

Ethnicity, Citizenship, Planning and Gender: the case of Ethiopian immigrant women in Israel

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ABSTRACT *This article analyses spatial expressions of the interrelationships between gender, ethnicity and citizenship among Ethiopian immigrant women in Israel. It assesses the impact of the approach informing the Israeli Government's 'Master Plans' for Ethiopian immigrants. Critiquing the procedural approach adopted in Israeli planning, it advocates a pluralist approach.*

Introduction

This article examines expressions in space of changes in lifestyle, traditions and gender relations experienced by Ethiopian immigrants in Israel, focusing particularly on the ways in which ethnicity and newly-won citizenship have affected women. The analysis develops along twin tracks: on the one hand I explore the cultural understandings and uses of space by immigrant men and women, and on the other hand I examine the perspective adopted by the state as articulated in planning projects that aimed to 'absorb' Ethiopian immigrants who arrived in Israel in the 1980s. This approach provides a basis for illustrating spatial dimensions of the complex patterning of ethnicity, citizenship and gender.

'Absorption' in this context is a translation of the Hebrew word *Klita*, which expresses the concept of the Israeli state as a homeland and safe haven for Diaspora Jews. Israel has the potential to become an ethnically heterogeneous society, encompassing both Jewish and non-Jewish sectors, the latter including Muslim and Christian Palestinian citizens. However, the manner in which the Israeli state apparatus absorbs its immigrants, as evident in development projects and planning schemes, tends to ignore ethnicity, and to treat Westernised lifestyles as the normative model into which others should assimilate. Thus, while the concept of 'absorption' could suggest forms of adaptation to life in Israel in which unique ethnic identities are preserved, government policies have generally pointed in a different direction.

In order to explore the particular impact of this on Ethiopian immigrants, this article begins by discussing the significance of planning, drawing particular attention to a distinction between procedural and pluralist perspectives, after which an overview of planning related to immigration to Israel is provided. I then briefly discuss the concepts of ethnicity and citizenship, focusing particularly on gendered dimensions of these concepts. This provides the background for an investigation of the experience of

Ethiopian immigrants to Israel and for assessing the impact of the 'Master Plans' formulated by the Israeli Government.

Social Change, Space and Planning

During the last two decades the role of space has been accorded increasing significance in social theory, and it has become clear that spatial relations can represent and reproduce social relations (see, for example, Gregory & Urry, 1985). One expression of this is the acknowledgement by Marxists that geographical perspectives are vital for social theory. Thus, crises of capitalism must be understood in terms of the spatial structures intrinsic to their character and resolution (Harvey, 1989; Soja, 1989). This trend was further reinforced by Giddens's (1979, 1981) structuration theory, which disentangled the Marxist dialectic in order to investigate the interplay between 'structure' and 'human agency' (see Smith, 1994). Another important influence has been the emergence of post-structuralist perspectives, which have led to significant changes in perspectives on planning and development. In particular, the complicity of 'development' in the exploitation and marginalisation of groups such as racialised peoples, ethnic minorities, women and students (all of them articulating discontent with their subordinate positions) has become clearly apparent (Lefebvre, 1992). This has been accompanied by a growing interest in the needs of displaced and immigrant groups, who often experience very intense social and cultural transitions.

These shifts in social theory are sometimes understood in terms of a distinction between the 'modern' and the 'postmodern'. This relates closely to a distinction in planning theory between procedural and pluralist approaches.

Procedural planning is rooted in the assimilationist approach: it assumes that assimilation is both 'natural' and desirable for both immigrant groups and the host society. This implies that 'equality' through citizenship can be substituted for 'difference' represented by ethnicity so that in becoming citizens all people become similar (for elaboration see Fenster, 1996). Procedural planning serves as a tool for the implementation of this theory: it views society as one homogeneous entity, and aims to foster similarity. Relying upon functionalist thinking to achieve its goals, it is a highly formalised, top-down process that pays attention to differences among those for whom plans are made only in terms of their 'deviation' from the norm. In other words, procedural planning emphasises formal equality and civil rights above other concerns, notably those of cultural difference. It is an avowedly modern form consisting of a set of rational, logical, universal principles for making decisions. Its methodology takes the form of a set of stages including problem definition, data collection and processing, formulation of goals and project objectives, design of alternatives, implementation, monitoring and feedback (Moser, 1993).

In contrast, pluralist planning adopts a more open view of social structures and relations, and allows for more diversity in their spatial attributes. While it has also developed in modern contexts, it is now often understood as a 'postmodern' form. Rooted in a pluralist understanding of social change, it acknowledges that some groups may guard their ethnic, cultural or religious differences for reasons of sentiment, belief or ideology (see Fenster, 1996). Thus, it views ethnicity and citizenship as complementary, and seeks to enable ethnic identities to withstand pressures towards acculturation. In pursuit of this goal pluralist planning emphasises the participation of citizens, and their social and political entitlements. It is closely linked to a multicultural conception of citizenship in which the right to equality is combined with respect for ethnic difference.

It fosters dialogue between ethnic groups, with any adaptation being mutual in character. Consequently it can serve as a means of achieving social and political aims such as building capacity, fostering empowerment, and equalising access to resources. Pluralist approaches include advocacy planning, negotiated planning (in which planning is regarded as a mutual learning process between planners and the target group), critical planning and radical planning (Alterman, 1994). It has strong links with post-structuralist theory in that it challenges 'grand theory' and emphasises particularity and the local (Ley, 1989). Sandercock & Forsyth (1996, p. 473) describe it as 'planning for multiple publics', at the centre of which is 'the acknowledgement and celebration of difference'.

One important issue arising in this context concerns gender relations: in this dialogue what happens to cultural traditions that give a subordinate role to women? In other words, tension between equal rights and respect for difference is brought to the fore in relation to gender issues. This article explores this issue by examining the impact of planning in Israel on Ethiopian Jewish immigrants, focusing especially on women's experiences.

An Overview of Planning for Immigrants to Israel

Planning for the absorption of Jewish immigrants to Israel has been dominated by a procedural approach, which has generally been insensitive to the particular circumstances and needs of minority ethnic groups. This approach has emphasised the 'national interest' as defined by the dominant group, namely Ashkenazi Jews who originated in Eastern Europe. The social and cultural traditions of other groups have been treated as 'problems' that need to be overcome, and minimal attention has been given to the processes of adaptation such groups undergo (Smooha, 1978; Ben-Zadok, 1993).

For example, the Mizrachim immigrants, who arrived in Israel in the 1950s from parts of the Arab world, notably North Africa and the Middle East, were met by a cohesive and centralised Western-style political system controlled by Ashkenazim (see Ben-Zadok, 1993). They were sent to live in so-called 'development towns', mostly in peripheral locations and subsidised by the central government. In the absence of alternatives, most remained in these settlements and so remained dependent upon the Government for the provision of employment, education, housing and social welfare services. They lived in accommodation that failed to cater for the unique and particular needs of their traditional ethno-religious culture (Ben-Zadok, 1993). As I elaborate later, these policies have persisted into the 1980s and 1990s. In contrast to this, Jews arriving from the former Soviet Union, who were nearly all Ashkenazi, benefited from *Klita Yeshira*, meaning 'direct absorption'. On arrival they received a sum of money direct from the Government and were free to choose where to live and work. Racist attitudes within officialdom and the public at large have undoubtedly been significant in producing these contrasts (Smooha, 1978).

It must also be noted that the dominant national ideology has resulted in the exclusion of 20% of the population of Israel from planning considerations: until very recently there were no development plans for the Arab-Palestinian populations, who suffered instead the expropriation of their land (Yiftachel, 1992).

Ethnicity, Gender and Citizenship—towards a pluralist approach

In order to understand how the tension between equal rights and respect for difference was played out in the lives of Ethiopian Jewish immigrants, it is necessary to clarify my

usage of the concepts 'ethnicity' and 'citizenship', which I do in this section. I focus particularly on the themes of equality and difference.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity is a contested concept, but one of the most widely cited definitions is that offered by Horowitz (1985), who describes ethnicity as the feeling of belonging to, and solidarity with, cultural units wider than families. In this sense ethnicity necessarily generates relationships between groups, which consider themselves, and are regarded by others, to be culturally distinctive (Erikson, 1993). It therefore creates feelings of 'difference' and 'otherness', especially within 'minority' groups. Majorities constitute ethnic groups too, but their cultural identities tend to be normative as well as dominant, especially in democratic societies. Ethnicity is often recognised in distinctive values, norms, language, religion, customs, festivals, ceremonies, clothes, food and so on, formed and preserved by a particular group of people. It is a highly complex, multifaceted and dynamic form of collective identity, typically less stable than, for example, territorial, religious or gender identities.

Ethnicity is often created and perpetuated through conflict within a socially and culturally heterogeneous environment, or as a response to civil discrimination (Smith, 1991). It is, therefore, often connected with racism. Some scholars regard 'race' relations as a special case of ethnic relations (Van den Berge, 1983; Erikson, 1993), while others (notably Banton, 1967) argue for a greater conceptual separation between the two terms. This debate is beyond the scope of this article, but I want to draw attention to one key issue, namely the basis of discrimination: discrimination is spoken of as 'racism' when members of the subordinated group are considered to 'look different' from the dominant group, and are therefore unable to 'escape' from their ethnic identity even if they wish to do so.

Ethnic identities are intrinsically gendered, and are often highly differentiated between women and men. In many cultural contexts women play distinctive and major roles in the construction and defence of ethnic collectivities. For example, the spirit and the roots of an ethnic group are frequently symbolised in feminine terms (Yuval-Davis, 1995). Ethnically-specific constructions and understandings of spaces are also often differentiated in gendered terms. One effect of this is that women's mobility may be circumscribed by cultural constructions of space. Consequently, they are, in a sense, sometimes imprisoned by the symbolism defining their ethnicity.

Citizenship

Whereas ethnicity emphasises differences between groups, the concept of citizenship draws attention to principles of sameness such as equal rights and equal treatment for all. Marshall's (1950) definition of citizenship as full membership in a community, encompassing civil, political and social rights, has been very influential (see also Marshall, 1975, 1981). It has led some feminists to argue that women will gain full citizenship only if, alongside equal civil rights, all major social and political responsibilities and duties are shared equally between women and men (Lister, 1995; Yuval-Davis, 1997). However, as Yuval-Davis (1997) argues, what characterises women's citizenship in many societies today is its dualistic nature: on the one hand women are included in the general body of citizens and in the laws and policies of the state; on the other hand women are subject

to a special body of legislation, sometimes framed in protective terms but which generally expresses and contributes to their subordinate position.

During the last decade or so, political and social crises in which the exercise of power by nation-states has been challenged, have prompted renewed debate about citizenship. Kofman (1995) suggests that discussions have proceeded along two axes. One axis concerns the relationship between citizenship and nationality, and has given rise to a distinction between republican and ethnic models. The former prioritises the civil rights of the individual citizen, and is therefore linked to the American and French revolutions. The ethnic model links citizenship to membership of a nation defined by community of descent, and is, according to Kofman, exemplified by Germany and by Israel. The second axis concerns social and political rights, in a continuation of Marshall's approach. In this context particular attention has been paid to differences in the *de jure* and *de facto* rights of different groups within and between nation-states (Smith, 1991). In this article I explore the effects of a discourse of equal rights in relation to the experiences of the first generation of a racialised ethnic minority arriving in a country in which citizenship is explicitly linked to ethno-religious identity. I focus especially on the impact of both ethnic difference and gender difference in relation to the spaces occupied by a new group of citizens.

The notion of 'spaces of citizenship' (Painter & Philo, 1995) draws attention to the geographical and environmental context of these debates, including issues of access to natural resources such as land, water and minerals, and access to public facilities such as infrastructure, welfare services, education and employment (also see Fenster, forthcoming 1997). The distinction between 'public' and 'private' space plays an integral part in citizenship, framing the limits of state intervention in the lives of individuals (see, for example, Turner, 1990; Jayasuriya, 1990). As is well documented, the distinction is deeply gendered such that, according to Lister (1995), we cannot understand gendered patterns of entry into the public sphere where the formal rights of citizenship are exercised, without taking into account sexual divisions within the private sphere. But it is also culturally variable, and is therefore a key point of intersection between gender, ethnicity and citizenship (Yuval-Davis, 1991). In a multicultural concept of citizenship, a right to equality is combined with respect for ethnic difference.

In the context of these ideas I turn now to examine the experiences of Ethiopian immigrants who arrived in Israel in the 1980s and 1990s. I will draw particular attention to the interplay between ethnicity and gender in their absorption in Israel, before turning to particular issues arising in relation to constructions of space.

Ethiopian Immigrants in Israel—ethnicity, gender and absorption

The 53,000 Ethiopian Jews now living in Israel arrived in two main waves, the first in 1984 (about 33,000 people) and the second in 1991 (about 20,000 people). These people arrived as a result of dramatic rescue operations prompted by civil war and famine in Ethiopia, within the context of Israel's national mission to gather Diaspora Jews from all over the world and bring them to the Jewish homeland. At the height of the rescue, 19,000 people arrived in Israel from Ethiopia in a period of just 24 hours.

The State of Israel prepared itself for the absorption of Ethiopian Jews by formulating two 'Master Plans' (Ministry of Absorption, 1985, 1991). The first was prepared in 1985, a year after the arrival of the first wave of immigrants; the second simply updated the first in response to the second wave of immigration from Ethiopia in 1991. The first Master Plan contained an elaborate and detailed programme. It covered issues of

housing, education, employment and practical organisation, together with policy guidelines regarding specific groups including women, youths, and lone-parent families. Like earlier absorption policies, it adopted a procedural approach, assuming that the immigrants were broadly similar to the existing majority population of Israel. The Plans were, no doubt, formulated with the best of intentions and a firm belief in the underlying principles of absorption. However, as I indicate in this section, the results have been disappointing and suggest that much greater attention needs to be paid to issues of ethnicity.

The Ethiopian Jews have experienced very major changes in all aspects of their lives since their arrival in Israel. They came mainly from rural communities in Ethiopia where most had been farmers, blacksmiths and potters; they lived in extended family groups; and they practised their own distinctive Jewish religious traditions in mixed Jewish and Christian villages (Doleve-Gandelman, 1990; Salamon, 1993). As immigrants they faced totally unfamiliar social, economic and religious norms and values. For the majority, the processes of change have proven very difficult (Askenazi & Weingrod, 1987; Doleve-Gandelman, 1990; Westheimer & Kaplan, 1992; Anteby, 1996).

Ironically and tragically, one of the most contentious issues in the integration of Ethiopian Jews in Israel has been the question of their 'Jewishness'. According to the decision of the Rabbinate [1], they were officially Jews, but nevertheless those arriving in the first wave in 1984 were required to undergo special conversion procedures in order to receive identity cards that acknowledged their Jewishness (Corinaldi, 1988) or to marry under Jewish law (Rosen, 1987). The special demands made by the Rabbinate harmed relations between the Ethiopians and the host Israeli society at the critical initial moment of encounter (Holt, 1995). It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that these special demands reflected the racism of the Rabbinate.

Further difficulties arose in connection with housing. The arrangements for housing contained in the Master Plans overlooked two issues of great significance to the Ethiopian immigrants. First, as I outline here, they failed to make any provision for the distinctive form of the immigrant families. Secondly, as I indicate in the next section, they failed to consider the need for separate spaces for men and women.

The majority of Ethiopians were raised in large families and accustomed to living in an extended family space. Upon arrival in Israel most were initially placed in hotels that served as 'absorption centres', where they remained for at least a year after their arrival, purportedly to assist them in adapting to their new environment [2]. In due course, they moved into small government-provided apartments designed for nuclear families, and the immigrants were therefore forced to adapt to the living spaces of this alien form. Moreover, they were expected to live at higher room densities than the Israeli average, namely 1.5 people per room rising to 2 people per room in temporary housing, compared to 1.1 people per room for the population at large. I will return to particular aspects of the hardship this caused in the next section.

A choice of living space can be considered a basic right of citizenship. Many other immigrants to Israel, such as those arriving from the former Soviet Union, were free to settle wherever they chose. But, like the Mizrachim immigrants in the 1950s, those arriving from Ethiopia were subject to the government policy of 'cultural integration'. The Master Plans stated that rapid and successful absorption of the immigrants depended upon their geographical dispersion. This required the new immigrants to move to specified settlements (selected according to such criteria as their income and level of education) where they would form no more than 4% of the total population. They were housed in 'integrative neighbourhoods', where they lived alongside Russian immigrants

and Israeli-born households. According to the Master Plans the rationale for this was to aid speedy absorption. However, it also seems very likely that racist fears about the presence of large numbers of Ethiopians and their impact on particular settlements may also have been at work. Certainly the policy has proven problematic in practice, with many reports of conflict associated with racial, cultural and lifestyle differences. Intensive community work to facilitate coexistence is still needed in many of these neighbourhoods.

This policy has aggravated the loss of extended family space and has proven particularly problematic for those arriving in the second wave (in 1991), many of whom wished to be reunited with members of their families who had come in 1984. A survey conducted by Benita *et al.* (1993) in the cities of Netanya, Afula and Kiryat Gat in 1992 revealed a continuing desire to live in close proximity to relatives: in Kiryat Gat, 60% stated that it was important for them that other Ethiopians live in the same neighbourhood as themselves and 57% indicated that it was important for them that other Ethiopians lived in the same apartment block. While the figures for those arriving in 1984 were lower than for those arriving in 1991, indicating some adjustment over time, 48% of those who had arrived in the first wave stated that the proximity of relatives was the most important factor influencing their choice of location. This illustrates the effects of a procedural approach to planning in which assimilationism is taken for granted.

Profound changes have also been endured in relation to employment. In Kiryat Gat, only 46% of Ethiopians aged between 22 and 64 were employed, while in Ethiopia almost all had been in work. Unemployment has arisen partly because of the enormous differences in the work available. In Ethiopia the majority (72%) had been farmers, with most of the remainder being blacksmiths, potters or soldiers (Benita *et al.*, 1993). In Israel, of those in employment, most work in manufacturing industries (66%) or public services (24%) with only 6% employed in agriculture, construction and commerce combined. Only 53% of Ethiopians in employment expressed satisfaction with their work, compared with 77% among the Israeli-born Jewish population. Moreover, 60% of the Ethiopians in the survey claimed that their income was not sufficient to support a family. The majority indicated that issues relating to employment constituted the most severe obstacle to their integration into Israeli life (also see Ben-Zvi, 1989; Elias, 1989).

Language is an important indicator of integration and adaptation to a new culture. Although 75% of those surveyed by Benita *et al.* (1993) in Kiryat Gat attended *Ulpan* (Hebrew language courses), only 58% spoke Hebrew fluently, only 37% were able to write a simple letter in Hebrew, and only 43% were able to read a simple letter in Hebrew, although some had lived in Israel since 1984.

Perhaps the starkest indicator of the traumatic nature of the changes experienced by Ethiopian Jews in Israel is the relatively high rate of suicide. A survey conducted in 1992 (Arieli *et al.*, 1994) indicated rates of suicide between one-third and nearly seven times higher among Ethiopians than among the population at large. The majority of suicides were men aged between their early twenties and their late thirties, who are probably the group who have faced the most severe difficulties in integrating into the host society, and the greatest acculturation stress (Arieli *et al.*, 1994). These rates are markedly higher than for other immigrant communities in Israel or for immigrant communities in the USA, Canada and France (Arieli *et al.*, 1994). They strongly suggest that particular ethnic needs of the Ethiopian immigrants remain unmet.

The spread of Pentecostalism and the rise in cases of domestic violence are also symptomatic of the trauma of adjustment. Pentecostalism is a missionary movement that has gained great popularity among displaced and uprooted peoples in many parts

of the world (Rosen, 1995). The success of the movement in Israel is undoubtedly symptomatic of a sense of not belonging, often exacerbated by severe economic problems. Precise figures on this phenomenon are not known, but the Ministry of Integration has estimated that approximately 20 Pentecostal centres exist in neighbourhoods with substantial Ethiopian populations (Rosen, 1995). Increased rates of domestic violence have been observed in a number of societies in transition (for example among First Nations and Inuit women in Canada [Pauktuuit, 1990]). It appears to have been virtually unknown among Ethiopian Jews until they arrived in Israel, since when cases of wife beating and killing have become more and more common (Beitachin Information and Counseling Center on Family Affairs, 1993). The breaking up of traditional family structures, resulting in the loss of mechanisms for conflict resolution, together with male unemployment, are probably contributory factors. Also relevant is the loss of authority experienced by men relative to women, which I outline below.

As this account shows, the integration of Ethiopian Jews in Israel has been deeply problematic. I have indicated that insufficient attention has been paid to issues of ethnic specificity within the framework of the Master Plans. In practice the presumption of similarity has generated a series of problems that have, ironically, produced inequalities both economically and socially.

The evidence presented so far has made very little reference to gender difference beyond noting the predominance of men amongst those who commit suicide and the predominance of women among the victims of domestic violence. I want now to focus more closely on the impact of absorption in gender roles and relations.

Gender Relations in Transition

In Ethiopia the family was defined by a clear patriarchal structure, and gender roles were sharply delineated, in both 'public' and 'private' spaces. The husband normally headed the family in both public and private spaces, controlling the finances and related decision-making. Women remained mainly in private spaces, fulfilling traditional roles in childbearing, child rearing (including taking responsibility for the health and education of children), domestic management (including the collection of wood and water as well as cooking) and basket-weaving (Westheimer & Kaplan, 1992; also see Moser, 1993). A wife was expected to obey and respect her husband, to wash his feet when he returned from work, to feed him before the rest of the family and to honour him by observing strict Jewish laws concerning family purity.

The Master Plans presumed that the subordination of women in traditional Ethiopian societies would have particular effects on their integration in Israel. On the one hand, their relative lack of education and their traditional domestic roles led planners to assume that Ethiopian women would be less able than men to participate in activities such as the *Ulpan*, or in training for employment. However, they suggested that women should be involved as much as possible, and recommended, for example, the provision of childcare facilities. On the other hand, Ethiopian women were regarded as 'agents for change', their lack of education and subordination in traditional communities rendering them more flexible, more amenable to new cultural patterns, and more likely to be willing to become 'similar' to the majority of Israeli citizens than their educated menfolk, who were perceived as having a greater interest in adhering to ethnic traditions. This flexibility was perceived as particularly 'useful' because of women's roles in socialising the next generation to assimilate into Israeli society. It was also assumed to be a function of the fact that wives tended to be considerably younger than their husbands. Overall, the Plan

appears to have been motivated rather more by a functionalist interest in the potential of women to promote social change, especially among the next generation, than by issues of gender equality.

The application of these ideas has had complex and disruptive effects. Although women have developed fluency in Hebrew more slowly than men, with Benita *et al.* (1993) reporting 66% of women able to speak Hebrew compared to 85% of men, women have made more rapid advances in employment than anticipated. The patriarchal form of Ethiopian families has been severely tested by unemployment among Ethiopian men, and by exposure to the less rigid gender roles prevalent among Westernised Jews (Beitachin Information and Counseling Center on Family Affairs, 1993, 1994). Women have become more independent in part because they have had to maintain their families financially, whether by means of employment or by receiving social security payments. In addition, some 28% of families arriving from Ethiopia in the first wave were headed by lone parents, 83% of whom were women. In many cases one partner had stayed behind in Ethiopia or had died on the journey to Israel. Whatever its cause, women's growing independence has propelled them increasingly into the public domain and has decreased the authority of their menfolk (Litman, 1993). Conversely, men have often found their lives have become less bound up with the public domain and more restricted to private spaces.

The different effects on Ethiopian men and women of the changes experienced since their arrival in Israel, and the shifts that have empowered women relative to men, can be attributed to a number of factors. First, women have been assisted in the processes of transition to a greater degree than men through the actions of social workers, nurses, teachers and so on (Westheimer & Kaplan, 1992). Most of these people are themselves women and they have interacted much more with Ethiopian women than Ethiopian men because of shared gender identities, and because of men's reluctance to contact them or to seek their help. Moreover, while Ethiopian women have turned to social workers and the like for assistance, Ethiopian men have relied much more upon traditional religious leaders (*Kessim*) within their community, since this framework upholds their position and authority within the family (Beitachin Information and Counseling Center on Family Affairs, 1993). Secondly, Ethiopian women have become more independent because of markedly greater opportunities for employment, although it should be noted that these have been pursued more because of the needs of their families rather than in a conscious struggle for equality. Thirdly, the legal system, together with dominant social norms, provide women with mechanisms to secure their civil rights and to fight for equality. This has provided Ethiopian women with the means to defend themselves, for example against domestic violence, and has helped them to enhance their self-esteem (Beitachin Information and Counseling Center on Family Affairs, 1994). Lastly, the notion that Ethiopian women are 'agents of change' has intensified all these processes.

Social Change and Constructions of Space: 'pure' and 'impure' space

The changes described in the preceding section have engendered increasing tensions within many families. An additional and important source of tension relates to issues of family purity, which are expressed through constructions of space.

In traditional Ethiopian communities, both Christian and Jewish, women's menstrual blood is considered impure, as are menstruating and post-partum women. 'Pure' and 'impure' spaces are differentiated in relation to menstruation and childbirth. This

precludes menstruating and post-partum women from attending Church in the case of Christians, and from the family home in the case of Jewish women (Pankhurst, 1992).

Traditionally, during menstruation and following childbirth, Jewish women must retire to, and remain in, the 'impure' space of the menstruation hut (*yamargam gogo*) so as to maintain the purity of other spaces. This practice removed menstruating and post-partum women from their daily routines, and during this time female relatives would bring food to the menstruation hut on special plates. Located close to the village and preferably beside a river (in the waters of which the women could purify their bodies), these huts were partially surrounded by a half circle of stones, which delineated the boundary between 'impure' and 'pure' spaces. They cut across the distinction between public and private space: they belonged to the public sphere in the sense of territory outside of family homes, but they retained many of the characteristics of private space. The huts also provided a means by which women communicated to others in their communities whether or not they were pregnant, a matter that would not be discussed verbally. Menstruation huts emphasised the distinctiveness of Jewish identities, especially in villages where Christians and Jews lived together (Salamon, 1993).

The environments into which Ethiopian immigrants to Israel moved offered no opportunities for spaces comparable with the menstruation huts, although the planners were certainly aware of traditional customs. Many women attempted to retain some kind of separation between 'pure' and 'impure' spaces by means of improvised replacements for the huts, through the use of hotel corridors (in the initial absorption centres), special rooms, balconies, or closets in their homes (Zehavi, 1989; Halper, 1987; Westheimer & Kaplan, 1992; Anteby, 1996). But the small size of the government apartments into which they moved made it very difficult to retain the traditional segregation of space, or the codes of modesty associated with the menstruation hut. A small number seem to have found a solution to this problem through adopting the common Jewish rabbinical laws of *nida* (menstruation), with immersion in the *miyve* (a pool-like ritual bath) replacing the bodily purification in the running water of Ethiopia's rivers (Anteby, 1996). But for most households there are no adequate solutions.

This has caused tension among family members, with women in particular expressing feelings of guilt and shame. For some the effect has been to remember Ethiopia as a 'clean' place, while their new environment is experienced as 'dirty' (Anteby, 1996). Women have lost a space that enabled them to remain closely 'in touch' with their bodies (Doleve-Gandelman, 1990).

The loss of menstruation huts has deprived Ethiopian immigrants of a very important traditional social institution, and Anteby (1996) claims that women have lost crucial aspects of their social roles since they can no longer demarcate the boundary between 'pure' and 'impure' space, or convey information about pregnancy, with their bodies. The cultural significance of this is indicated by the fact that even in a compromised form, attempts to preserve this custom have persisted among those who have relinquished many other aspects of the traditional ethnic identity, including communal living, food and clothing (Westheimer & Kaplan, 1992). While it is likely that the second generation will be more willing to give up traditional customs of this kind, it has caused great suffering among the first generation.

As the case of menstruation huts illustrates, existing approaches to planning in Israel leave little room for constructions of space that differ from those of the dominant group. Moreover, the example illustrates the failures that often flow from assimilationist assumptions. Particularly important in relation to planning, what was 'public' in Ethiopia has been relegated to the 'private' in Israel; at the same time, individual women have had

to take over responsibility for what had been provided by the community as a whole. Had pluralist concepts of citizenship and planning been adopted, it would, surely, have been part of the state's obligations to ensure that appropriate spaces were provided for its newly arrived citizens. Thus, the example raises crucial questions for planners regarding the need for policies sensitive to the needs of particular ethnic groups, and about the rate of adaptation demanded of an immigrant group, and suggests that pluralist approaches to planning would lead to very different outcomes from those of procedural approaches.

Conclusion

As I have illustrated, the procedural approach to planning that has been dominant in Israel has led to the neglect of many of the particular needs of the Ethiopian Jewish immigrants. It has been insensitive to 'otherness' in terms of both ethnicity and gender. As a result, it has exacerbated the difficulties of transition experienced by this group. Indeed, the exclusive concern with equal treatment based on assumed similarities has created unexpected conflicts.

Earlier in this article I drew attention to the alternative pluralist approach to planning and to its links with multicultural understandings of citizenship. How might such an approach serve the needs of groups like the Ethiopian Jewish immigrants to Israel? Pluralist planning is rooted in dialogue between planners and beneficiaries. Participation is a basic tool through which consultation through all stages of the planning process ensures consideration of diversity of needs within the community, including those relating to age, gender and generation (see, for example, Oakley & Marsden, 1984; Paul, 1987; Moser, 1989, 1993). The principle of equal rights for all citizens is essential to ensure participation for all, and in particular in securing the full participation of women. But this needs to be balanced against a sensitivity to difference and an awareness of the time required for dialogue and mutual processes of adjustment. It is impossible to know what effects such an approach might have had in the case of the Ethiopian Jews who have settled in Israel. However, it is clear that a pluralist approach would have engaged with the complex interplay between ethnicity, gender and citizenship very differently. In particular, instead of precipitating the swift but unintended dislocation of gender roles within a group subject to racism, it might have allowed explicit dialogue about the tension between universal civil rights and respect for cultural difference that incorporate unequal gender relations.

NOTES

- [1] The Rabbinate is the supreme Jewish religious authority in Israel, and since state and religion are not separated, it is within the authority of the Rabbinate to decide whether an individual or a group of people can be regarded as Jewish. Those deemed to be Jews normally receive automatic citizenship, housing and living allowances on arrival in Israel.
- [2] The contrast between this paternalistic treatment of Ethiopian Jews and the 'direct absorption' of Jews from the former Soviet Union is striking and strongly suggests that racism was at work in the treatment of the Ethiopian immigrants.

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