

Though states have certain regulatory power over MNCs, there are many restrictions on that power. Moreover, firms have established themselves tantamount to states in the international system. They have power to negotiate with states, affect state-state relations, influence monetary policy and even bring about social change. It is evident, especially in regions dependent upon MNCs for their link to the global market, that these corporations are an equal or greater force than that of the state itself. ®

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#### TEL AVIV: A STUDY IN UNPLANNED DEVELOPMENT by Greg Shill CC '02

Located on the coast of the Mediterranean, Tel Aviv-Jaffa<sup>1</sup> is Israel's largest city. It is the Jewish state's primary business, cultural and communications center. The metropolitan area boasts about two million residents, about one-third of Israel's entire population; Tel Aviv proper contains approximately 357,400 residents.<sup>2</sup> Though many cities experienced dramatic growth during the twentieth century, Tel Aviv provides a particularly impressive example of that phenomenon. It remains an example of a metropolis which defies central planning and government control, despite numerous attempts throughout the history of Israel and Palestine, to do so.

A century ago, Tel Aviv was, for practical purposes, non-existent. Jews from Czarist Russia in 1882 began the first large wave of immigration to Ottoman-controlled Palestine. The nascent Zionist institutions were located in Jaffa and many of the new immigrants settled in *moshavim* (semi-communal settlements based on private ownership and wage labor) outside Jaffa. But Tel Aviv itself still did not exist and would not until several decades later, when it would be founded as a suburb of Jaffa to house an expanding Jewish population that had come into increasing conflict with the Arab residents of Jaffa. Principal financing came from the World Zionist Organization, which "saw in the development of a modern Zionist settlement the establishment of a national Zionist society in Palestine."<sup>3</sup> The city began in 1909 with the construction of the Ahuzat Bayit neighborhood, planned by a German architect, A. Tiedel, on the British "garden suburb" model. The model called for lots surrounded by a garden.

The city grew at a rapid pace during its first decade. Private enterprise and unchecked development created a situation in which building speculation soared, causing the population of Tel Aviv to expand. But what cemented Tel Aviv's status as a separate city were the Arab-Jewish disturbances in Jaffa in 1921. "As a result of the clashes Tel Aviv became isolated and was forced to develop those services which up till then had been provided by Jaffa."<sup>4</sup> The British Mandatory Authorities, who took over from the Ottomans following the Porte's cession of Palestine to Britain in 1917, recognized Tel Aviv as an "autonomous township," following the request of Tel Aviv's leaders. Though it was still subordinate to Jaffa's Town Planning Committee and was included in Jaffa's development plan, Tel Aviv's newfound independence, rail link to Jerusalem and ideology—"the first Jewish city"—encouraged many Jews to move their offices from Jaffa to Tel Aviv. And another wave of immigrants began to arrive in Palestine, many of them settling in Tel Aviv. Thus the population nearly tripled in four years,

rising from 12,392 in 1922 to 34,200 at the end of 1925.

This unprecedented growth was taking place in a planning vacuum. Giuseppe Pace notes that during this period,

The uncontrolled nature of development, which proceeded without any regard to the original development plan (Treitel's) and whose only criterion was that of exploiting to the full the available space, produced an urban sprawl and a visible fall in living standards. The original concept of a 'garden city'—if indeed it had ever been present in the eyes of the builders—had totally disappeared.<sup>5</sup>

In an effort to reclaim the city's right to control its form, the Mayor of Tel Aviv, Meir Dizengoff, commissioned Patrick Geddes to draw up a development plan.

The Geddes plan, which was "completed at the end of 1925, approved by the District Town Planning Committee in 1927 and ratified in 1929," represented a marriage of city and suburb; it was a "'garden city' laid out according to a grid street plan."<sup>6</sup> It was designed for 100,000 people and called for dwellings set back from the street with a garden at the center of each block, accessible through small alleys. It also recommended the purchase of land north of the river Yarkon for future expansion.

Geddes' plan, though quaint, failed to anticipate the rapidity with which Tel Aviv would grow over the following twenty-five years. Tel Aviv's explosive growth would soon make Geddes' low-density "garden city" plan unworkable. The rise of Hitler prompted many German and Central European Jews to flee Europe; many of them settled in Palestine, especially Tel Aviv. By 1934, Tel Aviv had 72,000 residents and had attained city status. It was now the most populous city in Mandatory Palestine, larger than Jaffa or Jerusalem. At this point, two processes were set in motion that would dictate the future of Tel Aviv's development. First, south Tel Aviv in the early 1930s "witnessed a burgeoning of industry which had increased job opportunities and in turn had encouraged immigration and the growth of suburbs."<sup>7</sup> Second, the *moshavim* that surrounded Tel Aviv were transformed into suburbs as developers recognized both that land on the communal settlements was cheap and that city dwellers wanted to live outside the city. Of course, the *moshavim* did not offer as many employment opportunities as did the city, so many became bedroom communities. Many of the settlements closer to the city shed their identity completely and became part of metropolitan Tel Aviv. *Moshavim* that were further away retained their original character.

The rise of bedroom communities, however, did not hinder Tel Aviv's expansion. In 1946, its population was 198,000; in 1948, when the State of Israel was born, it was 287,380. By 1951, it had reached 345,000. Geddes' plan simply could not accommodate the deluge of immigrants, which had overcrowded the central areas to such an extent that their "densities touched

on 4 inhabitants per room in some cases."<sup>8</sup> In addition to the population of Tel Aviv proper, residents of the surrounding districts poured into the city for work and pleasure. By this point, Tel Aviv was an identifiable metropolitan area, but by this point "those in charge of planning the new State neglect[ed] urban planning.. .to concentrate on policies for dispersing the population."<sup>9</sup>

Other developments also prevented the State of Israel and the City of Tel Aviv-Yafo (Jaffa) from focusing their attention on the form of Tel Aviv. Their primary objectives were not architecture and city planning, but the war that immediately followed the birth of the State and the settlement of the hundreds of thousands of new immigrants pouring into the country each year.

Soon, however, the government recognized the need for planned development. The Sharon Plan (1950) called for lower-density cities and more intermediate development. Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion was able to secure support for this program and "thus the creation of new intermediate cities became a government policy and was pursued energetically in all the districts."<sup>10</sup> Specifically, the Sharon Plan sought to thin out the population of the Tel Aviv district, encouraging surplus population and new immigrants to settle outside the city limits. Many former Arab towns were chosen for the expansion this plan required, in large part because they were close to Tel Aviv and had been abandoned. The metropolitan area was thus expanded to include a range of formerly rural settlements; "Greater Tel Aviv" was born, envisioned as a community of intermediate communities ringing the nation's metropolis.

In spite of the Sharon Plan, however, unplanned development continued at a rapid pace. While the Israeli State owned 92 percent of the land in the country as a whole, it owned a far smaller percentage of the land in Tel Aviv, which was one of the earliest and most populous settlements in Palestine. A high percentage of the land in Tel Aviv was owned privately; as a result, "in the district of Tel Aviv[,].. private interests prevailed."<sup>11</sup>

The Tel Aviv City Council in the early 1950s had asked the American town planner Aaron Horwitz to draw up a new development plan. He attempted to plan for the decentralization of the city by prohibiting the expansion of residential districts. His plan called for significantly reduced population density in the middle of the city and a network of highways and secondary roads that bypassed the city. The Horwitz plan was approved by the City Council but was never ratified by the national government. No competing plan was approved at that time; the city began to sprawl like never before, the previous plans having become irrelevant. "The city continued its 'polarized' development, controlled by a market economy which made it difficult and onerous to put aside areas for public facilities and to satisfy town planning standards."<sup>12</sup>

By the early 1960s, uncontrolled development had caused a fall in living standards that was unacceptable to Tel Avivians. There an exodus by the

middle-class and the young to the suburbs, their old dwellings replaced by shiny new office buildings that brought higher taxes to the municipality.<sup>13</sup> Recognizing the need to plan the metropolitan area as a whole, a National Master Plan was drawn up in 1964. It called for a new road network, a suburban metro system and a variety of new facilities on the outskirts of the city, with an eye to decentralization. But the plan was simply not broad and strong enough. It only underscored the inability of the national government to plan for Tel Aviv and illustrated the need for management of the area on a metropolitan basis.

Tel Aviv's Municipal Planning Department offered another plan. The 1964 Development Plan sought to relocate the Central Business District (CBD) to an area of the city where land was cheaper and road connections better. To lower housing density, the plan recommended more parks and re-proposed the Horwitz solution: expanding metro links and developing underdeveloped areas. But it was never approved: Mayor Rabinovich feared the plan would curtail his power and championed a reworked Geddes Plan. Development went largely unchecked; sprawl prevailed.

Soon, however, planners would succeed in their goal to plan Tel Aviv as a metropolitan region. Drawn up by Adam Mazor, the plan called for concentric rings radiating out from the center of the city, each with a lower density than the last. It began to be implemented in the late 1970s and was the model on which the 1984 Tel Aviv-Jaffa Strategic Development Plan was based. Mazor's goal was to repopulate the city, which had dropped from 400,000 residents in 1964 to 330,000 in 1984,<sup>14</sup> by emasculating the CBD and improving transportation. Though the Mazor Plan was adopted by the city council as its Master Plan, it was not approved by the national town planning committee. Some of Mazor's proposals were implemented anyway, repackaged as variations on the Geddes Plan. "Yet the failure to implement the plan in its entirety has prevented it from addressing the major problems posed by the metropolitan area,"<sup>15</sup> problems that have been exacerbated by the influx of Russian immigrants beginning in the mid-1980s.

As a result of the failure of the city of Tel Aviv and the State of Israel to plan the Jewish metropolis as a metropolitan region, the problem of urban sprawl escalated in the 1990s, when congestion and the explosive popularity of malls began to detract from the vivacity of downtown streets.<sup>16</sup> Rising standards of living, significant population increase and a diminished desire to use public transit translated into more cars; many Israeli families still insisted on living in the suburbs in a house with a garden.<sup>17</sup> Older neighborhoods of Tel Aviv, such as Florentine, became more desirable as commutes lengthened and people wanted to live closer to the center of the city.<sup>18</sup>

Only time will tell if efforts to prevent the paving-over of the Tel Aviv area and Israel will meet with success, but the prognosis is not good. At the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the nation's metropolis, with no serious plans for rail-based metropolitan transit or extensive rail links to Be'er Sheva, Haifa or Jerusalem in the offing, seems to be headed for endless sprawl, on the

American model—the only difference is that Israel is four hundred sixty times smaller than the United States.<sup>19</sup> ©

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The ancient city of Jaffa was consolidated as part of Tel Aviv in 1950. It is located to the south of Tel Aviv.

<sup>2</sup> "Tel Aviv-Yafo." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Home page. 14 Feb. 2000. <<http://www.eb.com:180/bol/topic?eu=73430&sctn=l&pm=1>>.

<sup>3</sup> Pace, Giuseppe. "European Migration and Middle East Urbanization: Tel Aviv, The First Jewish City." *Journal of European Economic History* 25 (1996): p. 97-128.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Zandberg, Esther. "Master Planners." *Ha'aretz Magazine* (English edition) 1 Jan. 1999.

<sup>14</sup> Pace.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Coussin, Orna. "Dead End Street." *Ha'aretz* (English edition): 10 Feb. 2000.

<sup>17</sup> Hecht, Esther. "How to Build a Country." *Jerusalem Post* 11 Dec. 1998: Features, p. 10.

<sup>18</sup> Kaye, Helen. "Florentine Renaissance." *Jerusalem Post* 17 Jan. 1992: Features.

<sup>19</sup> Excluding the Occupied Territories. "Israel," "United States." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Home page. 20 Feb. 2000. <[http://www.eb.com:180/bol/topic?eu=109500&sctn=l#s\\_top](http://www.eb.com:180/bol/topic?eu=109500&sctn=l#s_top)>, <[http://www.eb.com:180/bol/topic?eu=121244&sctn=l#s\\_top](http://www.eb.com:180/bol/topic?eu=121244&sctn=l#s_top)>.