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**Approaches and Tools
for Implementing
the Circular City Model**



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PLANNING A NATION: THE JEWISH LAND FROM THE SHARON PLAN TO ISRAEL 2020*Gianluigi Freda***Abstract**

Soon after the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel, proclaimed on 14 May 1948, the new Jewish State developed a planning process in the scale of the overall national land. Modernist theories in architecture and urban planning have been conformed to this pluralistic and multi-ethnic geographic area, lacking of water resources and infrastructures. Arie Sharon, who graduated from the Bauhaus in Dessau, was called by the first Prime Minister of the State of Israel and Head of Jewish Agency for Palestine, David Ben Gurion, to coordinate a national plan, in order to encourage social and economic progress and to support imminent waves of Jewish immigrants. After the sixties, the Sharon plan started to be unable to support the changes that characterized the Israeli society and territory and, during the last five decades, new orientation has conditioned the new planning doctrine. This article focuses on the nature of Sharon's plan and its legacy and differences with the current management of Israeli territory.

Keywords: Israel, planning doctrine, Arie Sharon

COSTRUIRE UNA NAZIONE: LO STATO EBRAICO DAL PIANO SHARON A ISRAEL 2020**Sommario**

Subito dopo la Dichiarazione dello Stato di Israele, proclamata il 14 maggio 1948, il nuovo Stato ebraico sviluppò un modello urbanistico alla scala dell'intero territorio nazionale. Le teorie del Movimento Moderno vennero adattate alle caratteristiche di quest'area geografica multi-etnica, priva di risorse idriche e infrastrutture. Arie Sharon, architetto formatosi alla Bauhaus di Dessau, venne chiamato dal Primo Ministro dello Stato di Israele e Capo dell'agenzia ebraica per la Palestina, David Ben Gurion, per coordinare un piano nazionale, al fine di incoraggiare il progresso sociale ed economico e affrontare le imminenti ondate di immigranti ebrei. Dopo gli anni '60, il piano Sharon ha iniziato a non essere più in grado di sostenere i cambiamenti che hanno caratterizzato la società e il territorio israeliani e, negli ultimi cinquant'anni, un diverso orientamento ha condizionato la dottrina della pianificazione. Questo articolo analizza le caratteristiche del piano Sharon, nonché sulle sue eredità e differenze con l'attuale gestione del territorio israeliano.

Parole chiave: Israele, pianificazione, Arie Sharon

1. Spatial and historical context

It is possible to attribute the foundation of the Jewish Nation, before the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel, proclaimed on 14th May 1948, to the Zionist ideals led by Theodor Herzl, who prefigured the State in his book *Der Judenstaat*.

Zionist feelings developed a modern Jewish nationalism, that had two different roots through the history of Jews: one, more ancient, which has heterogeneous meanings, because it belongs to Jewish people during the Diaspora, who shared the same sense of belonging to Jewish culture without being a national community; the other, which dates back to the cultural and social context that the European Jews faced at the end of the nineteenth century (Barnavi, 2005). In this uncertain political context, a new idea of a Jewish State started to take a form, but, before being able to proclaim itself as a Nation, it will cross the dramatic events of the Second World War and the Holocaust.

The immigration into Eretz Israel by groups of European Jews had been intensifying more and more since the beginning of the twentieth century: the area of ancient Palestine, which has been historically characterized by different social, cultural and political structures and also by different environmental conditions, suddenly had to cope with the political necessity of a unification, to which correspond a new urban and administrative structure. The experiments in the field of architecture, which embarked on the courageous road of modernity declined in a context decidedly different from the European one, in which it was born, were the engine of a new way of conceiving the city and the housing. Innovators, in this sense, were the Jewish architects belonging to the second generation of immigrants, or from the twenties onwards, who were able to study in Europe in the most important architectural schools of the time, such as the Bauhaus, and following the great Masters of the Modern Movement.

Thus, the idea of a Nation as a new urban, territorial and infrastructural apparatus, therefore, was modeled on the reinterpretation of the new urban theories that arose in the first decades of the century, and had the audacity to measure itself with a plurality of challenges whose consequences are still visible today.

In addition to Jerusalem, Haifa and Tel Aviv and to the other and more rarefied existing urban systems, new settlements were added, some of which had a utopian character by type and form, in order to densify the territory repopulating non-urbanized and, in some cases, impervious areas.

Although of modest size, at the time of the foundation of the State, the territory was mostly arid and desert, extended along different regions, each characterized by a specific climate. The limited concentration of water resources, the geographical distribution of population, infrastructure and economic activities were the essential issues that the Government and public institutions had to resolve. The new administrators conceived an ambitious and far-reaching plan, so that, judging by the impact of the intervention on the whole territory, Israel can be considered the nation whose degree of planning has been more incisive than most of the other western democracies (Shachar, 1998).

Before dealing with the main contents of the Sharon National Plan of the State of Israel, however, it is appropriate to summarize, even briefly, the historical and political circumstances of the events on which this article is focused, in order to define a general geopolitical picture, which was the background to urban planning actions.

As previously said, between the 14th and 15th May 1948 the State of Israel was proclaimed, after Britain has renounced to its Mandate on Palestine-Eretz Israel.

The British Mandate was established with the Sanremo Conference in 1920 and ratified by the League of Nations in 1922. The establishment of the “British Government of Palestine-Eretz Israel” should be seen in the series of events that conditioned the Middle East at the end of the First World War. In fact, the Sykes-Picot agreements in 1916 redefined the structure of the Ottoman Empire, which was placed under the political influence of Britain, France and Russia.

This operation, led by the great international economies, in fact “created” the Middle East (Barnavi, 2005).

In 1917, with the Balfour Declaration, Britain promoted a “national home for the Jewish people”, but, later, the British government policy towards the building of the Jewish homeland changed, favoring, in this way, the disputes that had already taken place between the Arab and Jewish population.

Palestine-Eretz Israel represents, on the road to the Indies, a cross between two continents. It always had, therefore, a unique and necessary strategic position to support the expansionist commercial ambitions of Western countries towards Asia.

The atrocities of the war, the internal struggles, and the English politics will lead to the War of Independence and the proclamation of the State, which opened wounds not yet healed, but which, besides determining the Jewish Nation, represented the attempt to make economically autonomous a region that was underdeveloped in many aspects.

2. Arie Sharon's Israel National Master Plan (1948)

The title of the recently-installed retrospective at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, “Arie Sharon: Architect of the State”, celebrates the active professional involvement of the Bauhaus graduate architect and town planner in the realization of the idea of a Jewish Nation.

This idea had brought in a few decades thousands of immigrants from Europe on the Middle Eastern coast of the Mediterranean.

After the independence of Israel in 1948, in fact, Sharon was appointed director and chief architect of the National Planning Authority and during the five years, in which he held this role, he planned the actions that tried to transform a region without a coherent territorial structure in a Nation effectively organized.

As he himself describes in the report to his work a few years later, the most important elements for the national masterplan were the environmental characteristics of the territory: vegetation, climate, nature of the soil, water resources and mining (Sharon, 1952).

Born in the Galician city of Jaroslaw, in the current Poland, in 1900, Arie Sharon emigrated to Palestine around the age of twenty and actively lived the life of the first *kibbutzim*, during which he experienced agricultural and productive life, as well as the construction and architecture. Driven by a strong talent in this sense, he moved to Germany to enroll in 1926 at the Bauhaus School made by Walter Gropius, at that time directed by Hannes Meyer, who became his mentor.

After graduating in 1929 and after two years working in Meyer's Berlin studio, he returned to Palestine, like other architects of his generation, to participate in the construction of a new local identity assimilated to the principles of the Modern Movement.

Sharon was the author of many residential and public buildings, mostly in Tel Aviv, and in the main cities then inhabited. His incessant commitment, pragmatism and natural leadership qualities that distinguished him, in addition to the cultural heritage of the

Bauhaus philosophy, were the reasons that led him to play the role of coordinator of the first national plan.

The tasks that he immediately saw as fundamental were the location of agricultural settlements and cultivable areas, the distribution of urban centers along the entire territory of the State, to reduce the crowding along the coast in favor of densification of isolated and internal areas, the consequent relocation of industrial sites on the whole national soil, a road and infrastructural network able to sustain this progress. Moreover, parks and nature reserves were immediately considered to be of vital importance for the State.

To Sharon, the risk to avoid was represented by that kind of spontaneous planning, lacking of an overall view, that could take place outside of big cities and institutional centers, as happened in Australia or America, whose dimensions were certainly not comparable to the State of Israel, but with which they shared the destiny of being a refuge for immigrants from all over the world. In this sense, according to Christaller's Central place theory that had a significant influence on Sharon's Plan, Israel could not afford to fail the goal of an overall vision, capable of giving order to existing urban and administrative systems, building new ones and implementing inadequate environmental resources (Sharon, 1952).

In 1950, the Knesset, the Israeli Parliament, promulgated the Law of Return that allowed any person with Jewish origins, from anywhere in the world, to move permanently to Israel and obtain the Israeli citizenship. The needs of Holocaust survivors, Jewish refugees from the Muslim world and the effects the Law of Return produced a rapid increase in population, following a trend already in place before the proclamation of the Nation. In 1948, there were 806,000 Jewish inhabitants in Israel, which became 7.2 million in 2007, with an average growth of 3.8% per year and a projection of more than 10 million inhabitants in 2030 (Israel in statistics 1948-2007).

In the first years after the Independence, between '48 and '51, there was a 21.3% immigration rate that brought 687,624 immigrants to Israel and the tendency towards a very rapid demographic growth was clear to Sharon, who established three-fold basis for planning: Land, Nation and Time.

«“Land”: Israel, a bridge between three continents, is bordered by the Mediterranean on the west, Lake Tiberias and the Dead Sea on the east, the Mountains of Lebanon to the north, and the Sinai Peninsula, the Arabian Deserts and the Gulf of Elath to the south [...]

The vegetal and topographical conditions produce a rich and colourful mosaic offering ample planning opportunities.

“Nation”: The second factor involves the social structure, character and composition of the population in this country [...] With the founding of new and the enlargement of existing settlements, with the establishment of new towns, and an objective of balanced distribution of the population, attention must be paid to social composition, and a planning framework prepared that will promote the acclimatization of the diverse groups of the population, old and new, and expedite their integration into one organic and productive entity.

“TIME”: [...] The quickened tempo of development and the resultant pressure combine to exert a great and sometimes negative influence on planning proper. Planning is by its very nature a slow process, demanding the basic survey of economic causes and careful research into physical and social conditions as a prerequisite for the successful preparation of plans. Yet the introduction of the time element as such the need to ensure that immediate requirements be satisfied first, is in itself detrimental to the quality of planning. Immigrant camps, transit camps, permanent settlements and housing estates, all planned and built in

haste, will remain as social and economic blots on the national landscape and may be succeeded by even worse blemishes later on.

Since it is the primary task of planning to shape the future pattern of the land, its settlements, towns, and country- wide services for our own and future generations, the fact that the need for compromise has been imposed by the pressure of time may prove to be detrimental to planning and the country alike» (Sharon, 1952, pp. 67-68).

Sharon's words represent the proof of his enthusiasm and his courage, which actually characterized the development of the plan. On the other hand, the necessary speed of execution could have neglect factors that are generally the result of sedimentation over time in the design process. This fear did not stop the executors of the plan from proceeding, but in many ways it was realistic. In fact, the plural identity that defined immigration in Israel, the consequent dispersion in the territory of large and inhomogeneous groups of settlers, forced to pour in unwelcoming areas, and the difficulty of integration with the natives, have proven over time, a fragility that still shows its physiognomy.

The migratory waves that occurred before and after 1948 have mixed people who spoke different languages and who carried behind centuries of different traditions and mentalities: they were, in short, an absolutely inhomogeneous group, devoid of makeshift means and landed in a very different land from the one they had imagined and handed down (Barnavi, 2005). Therefore, in addition to the disparities that existed within the groups of Jewish immigrants, there was the difficult process of integration between the immigrants and the Arab population, which in the mid-nineteenth century, during the Ottoman Empire, was by the order of 340/400,000 people, although fragmented and without a recognized national identity or well-tailored social and economic structure.

As well as in other societies built on the basis of strong immigration – the United States, Australia, Canada or South Africa – both settlers and natives perceive themselves as owners of the land, with a strong sense of belonging to the place, motivated by ancestral feelings and by historical reasons. In this sense, throughout the whole of its existence, the National Plan has not been able to propose a suitable solution to the problem of marginalization of the Palestinian identity to a secondary role (Fenster, 2004).

Fig. 1 – Sharon Plan



Source: Sharon (1952)

If these great fragilities are put into question today, as we will see later, with the forecast of development made by the new plan for 2020, on the other hand, Sharon's plan was the frame of rapid infrastructural, economic and social progress that otherwise it would never have been in that region and in such a short time.

The objectives set by the Sharon National Plan (Fig. 1) can be summarized in two stages: the first phase of national development based on the assumption that the national economy can guarantee a fair standard of living, while maintaining the right balance between agriculture, industry, trade and services; the second phase is able to plan the correct use of the Negev wealth and mineral deposits, the connection of the ports of the country with the trade of the Near East and the further expansion of industry (Sharon, 1952).

3. The National Water Project

Surely, in the general structure of the piano, which provided for the emergence of agricultural regions, a new industrial network and a system of national parks, the plan for the distribution of water resources (Fig. 2) assumed a decisive role for the evolution of the project and for the achievement of the objectives of modernization of the nation. «The agricultural plan involves full exploitation of all water resources, streams, subsurface water, rain water and floods. These water resources will also be employed as a source of electric power and for the development of industry.

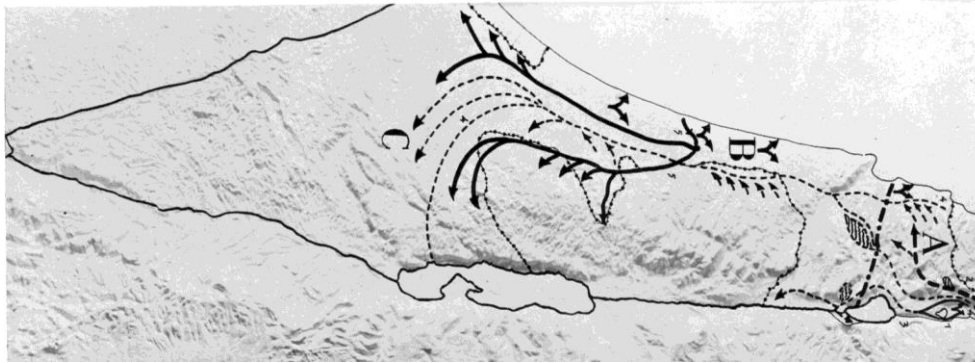
The country's water supply differs in the three regions:

1. Region A (north of the country): is rich in water sources the surplus of which can beexploited for the irrigation of other regions;
2. Region B (the Coastal Plain or Shefela): has enough water for its own requirements;
3. Region C (South and Negev): has an insufficient water supply. To ensure the progress of agriculture in the south it will be necessary to supply it with part of the water of the north and the Shefela. The water supply of the country can suffice for the irrigation of an area of 3,750 square kilometres of the total area of 6,500 square kilometres which is available for agriculture in the country as a whole.

Partial implementations within the framework of the more comprehensive plan, which are to be put into effect soon, are:

1. drainage of the Huleh swamps;
2. exploitation of the water sources in the Huleh Valley and the north of the country for the irrigation of the northern districts and the valleys;
3. exploitation of the Yarkon waters and drainage waters of the Tel-Aviv district in order to supply water to the Negev, Jerusalem and the Corridor» (Sharon, 1952, p. 73).

If we consider the predominantly arid nature of the territory, apart from some regions, the general water conditions with which the plan had to be confronted were decidedly adverse. These limitations did not prevent the development of a very ingenious water resource implementation system that, in the years that followed and until today, has become a valuable model for other communities fighting against drought. Based on a network of tunnels that distribute water from the richest to the driest areas, the water network that flows under the Israeli territory is constantly evolving, so much so that one of the largest water tunnels from the first built during the years of the plan have been planned in recent years.

Fig. 2 – National Water Plan

Source: *Sharon (1952)*

4. Old and new cities

Divided into four zones (North, South, Central and Jerusalem Corridor) and twenty-four regions, the Sharon plan was an example of a reconfiguration of a geographical area in a national space. The economic and productive structure, which represented the backbone of the plan and of nation's progress, had a double identity. If, on the one hand, a modern vision of the industry was introduced, or rather that vision that was able in Europe to produce rapid progress thanks to the great technological inventions of the century, to the solidarity between science and industry and thanks to the rationalization of the use of workers, on the other hand, the strong characterization of the Nation as a large agricultural territory was extremely important. Agriculture, in fact, was considered a sector to be defended and developed, in order to make the arid land as productive as possible to support the families of immigrants and to build new settlements around them.

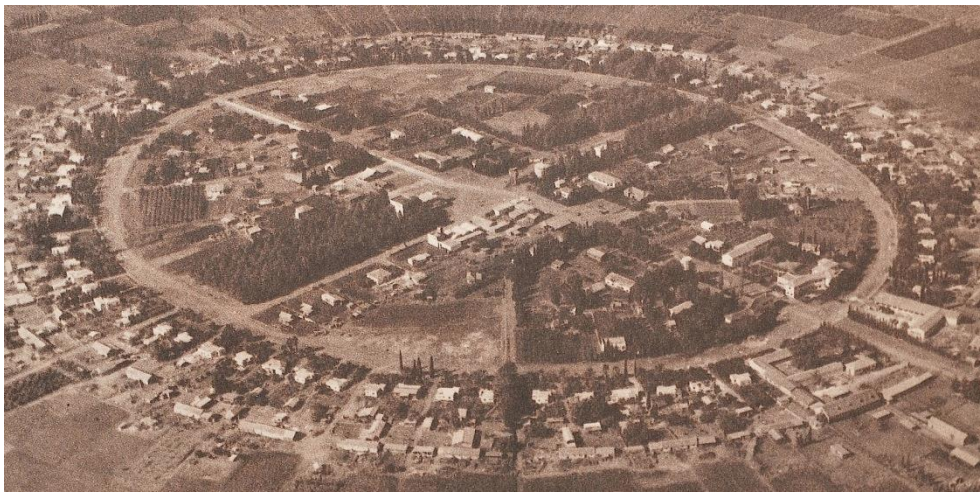
In this sense, the collectivist, socialist and Zionist experiments of the *kibbutz* (Fig. 3) and the *moshav* had a decisive weight, not only on the dynamics of social aggregation to which immigrants adapted from all over Europe, but also on the spatial configuration of the entire Nation. The Sharon plan, in fact, took as a model those initially spontaneous settlements, which then began to be shaped by architects and planners, in an almost utopian key.

Fig. 3 – A kibbutz in the first year of settlement on the land

Source: *Sharon (1952)*

The *moshav* Nahalal (Fig. 4), built on a design by Richard Kauffmann in 1921, is a significant example of how an agricultural settlement can take the form of a city and become part and model of an extended system. The typology of *moshav* became available to be spread throughout the territory, thus responding to a double political question: cultivating the land and populating the territory. The spatial organization of the settlements and the economy was the main political objective that preceded, in the hierarchy of the objectives to be achieved, the desired egalitarian and collectivist social structure (Shachar, 1998).

Fig. 4 – *Moshav Nahalal*



Source: Sharon (1952)

Dozens of settlements (Fig. 5) were planned and built and still on the territory of Israel it is possible to recognize the vision of the Sharon plan and to read the differences between the densely populated cities and the small original settlements located along the State, that are today less depressed but still marginal compared to the more developed centers such as Jerusalem, Haifa, Tel Aviv, where most of the population resided since the proclamation of the Jewish nation.

Other historic cities, which had lost a cultural unity due to the repeated changes in the general political order, were refounded and established to have key roles within the national administrative and productive organization.

To Sharon, the structure with which to define a new urban structure could have been applied in the same way to existing cities, so that they evolve into complete and balanced social and economic units, benefiting from the reciprocal relations between urban and rural centers.

An example is Beersheba (Fig. 6), in the south of the State and out to the Negev desert, which became the focus of industrial development, thanks to its location at the intersection

of the main north-south communication routes. Moreover, this position would have guaranteed it a decisive role in the plan to implement water resources.

Fig. 5 – Bat Yam near Tel Aviv



Source: Sharon (1952)

Jerusalem, Haifa and Tel Aviv were, instead, the three largest and most developed cities. Each of them possessed a strong economic potential and its own historical identity. Jerusalem (Fig. 7) had a different role from the other urban settlements of the country, therefore it was necessary a specific master plan prepared by the Planning Department in 1950. It tried to find a coherent solution that would allow the city to carry out its functions as political and cultural capital of Israel. The old city was divided into four areas: the Armenian, Christian, Jewish and Muslim quarters. Although religious sentiments and historical stratification have always represented an obstacle to modern expansion and to a coherent active planning of the city (Efrat e Noble, 1988), different plans have alternated over time, including that of Sir Patrick Geddes in 1919 – to which he worked before devoting himself to the plan of Tel Aviv – designing, in the case of Jerusalem, a plan not very sensitive to the pluriform soul of the city.

Fig. 6 – Beersheba

Source: *Sharon (1952)*

Fig. 7 – Jerusalem

Source: *Sharon*

With the ratification of the capital of the Jewish State in 1950, Jerusalem welcomed institutional and governmental headquarters, and the differences, between the Jewish city and the other cultural and social identities that still characterize it, were more clearly defined. The Sharon plan focused on six programmatic points: the current city, the residential units, the development of trade and industry, the Kiryat government complex in the Givat Ram area, the communications network, the green belt (Sharon, 1952).

The National Plan attributed to the city of Haifa an important role, speaking of which writes Sharon: «Greater Haifa has a unique geographical position in Israel. The deep-water port within the spacious and calm bay extending as far as Acre to the north is already the second largest in the eastern Mediterranean, and its natural advantages seem to foreshadow a future

as chief port linking the Near and Middle East with the world at large. Hence Haifa may prove to be a centre of international trade and heavy industry, which will find its place in the vicinity of the port.

Fig. 8 – Tel Aviv



Source: *Sharon*

In the Master Plan Haifa is envisaged as the administrative, economic and cultural centre of

the northern part of the country, including the mountain regions of Galilee and Shomron, the fruitful valleys to the east along the coast from Naharia in the north, and to Hedera in the south. This zone is capable of absorbing a population of more than a million by the close of the First Stage of Development» (Sharon, 1953, p. 22).

As the first modern urban experiment in Israel, Tel Aviv (Fig. 8) has a preeminent role in the recent history of Israel. The White City was strongly influenced by the Modern Movement, which progressively characterized its architecture. It was a significant experiment in the field of urban planning too, which also had a significant influence on the design of the national plan. After an initial spontaneous development, the city had a first plan made by Richard Kauffmann. Born in Frankfurt in 1887 and a pupil of Theodor Fischer in Munich, Kauffmann elaborated a plan inspired by the American City Beautiful Movement and the Anglo-Saxon city garden, which was replaced by the project for the city of Tel Aviv made by the Scottish urbanist Patrick Geddes in 1927. Geddes was a pioneer of modern urbanism and, since 1919, one of the most appreciated planners of Britain, engaged in dozens of projects scattered along the broad perimeter of the British Empire and pervaded by profound Zionist sentiments (Troen, 1988). «The combination between Geddes' urban planning and the language of Modern Architecture developed locally helped create a unique urban center, unequalled in size and quality in Israel or anywhere else» (Unesco, 2003, p. 9).

5. A new national spatial vision

Arieh Sharon was driven by theories related to the principles of socialism and social justice, to which he corresponded models of European architecture and urban planning, but after an intense five-year working season, he resigned from his position as head of the national planning team. The guidelines were written and the spatiality of the new State would take shape slowly. After a few decades, the identity of the country's territorial structure is recognizable in many of the programmatic points described in the plan, which showed, however, its weakness when theories and models matured in other social, cultural and political contexts, had to clash with the complex dynamics of the Middle East.

The dispersion of Jewish immigrants, coming from different countries, into new cities and rural settlements, while contributing to the development of the State, produced considerable frustration for the inhabitants of those areas, characterized by harsh environmental conditions and the dissatisfaction with the Arab population, to which the plan did not recognize a spatial identity. Moreover, since the mid-1960s the Sharon plan no longer knew how to cope with changing conditions in the economic and demographic sphere, that were influenced by the Six-Day War of 1967 and because of the need for better national infrastructures structure. At the beginning of the 21st century, these difficulties have not been resolved, due to the discipline of planning and architecture, but Israeli research institutions and institutions have collaborated in order to produce new planning principles.

In 2005, the Government approved the "Tama 35", a national plan that addresses and guides the development of the country for the first decades of the new century. It elaborates the themes dealt by "Israel 2020", a document prepared by a group of scholars and specialists, led by professors of the Technion of Haifa. It incorporates indications from the previous "Tama 31" plan approved in 1999 and tends to overcome the gaps shown by the National Plan defined in the 1950s, while maintaining the prospect of economic, social and environmental development. The document addresses the need to make a more

homogeneous economic growth, respecting the demographic increase that the State of Israel has seen over the last few years and setting up instruments to meet growth demand and guarantee adequate social services, as well as rights to new immigrants.

The plan has been given an identity and a flexible form, to be able to respond to changes and shape itself on them. For this reason, “alternatives” have been defined within the plan, or, in other words, measures adaptable to changing contexts in the economic, social and environmental fields: «The goal of the economic alternative team, for example, is to bring about maximal growth and a high standard of living. This scenario envisages no government interference with the workings of the market except to prevent large-scale damage, such as environmental deterioration. Optimal economic growth will be effectuated through an emphasis on business services or high-tech industry, a trend that will aggravate congestion in the center of the country while leaving the periphery relatively untouched by development» (Israel 2020, 1995).

The alternatives are based on four different scenarios that are the backbone of the new national plan: the scenario that sees Israel developing in the direction of the other great Western economies, without paying high social and environmental costs; the scenario of a Jewish State capable of protecting its cultural and historical identity; the scenario that portrays Israel as a land of peace, having established political and spatial criteria so that economic and social growth can be shared, within it among different religious and cultural inhabitants, and, outside, with neighboring Arab states.

Eventually, the Tama 35 National Plan elaborates the principles in the Israel 2020 document and aims to maintain a balance between the development and the damage that progress can bring to the environment and to future generations.

The plan defines the four metropolitan areas of Haifa, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Beersheba, divided by non-urban textures. Within these areas, the plan provides for urban development in order to respect a general principle that has guided the entire operation, which is that of “concentrated dispersion” by encouraging economic cooperation between local authorities.

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