, drawings, for example.

Places often change their meanings over the years. They can be perceived as sites at times, and then evaluated in context, or they can be part of the practice of actual planning. As Beauregard (2013) argues, places of practice should be included in any theory concerned with the micro-politics of planning, and this paper aims to show how applying the notion of memory as remembering and forgetfulness of a place is linked to the (micro-) politics of planning, and how participatory planning helps understand the kind of place residents want to live in and the changes they are willing to tolerate.

### *Participatory planning*

Participatory planning seeks to transform power and social relations by shifting the focus away from the planners' dominant professional knowledge to include local individual and community knowledge (Fenster, 2004b; 2012; Rydin, 2007; Sandercock, 1998, 2003). Developed from the mid 1960s, participatory planning theory, methods and practices refer to a rich variety of approaches to planner–community relations. To name but a few: advocacy planning (Davidoff, 1965), radical

planning (Harvey, 1973), equity planning (Sandercock, 1998), and communicative planning (Healey, 1997) (see Fenster, 2009a; Sandercock, 1998 for detailed reviews).

In this project the PECLAB team worked in a manner that alternated between advocacy and communicative planning – evoking and discussing community members’ memories of the place as a major tool of engaging them in the planning process, thereby including local knowledge and importantly, also enhancing the sense of community identity and empowering its members. The latter argument is based on Laclau and Mouffe (2004 [1985]) who suggested perceiving social relations through notions such as radical democracy, pluralist thinking and activism. Among other methods, they use antagonism as the basis for new discourse and raising communities’ social awareness and empowerment. Our investigation applies these concepts of antagonism and discourse as well as Rocha (1997) ladder of empowerment which proposes a clearer understanding by way of typology of empowerment.

### *Memory and forgetfulness*

Several scholars emphasise the strong link between the social-spatial and planning practice in the context of memory. Massey (1995) contends that places are always hybrid and therefore every historical period and every population group affects them. Blumen and Halvei demonstrate how a place simultaneously contains past events and activities and is identified with the present (2009), (also in: Halevi and Blumen (2011)). Referring to the role of memory in planning, Sandercock (1998, 2003) juxtaposes modernist planning with memory and contends that modern urban planners have become “thieves of memories”, who ignore the city’s past and the memories engraved in its spaces under the pretext of development. In a similar vein, Fenster (2004a, 2004b) suggests memory, belonging and commemoration as alternative elements to the modernist, professional planning discourse – an approach that Yacobi and Fenster (2010) call “spatialised counter-memory”. Baum (1999) offers a different view, that communities must remember their past realistically, in a way that “balances imagination and reality” (p. 11).

Forgetting is part of the discussion of memory (Gelber, 2007). Baum (1999) asserts that: “communities find it hard to surrender the past. Even while apparently engaging in planning, members may recall another era and imagine that remembering it will keep it alive or resurrect it.” (p. 10). Hassan (2005, p. 197) demonstrates this practice in urban contexts in Israel/Palestine, and calls it “the politics of forgetting and memory”, driven by different actors and multiple opposing interests (Lee & Yeoh, 2006). Both memory and forgetting are used, in fact, as basic concepts, which help decipher the production of the physical and sociocultural layers of space (Yacobi & Fenster, 2010).

Memory (both personal and collective) fulfils different needs simultaneously (Anderson, 1991, Taydor-Baumel, 1995), such as the need for rituals that promote national unity or the educational need to construct a cross-generational ethos. Collective memory is perceived as socially structured through political, social and cultural actions (Halbwachs, 1980; Ohana & Wistrich, 1996; Zerubavel, 1995). Thus, “autobiographical memory” (Halbwachs, 1980), or “narrative of commemoration” (Zerubavel, 1995) are some of the concepts relevant to this research. Finally, Nora (1993) makes another connection between memory and cityscapes, arguing that memory is associated with sites – in the same way that history is associated with events. Cities are thus places where memories are stored, becoming texts of memory in their own right (Pile, 2002).

## **Methods and procedures of working with the community**

### *Methods*

The PECLAB team’s work started in September 2010 with the Bat Yam Biennale of Landscape Architecture, which consisted of dozens of local projects spread all over the city. Our first task with

the residents was to conceptualise and produce our presentation for this event. After many discussions we decided to exhibit residents' photos and mental maps and to organise two guided tours in the neighbourhood (see below for details).

After the Biennale – held during the first year, two more big meetings took place in which both resident and non-resident owners participated. Other activities included fortnightly meetings with a small group of owner residents, personal meetings and talks with several residents, and two cycles of in-depth interviews which included the drawing of mental neighbourhood maps, one several weeks after the beginning of the project and the other at the end of its first year (which provided the fieldwork material for this paper).

Our fieldwork also included a door-to-door survey on the socio-economic situation of each household, as well as on subjective reflections about the neighbourhood and daily problems faced by the residents. In total, 33 (30% of Meo'not Yam's 108 flats) completed the survey, but we did collect names and contact details from 102 owners. We found that only 38% of the owners resided in Meo'not Yam while the rest let their flats. Part of our work was to engage the non-resident owners in the participatory process, and indeed, some of them came to the meetings – particularly to the two big meetings. Another interesting finding was that 30% of the 44 resident owners said they had lived in their flats between 11–20 years. Of the renters, only 15 responded: 8 of them had lived there between 1–3 years and the other 7 between 4–7 years. Finally, 75% of the flats were occupied by 1–2 people and the rest by 3–5. These figures provide an indication of the owner/renter situation, and of the number of years the residents have lived in the neighbourhood.

Throughout the project the PECLAB team conducted planning/legal archival research in order to explore the neighbourhood's history, legal status and land and property rights. These materials were taken from the municipality's engineering archive and the Registrar of Companies' archive in Jerusalem.

### *Procedures of working with residents*

We started the process of participatory planning with efforts to meet the residents informally and invite them to join the formal meetings. We advertised invitations for the first meeting on posters at building entrances and via direct mailing. We also walked around the neighbourhood several times and issued invitations in person.

Some 35–40 residents and non-resident owners arrived at the first meeting.<sup>1</sup> The rest did not come, mainly due to lack of time (non-resident owners) or inner conflicts among the residents themselves around issues such as keeping the compound clean and tidy, the use of the communal parking lot, flat expansions. Despite that, our survey revealed that 52 different people (both residents and non-resident owners) arrived at the 16 meetings (in the first year); 63% came to 1–3 meetings, 19% came to four or more and 10% came irregularly to 4–9 meetings; 55% were flat owners. During the 3 years of meetings, the number of active residents decreased due to lack of patience or interest and mistrust in the process. In the end, a group of between 9–15 residents – 7–13 resident owners and two non-resident owners – became the active group we worked with. They believed in the process and were willing to spend time and effort promoting changes in the neighbourhood. They included women and men aged 50 and above, with low to average income. They were Jewish – some were born in Israel and others were immigrants. Whilst it seems that only a small proportion of residents fully participated, it's important to remember that only 38% of the flats were home to owners, so these activists actually represent almost half of the resident owners. All of them were later elected as representatives in the neighbourhood elections in May 2012. We consider these residents as legitimate representatives of the community, and in turn, we consider the entire process as “planning with community”.

In what follows we briefly describe the Israeli planning system, the history of Bat Yam and of the Meo'not Yam neighbourhood.

## **Planning in Israel, Bat Yam and in Me'not Yam**

### ***Planning in Israel***

The planning system in Israel is based on the 1965 Planning and Construction Law, based on the 1936 British Mandate Regional Planning Order. The 1965 law provides for a three-level hierarchy of statutory bodies: one national planning committee, six district planning committees and some 250 local (including municipal) planning committees. Plans are discussed at the local and district level and before their approval, they are presented to the public to allow submissions of objections (Fenster, 2004a). This is in fact the only form of participation provided for in the 1965 law – a clear indication of the Israeli planning system's centralism (Fenster, 2004a). Critical scholars claim that such planning procedures are non-democratic (Alfasi, 2003) and have a dark side that oppresses minority groups or weakens communities (Yiftachel, 1998). Conversely, participatory planning is voluntary, initiated mainly by NGOs or pioneering municipalities such as in Tel Aviv-Jaffa and Bat Yam, without being regulated by any legal mechanism. Even the newly proposed planning law does not provide for participatory planning, and thus it is not going to be more democratic (Yacobi & Rokem, 2013).

### ***The city of Bat-Yam and its planning approach***

Bat-Yam is a suburb south of Tel Aviv-Jaffa. Its 130,000 residents are mostly Jewish, with only a few hundred Christians, mostly new immigrants from the former Soviet Union (Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, <http://www.cbs.gov.il>). The land was purchased from Arabs living in neighbouring Jaffa in 1921, and first settled in 1926. In 1936, Bayit Vagan ("Home and Garden") became a local council, and in 1937 changed its name to Bat Yam ("mermaid") (Olitzky, 1984, 1950). In 1958 it became a city, and since then it has absorbed several Jewish immigration waves from various countries (Olitzky, 1984; Magen, 1959).

The municipality's development approach is mainly based on the "knockdown and construction" type of urban regeneration. Its planning department promotes community participation (hence the project under study), which is quite a rarity in the Israeli context.

### ***Meo'not Yam neighbourhood and regeneration alternatives***

Me'not Yam ("Sea Residences") Neighbourhood in Bat Yam<sup>2</sup> spans over one hectare. It was planned in 1949 as a public housing compound made up of two-storey buildings, with modest 1.5–2 room flats, with a total of 108 flats and eight shops. Each dweller was a sub-tenant through subsidiaries of a parent company which was the main lessee. By the end of the 1960s the leasing companies stopped operating, but the parent and subsidiary companies remained the property's legal owners. This led to legal and planning complications, which resulted, inter alia, in physical and social deterioration in the last decades. Several ideas for neighbourhood regeneration were suggested in the past by the municipality and developers, but didn't materialise due to a lack of consensus among the residents. Because of this, the Bat Yam municipality decided to fund this community-based planning project in order to decide on an agreed plan.

Four regeneration alternatives were formulated by the PECLAB team and discussed with the residents and the municipality representative: (1) *As is* – leaving the current situation unchanged; (2) *Improvement-preservation* – minimal planning and regularisation without construction or development; (3) *Modest urban renewal* or re-planning the site on the existing basis with

additional constructions to the buildings, their expansion and repartition of public areas; and (4) *Knockdown and construction* including re-planning of the site, demolishing all existing buildings and replacing them with new and massive construction, with a dramatic change in the neighbourhood's human and social makeup (Planning for the Environment with Communities report (PECLAB), 2011).

Our discussions with the residents consisted of two parts. First, we convened two big meetings and invited the flat owners with whom we'd had contact. Only half of them arrived at the meetings, mostly those living in their own flats. In the meetings, the four alternatives were visually presented by the residents' representatives, the municipality representative and the authors, detailing the pros and cons of each of them as discussed with the residents in our fortnightly meetings. Secondly, we sent letters to owners who didn't take part in the meetings, specifying the four alternatives and asking them to select their preferences. We received a total of 49 responses, showing a sharp contrast in opinions between resident and non-resident owners. The former were divided almost evenly between alternatives 2–4, while 86% of non-resident owners selected the fourth option. This clearly shows that resident owners want change but within the existing framework and the physical set-up of buildings, while the latter see their flats as mere financial investment and want to maximise profit.

We discussed these results with the municipality. Despite the clear majority vote for the knockdown option, we all agreed that this was not realistic and perhaps not even fair towards the resident-owners who were divided among themselves. At the same time it became clear that the site's legal and planning status prevented the realisation of any alternative development because of the complex "parcelling" at the site which crosses buildings, preventing any independent decision by every building, and requiring consensual agreement of all neighbourhood residents (not only the majority). Therefore, the decision of the regeneration alternative was postponed until the re-parcelling of the site had been carried out. Thus, in the second year of the project (2011–2012) and in light of our recommendations, the municipality hired an architect to regulate and re-parcel the site, a process welcomed by the residents as they understood that this was a prerequisite to any future development in the area.

For these reasons the municipality accepted our recommendation to spend the second year working with community members on sorting out daily physical problems such as rubbish collection and parking. During the third year (2012–2013) we worked on electing a representative body. The PECLAB team's involvement ended in July 2013 but the municipality representative is still working with neighbourhood representatives.

In the next section we analyse what we have identified as three expressions of memory of place, and we offer close examination of their relevance to participatory planning and individual and community empowerment.

## Place, memory and participatory planning in Me'onot Yam

### *Visual-material expression*

The visual-material information by which memory has been related to Me'onot Yam can be divided into two types of expression: *professional* abstract visual materials such as planning documents, company records, maps and charts; and *personal* visual materials such as photographs of the neighbourhood, family photos informing us about the physical surroundings in the past (Rose, 2010) and personal documents. Each of these expressions perceive place differently, reminding us of Lefebvre's (1992) notion of the different representations of space and place. The documents speak directly to the differences between the abstraction of space, that is a result of professional practice expressed in professional visual materials, and the everyday experiences of lived space represented in the personal visual materials.

### *Professional visual materials*

As already mentioned, in the first stage of our work we undertook an in-depth study of the neighbourhood's planning and legal status using historical-geographical and planning archival sources such as: master plans, various planning documents, maps, aerial photographs, drawings, and correspondence from the Registrar of Companies' archive. These documents contained rich information about the legal planning complexity, land ownership, the original plan, and its revision over the years<sup>3</sup> (see Figure 1). They reflected a specific type of representation of place via its planning but could not shed light on the residents' social condition or personal histories (Crang, 2003; Rose, 2000, 2010; Rose & Tolia-Kelly, 2012).

Indeed, when we presented the materials to the residents, they disagreed about the accuracy of the details in the "objective" documents, which for us were the basis for unlocking the past of the place. For instance, while the planning documents, blueprints and maps informed us about the original planning of the walkways between the houses, some residents argued that in reality they were built differently. Their memory exposed a local past which was to some extent different from the professional, objectified past portrayed in the official documents. Hence, we asked the residents to tell us what they knew as a type of counter-memory, challenging the official narrative and claiming a more accurate representation of the past – the lived space. This carried not only symbolic but also political significance, as it constituted an additional expression of antagonism and defiance against professional planning knowledge and representation. Challenging professional

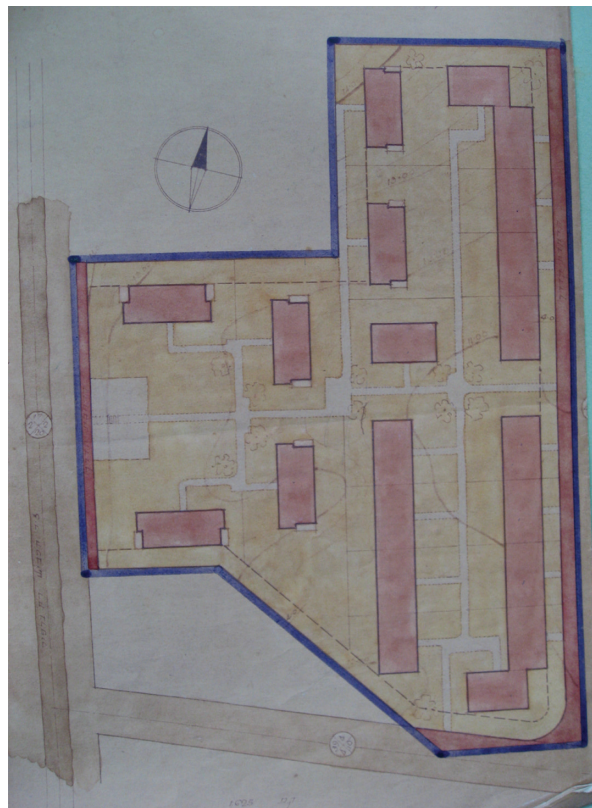


Figure 1. Planning blueprint of Me'onot Yam's buildings and walkways array, 1949. Source: Bat Yam municipality engineering archive.

representations of space made the residents more aware of the potential and inherent power embodied in their knowledge.

### *Personal visual materials*

We asked residents for documents and photos representing their lived space, particularly in the 1970s to 1980s, for which we had found few professional materials. We were surprised to find that, besides photos of the neighbourhood – of the green lawn that used to convey a “countryside” atmosphere in the neighbourhood, the relatively new houses and the sign announcing upcoming construction at the time when the neighbourhood was just being developed (Figures 2 and 3) – some residents chose family photos as their representation of place. Figure 4 shows a mother and baby in an intimate moment with the newly built neighbourhood in the background. Figure 5 shows a white, clean new balcony on which three family members are standing. In both, private, intimate memories are representations of place that intermingle with the public, tangible positive elements of a neighbourhood signifying cleanliness, young families and a fresh start (Rose, 2010).

Photographs are, in fact, a subjective phenomenology of going through a certain social experience, and are an articulation of social value on the one hand, or defiance and doubt on the other (Crang, 2003; Rose, 2000, 2001; Tolia-Kelly, 2010, 2011). Either way, the use of visual images helps develop diversified thinking about the relationship between personal identity and society (Hoss, 2012) or between past and future in participatory planning. Furthermore, the use of images as self-expression of spatial representation allows the researcher to explore topics which participants find hard to talk about because of emotional pain (such as the death of people shown in the photos), the limitations of language, or the difficulties in reaching unconscious layers of the subject (Hoss, 2012).

It seems that the family photos presented to us carried some meaning for the neighbourhood, be it the physical layout of the buildings in the 1980s or the location – the place where the photo had been taken (Figure 5) or its dilapidated state (Figure 6). In this respect, these photos were not only physical expressions of a place revealing information about the condition of the buildings or the public space, but contained personal narratives that were also exposed in the meetings, reflecting a sense of hope and a fresh start, as well as familiarity, solidarity and closeness between the residents, based on common positive memories. This was in sharp contrast to the more recent situation of anonymity and alienation described in the survey, where 15% of respondents, mostly owner residents, didn't know any neighbour's name, 61% knew between 5–10 names and 7% knew more than 10. The solidarity and nostalgia evoked by these photos



Figure 2. View of the neighbourhood in the early 1980s. Source: Gabriel Halfon.



Figure 3. A sign announcing upcoming construction in the Me'onot Yam area circa the late 1970s. Source: Dorit Segal.

were also expressed at the two big meetings where the pictures were screened. The photos created a sense of common legacy also for newer residents (39%, mostly owners, had lived less than 10 years in the neighbourhood), for whom they contained new information and were not evocative of a living memory (Valentine, Sporton, & Nielsen, 2009), reinforcing their sense of attachment to the neighbourhood and solidarity with the memories of their more senior neighbours. This is a unique way of learning the past in participatory planning processes – where veteran residents represent their place to the newer residents in order to provide the necessary background for choosing between regeneration alternatives.



Figure 4. Family photo with neighbourhood buildings in the background in the 1970s. Source: Dorit Segal.



Figure 5. Family photo of Yona Lerner on her parents' balcony in the early 1960s. Source: Yona Lerner.

By focusing on the role of photographs in participatory planning, we follow the approach emphasising the *political* significance of visual products in geographical research as a way to give voice to and empower communities and identities, making the “other” more tangible (Tolia-Kelly, 2011). As Barthes (1981, p. 38) defined it, the photograph “speaks, induces us, vaguely, to think”. Combined with the “objective” professional planning documents and mental maps discussed below, the residents’ photos presented to guests during the 2010 Biennale – the project’s opening event – gave them an opportunity to share their good memories of the neighbourhood and express their sense of attachment to the place.

### *Cognitive expression*

Drawing mental maps was one of the methods used to extract local knowledge. First, we asked each resident to draw their home and the neighbourhood on two separate sheets of paper, one representing the present and one representing the desired future. We used the same method in our in-depth interviews, with reciprocal commentary of researcher and resident, based on Fenster’s (2009b) three-step mental mapping method.

We faced certain suspicions and objections as some of the residents were sceptical about the whole idea. They felt that they didn’t know how to draw – reactions frequently described in the mental mapping literature (Fenster, 2009b). Nevertheless, most residents agreed to draw and

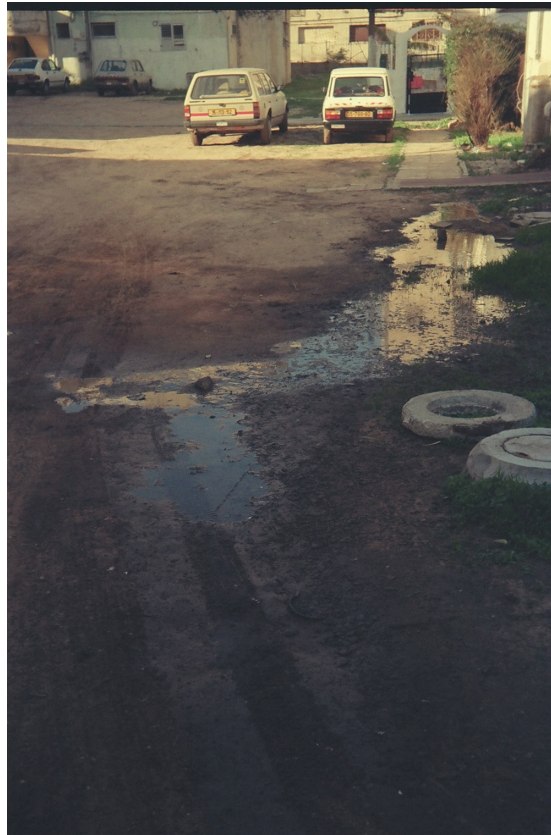


Figure 6. The parking area prior to its paving, showing the sewage and mud in the late 1980s. Source: Gabriel Halfon.

explain their drawings, which helped us with the initial acquaintance and internal representation of the place. The maps helped us understand the residents' visions for the neighbourhood, especially when they indicated existing hazards. Moreover, they reflected the community's dynamics through the personas and buildings that they remembered to draw and those they forgot, and through the way they drew themselves in relation to the neighbourhood. The maps also indicated doubts in our (the researchers' and municipality representatives') ability and motivation to generate real change. This was due to long years of disappointment, sometimes explicitly voiced in sentences written over the maps, with previous private and municipal initiative. The way we handled these suspicions was to suggest that because this project was financed by the municipality and accompanied by its representative it might yield different results.

Many researchers have used mental mapping to trace locals' perceptions of space and the environment, both globally, for example Downs (1970), Downs and Stea (1977), Ittelson (1978) and Ittelson, Proshansky, Rivlin, and Winkel (1974), and in the particular Israeli context, for example Fenster (2004b, 2009b), Fleishman and Salomon (2008) and Portugali (1993). Scholars such as Fenster (2004a, 2009b), Lynch (1960), Portugali (1999) and Sletto (2009) contend that mental maps help urban planners understand how people perceive the city as a subjective representation of the environment, a scheme of individual identity, which articulates symbolic and sensory knowledge and reflects the drawers' "mental archive" (Tolia-Kelly, 2006). Critics, however (e.g. Golledge & Stimson, 1997), argue that the maps represent certain aspects of the

spatial image in the human brain, but not the entire information stored in it. This criticism refers particularly to mental maps' failure to represent other modalities such as smell and sounds, with which we will deal in the next section.

We also asked participants to draw subjective representations of the neighbourhood's past, as illustrated in Figure 7. Unlike the mostly positive past as expressed in the photos, some of these past maps expressed negative attitudes, through captions such as "a mess" or "Warsaw Ghetto" (meaning an overcrowded, neglected space) in one map, and "sand and more sand" in another. In both maps there are also positive elements, such the well-organised planning of the buildings, paths and other structural elements in one, or the spaciousness and peaceful atmosphere in the other. This mixture of negative and positive descriptions of the past emerged also in the in-depth interviews, and in the open group discussions. For example, Rebecca reflects in her personal interview: "When I came to live here 18 years ago it was scary to enter the neighbourhood, there was no light, there was sand [all over]; it was scary but slowly they [the municipality] developed the paths and installed lights and the situation improved" (interview, 13 June 2012).

The present situation maps (Figure 8) also include verbal references to the neighbourhood's current problems: "dark walkways" and "broken pavements", asphalt covering public spaces, lack of greenery and cosy public spaces, and the buildings' physical neglect.

### *A more-than-representational expression*

Spatial memory also involves expressions, which are not represented verbally or visually through photos or mental mapping, although they are highly significant in creating a sense of place and belonging. These will be described here, in line with the increasing geographical involvement with spatial non-representational theory and analysis, or with how place is created in an active process involving human bodies, sensations and emotions. This is in light of the fact that today, geography deals not only with representational practices (e.g. mapping, aerial photographs, geographic information systems (GIS)) but also with the non-representational, the sensory, and the physical, which create places through action (Thrift, 2007; Thrift & Dewsbury, 2000). We argue that participatory planning should also involve non-representational practices as another means of reaching a deep understanding of a place in planning theory and practice. Thus, the geography of the non-representational engages not only with the final product of the action, which can be mapped and represented, but also with the action itself as a practice and process, with the emotions, discourse and performativity involved, which generate a different and new spatial expression through smells and voices (McCormack, 2009). According to this approach, every occurrence is significant, including words said, actions performed, bodily gestures, texts, and particularly the occurrences themselves (Anderson & Harrison, 2010; Harrison, 2000).



Figure 7. Mental maps of the past drawn by neighbourhood residents (a man and a woman, left and right, respectively).

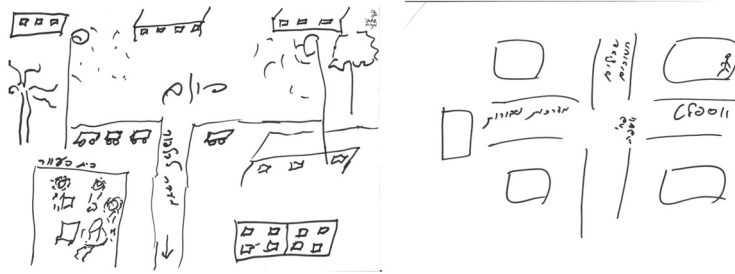


Figure 8. Mental maps of the present, drawn by the same residents as in Figure 7.

Recent research on non-representational geographies of memory focuses on “the present moment of practice” rather than on past memory (Jones, 2011). Like other scholars (e.g. Tolia-Kelly, 2010), Jones argues that memory is spatially expressed both through texts and discourse, and through visual-tangible materials. In this he follows Lorimer (2005), who prefers to think of “more-than-representational” geography, since the teleology of the original “non” title has proven to be an unfortunate hindrance (Lorimer, 2005). For Lorimer, “more than” connotes multifarious, open encounters in the all-important realm of practice. The new “scapings” of ear, mouth and nose can be visible in many spaces such as home, garden, work, etc. and investigated through photos, community art or other presented objects.

The connection made here between more-than-representational geography and participatory planning refers to the necessity to deeply understand residents’ sense of place as expressed in pleasant or unpleasant smells; sounds or noises; ugly or pleasant vistas, etc. It is manifested in two expressions of spatial memory in the “more-than” spirit: the controversy around the parking lot and the guava scent photos (Figures 6 and 9, respectively). The former represents the most problematic planning issue for the residents. Twenty years ago, as a result of complaints about flooding and sewage, the municipality decided to pave a vast area at the centre of the neighbourhood with asphalt, covering the mud and weeds that had been there before. Soon enough the area became a parking lot for residents and non-residents, who took advantage of the lack of enforcement to park their vehicles there. During the meetings, some residents said it was a blessing and referred to the nuisance that had been there before, while others thought the parking was a nuisance and demanded to turn the area into a park, or at least restore it to its original state. One of the dominant activists in the group kept demanding the latter solution throughout the meetings. Living near the improvised parking lot, he suffered from noises and bad smells, to the point that he could not even open a window. This is what he said in the residents’ meeting:

Why does it always have to be public? Why is my building always a parking lot or a park? How public, what public?! Every building deserves a private area of its own ... I have been public for many years ... ever since they built a parking lot under my window ... You don’t understand what it’s like, living for years without being able to open a window in my flat. Nothing happens besides noises of cars and the smell of petrol. I can’t breathe and can’t ventilate the house. Close down this parking! Enough with it! (George, December 2011).

It is interesting that George refers to smells and noise, senses that Tuan (1974) considers to be “super-spatial” components crossing the line between private and public. His lively description demonstrates how “non-representational” issues are sometimes more present and disturbing than representational ones.

The second example is of the guava trees in a part of the neighbourhood that was so significant for one of the residents that she guided a tour around the guava scent theme for the guests of the 2010 Biennale which launched the project. She proposed the tour in order to demonstrate to



Figure 9. The guava scent sign from the Biennale, October 2010.

the visitors the neglected and broken walkways, piled with rubbish and weeds, which symbolise the neglect and deterioration of the neighbourhood as a whole. Her idea was to take the visitors to one of the neglected walkways, where she used to enjoy walking in the past, smelling the scent of nearby guava trees that as she said, made her feel a sense of belonging. Some of the trees were uprooted during illegal construction and takeovers, a common phenomenon in the neighbourhood, which she was trying to fight. When the visitors in her tour stood on the neglected walkway and looked at the last guava tree, her narrative of the spatial past and desired future of the neighbourhood referred especially to the smell that she used to enjoy.

Once the tour became represented in a sign (Figure 9), it was partly transformed into a visual-material expression, which reinforces our argument regarding the blurred boundaries between the different categories. Moreover, the guava scent narrative became meaningful in shaping the collective memory of the active residents, which highlighted both the nostalgic dimension and the problematic past of environmental nuisances. This memory was endowed with an additional expression, visual material in nature, when the residents chose a logo for the activists' committee it contained a drawing of a guava flower with a matching caption (Figure 10).

### Discussion: memory, participatory planning and empowerment?

We found a complex mixture of nostalgic positive and negative memories, as opposed to the clearly negative present, as a dominant discourse during the first year of the Meo'not Yam project. The



Figure 10. Logo of the neighbourhood activist team featuring the guava flower.

discussions on memories reflected agreements and disagreements that emerged in debating the sense of the place and how it should change or be maintained under the various regeneration options suggested. This is articulated in verbal as well as visual, cognitive and more-than-representational expressions in the form of spatialised memories and past narratives of a place.

Initially we looked for a connection between the imagined past and the kind of regeneration alternative each resident chose for the neighbourhood. Indeed, the imagined past that those residents remembered and evoked in the collective meetings affected their perception of the suggested regeneration alternatives. In the course of the planning process, however, we realised we could not discern any particular correlation between expressions of spatial memory and a specific regeneration alternative. For instance, some of those who expressed longing for the past and described it in bright colours were sometimes in favour of the knockdown-and-construction option. They explained this contrast between their mental images and their choice in their belief that knockdown-and-construction is the only way to bring them wealth and comfort. It must be emphasised that some of those beliefs changed during the process of planning when residents became aware of the risks and of the increase in the costs of living in high rise buildings that would replace the existing buildings (such as municipality taxes and maintenance taxes). This change in perception is evident in later stages of the project (years 2 and 3).

Nevertheless, in some cases there was a relationship between a nostalgic memory expression and a relatively conservative choice (improvement/preservation):

This place had a uniqueness of its own and still has. It is a charming spot, it was and it can be also in the future. In today's Israel, where everything is so temporary, I cannot wait five years for the knockdown-and-construction option and neither do I want to. Who knows what will happen? If we choose improvement-preservation with a lot of help and considerable funding by the municipality, it will be better, like it used to be. This place will become a charming spot in Bat Yam: one-storey houses that one cannot see nowadays in Bat Yam, normal and clean walkways. (Aharon, 20 December 2010)

Aharon's approach is embedded with past memories as he uses many past tenses and juxtapositions of past and present situations that sometimes reveal contrasts between the "beautiful" past and the "neglected" present. It also increases the residents' awareness of the potential inherent in their neighbourhood and their power to organise and change the complex present.

Indeed, in most meetings, the positive past is juxtaposed with the neglected present but also inspires the future image and how it may be possible to revive the neighbourhood's past glory. Some of the residents looked back nostalgically to the time in which the neighbourhood's physical and social condition created a sense of attachment to a community and high quality of life in the city, expressed verbally in the discussion on the maps. In many cases the past they remembered and

described stood in stark contrast to the dismal present and made the neighbourhood's deteriorated physical and social condition more conspicuous:

We have owned the same flats for years. Today I don't really know what is going on there. It used to be a beautiful neighbourhood! In my childhood the gardens were pleasant, the walkways, as a child I lived in Halper Street, every Friday we used to go to Haim'ke who was my grandfather. It was a very beautiful neighbourhood, my grandfather used to take care of it. Today we live in a different world, not at all what it used to be. (Dvora, 13 September 2010)

In fact, this process created a discursive space (Whitzman, 2007) that built community leadership (as elaborated below) in that it facilitated a new and different agenda and opened up possibilities for discussing changed norms, opinions, power relations and interactions among community members. In this process, a space of transformation (Baum, 1999) – social, cognitive and temporal – is created as in the Me'onot Yam process, where a relevant discourse developed in which all participants learnt about the neighbourhood and its past, as well as about the future vision and the (often conflicting) aspirations of different parties. While some participants looked at the neighbourhood's past in a positive-nostalgic way, others remembered the more problematic aspects the former preferred to forget, thereby perhaps supporting Baum's (1999) assertion that forgetting is the only way to create contingency in planning.

Past memories had played an empowering role at the beginning of the project, in the September 2010 Biennale event. At this one of the senior residents volunteered to recount his personal history of the place based on his childhood memories. He did it with considerable pride and self-esteem and attracted listeners. Indeed, in the meeting after the event the residents shared their experiences and it was evident that the great interest in their neighbourhood, the many guests, the willingness to listen and watch, and the attention to their personal stories and their way of life empowered each of them in an embedded way (Rocha, 1997), and also enhanced their pride and sense of community collectively. Moshe, for example, said: "the mayor's presence gave us the feeling that the municipality supported us. I don't remember so many people coming to this neighbourhood and so much interest in it" (11 October 2010).

The empowering effect of memory is also expressed in Natalie's words in one of the two big meetings held to inform all residents about the project's progress:

I am a resident in the neighbourhood today. In the past my mother lived here, so that as a youngster and as an adult woman I lived here and knew the place well. This is a place that I have loved and appreciated for many years. I would like to speak to property owners who are not present in the neighbourhood in everyday life, and I address them. I am active in this project, the owners who are not here do not know how hard it is to live in an ugly house. I don't know where you live but I don't feel comfortable living here for quite a long time. We have a window of opportunities, so let's start dealing with it, so that the value of the flats will rise, the place will look different and it will be pleasant to live here. (Natalie, meeting of residents and property owners, 10 March 2011)

The change Natalie went through (from complaint to request and even demand) occurred as a result of using past memories and the social dynamics they generated in the meetings. For her it was not only a change but an empowering process that we identify as an embedded individual empowerment (Rocha, 1997), in that "although the locus of empowerment is individual, the process clearly includes recognition of the importance of the surrounding environment" (p. 35). From an anonymous person she became one of the loudest voices and even one of the leaders of the group, showing how strategic power changes happen in the process. This is reflected in her acting as mediator and resolving conflicts in the meetings.

Another example of the change in social and power relations that the group underwent, and the mutual respect and listening that gradually emerged as a result of the memory sessions, is expressed in Natalie's description:

This project bonded us. For example, before, when I used to see George here in the neighbourhood, I was very hostile towards him. He wanted to take over all the time. But in fact, I came to the meetings because of him – all the time my neighbour repeatedly said that if I did not come he would take control and steal the neighbourhood from us ... It may be said, in fact, that I came to see what his intentions were, he lives in a dream, and I object to his vision of how the neighbourhood should look like ... Maybe these memories that were part of the meetings made us listen to each other more attentively. It made me listen to Aharon, whom I did not really know before and suddenly I listened to him because he had his ideas ... Also George whom I did not know before and suddenly I listened to him ... I had no idea how long he lived in the neighbourhood though he was my neighbour, but he spoke all the time about the past, so now I know. (Interview with Natalie, 13 June 2011)

This common sharing of memories created a transformation that helped them get to know each other better and built up their activism and leadership. We refer here to Laclau and Mouffe's terminology of "*contingency*" (2004 [1985]) to interpret the social process that the residents underwent because it expresses changes in the residents' social identity and makes them aware of the power relations in their group. Contingency has been prevalent in the last two decades in social, cultural and political geography, and is used to define and describe social, cultural, conscious and even physical spaces, in which discourses of many topics take place. But, as Cresswell notes (2009), this use is far from homogenous and consistent; sometimes it refers to the spoken and written language and sometimes it encompasses other forms of representation. It seems that expressions of the spatial memory of a place emphasise similarities, differences and disagreements between people. They do not only reveal antagonism but increase awareness with regard to social relations and consequently the ability to change the neighbourhood. Attention thus should be paid not only to the result – an agreed-upon alternative, but mainly to the *process of remembrance, forgetting and awareness* which in itself created a new community identity, at least among the activist residents

## Conclusions

This article analyses the role of memory as expressing multiple meanings of place in participatory planning processes in Meo'not Yam neighbourhood, Bat Yam, Israel. Although this research refers to a specific place, we argue that some general conclusions can be drawn from this case study, which might be relevant to participatory planning in other contexts.

We investigated the extent to which evoking memory led to individual and communal empowerment and leadership, viewing planning as a social process, articulating power relations into what are called strategic changes (Fenster, 2012). In doing so, we demonstrated how the process of remembrance and forgetting, as part of the planning process, contributed to creating connection and contingency, which transformed social-community identity, raised awareness of power relations and exposed antagonism. We showed how the discourse concerning the neighbourhood's spatial past had been formulated, by presenting documents, photographs, and residents' mental maps, and evoking sensory memories linked with the past. All those processes built a connection between the people but also revealed conflicts, disagreements and antagonism, undermining existing power relations while creating others.

By way of conclusion, let us challenge and summarise the two main themes discussed in the paper. First, was better understanding of sense of place enabled by using memory in community work and was memory indeed a dominant and an important factor in this process? Second, did evoking memory actually lead to individual and community empowerment?

As for the first theme, we can conclude that spatial memory representations as visual, cognitive and more-than-representational perspectives definitely contributed to "deeper understanding" of the place so that we now know about it more than just as a physical site (Beauregard, 2013). It is definitely knowledge richer than that provided by professional expressions (e.g. documents, maps,

air photos,). Rather, it is what Beauregard calls a place of practice, and its practicalities are reflected in the different expressions of memory.

We also conclude that our discussions of memory did create a “transformative space” as it was a preparation for the discussions on the four regeneration alternatives; indeed, when the residents were asked to checklist the pros and cons of each alternative, some of the “memory exercises” we carried out did help them, although not directly as discussed above.

As for the second theme, what we have identified is a mediated empowerment process by an expert or professional resulting in embedded empowerment (Rocha, 1997) of individuals such as Natalie, George and Aharon, who underwent personal changes within the context of the community’s physical and environmental changes. The fact that only 9–15 such residents became active throughout the entire 3-year process can raise doubts as to its “collectiveness” and representativeness. However, the fact that those 9–15 residents have become the neighbourhood’s current leaders shows that sometimes, a relatively small number of residents can be enough to create a strategic power change. Despite not representing the whole community, the fact that they themselves are more empowered and active can bring change to the community, now that they lead negotiations with the municipality and some private developers regarding regeneration options. They are more knowledgeable, they understand the complexities concerning planning procedures and the numerous actors involved, and also speak a more professional language when negotiating with external actors and feel more empowered. Thus, in a slow and prolonged process, they have internalised pride in their home and in their achievements developing it. This strategic change came up in the last farewell party (28 August 2013), where they chose to summarise the process by stating: “Nobody will stop us now”; “The project succeeded in creating a sense of belonging and a sense of community”; “I have learnt that no matter how big a group of residents is, they are more powerful than one individual”; “I have friends and partners – I am not alone anymore”; “This has been a very significant experience for me”.

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### Notes

1. All meetings were held in a hall located near the neighbourhood with the participation of a municipality representative.
2. [http://www.cbs.gov.il/reader/?MIval=%2Fpop\\_in\\_locs%2Fpop\\_in\\_locs\\_h.html&Name\\_h=%E1%FA+%E9%ED](http://www.cbs.gov.il/reader/?MIval=%2Fpop_in_locs%2Fpop_in_locs_h.html&Name_h=%E1%FA+%E9%ED) (last accessed 3 February, 2013)
3. Based on this information we wrote an initial planning history professional survey included in the project’s Stage A Report (Planning for the Environment with Communities (PECLAB), 2011); see <http://peclab.tau.ac.il/imagesPEC/overview.pdf>

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