

Urban redevelopment, Identity and Ethno-nationalism in a contested city

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* Paper prepared for presentation at the ERAS Annual Conference, 2022

ABSTRACT

The dominant stream of political geography research links ethnic or racial marginalization and class-based marginalization resulting from redevelopment planning, presented sometimes as gentrification. This study presents a new phenomenon of “Minority gentrification:” gentrification led by the minority -Arab entrepreneurs and business owners in the contested city of Acre in Israel, which challenges the dominant research narrative and emphasizes the complexity of the relationship between class and ethno-national identity. Based on a qualitative research method that included in-depth interviews with Arab business owners and lower-income tenants, and analysis of policy documents and press articles, this study offers the term “stratified marginalization” to describe the relative advantage of Arab and business owners over lower-income Arab tenants. Simultaneously, it describes the trap in which they find themselves between their ethno-national and class identities and the explanations they provide for the gentrification process. Finally, the study describes the tension between Arabs from different classes as a result of gentrification. The research findings contribute to addressing questions of ethno-national and class identities, urban redevelopment in minorities neighborhoods. It also contributes to a re-evaluation of class and ethno-nationalism intersectionality in a way that recognizes the benefits of gentrification for the middle-class ethnic entrepreneurs on the one hand, and the multiple margins of the lower-class ethnic tenants on the other.

Keywords: Gentrification, Intersection, Class, Ethno-nationalism, Minority.

Introduction

The study of gentrification emphasizes the narrative in which the migration of a middle-class white population to disadvantaged areas causes the displacement of lower-class ethnic or racial groups (Lees, 2016). Similarly, gentrification in settler-colonial societies or contested spaces has been described as causing the displacement of minorities groups from space by the dominant nationalities (Porter & Yiftachel, 2017; Monterescu, 2015; Yacobi, 2016; Shaw, 2012; Shmaryahu-Yeshurun & Ben-Porat, 2020; Luz, forthcoming; Zaban, 2017).

While this is the case in many cities in the world, over the past decade, a developing body of knowledge has challenged this narrative and examined gentrification led by middle-class ethnic/racial groups. This literature, takes a more nuanced examination of the intersection of class and ethnicity and shows how these can work against each other, by displacing a lower-class group with a middle or upper-class group of the same ethnicity (Ahrens, 2015; Arkaraprasertkul, 2016; Boyd 2008; Casellas & McBrayer, 2019; Delgado & Swanson, 2019; Hyra 2006; Pattillo, 2007; Schaffer & Smith, 1986; Taylor, 2003).

Despite this development, complex research on the intersection of class and ethno-nationalism in gentrification remains limited (Lees, 2016). Further, scholars have paid less attention to the implications of this intersection on relationships between classes groups within the same ethnic group. In particular, this issue has not yet been explored in a state of geopolitical struggle between ethno-national groups. Thus, it is not clear whether and to what extent the class interest is able to overcome the ethno-national identity of ethno-national minority groups and what relations are formed within the minority group in this case.

Gentrification in contested cities in Israel, which experiences ongoing geopolitical struggle between Jews and Arabs, and at the same time the growth of the middle-class in Arab society¹, intensifies this question. Despite the significant expansion of Israel's Arab middle-class, the recognition of its effect on spatial relations has yet to be sufficiently explored (Haidar, 2018; Jamal, 2017).

The term "Israeli Arabs" is used to make a clear distinction between Arab citizens living in Israel and ¹ Palestinians living in the West Bank or Gaza. It also represents the perceptions of many Arabs (including some of the interviewees in this study) who see themselves first and foremost as part of the Arab nation, and then only the Palestinian one (Radai, Elran, Makladeh and Kornberg, 2015; Samocha, 2017).

This study argues that ignoring class diversity within the Arab society may fail to acknowledge the potential benefits of gentrification for middle-class Arab entrepreneurs. Moreover, without a more precise and intersectional lens, efforts to tackle the inequalities experienced by minority residents of gentrifying neighborhoods are themselves likely to perpetuate systems of inequality toward lower-class ethnic populations. Focusing on gentrification in the old city of Acre, this study investigates the relationship between class and ethno-nationalism as perceived by different classes in the minority group. It will address two questions: First, how do Arab entrepreneurs and business owners and lower-income public housing' tenant, describe the relationship between their economic and ethno-national identity? Second, what is the impact of minority gentrification on local Arab intra-community relations?

In the following section, I will review the intersectionality of class and ethnicity in gentrification literature. I will then outline the Israeli context in which minority gentrification appears in the neighborhood of Acre. Afterwards, I will describe the methodology of this research. I will present the perceptions of different class groups in the Arab community and the relationship formed within the Arab community due to gentrification. I propose the notion of “stratified marginalization” and end with some conclusions.

Gentrification: class and ethno-national intersectionality

Rejecting the “separability of identity categories,” the “Intersectionality” theory argues that categories of class, ethnicity, race, gender, etc. are mutually constitutive to the individual/group experience (Collins, 1998; Crenshaw, 1989). The pressures of gentrification are often experienced most acutely in ethnicized or racialized neighborhoods located on the borders of redevelopment zones. Gentrification is not only a class-based population change, but one with ethnic or race-based dimensions. Gentrification highlights how race can intersect with class, space, and home ownership (Bolt et al. 2009; Goetz, 2011; Mumm, 2017; Wyly & Hammel, 2004).

Gentrification can displace ethnic groups for intentional and unintentional reason (Shmaryahu-Yeshurun & Ben-Porat, 2020). First, ethnic minorities are often overrepresented in lower income groups. They're vulnerable when state-led gentrification aimed at economic development causes, as a side effect, ethnic displacement (Arena, 2012; Wyly & Hammel, 2004; Goetz, 2013). Second, stigmatization has justified state-led gentrification of ethnic minority communities (Uitermark et al., 2007). Third, in contested spaces, gentrification can be part of a wider state-led project of territorialization and ethno-national domination. Shmaryahu-Yeshurun and Ben-Porat (2020) describe this process as “state-led ethno-gentrification.” In

multiple instances, such gentrification has caused the displacement of minority groups by dominant nationalities (Yacobi & Tzfadia, 2019; Porter & Yiftachel, 2017; Shaw, 2012; Yacobi, 2016; Zaban, 2017). Scholars have used the terms “ethno-gentrification” (Monterescu, 2015) and “religious gentrification” (Luz, forthcoming) to emphasize the “secondary marginalization” (Cohen, 1999) of Arabs, displaced on both economic and national bases.

Despite displacement patterns of low-income blacks or ethnic minorities by majority whites have roots in the historical and contemporary race-based political economies of many cities—and is, as a result, well documented in the literature—class and race/ethnicity can intersect in more complex ways; indeed, the two categories may work against each other (Lees, 2016).

In the last decade, recent scholarship has identified gentrification based tensions between class and ethnic/racial affiliations (Ahrens, 2015; Boyd 2008; Casellas & McBrayer, 2019; Delgado & Swanson, 2019; Hyra 2006; Lees, 2016; Pattillo, 2007; Schaffer & Smith, 1986; Taylor, 2003). “Ethnic-led gentrification,” “Black gentrification” (Schaffer & Smith, 1986), “Gentrification from within” (Arkaraprasertkul, 2016) and “Self-gentrification” (Hooi Chan et al., 2016); all reveal a nuanced process of demographic change involving capital investment and cultural development that some of the local residents in the ethnic or racial community, especially those from a higher class, are the key player in promoting. Local residents are not necessarily passive or victims of the process. Some benefit from it, utilizing it to their advantage (Paton, 2018).

Scholars have debated the meanings and implications of ethnic-led gentrification. Some scholars (Ahrens, 2015; Moore, 2009) have argued that the social justice agenda of resisting racism motivated gentrifiers from the same racial or ethnic group to move into a neighborhood; expressing the desire to live with lower-income residents and instigating positive interventions in these neighborhood, a form of social solidarity. By contrast, others (Boyd, 2008; Delgado & Swanson, 2019; Pattillo, 2007) have argued that ethnic minority gentrifiers use the discourse of “protecting the culture” as a political tool for leveraging their own economic advantage, at the expense of the same ethnic community. The growing middle-class demand for “exotic” products in gentrified neighborhoods may increase the business volume of ethnic entrepreneurs (Kloosterman et al., 1999). Thus, higher class community members and entrepreneurs enjoy an opportunity to benefit, unlike the lower-class (Sakızlıoğlu & Lees, 2019). While ethnic gentrification signifies attempts to redesign urban space in a more culturally inclusive manner, it has nevertheless led to the ongoing displacement of the racialized poor. In these cases, gentrification benefits certain individuals and displaced others from the same ethnic group,

exposing them to “secondary marginalization” (Cohen, 1999). Intra-ethnic class distinctions lead to what Taylor (2003) conceptualized as the “dilemma of difference:” black middle-class gentrifiers confronting identity alienation as they alternate between work in majority-white business districts downtown and their homes in the largely-black uptown neighborhoods, transitioning from outsider to insider.

Cases of ethnic gentrification have not yet been studied in either settler-colonial societies or contested spaces. As described earlier, the central study of these societies sees ethno-nationalism and class affiliations as intertwined dimensions, leading to multiple marginalization of indigenous groups. While there is little doubt that ethno-nationalism is a major force in shaping space and urban relations in these societies (Yiftachel & Rokem, 2021), it is important to address the impact of other dimensions on the urban life. In a critique of “methodological nationalism,” Ulrich Beck (2007) calls for exploring additional dimensions, beyond nationalism, that shape relationships in urban spaces. Multiple dimensions validate the reality beneath the geopolitical conflict that there is a dynamically evolving multilayered daily urban activity. Struggles in contested cities contain layers of national division, geographical separation, and economic stratification (Rokem, 2018).

The Israeli context of minority gentrification: Geopolitical conflict and Arab middle-class mobility

Pre-state Jewish settlement occurred in lands purchased by Zionist organizations, Jewish philanthropists or entrepreneurs; however, the Arab-Israeli War of 1948 established Jewish sovereignty and control over new territories. During the war, many Palestinians, mostly the elite, were deported or fled as refugees to surrounding Arab countries in addition to the West Bank and Gaza Strip. A minority of these Palestinians also moved to Arab villages in Israel. The Arab population left behind was divided along socioeconomic lines; these members tended to have less education, a more rural focus, and an orientation towards tradition (Khamaisi, 2017; Haidar, 2018; Jamal & Bsoul, 2014).

In order to ensure Jewish dominance over the territory, the state of Israel settled over 900,000 new Jewish immigrants in peripheral areas. This is where Jewish populations were sparse and restrictions installed on Arabs who remained after the war. Many of these restrictions involved property. The state seized Arab land and property through the Absentees Property Law (1950) and transferred it later to the Development Authority for public housing (Yiftachel, 2006). In ethnically mixed cities in Israel (i.e., contested or binational cities), the state imposed a military regime, split the demographic continuum of Arab localities, and diluted Arab

concentrations (Boimel, 2006). Later on, Arabs were discriminated against through housing; the state established neighborhoods exclusively for religious Jewish populations (Shmaryahu-Yeshurun, 2021), in addition to using admissions committees to prevent Arabs from entering Jewish localities (Shafir, 2018). While the welfare system in Israel provides a safety net to its citizens, particularly public housing tenants protecting against displacement and homelessness, Arab citizens are nevertheless more prone to displacement following the state's policy Judaizing the space.

After 1967 and even more so the 1980s, a new Arab middle class emerged despite discrimination. They especially influenced mobility and internal migration processes in Israeli society. Privatization, globalization, open markets, and import liberalization from the mid-1980s created new opportunities for Arab entrepreneurs. The establishment of Arab colleges along with increased immigration to foreign institutions contributed to the new middle class's expansion. This class began to integrate into the Israeli labor market, entering new areas of business, developing professional skills, and enjoying economic cooperation. Because of this, the Arab middle class significantly expanded. By the late 2000s, 23-28% of Arab society could be considered members of the middle class (Haidar, 2018; Jamal, 2017).

This growth has complicated the relationship between Arabs' economic interest, ethno-national affiliation, and mobilization for Palestinian nationalism. Indeed, the middle class created a new agenda, setting different boundaries for political activity by Israel's Arab society. The most notable change involved transitioning from a survival strategy to one of Israeli integration while claiming rights and cultural uniqueness (Haidar, 2018). On the one hand, younger Arabs—identified as the “stand-tall generation” Palestinians (Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker, 2002)—demanded that collective justice be given to Arabs, who were Israeli citizens. On the other hand, the growing reality of Israeli occupation since 1967 promoted the understanding that Israel is a *fait accompli*, and that Arabs, its citizens, are bound by Israel's fate. Therefore, to advance their status in the existing reality, members of the middle class sought to normalize Arab society, adopt a civic pragmatic discourse, and integrate into the Israeli system. They also refused to boycott it as in the past (Jamal, 2017; Haidar, 2018). As Khamaisi (2017) argued, this class often demanded equality in daily socio-economic issues over appeals concerning the national Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Their adoption of a pragmatic citizenship discourse and concern for their own economic interests thus removed the “national interest” barrier. This led to the legitimacy of positions once considered national betrayal (Haidar, 2018).

Emergence of the Arab middle class has also promoted mobility from Arab villages to mixed or Jewish cities. Blatman-Thomas (2017) argues that the Arab middle-class migration to the Jewish city of Karmiel connects the city to neighboring localities in a way that undermines the familiar separation between Jewish and Palestinian spaces. Within the context of middle-class Palestinians' moving to Jewish neighborhoods in Jerusalem, Shtern and Yacobi (2019) argue that the juxtaposition of colonial and neoliberal logics of space reveals a shared yet fragile middle-class identity between Jews and Palestinians. These studies emphasize Monterescu and Hazan's (2018) claim that for some residents of contested cities, status is more significant than national affiliation. Jews and Arabs are divided between different economic classes, parties, and interests in a way that can produce "casual coalitions" between Jews and Arabs, an "Ashkenazi-Palestinian alliance" (Monterescu & Shaindlinger, 2013; Monterescu, 2015) or "coexistence from below" (Nathansohn, 2010). Thus, there is not always a fit between the collective-national narrative and the personal story, between the local space and the national space, and between the class and ethno-national affiliations (Monterescu & Hazan, 2018).

Minority Gentrification in old city of Acre:

Along the Mediterranean coast, the contested city of Acre (Akko) sits along Israel's northern shores. 68.2% of the city's 48,303 residents are Jews, while 28.8% are Muslim Arabs. 2.8% are Christian Arabs (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2017). 5000-8000 Arab citizens live in a historical neighborhood, the Old City, surrounded by a wall. The neighborhood jets into the Mediterranean Sea and is surrounded by water on three sides (Forman-Neeman, 2008). During and following the war in 1948, most of the Palestinian community fled to villages in the Galil region or Lebanon (Abbasi, 2010). The state seized Arab land and property, like elsewhere, through the 'Absentees Property Law' (1950) and transferred it later on to the Development Authority for public housing. The remaining Arab population concentrated at the old city as protected tenants in public housing. By the end of 1949, the Jewish immigrants settled in the Old City. By 1952, they constituted 36% of all residents. Later, the old city became known as a disadvantaged town, and the Jewish population moved out of the Old City (Forman-Neeman, 2008).

The Old City is undergoing accelerated gentrification in part because of its tourism and real estate potential. In 1967, the Ministry of Tourism founded the "Old Acre Development Company," which encouraged development to entice tourism. In 2001, UNESCO declared the old city a World Heritage Site (Old Acre Development Company website). Tourism increased considerably; housing prices also rose. The municipality raised property taxes, public housing

companies began evicting debtors tenants, Arab citizens, and homes were soon listed for sale to the highest bidder.

Jewish investors, entrepreneurs, and organizations bought some of these houses in what has been described as ‘State-led ethno-gentrification’ (Shmaryahu-Yeshurun & Ben-Porat, 2020). However, middle and upper-class Arab investors and entrepreneurs from Old Acre and beyond also purchased houses in old Acre. While Arab tenants in public housing were prone to displacement, Arabs entrepreneurs from Old Acre and the near area, developed business and promoted gentrification. Over the years, art galleries, boutique hotels, and cafés (identified as the “ABC’s” of gentrification according to Zukin et al., 2016), alongside hostels, guest rooms and chef restaurants opened in Old Acre.

As of 2021, there are about 36 accommodation businesses (hotels, hostels, and guest apartments) in Old Acre, comprising about 230 rooms. Around 70 percent of these businesses are Arab-owned and the rest are Jewish-owned. However, in terms of business volume, i.e., the number of rooms per business, this figure is reversed. 70 percent of all rooms are owned by Jewish entrepreneurs. This is because the largest hotels and hostels are mostly Jewish-owned, while the small, single-room guest apartments are largely Arab-owned. In the restaurant and entertainment industries, we see a different trend. Restaurants, cafes and cruise ventures in Old Acre are almost wholly owned by Arab entrepreneurs (98%). Of Old Acre’s six art galleries, two are Arab-owned. Demographically speaking, between 80-90 percent of these Arab entrepreneurs in Old Acre are local residents while the rest are from villages in the surrounding area (Jadeidi-Makr, Mi’ilya, Abu Sanan, and more) (D.A., head of tourism department, Acre Economic Company, personal communication, 2021).



Fig. 1. Right: Akkotel hotel. *Source:* Photo: AKKOTEL website; left: Zidan Sarai suite. *Source:* Photo: Daniel Hanoch.



Fig. 2. Ashash House & Gallery.

Source: Photo: Ghassan Kashash.

Methodology

The study included thirty-two, semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Nine interviewees were Arab entrepreneurs and business owners from the Old city of Acre and its surrounding area located in northwest Israel. Remaining interviewees comprised eleven Arab tenants of public housing from the old neighborhood of Acre, as well as twelve policy makers from the Acre municipality. These policy makers included the mayor, deputy mayors, council members, directors of departments, director of the Israel Antiquities Authority, and the director of Tourism and Projects in the Akko Economic company. Sampling of the interviewees was done using the snowball method. Most of the interviews were conducted between 2017 and 2019 and some in 2021. Lasting thirty to ninety minutes, all interviews were face-to-face meetings, audiotaped, and transcribed. Interviewees' names remain anonymous for confidentiality.

In addition, I analyzed 175 documents, including articles from the local and national press, online forums websites, municipal policy documents (planning documents, annual reports, tenders of the Old Acre Development Company, outline plans etc.), and government policy documents (Knesset committees' protocols, laws, work plans of government ministries, queries, and judgments).

Documents and interviews with policy makers were mainly used to obtain data about the population as well as historical and business information. Materials regarding Arab tenants and entrepreneurs provided information about their perceptions of gentrification and their intra-relationship. I used Atlas.TI8 software—a qualitative analysis software package designed for conducting large-scale thematic analysis. This thematic analysis process included three steps

aimed at formulating the research data into concepts, central themes and dimensions (Clarke & Braun, 2016).

Struggling for home: between Arab capital and the space Judaization

While gentrification in Old Acre is motivated by the state's nationalist agenda of spatial Judaization (Shmaryahu-Yeshurun & Ben-Porat, 2020), at the same time it is also promoted by Arab entrepreneurs. In some cases, struggles over assets, even when directed at Arab entrepreneurs, are revealed in the local tenants' discourse as part of the overall ethno-national fight between Arabs and Jews. However, under the camouflage of a public and well-reviewed ethno-national struggle, a local inner-class Arab tension is revealed.

Since 2012, a notable example of such class tension is the tenants' ongoing struggle to ban construction of the Bustan Cinema hotel bought by two Arab entrepreneurs. One entrepreneur grew up in Old Acre, while the other is a resident of Yasif village nearby. The Arab Waqf (a charitable endowment) owned a certain complex before the state of Israel was established. After changing hands multiple times, it was transferred to the Old Acre Development Company (OADC) in 1968. OADC put the property up for sale by tender in order to construct a hotel within the complex. The seafront structure contained the remains of a three-story building formerly used as a cinema, mosque, and house for an eleven-member Arab family, who had been living illegally in the building since the 1960s.

In 2005, OADC filed a lawsuit against the family in an attempt to evict them from the complex. The mother, Salwa (Umm Ahmed) Zidane, appealed to the district court and later to the Supreme Court, but her petitions were rejected. The courts determined she held the property illegally and was trespassing (RAA 637/10 *Salwa Zidan v. Old Acre Development Company Ltd.* (3/5/10; AA (Haifa) 2047/05 - *Salwa Zidan v. The Old Acre Development Company Ltd. Haifa District*). When the Arab entrepreneurs won the bid and attempted to evict the family in 2012, the Arab community organized to resist the eviction and construction planning.

In 2014, the Al-Aswar Association—an organization promoting cultural and social advancement—coordinated a conference against the construction of the hotel where activists, council members, and Members of Knesset delivered speeches of an ethno-national nature. Conference attendees observed a minute of silence in memory of Gaza's martyrs and the association's director, Jihad Abu Raya, indicted the OADC for their actions, claiming the attempt at Arab displacement was “an apartheid policy” designed specifically to remove Arabs from the country (<http://www.akkonet.co.il/forums/viewtopic.php?f=11&t=27763>).

Similarly, in a protest held against the hotel's construction, city council member Adv. Madiha Ramal Aisha said the following:

This is a Judaization program... We are standing firm with the participation of our Arab brothers from all over the country. We hope there will be a positive result to keep Umm-Ahmed in her home and prevent the construction of a hotel, which is modular housing for wealthy Jews in Old Acre... In Old Acre, mainly due to the difficulties in obtaining housing loans, young couples live below the poverty line because of the high rent (<https://www.akkanet.co.il/forums/viewtopic.php?f=11&t=27572>).



Fig. 6. Protests against the construction of Bustan Cinema Hotel. *Sources:* Photos: Akkanet website.

Despite the Arab identity of the entrepreneurs, the local discourse addresses the tension between entrepreneurs and lower-income Arabs not only in terms of class, but also nationalism. It can be interpreted that lower-income tenants perceived them as foreign agents promoting the entry of Jewish entrepreneurs and tourists as well as the transfer of properties of religious significance—such as the mosque—into private hands, thus displacing the Arab community. However, under the guise of an ethno-national struggle, the intra-ethnic class struggle is prominently revealed. As Raida, a lower-income tenant of Old Acre, protested against one of the entrepreneurs:

Why did he come here? Go build the hotel in your village. We'll go against him. They [OADC] published this tender to divide and separate Arabs... The family has lived in the house for more than forty years. Now they remember to publish the tender? This is her home and she will not get out... We will all protest it.

In response, the Arab developers sued the conference organizer via a defamation lawsuit, alleging that he aimed to humiliate the entrepreneurs and make them a target for hatred for winning the bid. They also claimed he conducted a public campaign against the implementation and execution of the eviction order. Eventually, the parties agreed to transfer the claim to an arbitration process (Tel Aviv 31396-04-14 *Bustan Cinema Hotel Ltd. v. Abu Raya*).

Resisting the Bustan Hotel's construction reveals the complexity of the intersection between class and ethno-nationalism within minority gentrification. It illustrates how gentrification divides Arab society on a class basis between entrepreneurs who benefit economically and lower-income tenants in danger of displacement. It also emphasizes the need to explore gentrification beyond the state's well-known ethno-national motivation to Judaize the space; and address the inner-class tensions and varying attitudes of Arab entrepreneurs versus lower-income tenants regarding gentrification.

Minority gentrifiers: economic profit, national price

On my way to meet Nadim, entrepreneur and owner of the chef restaurant, I wove through the alleys of old Acre past cafes and stallholders offering their wares to the endless tourists. Nadim, like other entrepreneurs I met, represents a generation of young Arab entrepreneurs born and raised in Old Acre. Men like him acquire a higher education and return home at adulthood to start a business. Along with a strong economic motive, they describe a deep emotion for the old city that pushed them to establish businesses to develop the area. As Nadim reflected:

I was born and grew up in the Old City. My belonging is here. I graduated with a bachelor's degree in sociology and education, but I always dreamed of being an entrepreneur... We have properties in the Old City, which are originally from my grandparents' family, so my brother and I turned them into B & Bs and restaurant ... You have everything here, food, market, authenticity, history, and the new businesses raising the level of the city... Ten years ago there was no one passing through the port, and now look – you can see a lot of tourists. It's a welcome development.

Arab entrepreneurs outside Old Acre also indicate an emotional bond to the city, which led them to establish their businesses nearby instead of other locations. One example is Hisham who lives in village north of Acre , commented on this attachment:

My mother and uncles lived in Acre and in 1948 they moved to Lebanon. That's how we heard about Acre... We had an emotional connection to Acre, a sympathy. I always believed in Acre even though the city suffered from a lot of problems, crime and drugs. And when there was a tender for this building, we applied and won it. We looked at it as a business-worthy thing... But there was also an emotion connection to Acre as a beautiful and neglected place and out of a back-to-history move.

Entrepreneurs emphasize a feeling of belonging to the Old City that strengthened their desire to develop it economically. This is most evident when addressing criticisms leveled at them by lower-income tenants, who accuse the entrepreneurs of contributing to the tenants' displacement from the neighborhood and changing its Arab character. Some acknowledge these concerns and describe the tension between desires for economic profit and ethno-national affiliation. As Nadim explained:

Like elsewhere, there are those who are on the wave, [who] want [to] join the change as I joined it, and there are those who stand aside and resist. Of course, those who are in a better financial situation will benefit from the process... They don't have the worry of bringing bread home, they have time to start a business... Once you have a difficult financial situation, you do not have time to look around, you take care of your existence ... It's scary because prices are rising and he has to pay rent so he won't be evicted... Some residents tell me, "You opened other investors' eyes to come and invest in the city and in the end they will displace us" ... that's the only thing that worries me, that we are slowly losing the authenticity of this place. I want that original population to continue living here. So we won't become a gallery city.

Minority gentrification reveals what I propose to describe as "stratified marginalization," in which an ethnic group is divided on a class basis between entrepreneurs and tenants: Both are ethno-nationally displaced, but the entrepreneurs benefit economically while the tenants exposing "secondary marginalization" (Cohen, 1999). In this regard, tenants are not only ethno-nationally displaced, but economically displaced as well. Similar to Taylor's (2003) notion of the "difference dilemma," stratified marginalization emphasizes the ambivalence of ethnic gentry. These successful entrepreneurs deal with the inherent dilemma of taking part in a process that changes the Arab character of the neighborhood while reaping economic benefit from these changes.

Although some entrepreneurs feared that displacing Arab tenants would change its character, most of them perceived the entry of Jewish entrepreneurs into the area in either a neutral or positive way. Samah, a cruise ship businesswoman and Acre' resident for the past fifty years, mentioned:

We now have a business of cruise ships for tourism in the port... the business is going well, we make a living... Jews are coming in... We have no problem with that... sometimes Jews are better than Arabs, not all Jews are good and not all Arabs are good. What do we want? Live quietly. We get everything we want... to make a living.

Similarly, Alaa, a local shop owner, described:

Whoever comes is welcome. There are a lot of sellers and there are a lot of buyers ... the process is good for someone who has money ... What do I care about a community? About Old Acre? About Arabs and Jews? It does not matter... I care only about my health, my pocket, my home ... I have no problem with Jews coming in... that [the neighborhood] will have Jews, Arabs together, more are Jews also better... This is the state of Israel, no one is moving them from here, we're done. We need to go with them.

Other entrepreneurs describe the entry of Jewish entrepreneurs neither as a forced situation, nor as a constraint. Instead, they view it as a desirable economic cooperation between entrepreneurs, renouncement of the ethno-national discourse, and adoption of a class identity (a discourse expressed in businesses collaborations between Jews and Arabs, such as the “Doniana” restaurant, co-owned by an Arab Muslim entrepreneur, an Arab Christian entrepreneur, and a Jewish chef). As Nadim further illustrated:

We have collaborations with Jewish entrepreneurs, we work together... it is not just an economic relationship, with some of them we have a friendly relationship... We are meeting, hosts in our homes, it is normal... I grew up like this. All my mother's friends are Jewish ... From a young age we were in a mixed football team ... we grew up in a mixed city... I do not judge a person by whether he is Jewish or not. This discourse belongs to the politicians who have made all these tensions.

Gentrifiers' attitudes towards gentrification and “stratified marginalization”

Arab entrepreneurs provided explanations for gentrifying businesses, arguing their establishments promoted historical and social justice for the Arab community. They also claimed they strengthened the Arab presence and character of the neighborhood. Ranin, owner of a guest house, explained how this gentrification is changing the stigma of Arab society and making her culture accessible to tourists from around the world:

This house is authentic—you can see that it is a Syrian, Lebanese, Palestinian, Moroccan house. The colors, the embroidery on these pillows is the handiwork of a woman from Jenin [Palestinian village]... I want them to see Palestinian things, to see how good it is that a Muslim Arab woman hosts Jews, Europeans, from all over the world... I give them the idea to no more think that the Arabs are terrorists, that they hate the Jews ... we are human beings... in this country that you say is Israel – I am before you. What convinced me to establish this business was that I will emphasize that a Palestinian is living here and hosts in her home. Not a hotel.

Similarly, Nadim remarked that the dishes served in his restaurant combine an innovative menu with local and traditional ingredients, making Arab culture available to many:

We opened a seafood restaurant with an emphasis on original materials... There are many raw materials and dishes here that everyone today presents on TV as Mother's food, Grandma's food ... You can combine, for example, *coba* stuffed with seafood, *labane* with fish ... We wanted to make the food, the raw materials accessible to people who have not known it before. The Israeli chefs who conquered abroad brought our food out of the Middle East and made it accessible to Europeans.

They describe authentic local culture as an attraction for tourists. Entrepreneurs explain that not only do their businesses strengthen the Arab character of Old Acre, but provide incentive for the local population to remain in the area. Attracting tourists through Old Acre's "authenticity" encourages the presence of locals by stimulating economic interest. The old city structure, which combines "authentic" residences with local businesses, described as prevents demolition of housing for large-scale businesses. As Naser, a chef and restaurant owner, explained:

The local residents enjoy the development of the city because it gives to the city an economic return... to the owners of the B & Bs, to market shops, to boat operators, even to one who has a small stand of hummus... The city itself is built in such a way that its authenticity is the attraction, not its landscape... that it has remained authentic in all its layers of life. You can still see the fisherman who makes the fishing rod, the woman who cooks, the small stands are more authentic and not fancy... if they had more money maybe they would change the stands, and their signage ... You feel the locals are still living here ... making a profit.

Naser's allusion to a lack of funds reveals the disconnect between a romantic conception of authentic local life and the economic hardship compelling tenants to simply survive. As Lloyd (2002) noted, gentrifiers often romanticize local living conditions reflecting poverty,

describing them instead as an authentic urban experience. Authenticity serves as a sought-after exotic product for tourists, which entrepreneurs claim increases the volume of their business in the Old City (Kloosterman et al., 1999; Sakızlıoğlu & Lees, 2019). Entrepreneurs further advocated gentrification, explaining that solidarity with the community, along with reaping economic benefits, led them to prefer employing locals. As Naser continued:

There is a phrase in Arabic: “Where you get your livelihood, you will stick there.” They stick to this place because there is a livelihood here... Businesses are strengthening their presence... I am employing locals because it brings me good... because this is how Acre is built. If tourists will ask a local employee which restaurant he recommends, he will say mine... As long as you include local people in your business, it comes back to you.... So I try as much as I can to employ locals.

Similarly, Nadim noted:

Since I was born and raised here and I am an example for the population here, I always tell entrepreneurs that one of the important things is to look at the community, to help them; if they want a job, please do not close the door for them, because if I will take care of him, he will want me to stay here, he will take care of my business... I have 25-30 employees here in the restaurant, all are locals ... I want the locals to succeed, to develop in their lives.

Alongside employing locals, Nadim also described his business activity in Old Acre as a role model for other locals to emulate. Similarly, Hamudi Suwaed, owner of the Elmarsa restaurant, mentioned:

In Acre we are called “the Ashkenazi Arabs.” This is how we are looked at. Our thinking has always been different... if the outside entrepreneur succeeds, there is no reason that I will not succeed several times over. I know the place, I have connections, I know the population, I know how to work with it, and I know how to bring the work here. That is why we are viewed as “Ashkenazi Arabs.” They [locals] are not used to it. We symbolize the new generation with desire and aspirations to succeed, with innovation and partnership, along with the fact that we do not forget where we came from. I believe that if you do things right and invest, there is no reason not to succeed (Haim, 2020).

While Arab entrepreneurs emphasize belonging to the local community and Arab culture, in this discourse an identity gap is revealed between classes. Their identification as “Ashkenazi Arabs” embodies the divide between the young, aspiring entrepreneur and the struggling, lower-income tenant. The underprivileged tenants’ use of the term “Ashkenazi Arabs” implies the notion of “Ashkenazi-passing” [“White-passing”] Arabs; e.g., creating businesses that feel

foreign to the local culture and identity. While the “new generation” of entrepreneurs identify as members of the “stand-tall generation” (Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker, 2002) who “do not forget where [they] came from,” they are described as different from their ethnic community. As Kloosterman et al. (1999) and Sakızlıoğlu & Lees (2019) found, gentrification is an opportunity for local entrepreneurs to take advantage of their familiarity with the area and make a profit, unlike lower-income tenants. Their claims as role models for local tenants also potentially reveals some degree of condescension, seen more clearly in Ranin’s account:

I did this business on my own. I worked all day like a donkey, so why can’t you? If you want to you can, even if you have nothing. I did not have a cent either and I set up the business... why didn't you pay your bills on time? This is your fault... you going to make nails, buy clothes, you had money for that? Go to work! ... I'm angry with the people of Acre, why shouldn't an Arab do business? Why not the people of Acre? This is their hometown, the place where they grew up... they are good people, poor people...who are not thinking enough.

In this entrepreneur’s discourse, a reversal of blame is revealed—she redirected the criticism leveled against her for contributing to gentrification and for promoting its Judaization, pointing instead to lower-income tenants for the debt accumulation that made them abandon Acre. Moreover, entrepreneurs like Ranin attributed such criticism to jealousy of their economic status. As Naser noted:

There is jealousy, okay... it's natural... [the local entrepreneur]—the eyes are on him too much, even though he is an Arab... the criticism of us is greater than of Jewish entrepreneurs coming from outside... When I bought the property in the tender I got a lot of criticism... I always acted properly socially. So what's going on here? What do you want? You are calling the Arabs to be here, right? So I bought, so what happened? What is the deal? So this whole issue is pretty harsh.

Despite efforts to describe Minority gentrification in positive terms, the issue Naser spoke of divides the Arab community, revealing a stratified marginalization structure between different classes of the same ethno-nationality.

Ethno-national and class displacement: the capital betrayal

Contrary to entrepreneurs’ discourse on strengthening the Arab presence in the Old City, lower-income Arabs emphasized their displacement, a recurring struggle for the Old Acre community. During the 1948 war, most of Acre’s Palestinian community fled to Lebanon or villages in the Galil region. In the 1960s, Old Acre was designed to be a “living museum city”

from which the Arab population was encouraged to move. In 1967, the state relocated about 500 Arab families from Old Acre to a new neighborhood built in the village of Makr. Another 250 families were relocated in the 2000s. This history of national displacement mirrors the economic displacement underprivileged tenants are experiencing because of the gentrification. As Shadi, a lower-income tenant, reported:

We live in the Old City for seventy-two years. My father was born here and my grandfather...the state does not want Arabs here—maybe some Arabs, but not a majority. They are slowly pushing us out. It starts when you have no money to pay. It's the worst... The prices of the houses have gone up, and I do not have the money... Those who buy here come from outside... Jews from Tel Aviv, there are also Arabs from Tamara, Yarka [Arab villages], and Arabs from here who have some money are starting to innovate, too; they know it's a good investment ... They want to get people out to do more tourism.

Gentrification can be described as displacing Arabs unequally, depending on their economic status. Shadi, like other tenants, described the pain of losing the neighborhood's character following new business establishments:

One day, I suddenly saw they are starting to renovate this house. It became a B&B... Now Arabs who have some money are starting to innovate too... it's a problem that we are leaving Acre... Everything has become business... then there will be no Old Acre as we know it... Because of the development of tourism, we are no longer allowed to do weddings on the street like we used to do, or to eat fish on the fire, open a hookah on the beach. The municipality banned it ... It hurts me. We were born in Acre, this is our place, our roots. Whoever lives here, the place should be his.

Tenants expressed how gentrification harms the lower-income class. Most properties in Old Acre (about 65%, which constitute 807 units) are managed by Amidar, a public housing company. Amidar's units are rented to lower-income tenants under protected leases for “key fees”—usually tens to hundreds of shekels a month. Although Amidar's tenants have the legal right to purchase their apartments at a significant discount (Resolution 921, “Sale of Development Authority Assets,” 2001), some seem unable to do so, citing their precarious economic situation along with banks' refusal to offer a mortgage. Additionally, tenants explain that with the increased demand for properties, Amidar began to evict indebted tenants and put their properties up for sale by tender. In 2008 alone, there were about 170 eviction orders against debtor tenants. As Nasreen illustrated:

I was born and raised in Old Acre, and when I was fifteen I got married. We lived with my husband's father in the Amidar apartment. He had diabetes, and when he died Amidar wanted to evict us from the apartment because he had a debt. He did not pay. NIS 70,000 Where will I get it? Where will I go with my children?

Along with rental debts, companies like Amidar evict many tenants because of hazardous living conditions. In some of these cases, as Ali claimed, the properties were offered for sale and turned into hostels after renovation:

I was told that my house was not in condition for human residency, in danger of collapsing, and that I had to leave. They would renovate and preserve the building ... I was forced to leave... and then they turned it into a tourist hotel. They want to throw us out of Acre. They suffocate us.

In addition to Amidar, tenants also owe debts to the municipality from being unable to afford property taxes, which also contributed to their displacement. Amidar's apartments, once they are free of tenants, are being offered by tender to the highest bidder. Wealthy developers purchase them, turning the residential properties into businesses.

Following the increased demand for properties, a phenomenon of restriction resale, also known as a “round / triple transaction” or “combination transaction,” (Bimkom, 2009) was accelerated, causing displacement of tenants in exchange for monetary compensation. In this situation, investors convince tenants to purchase the property through their legal right, lending them the necessary money to do so. In this deal, the tenant sells the investor his right to the property discount while the tenant, albeit of his own free will, is required to find another place of residence with the money he has received in return. Alongside the economic hardship pushing tenants to this deal, both the housing density and rigid restrictions on extensions and building permits leave them little choice, prompting them to abandon the Old City. As Shadi explained:

It bothers us that we cannot fix our houses... That's why people leave. A family with five children in a sixty-meter house, how could they live here? They don't give you permission to expand the apartment, so you prefer to sell your right to a house and rent outside... Those who buy are willing to pay a lot, especially the houses that are by the sea, and then you regret your entire life for leaving Acre. That's a problem.

Contrary to the entrepreneurs' discourse, underprivileged tenants claim that gentrification undermines the Arab character of the Old City and their displacement. They distinguish between Arab business owners and entrepreneurs who benefit from the process and lower-income Arab tenants who risk being displaced.

Conclusion

In the spring of 2021, unprecedented intercommunal violence broke out among Arab and Jewish citizens in ethnically mixed Israeli cities. In Old Acre, Arab residents burned dozens of Jewish businesses, including guest apartments, restaurants and the police station, injuring Jewish residents and tourists.

These violent incidents were inextricably linked to Arab displacement over the years caused by Jewish investors, entrepreneurs, and organizations and, more importantly, supported by the state. Arab residents claimed that the Judaization policy caused their displacement from Old Acre. This process is described as “state-led ethno-gentrification,”²(Shmaryahu-Yeshurun & Ben-Porat, 2020) namely, the convergence of economic gentrification and ethno-nationalist territorialization.

While the intersection of class and ethnicity have been well documented in literature on gentrification (Arena, 2012; Bolt et al. 2009; Goetz, 2011; Lees, 2016; Mumm, 2017; Wyly & Hammel, 2004), the minority gentrification presented in this study reveals a more complex relationship between the dimensions, challenging the existing literature and recent research on ethnic and Black gentrification (Ahrens, 2015; Arkaraprasertkul, 2016; Boyd 2008; Casellas & McBrayer, 2019; Delgado & Swanson, 2019; Hyra 2006; Pattillo, 2007; Schaffer & Smith, 1986; Taylor, 2003).

As demonstrated, not only Jewish entrepreneurs promote gentrification in Old Acre, but also Arab entrepreneurs, Old City natives, or Arab villagers nearby. While lower-class Arab tenants are being displaced both economically and ethno-nationally, for Arab entrepreneurs and business owners, gentrification provides an opportunity for financial profit. This minority gentrification reminds us that ethno-nationally segregated neighborhoods are not necessarily homogenous from an economic perspective. As a result, gentrification divides the Arab community and reveals a structure of what I propose to describe as “stratified marginalization” between different classes within the ethno-national group.

In contrast to ethnic or Black gentrification, minority gentrification has implications beyond questions of class and ethnicity intersection and even local conflicts. This type of gentrification examines broader issues such as the struggle between ethno-national majority and minority populations for territorial control. On the one hand, minority gentrification

The term “ethno-gentrification” also refers to a Zionist religious settlement movements called *Garinim*² *Toranim* (literally, “Torah nuclei”), which aims to Judaize contested cities in Israel. See: Shmaryahu-Yeshurun, 2021.

becomes a tool of resistance against the Jewish territorialization project, since it provides Arab entrepreneurs with economic profits, the opportunity to shape the space, and a chance to strengthen their locality's Arab character. Arab entrepreneurs perceive gentrification as an act of national Palestinian justice and a historic return to their place of belonging. They presented gentrification as responsible for making Arab culture accessible to tourists, thereby changing stigmas about it, and providing a livelihood and economic opportunity for Arab residents. Finally, the global tourist demand for "authentic" culture (Sakızlıoğlu & Lees, 2019) strengthened the Arab presence and challenged Judaization of Old Acre.

On the other hand, gentrification negatively affects the minority population according to its class position, exacerbating tension between classes. In doing so, it replicates the ethno-national control of the mixed city and constitutes another form of Israeli territorialization by local forces. Minority gentrification also presents an alternative, class-cultural perception which views the demographic changes in the neighborhood as a desirable diversity and co-existence between Jews and Arabs. Despite their ethno-national identity and occasional recognition of the ethno-national price of gentrification, Arab entrepreneurs did not accept the role that the national struggle gave them as opponents of Judaization, instead promoting "casual coalitions" (Monterescu, 2015) or "coexistence from below" (Nathansohn, 2010) with Jewish entrepreneurs on the basis of common class interest. Concepts such as "creative marginalization" (Monterescu, & Schickler, 2015) demonstrate how blurring the boundaries between Arabs and Jews in the contested city challenges the nationalist spatial hegemony (both Palestinian and Zionist). Stratified marginalization, on the other hand, emphasizes how the split within the minority population following gentrification weakens Arabs' ability to organize around national identity and resist Judaization. Varying opportunities and costs that minority gentrification poses to entrepreneurs and tenants according to class affiliation reveals the structure of stratified marginalization, highlighting how one group's misfortune becomes an opportunity for another. Alongside state-led ethno-gentrification (Shmaryahu-Yeshurun & Ben-Porat, 2020), this process exacerbates the displacement of disadvantaged tenants and promotes Judaization of the Arab neighborhood.

In contrast to ethnic or Black gentrification, due to minority gentrification's geopolitical context, inner-class conflict becomes a broader national struggle over territory, extending beyond the boundaries of a local space. We see an example of this in the Arab entrepreneurs of Acre. These members are described as a foreign agency, "Ashkenazi Arabs" who are alienated from the local Arab culture and actively participate in Judaizing the area. The violent events of spring 2021 also express this national struggle over territory and property. An Arab owner

whose restaurant was destroyed explained that his business was targeted “because of my clientele who are mostly Jewish customers” (Liebsker, 2021). Some Arab entrepreneurs were also discontent with the effects of gentrification, blaming local residents for their economic situation. Thus, despite entrepreneurs’ efforts to express solidarity with tenants and describe minority gentrification in positive terms, the process nevertheless divides the minority group on a class basis, revealing the structure of stratified marginalization.

By presenting different perceptions of and inner tension between classes within the Old Acre Arab community, this research contributed to the currently developing yet under-researched studies examining more accurately the complex intersection between class and ethnicity in gentrification processes. These findings promote a re-evaluation of class and ethno-national intersection in a way that recognizes the benefits of gentrification for the middle-class ethno-national entrepreneurs on the one hand, while acknowledging the multiple margins of the lower-class ethno-national group on the other. In particular, this research stresses that tensions between class and ethnicity also exist in settler-immigrant societies, where despite the geopolitical conflict between ethno-national groups and the dominance of the ethno-national dimension, class identity is a significant force that divides the minority group.

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