

Small Town Big Urban Issues the Case of Kiryat Ono, Israel

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Abstract : Introduction: The rapid urbanization of the last century confronts planners, regulatory bodies, developers and most of all – the public with seemingly unsolved conflicts regarding values, capital, and wellbeing of the built and un-built urban space. This is reflected in the quality of the urban form and life which has known no significant progress in the last 2-3 decades despite the on-growing urban population. It is the objective of this paper to analyze some of these fundamental issues through the case study of a relatively small town in the center of Israel (Kiryat-Ono, 100,000 inhabitants), unfold the deep structure of qualities versus disruptors, present some cure that we have developed to bridge over and humbly suggest a practice that may be generic for similar cases. Basic Methodologies: The OBJECT, the town of Kiryat Ono, shall be experimented upon in a series of four action processes: De-composition, Re-composition, the Centering process and, finally, Controlled Structural Disintegration. Each stage will be based on facts, analysis of previous multidisciplinary interventions on various layers – and the inevitable reaction of the OBJECT, leading to the conclusion based on innovative theoretical and practical methods that we have developed and that we believe are proper for the open ended network, setting the rules for the contemporary urban society to cluster by. The Study: Kiryat Ono, was founded 70 years ago as an agricultural settlement and rapidly turned into an urban entity. In spite the massive intensification, the original DNA of the old small town was still deeply embedded, mostly in the quality of the public space and in the sense of clustered communities. In the past 20 years, the recent demand for housing has been addressed to on the national level with recent master plans and urban regeneration policies mostly encouraging individual economic initiatives. Unfortunately, due to the obsolete existing planning platform the present urban renewal is characterized by pressure of developers, a dramatic change in building scale and widespread disintegration of the existing urban and social tissue. Our office was commissioned to conceptualize two master plans for the two contradictory processes of Kiryat Ono's future: intensification and conservation. Following a comprehensive investigation into the deep structures and qualities of the existing town, we developed a new vocabulary of conservation terms thus redefining the sense of PLACE. The main challenge was to create master plans that should offer a regulatory basis to the accelerated and sporadic development providing for the public good and preserving the characteristics of the PLACE consisting of a tool box of design guidelines that will have the ability to reorganize space along the time axis in a coherent way. In Conclusion: The system of rules that we have developed can generate endless possible patterns making sure that at each implementation fragment an event is created, and a better place is revealed. It takes time and perseverance but it seems to be the way to provide a healthy framework for the accelerated urbanization of our chaotic present.

Keywords : housing, architecture, urban qualities, urban regeneration, conservation, intensification

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