



Competing Visions of the Future City: Modern Planning Models in Palestine during the British Mandate

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The palpable expression of Zionist colonization of Palestine since the late XIXth century is generally considered to coincide with the realization of a collective-farming settlement network. However, during the British Mandate, Zionist settlement policy also pursued an urban expression, such as in Tel-Aviv, Haifa or Jerusalem. All were widely inspired by imported European planning models and theories. Apart from the widely known entanglements of Zionist policy with the physical colonization and appropriation of Arab lands, this paper proposes to discuss from a comparative perspective the role of imported urban models in promoting Palestine's modernization process and establishing a nation-wide industrial network. It is interesting to notice, that the Zionist settlement policy did not follow a single coherent line of development. At least four different, if not competing, visions of the built environment were pursued to enact different Zionist settlement strategies: the network of collective-farming settlements as part of an anti-urban ideal; the development of Tel-Aviv as 'Bourgeois' metropolis; the attempt to develop a 'working-class' port-city in Haifa; the highly symbolic and representative project for the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

Significantly, the first collective-farming settlement (Degania) and the first residential neighbourhood of Tel-Aviv were both founded in 1909. Similarly, the same architects and planners were often contemporarily involved in plans for different settlements. Each of these strategies needs much further investigation, to clarify the part played by architecture in enacting them.

Zionist planning experiences took place at a time when a fast paced modernization process urged British Mandate Palestine's and similar neighbouring Mediterranean cities to usher in their industrial stage of development.

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