

Article

## LUD as an Instrument for (Sub)Metropolitanization: The 1000-District in Rishon-Lezion, Israel as a Case Study

Eran Weinberg \*, Nir Cohen and Orit Rotem-Mindali

Department of Geography and Environment, Bar-Ilan University, 5290002 Ramat Gan, Israel; E-Mails: rani@mweinberg.co.il (E.W.), nir.cohen@biu.ac.il (N.C.), orit.rottem@biu.ac.il (O.R.-M.)

\* Corresponding author

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### Abstract

Interest in the role of large urban development (LUD) projects in regeneration efforts of cities has risen in recent years. Studies of their planning process have often focused on global cities, examining challenges associated with their joint (public–private) governance structure, as well as those emanating from the need to balance local and global needs and interests. With few exceptions, the ways in which these projects fit in with metropolitan aspirations of small and medium cities were largely overlooked. In this article, we explore how a large-scale project was used by local authorities to re-position a secondary city as a sub-metropolitan center. Using the case of the 1000-District (*Mitcham HaElef*) in the Israeli city of Rishon-Lezion, it argues that while the project was originally designed to resolve the city's scarce employment problem, it was gradually used to endow it with higher-order urban qualities, re-situating it as a sub-metropolitan center in the Tel-Aviv area. To support our argument, we focus on the project's housing and employment components, including changes they were subjected to along the planning process, as well as the marketing campaign, which sought to re-present the city as a viable sub-metropolitan alternative. Drawing on qualitative methods, including personal interviews and content analysis, the article illustrates how one city's large project is instrumentalized to attain metro-scale objectives. In so doing, it contributes to a nuanced understanding of the complexity of LUD planning, its stated objectives at various scales, and implications for actors in and beyond metropolitan jurisdictions.

### Keywords

Israel; large urban development; metrotalk; mixed-use planning; regeneration; secondary cities; (sub)metropolitanization

### Issue

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### 1. Introduction

The past two decades have witnessed a considerable surge in the number and scope of large urban development (LUD) projects (Gualini & Majoor, 2007; Salet, 2008; Swyngedouw, Moulaert, & Rodriguez, 2002). Alternately referred to as strategic urban (Salet, 2006) or mega (Altshuler & Luberoff, 2004) projects, they were loosely-defined as massive and expensive projects of (re)-development, whose construction may take a number of years and involve major changes in land use

(Fainstein, 2008). A salient manifestation of the “new urban policy,” which saw redistributive policies giving way to market-oriented approaches to economic development and competitiveness of cities (Gualini & Majoor, 2007), mega projects have spread quickly from North America and Western Europe to South-East Asian, Arab, and Latin American cities (Barthel, 2010; Dogan & Stupar, 2017; Paling, 2012; Shatkin, 2008), resulting in “global convergence” (Hwang, 2014).

For cities, foreseen physical, economic and cultural impacts have been key motivations for embarking on am-

bitious, large-scale projects. Projects are expected to garner urban competitiveness by producing inter alia larger stocks of service jobs, more aesthetically pleasing physical environment and a culturally positive urban image. From a scalar perspective, these impacts were seen as instrumental for re-positioning cities within regional, national or global urban hierarchies (Dogan & Stupar, 2017; Lehrer & Laidley, 2008; Xu & Yeh, 2005). However, relatively little attention was thus far paid to the impact of projects at the metropolitan level. Given that inter-urban competition is (also) waged between cities that are part of the same metro area, mega projects could well serve as a means for city-repositioning within it. This is particularly relevant in small countries, whose urban landscape is dominated by a handful of large cities which constitute the core of the metropolitan area and are surrounded by multiple smaller, non-core cities. Such is the case of Israel, where the four metropolitan core cities (Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv, Haifa and Beer-Sheva) are surrounded by multiple secondary cities. Especially in Tel-Aviv, the past two decades have seen secondary, non-core cities implementing urban policies designated to improve their strategic position within—and beyond—the metro area. While some, like Holon, opted for an all-out re-branding campaign (Herstein & Jaffe, 2008), others—notably Bat-Yam—implemented a series of cultural mega-events to reverse its negative image and reinforce its competitiveness vis-a-vis other cities, in and beyond metropolitan boundaries (Eizenberg & Cohen, 2015). As the current study demonstrates, Rishon-Lezion (thereafter Rishon), the second largest city in the Tel-Aviv area, has instrumentalized a large-scale urban project to bolster its status and re-position itself inside its metropolitan hierarchy.

This article aims to examine how the planning of a large-scale urban development project promotes the metropolitan aspirations of a secondary, non-core city. Drawing on the 1000-District (*Mitcham HaElef*) project in Rishon, it shows how a project that was conceived with the aim of promoting distinct local (urban) needs, namely enhance the stock of urban jobs, became a tool for its re-positioning within the urban hierarchy of the greater Tel-Aviv metropolitan area. Specifically, it shows how—in the course of planning—the project has shifted from a limited scheme aimed at spurring urban employment to an ambitious initiative geared towards replacing Rishon as a sub-metropolitan (commercial and residential) center, that is able to compete with other secondary cities in the area as well as the core city itself.

The remainder of the article consists of four parts. Following a brief conceptual section on LUD projects, including challenges associated with its planning process, it contextualizes our case within broader urban planning trajectories in contemporary Israel. The third section analyzes the dimensions of employment and housing in the project's planning process, including the final marketing phase, exemplifying how a coalition of interests was formed that sought to use it for the purpose of metropoli-

tan re-positioning. The article concludes by discussing its main contributions and, where possible, outlines avenues of future research about the metropolitan effects of LUD.

## 2. Theoretical Background

In the last two decades, large-scale urban projects have become strategically important tools for city-(re) development. Traditional mega projects were used to describe “large-scale capital investments focused on a single purpose, particularly...transportation networks and power facilities” (Lehrer & Laidley, 2008, p. 788). However, in the middle part of the century (roughly from the 1930s to 1970), the term was extended to include highways, airports, train stations and even social housing projects. These were state-led and delivered, reflecting the Keynesian-inspired interventionist approach of the Fordist state that was dominant in Europe (Moulaert, Salin, & Werquin, 2001).

By the late 1980s, as economic neo-liberalization was unfolding, a ‘new’ type of mega projects emerged, which as Home (1990, p. 119) notes, included “huge private sector commercial development incorporating all kinds of land-use usually associated with a central business district.” Facilitated by deregulatory state policies and increasing market demand, the new projects soon proliferated to suburban and exurban sections of mostly Northern cities. Over time, projects have taken different governance structures, financing techniques and land uses (Olds, 2001). In an oft-cited symposium, Orueta and Fainstein (2009) argue that contemporary mega-projects take two main forms; the first is “based on the construction of a huge edifice with strong symbolic significance” (e.g., flagship museums), and the second “a larger scheme with complex contents (mixed residential uses, service industries, shared facilities, new transport facilities” (Orueta & Fainstein, 2009, p. 760). They argue that the new generation of mega-projects refer to schemes of waterfront regeneration (see Avni & Teschner, 2019), (re)development of manufacturing zones, construction of transport infrastructure or (re)construction of urban districts to meet the residential and commercial tastes of upper, middle-class groups. In line with this broad typology, Fainstein (2008, p. 768) loosely-defines mega projects as “costly scheme[s] for development of a contiguous area, requiring new construction and/or substantial rehabilitation,” which “may take a number of years” to complete and “always include a transformation of land uses” (Fainstein, 2008, p. 768).

While earlier studies examined mega-projects as win-win solutions for cities seeking to re-bounce from decades of de-industrialization and social decay (Loftman & Nevin, 1995), more recent accounts have taken a more critical approach (Altshuler & Luberoff, 2004). Denigrated for their neoliberal logic, which helps turn entire city sections into highly regulated and privatized spaces of for the upper-middle classes, large urban

projects are seen as potentially contributing to new elite formations, residential displacement, and higher levels of social polarization (Gellert & Lynch, 2003; Moulaert et al., 2001). Other critics called attention to the democratic deficit of such projects (Scherer, Baumann-Pauly, & Schneider, 2013), arguing that despite their nominally mixed structure of governance, in practice they sidestep social justice considerations, and strain public resources in the name of securing predominantly private gains (Siemiatycki, Rees, Ng, & Rahi, 2003). As Gualini and Majoor (2007) concluded a decade ago, “projects that share in a market-oriented competition rhetoric are often mainly publicly led and highly vulnerable with regard to shifting market interests, putting the burdens of financial investments and risks largely on urban governments” (Gualini & Majoor, 2007, p. 298).

Though projects are conceived to resolve particular local needs, like promoting physical rehabilitation of abandoned urban industrial zones left from the old zoning scheme, their impacts are typically felt at different scales. Light rail transit systems effect commuting choices of residents from adjacent cities (van Wee & Rietveld, 2013), and flagship museums draw patrons from distant parts of the region (Hamnett & Shoval, 2003; Loftman & Nevin, 1995), thus contributing to urban competitiveness. Such impacts are seen as instrumental to the re-positioning of cities within regional, national (inter-metropolitan) or global urban hierarchies. Xu and Yeh (2005), for example, examine how the provincial Chinese city of Guanzhou utilized mega projects to enhance its competitiveness vis-à-vis other cities in the region, and Dogan and Stupar (2017) showed how three of Istanbul’s recent projects are aligned with development goals at the national scale, spelt out in the Turkish State’s Vision 2023. Drawing on the case of Toronto, Lehrer and Laidley (2008) demonstrate how its large-scale water redevelopment project was essential to generating economic activities and “establish the international presence of the city and its revitalization” (Lehrer & Laidley, 2008, p. 789). In some cases, though, mega projects that aimed to promote positive image at home and abroad were bound up with massive corruption and cost overruns (Orttung & Zhemukhov, 2014).

In contrast, and despite a surge of interest in the metropolitan scale and its economic development strategies (Kennedy, 2013; Salet, 2007), relatively little attention was so far paid to the ways in which mega projects are used in intra-metropolitan competition. Given that inter-urban competition is sometimes waged between adjacent cities in the same urban agglomeration, mega projects could well serve some of them for metropolitan re-positioning. This is particularly true in small and densely populated countries, whose urban landscape is dominated by a handful of large cities, which constitute the core of the metropolitan area and are surrounded by multiple smaller, non-core cities. Such is the case of Israel, where the four metropolitan core cities—Beer-Sheva, Haifa, Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv—are surrounded

by multiple secondary cities (Shachar, 1998). Especially in Tel-Aviv, its principal metropolitan node (Razin & Charney, 2015), the past three decades have seen secondary, non-core cities implementing urban policies designated to improve their strategic position within—and beyond—the metro area. While some, like Holon, opted for an all-out re-branding campaign (Herstein & Jaffe, 2008), others—notably Bat-Yam, implemented a series of cultural mega-events to reverse its territorial stigmatization (Cohen, 2013), and reinforce its competitiveness vis-à-vis other cities, in and beyond metropolitan boundaries (Eizenberg & Cohen, 2015).

Recent years have seen a small but growing number of secondary Israeli cities making plans for costly, mixed-use mega-projects that aim to (re)develop a contiguous area by ways of new massive construction and/or substantial (brownfield) redevelopment. Salient examples, some of which are still subject to final approval by planning authorities, include *Tel-HaShomer* (Ramat-Gan), *Sirkin* (Petach-Tikva), *Techelet Beach* (Herzeliya), and *Western Quarter* (Lod). It should be noted that several of these mega projects are implemented on (urban) land recently evacuated by the Israeli military. Yet, with few exceptions, notably Jaffa’s waterfront redevelopment project (Avni, 2017), their planning trajectories have been understudied. Missing in particular are accounts that examine how secondary cities design, plan and instrumentalize projects to bolster their status and re-position themselves within the metropolitan urban hierarchy. The 1000-District project in Rishon makes a good case through which to explore these issues.

### 3. Methods

Our analysis focuses on the project’s planning process that had taken place between 2009 and 2018. It should be noted that its implementation phase, which began more recently, is beyond the scope of the article and so we are unable to assess whether it has attained its states objectives. To analyze planning, we employed two primary methods of inquiry.

First, content analysis of primary and secondary materials pertaining to the planning process (see Appendix). A common technique of qualitative data analysis (Mayring, 2004), content analysis allows a systematic, theme-based examination of data in social contexts and is especially suitable for geographical studies because it facilitates the testing of existing categories or concepts in new social environments. Two types of materials were analyzed. First, planning documents produced by pertinent agencies (e.g., local and District Planning committees) and protocols of meetings held by official bodies involved in the planning process (e.g., City Council, the Economic Company) were used, as well as the official website of the project. These documents allowed us to trace the official planning trajectory and examine the different stances articulated by partners with regards to the aims and outcomes of the project.

Secondly, relevant articles and ads appearing in local and national media outlets, usually in their electronic form (e.g., *HaShikma Rishon*, *Ynet*, *The Marker*) were analyzed. These complementary sources allowed us to go beyond the official planning narrative and helped us construct a sufficiently broad picture of the process.

A second primary methods of inquiry were the personal, semi-structured interviews conducted with senior officials who were directly involved in the process, including the chief architects, Deputy Director of the City's Planning Department, and the CEO of the Economic Company (see Appendix). Interviews were conducted in their offices and lasted approximately one hour. Interviewees were asked about their role and involvement in the project, interactions with other partners, the challenges faced during the planning process, and how they were resolved. Data obtained through interviews refined our understanding of the daily process of negotiation between partners to the planning process and shed important light on the motivations behind changes that were introduced along the way. They were then transcribed verbatim and content analyzed. In analyzing interviews, we paid attention to how informants conceive of the project itself, its stated objectives, and role in Rishon's metropolitan (re)-positioning.

#### **4. The 1000-District: An Urban (Re)Development Mega Project**

Although urban renewal in Israel is hardly a new phenomenon (for an excellent review of urban renewal policies through the late 1990s see Carmon, 1999), recent years have seen a frenzy of new projects. Motivated by, among other things, deteriorating conditions of apartment buildings, steady rise in land values, and population pressures, a plethora of cities have embarked on urban (re)development schemes in the past two decades. Fueled by "a neoliberal offensive on land-use planning" (Charney, 2017) and couched within a discourse of "creative destruction" (Fenster, 2019), renewal projects now dot the landscape of dozens Israel cities. While most are small-scale, single-use (residential) projects aimed predominantly to increase local housing stocks, others are significantly more ambitious, comprising of large-scale (excess of 1000 dunams), mixed-use (residential, commercial, and recreational) compounds. These mega-projects are typically executed by a steering committee (*Minhelet*) comprising representatives of private and public agencies. The Committee oversees a cumbersome planning procedure that entails considerable changes to the use of land, which often has numerous owners. This complex governance structure and the need to align multiple interests of urban, regional and national stakeholders make projects a tumultuous process of negotiation.

Although the majority of projects are intended to resolve specific local needs, like strengthening the urban economy or (re)aestheticizing a run-down neighborhood, they are typically used to secure wider, trans-

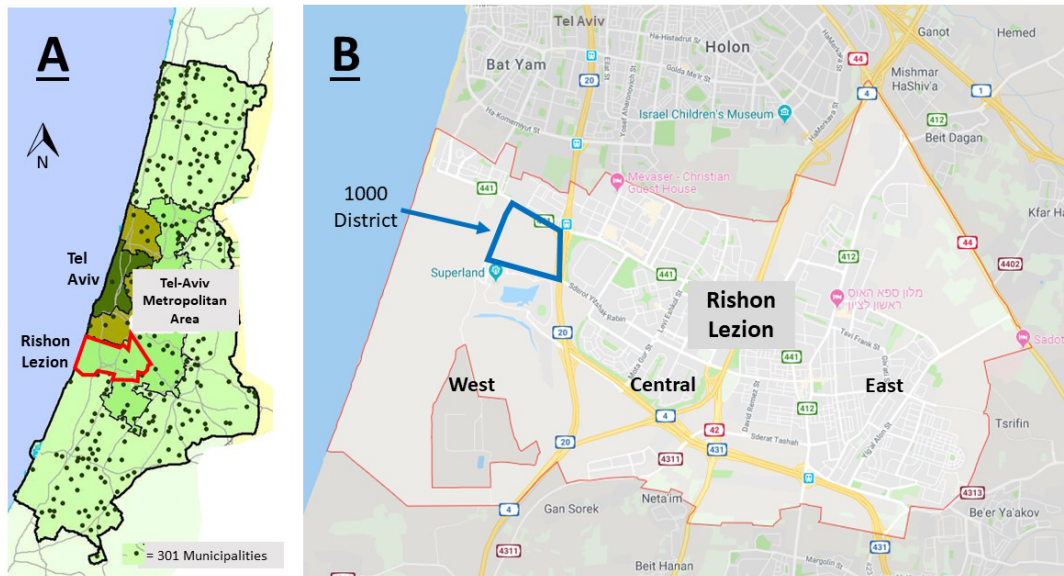
urban objectives. These objectives are increasingly defined in regional terms, reflecting as such the metropolitan aspirations of the city. For instance, Holon's new business center, which reinvigorates the city's partly vacant, old industrial zone by adding an assortment of new land uses, is promising to become "the logistical hinterland of Tel-Aviv...thanks to its location at the heart of the metropolitan area" (Hashikma Holon, 2019). Similarly, boasting over three million square meters of commercial, residential and office uses, Hertzliya's new business center promises to solidify the city's position as "a center of metropolitan employment" (see HR/2530 in the Appendix).

The 1000-District (see Figure 1) shares many qualities with large-scale projects mentioned above. Based in Rishon, the fourth largest city in the country and the second largest in the Tel-Aviv metropolitan area, it was originally conceived as a solution to its dwindling employment base. Fast population growth since the 1990s coupled with slow rates of job creation, led to a situation by which half of the local workforce was commuting beyond city boundaries, primarily to Tel-Aviv. Thus, whereas in 1990, 36% of residents were employed locally (see CBS5 and TMM 3/21 in the Appendix), in 2010, only 31% did so (see CBS1 in the Appendix). Municipal forecasts predicted that by 2030, approximately 80,000 additional jobs will be needed to increase the share of locally employed residents to 45% (see RZ/2030 in the Appendix).

Shortage of employment opportunities has long been a problem for Rishon, yet few attempts have been made to resolve it over the years. Only under Mayor Dov Tzur has the city begun tackling the problem more systematically. Upon his election in 2008, the Mayor set a vision of boosting urban employment to revive declining urban tax revenues. Simultaneously, he vowed to combat out-of-town commute, primarily to Tel-Aviv, and significantly reduce the negative, socio-ecological impacts associated with it. As the CEO of the city's Economic Development Corporation noted: "[The Mayor's] main concern was that more than half the...[working] population drives to Tel-Aviv daily, generating traffic jams, noise, pollution, [and] environmental damage" (PI1). Thus, it was economic and socio-ecological challenges, both of which adversely affecting the quality of urban life, that stood at the heart of the Mayor's new vision.

In line with his vision, in June 2009, the city issued a bid for planning a new employment compound. Its objective was to constitute the city's "main employment zone of advanced industries, combined with financial services and complementary uses" (see CH2 in the Appendix). In September, it was announced that *Yaad Architects* had won the bid. Their proposal, originally titled *The Dune Park*, consisted of an urban development project occupying a large contiguous tract in the Southwestern part of the city, owned co-jointly by the city and multiple private owners (it was about 1500 dunams, or 370 acres, comparable to that of mega projects in major European cities,





**Figure 1.** Tel-Aviv metropolitan area (A) and Rishon City (B). Source: Google Maps (2019); see also CBS3 in the Appendix.

like Zuidas in Amsterdam and 22@bcn in Barcelona; see Majoor, 2008).

The original plan, which, as we show below, was subject to various revisions, involved massive land use changes that were needed to create a large-scale, mixed-use (employment, residential, office, commercial, educational, and cultural) compound.

Planning began shortly thereafter, but the project itself was approved by City Council only in 2016. The reasons for the gap are twofold. First, bureaucracy combined with legal objections, who were submitted by parties to be potentially affected by the project, delayed the process. Second, the land allocated for the project was co-owned by the city (roughly half) and over one thousand private individuals. It should be noted that a co-owned land in this size is rare in Israel. Therefore, most urban mega projects are implemented on land that is owned in its entirety by public (city/state) or private agents. The city-approved plan was radically different than that proposed by *Yaad* Architects seven years earlier (see Table 1). Changes were particularly acute in the housing and employment dimensions of the project. In addition to considerable changes in the volume and composition of the residential component (i.e., apartments), there was a significant add-on to the number of proposed office space as well as number and types of foreseen jobs. These were to complement major commercial and recreational uses (e.g., restaurants, hotels, research labs and movie theaters) and substantial allotment for open public space like urban parks. The plan further stipulated that the project should be constructed in close proximity to Rishon’s active train station and (future) light rail stations, and major arteries, notably highways 431, 4 and 20, which dissect the city (Figure 2). Consequently, the grandiose project was described as an “alive and kicking compound with 24/7 life solutions” (see P12 in the Appendix), which would offer residents

and visitors “an innovative, lively and engaging urban life style” (1000muni, 2019).

To coordinate the arduous planning process, which required the involvement of planning committees at different scales (local, district and national), non-for-profit organizations, private corporations and multiple landowners, the city established a district administration (*Minhelet Mitcham*; see CH14 in the Appendix). As the next sections show, the administration orchestrated the local-turned-metropolitan urban (re)development project.

## 5. Findings

Rishon’s ambitions of playing a more significant role at the metropolitan scale preceded the project. Indeed, one of its current Masterplan’s key objectives is “ensuring quality of life for city residents by taking advantage of its location within Tel-Aviv’s metropolitan area” (see RZ/203 in the Appendix). Hence, quite early in the planning process it became clear that the project could be used to realize its metropolitan objectives. Over time and through a series of revisions in different realms, these objectives gradually crystallized. In this section we focus on two key dimensions, which were instrumental to the city’s metropolitan strategy, namely employment and housing. In addition, we highlight the role of the marketing campaign in ‘selling’ the project’s metropolitan qualities through what we term ‘metrotalk.’

In the realm of employment, it was project location and size, and type of jobs to be created in it, that became strategically important. Location was a key consideration from the outset. While the planning team initially considered creating smaller number of jobs at each of the city’s five industrial zones (Electra, Northeast, Ramat Eliyahu, Sorek and Western), it was rejected in favor of concentrating employment in one, new compound. One



Figure 2. 1000-District mix-uses. Derived from CH5, CH6 and CH11 in the Appendix.

reason for this was the poor image of some of the existing zones as hubs of traditional industries, which offer primarily blue-collar jobs. Electra industrial zone, for example, primarily consists of small-scale carpentries, auto shops, metal shops, and printing houses. Thus, concerns about being associated with a dated zone, whose economic value is relatively low and suffers poor infrastructure, including water, electricity and sewage, were compounded by the fear of exacerbating urban congestions along main roads leading to most of them. The chosen location, in proximity to current and future transportation networks, including cross-metropolitan highways (4, 20 and 431) and railroads (both south/northwards) were instrumental to promoting the project as a major hub of employment that is easily accessible from all parts of the metropolitan area. Finally, the composition of landownership in some zones was detrimental to the designation of certain land uses that may not be commensurate with

the interests of private owners. The chosen location, in contrast, which was co-owned by the city, facilitated a quick designation of the land for more profitable uses. As Mayor Tzur explained in a recent interview, implementing the project in a new compound, outside existing industrial zones would be beneficial not only because of the corporate tax it would generate, but also because “[s]elling the land [to corporations] would [generate] a lot of money for the city, between 2 and 3 billion NIS” (Ynet Rishon, 2019).

The physical size, both absolute and relative, of the project was also a sign for the metropolitan aspirations. Absolutely, in line with the Mayor’s vision, the project was meant to increase employment opportunities in the city. However, while the masterplan projected that the number of additional jobs needed to ensure urban economic stability was 80,000, planners set the bar much higher. Consequently, by 2013, the project was set to pro-

vide more than double that number, nearly 190,000. Not surprisingly, the surge was promoted aggressively by the city, primarily the Mayor, because, as the chief planner argued: “[H]e had a dream of making Rishon into a sub-metropolitan employment provider, [and so he pushed for] a large and powerful zone” (PI3). The Mayor’s vision, however, corresponded with that of the District Planner, which conceived of Rishon in regional terms as “a metropolitan primate city, that provides services beyond its residents and as such its economic dimensions were weighted in relation to other [neighboring] cities and it was found that it needs an improvement in the project” (see RPI3 in the Appendix).

It should be noted, though, that Rishon’s grandiose plans were not always well-received by neighboring cities. Indeed, some of them expressed serious concerns over its metropolitan aspirations and their potential repercussions. The objection of Bat-Yam, for example, its northern neighbor, were particularly noteworthy. A struggling municipality, Bat-Yam claimed that the project constitutes an “unfair competitor” to its own renewing business area and could potentially hamper its ability to fully realize its economic potential (see RPI1 in the Appendix). In response to the objection, which the court eventually rejected, the District Planner reiterated Rishon’s aspirations, noting that they must be understood in light of its justified efforts to gain a better hold over the metropolitan arena. The implementation of the project, she argued, “is appropriate and necessary at the local level given population increase and development patterns of the city, and at the regional [metropolitan] level, because of its national accessibility, as pointed out in...its masterplan” (see RPI1).

Relatively, the project was planned such that it is considerably larger—in both total size and area designated for office use—than most other employment zones in the region. Specifically, it was intended to surpass the metro’s two most profitable zones, namely *Atidim* in Tel-Aviv and *Gav-Yam* in Herzliya (see Table 2). Both are prosperous and quickly expanding hubs, which host some of the largest tech firms in the world, many of which are well-known for their ground-breaking innovations in information technology, pharmaceuticals, media and communication. The project’s location, one official claimed, would facilitate “transfer of businesses from Tel-Aviv to Rishon” (see CH4 in the Appendix, p. 231), and enable the city to become a “powerful hub...that [would] compete with employment areas in Tel-Aviv or Herzliya” (PI3).

The chief architect similarly declared: “In the future, it [the project] will attract from Rishon and nearby areas, meaning [it will] change the metropolitan picture” (see PI4 in the Appendix).

Beyond size and location, the project was to attract ‘creative’ firms (and professionals) associated with economically successful cities (Florida, 2002). In this spirit, the planning team was determined to entice prestigious firms in high-value economic sectors, including finance, insurance, and information technology (see CH6 in the Appendix). This, as noted above, stood in sharp contrast to the type of jobs the city attracted historically, including light industry, retail, and wholesale. Indeed, in the 1990s and 2000s, Rishon had the highest number of retail space per resident in the country and was known as Israel’s “Mall Capital” (Ynet, 2018). The project was to change its image. The change was recently described as follows: “The city, which was, until recently, Israel’s Mall capital is destined to become an alternative to Tel-Aviv, sweeping...not just headquarters of major banks, but many leading high-tech firms” (Ynet, 2018). Similarly, one of the project’s largest land sale bid defines to future landowners that “[new] modern offices will be built...that [will] address the needs of high-tech firms and enable them to draw clients from the entire [metropolitan] region” (CH14 in the Appendix).

Metropolitan ambitions were also evident in the project’s housing dimensions. Though the original plan aimed to create a primarily employment zone, it gradually shifted into an all-out mixed-use scheme. Changes had twofold motivations. First, from a planning perspective, adding a residential component, it was hoped, would diversify its functionality, stimulate ‘round-the-clock’ activities and distinguish the project from comparable, employment-oriented projects in neighboring cities (e.g., Holon). Secondly, the project emerged within the socio-political context of Israel’s 2011 social protest, which revolved primarily around the country’s so-called “housing crisis” (Charney, 2017). Against this backdrop, the city was pressured by the District Planning Committee to strengthen the project’s residential dimension, thereby help alleviating housing shortages (and rising prices) in the Tel Aviv metropolitan area. Consequently, while the original plan set the number of residential units at 1,500, it had gradually increased to 2,000 (in 2010), 2,500 (in 2014), 2,900 (in 2014), 4,900 (2015) and, finally, 5,500 (in 2016; see Table 1). In the words of the chief architect: “We started out with

**Table 1.** Offices versus apartments: Changes during the planning process. Derived from CH1, CH5, CH9 and RPI2 in the Appendix.

	6.2009 (CH2)	7.2010 (RZ/2030)	6.2014 (RPI2)	2.2015 (CH5)	3.2016 (CH10)	4.2016 (RZ/1000)
<b>Offices Area (m<sup>2</sup>)</b>	100,000 (Jobs)	1,750,000	1,750,000	Extra 13,652	1,750,00	1,750,000 (188,000 Jobs)
<b>Apartments (units)</b>	1,500	2,000–2,500	2,900	4,900	5,500*	4,900

Note: \* Including 500 units from Ramat-Eliyaho to the 1000-District (transfer-plan).



1,500...[that was] before 2011, but when we reached the District [Planning] Committee, it was after...the social protest and the Chief Planner kept pushing us, 2,500 is not enough, raise it to 3,000, 3,500, and that’s how we ended up with 5,000” (see PI3 in the Appendix).

In addition to their number, the District Planner demanded that future units be suited for different populations. Alongside the traditional, profit-maximizing large units (120 square meters), advocated by the city, she required that smaller (70 square meters), more affordably priced apartments are added (see RPI2 in the Appendix). The latter were seen as vital for the attraction of socio-economically strong groups, necessary for the creation of a vibrant and productive urban community. As the city’s Chief Planner explained, the main purpose was to court specific groups: “We wanted IT professionals to come [live] here and, eventually, work here because [it is] such an innovative neighborhood. [They would] buy apartments here...close to the beach and...[would] have everything they need 24/7” (see PI3 in the Appendix). Underscoring proximity to the beach and ‘round-the-clock’ amenities was a calculated attempt to position the city—and the project, more specifically—as viable alternatives to the free-spirited, beach-front urbanism that is typically associated with Tel-Aviv, Israel’s world city in the making (Kipnis, 2004).

Embracing a larger, more diverse residential component was the result of both top-down, political pressures and a growing realization that it was essential for the attraction of so-called ‘quality populations.’ The latter were perceived as critical for the success of the project and for its ability to re-position the city as an upper-middle class community at the southern edge of the metropolitan area.

Nowhere were metropolitan aspirations more evident than in the strategic planning and marketing campaign. By 2015, as the planning process was drawing to an end, the city hired Aman, a Tel-Aviv-based firm specializing in ‘smart’ urbanism to prepare a strategic plan. Two international consulting firms had soon joined in to assist in the preparation of the overarching plan. Alongside ARUP, a world-renowned expert group “working across every aspect of today’s built environment” (ARUP, 2019), Bechtel, a global engineering, construction and project management conglomerate was subcontracted. Assembling an international team, we were repeatedly told, was an early signpost that the city “was setting the bar higher” (see PI3 in the Appendix).

The international team has soon shifted some of the project’s core elements. One of its earliest recommen-

dations, for example, was to change the project’s name. Originally titled the *Dune Park* after the sandy hills that were characteristic of the city in its early days, it was re-named the 1000-District. In Hebrew, *HaElef* means both ‘one thousand’ and ‘the millennium.’ The new name reflected the innovative, forward-looking nature of the project, which the team sought to highlight. Explaining the idea behind the new name, the chief architect noted:

We made every possible effort to move away from the image of a [traditional] employment zone...to create an urban district experience....[We] needed to take a name that...was partly stuck in the past—an industrial park—and turn it into a [new] borough, an urban district. (see PI4 in the Appendix)

Furthermore, to ensure meeting international standards, the team explored similar projects around the world. Drawing on the experience of cities like London, Riyadh and San Francisco, it has incorporated globally popular planning principles like walkability, gentrification-mitigation strategies, and ‘green’ building codes (see CH4 and PI1 in the Appendix; see also Figure 3).

Nominal and conceptual changes were followed by an intensive marketing campaign. Geared towards residents of—and firms located in—the entire Tel-Aviv metropolitan area, it involved circulation of brochures and pamphlets, and advertisement in local, regional and national outlets. In addition to traditional marketing goals, namely enhancing project visibility (see CH10 in the Appendix), the campaign aimed to solidify the image of the city as a sub-metropolitan center. The costly scheme utilized multiple mediums, from print and online social networks (e.g., Facebook) to public billboards and e-magazines, to re-position Rishon as a viable alternative to Tel-Aviv. It is against this backdrop that Mayor Tzur has recently called “on companies and entrepreneurs to become part of Israel’s new metropolis” (Danieli, 2018), and a leading economic journal urged its readers to “come invest in the future” because “once in a millennium, a carefully planned new metropolis is born” (Hirsh, 2019).

Rather than a project, or a compound, campaign ads have consistently used the word ‘metropolis’ or ‘metropolitan area,’ producing as they may a new type of discourse, which we term ‘metrotalk.’ The new discourse, we argue, draws on a new set of formations, namely representation of knowledge about particular objects (Foucault, 1980), which re-imagine the project—and Rishon, more broadly—as the new centerpiece of

**Table 2.** Employment zones. Derived from HR/1900, TA/3561 and RZ/1000 in the Appendix.

	Size (dunams)	Offices Space (square meters)
<b>Atidim</b>	346	250,000
<b>Gav-Yam</b>	650	725,000
<b>1000-District</b>	1000	1,750,000



**Updates between plans:**

1. More apartments : From 2,900 to 5,500 units; full public services with 24\7 life around the clock;
2. Mix-use diversity of buildings, purposes, diversity of apartment size, diversity of communities, diversity of jobs, diversity of shapes and size,;
3. Modern accessibility: "Last Mile" re-planning, from the train station to the district's center; More small streets to walk in, open to the street and not close to inside;
4. First ring around train station to be build first and present Urban Life from the first step;
5. Millennium Branding; internal street branding and massive marketing outside the city;

2010 plan (CH5)



2010 Name: "DunePark"



2016 plan (CH6)



2016 Name: "1000 District"



**Figure 3.** 2010 Local Needs Plan versus 2016 Metropolitan Plan. Derived from CH5, CH6 and CH11 in the Appendix.

the wider urban assemblage. By underlining its physical centrality and extensive transportation and logistical linkages with the entire metro area, it sought to convince (residential and commercial) out-of-towners, that a new urban, indeed metropolitan, geography with Rishon at its core, is well underway. Thus, for instance, ads posted on the user-friendly website 1000muni insisted that there were very few reasons to commute to Tel-Aviv because the 1000-District is "a diverse, exciting metropolis at the center of the country, which offers accessibility and...flexibility...and simultaneously saves its residents and employees the dreariness of conventional employment parks and the suffering of traffic jams" (1000muni, 2019). The website also features a short video (titled *1000 in the Center*), which mocks Tel-Aviv's centrality, asking defiantly: "Being at the center is great; but what's it worth, if it's incredibly difficult to get there?" (1000muni, 2019).

In one of the most ambitious public campaigns seen in Israel, humongous billboards were deployed throughout Tel Aviv and neighboring cities (Figure 3). Located primarily around main metropolitan arteries, billboards included a daring slogan, which challenged Tel Aviv's position as the only metropolitan hub, calling the project "a new core center for the metropolitan area." The witty message was invariably echoed in speeches and interviews conducted with city officials. One of the major real estate developers in the project, for instance, quoted competitive rents, low tax rates and easy access from the entire metropolitan area as the main motivations for the relocation of Tel Aviv-based firms to Rishon. Similarly, Raz Kinstlich, the recently elected Mayor, claimed that the majority of employees in Tel-Aviv are in fact residents of the metro's southern cities and would therefore "prefer to work in Rishon" (see CH14 in the Appendix).

In line with its plan to re-position Rishon within the metro area, the city has been aggressively pursuing sectors that have long been associated with Tel-Aviv, namely banking and insurance. Initial efforts have been quite successful, as the first several bids were won by the Discount Bank Group and Migdal—Israel's largest insurance corporation (Hashikma Rishon-Lezion, 2019). And, while it is still early to predict whether these are early signposts of success in re-structuring the (economic) geography of the Tel-Aviv area, it is clear that the project is stirring metropolitan relations in quite a different direction.

**6. Conclusion**

The article examines how a LUD project whose original purpose was to address challenges at the city-scale became—in the course of the planning process—a means to attain goals at the metropolitan scale. Using the 1000-District in the second-tier Israeli city of Rishon as a case study, it explored how the project, conceived to mitigate local employment shortages, has gradually become a springboard for metropolitan re-positioning of the city. Focusing on project's employment and housing dimensions, as well as its marketing campaign, we argued that planning a disproportionately large number of jobs, and agglomerating them in a single, massive and highly-accessible site was intended to endow the city with higher-order urban qualities and, consequently, position it as a viable sub-metropolitan center that is capable of competing with other existing sub-centers and the core city itself.

With respect to housing, initial resistance to residential units had gradually faded, as the city was pressured—professionally and politically—to plan a mixed-use scheme that would draw residents and customers from

across the metropolitan area. Subsequently, a powerful marketing campaign was initiated that centered on the innovative qualities of the project, emphasizing its metropolitan ambitions. Utilizing ‘metrotalk,’ a set of narratives that re-imagine the project, and the city, as a potential sub-center of the wider metropolitan area, it underlined their physical centrality and extensive linkages with other cities. In doing so, it sought to convince residential and commercial entities that a new metropolitan geography with Rishon at its core is being formed.

The article makes three important contributions to the literature on LUD projects. First, in contrast to much of the literature, which examines their impact at the regional, national and global scales, we focus on their metropolitan implications. The metropolitan scale is important because large projects are key tools in contemporary inter-urban competition, which is increasingly waged between adjacent cities in the same urban agglomeration. As we have shown, the 1000-District was used instrumentally to advance Rishon’s status and prestige in relation to a range of cities in the metropolitan area. In addition to the core city of Tel-Aviv, which the project intended to draw residents, workers and firms from, other secondary cities, including Herzliya, Holon and Bat-Yam were to be adversely affected by it, mostly economically. The objection of the latter, though unsuccessful, was especially significant because it signaled the sense of threat experienced by nearby cities in the context of intra-metropolitan fragmentation. Yet, the fragmented nature of Israel’s main metropolitan area is hardly unique. Indeed, since many city-regions are being carved up into multiple, smaller urban fractions, many aspiring for their own grandiose projects, assessing their implications for the entire metro is of imminent importance. Future studies should scrutinize these negative implications more closely, including the mechanisms to moderate them.

Second, while the majority of studies have looked at large-scale projects planned and implemented in global cities, or city-regions, our article focused on a secondary, non-core city within a metropolitan area. Focusing on a secondary city is important not simply because it is smaller in size or located lower in the urban hierarchy, but primarily because these qualities present it with major challenges in planning and implementing a large urban project. As the case of Rishon demonstrates, secondary cities faced with the physical, financial and institutional complexity of such projects, are not only required to mobilize considerable resources, but simultaneously face key hurdles in their dealings with planning stakeholders at different scales. From concerns about the economic repercussions it might have on adjacent, less well-off cities to difficulties in fending off district-level planning regulations, smaller cities are often less equipped—economically, politically, and administratively—to handle the acute pressures that emanate from the erection of large projects. Hence, given the steadily increasing number of secondary cities (in Israel and beyond)

who embark on such projects, future studies should pay closer attention to these unique difficulties and, where possible, devise urban strategies to mitigate them.

Finally, the article underlines the importance of discourse in LUD projects. The role of discourse in urban planning has long been acknowledged (Tett & Wolfe, 1991), but for reasons that are beyond this article, it received relatively little attention in the context of large-scale development. However, since re-positioning a city is as much a material process as it is discursive, we attended, however briefly, to the ways in which the 1000-District was constructed as a metropolitan project. Especially during the marketing phase, the project—and the city—were portrayed as the new metropolitan core. Taking on Tel-Aviv is an ambitious plan and, given its entrenched status as Israel’s financial, commercial and cultural powerhouse, no one project could realistically pretend to accomplish it. Yet, Rishon’s ‘metrotalk’ should be seen as a strategic discourse, which attempts to reposition it within the metropolitan grid. Further research will tell whether the project had lived up to its promise “to change the map of Gush Dan [Tel-Aviv metropolitan area]” (1000muni, 2019).

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#### Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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### About the Authors



**Eran Weinberg** earned his MA in diplomacy from Tel-Aviv University and his LLB in Law and BA in Government, Diplomacy and Strategic from IDC Herzliya. He is currently a master's student in the Department of Geography and Environment at Bar-Ilan University. His thesis focuses on the role of mega projects in urban renewal. He works as a Director of Planning at a private real-estate firm in Tel-Aviv.



**Nir Cohen** is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Geography and Environment at Bar Ilan University. Trained in political sciences, international affairs and geography, his main research interests are in the fields of migration studies and social urban relations. His work was published in journals of human geography, migration and urban studies. In the Spring of 2018, he was a Visiting Fellow of Jewish Migration at the Parkes Institute in the University of Southampton, UK. In the 2018–2019 academic year, he was a Visiting Professor of Urban Studies at The Technical University of Vienna.



**Orit Rotem-Mindali** is Senior Lecturer and Head of the Department of Geography and Environment at Bar Ilan University. Orit holds a BSc in Life Science and Environmental Studies, an MA in Geography and in Environmental Management Planning and Policy, and a doctorate from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Orit is concentrating on urban geography, mobility and accessibility, spatial behavior aspects and transport policy. In her work, Orit is implementing various methodologies including of Geographical Information System and remote sensing.



## Appendix

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### PI—Personal Interviews:

- PI1—Mr. Nitsan Peled, CEO of the Rishon-Lezion City Commercial Development Company. Rishon-Lezion, January 29, 2019
- PI2—Arc. Rohatyn Doron, Arc. Na'aman Belkined, Arc. Tami Blayberg, Dune Park 2010 planners. Personal interview, Rishon-Lezion, January 24, 2019
- PI3—Arc. Leshem Haim, Deputy Director, City of Rishon Lezion's Planning Department. Personal interview, Rishon-Lezion, January 28, 2019
- PI4—Arc. Arie Kutz, 1000 District 2016 planner. Personal interview, Tel-Aviv, January 24, 2019

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