



## Bulletin du Centre de recherche français à Jérusalem

8 | 2001  
Varia

---

### Aliya from the Former Soviet Union Demographic Landmarks Over a Decade of Immigration

William Berthomière

---



#### Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/bcrfj/2172>

ISSN: 2075-5287

#### Publisher

Centre de recherche français de Jérusalem

#### Printed version

Date of publication: 30 March 2001

Number of pages: 188-218

#### Electronic reference

William Berthomière, « Aliya from the Former Soviet Union », *Bulletin du Centre de recherche français à Jérusalem* [Online], 8 | 2001, Online since 12 March 2008, connection on 19 April 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/bcrfj/2172>

---

## **Aliya from the Former Soviet Union Demographic Landmarks Over a Decade of Immigration**

The present article, written for the *Bulletin du centre de recherche français de Jérusalem* aims at highlighting the territorial repercussions of the wave of immigration from the former Soviet Union which Israel has, and still is, experiencing<sup>g1</sup>. Throughout this article, two major issues are examined: the socio-spatial logics of the roughly 800,000 inhabitants of the FSU who have come to Israel since 1989, and the spatial practices which emerge from an analysis of their distribution in space. These considerations are based primarily on analysis of data from the national census of the population in 1995, as well as specialized statistical sources dealing with this immigration. Current events guided the conclusion of this article. The terrible events of recent months have led to a reflection on the strategic dimension that immigration could have within the framework of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As of the first instants of aliya from the FSU, the medias, the scientific community, and the Palestinian leadership all stressed, not unjustifiably, the “demographic danger” of the return to Israel of a level of immigration comparable to the one that occurred at the time the State was founded. Thus, although today discussions appear to have refocused on the demographic issue, which itself vehicles a large number of prejudices, it seemed crucial to try to summarize the impact of this immigration on the growth of the settlements beyond the Green Line at a time when the future of these settlements is at the very heart of this controversy.

### **Geodynamic panorama of immigration from the FSU**

The geography of immigration from the FSU to Israel is a necessary first step, since describing the preferential places of residence of these immigrants helps grasp their absorption strategies, and sheds light on their perception of the socioeconomic realities of the country. We begin this overview of preferential places of residence by a macro-analysis of the distribution of former Soviet citizens in terms of districts and sub-districts of Israel.

The available data reveal several noteworthy features. First of all, the immigrant population has headed mainly for the most densely populated areas of the country. The Center and the Tel Aviv conurbation have integrated more than 249,000 ex-Soviets, or 36.8 % of the total immigration flow (see Figure 1).

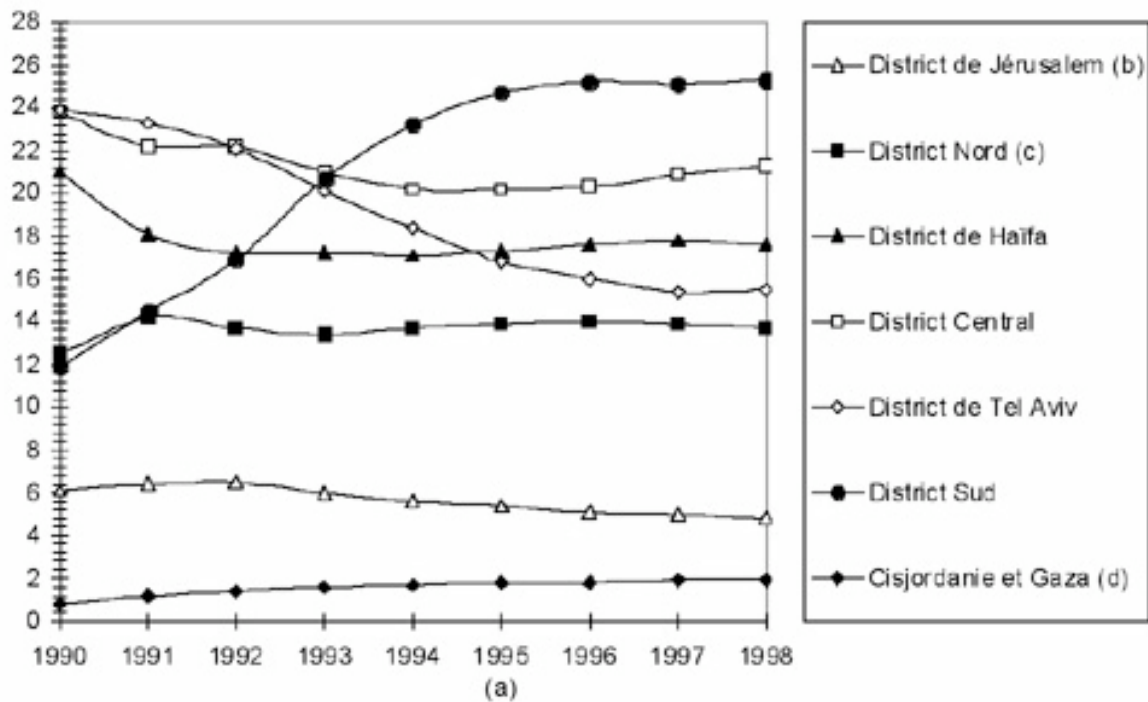
Without for the moment entering into further considerations as regards choice of residence, it should be noted that such spatial behavior was predictable, given the very high proportion of Jews from large cities in the FSU among the immigrants. Their “urban culture” naturally led them to opt for areas where the largest cities in Israel are located. For instance, the Haifa district attracted more than 120,000 ex-Soviets. By contrast, the Jerusalem district, despite the fact that the city of Jerusalem is the most highly populated city in the country, only drew 32,500 ex-Soviets. One explanation for this lack of appeal for the area may be, as many local representatives state, the low level of ideological motivation of this group of immigrants. Cut off for too many years from their Jewish roots and from Zionist ideology, Jerusalem no longer represents the strong symbol for these ex-Soviet Jews it was for the *Refuzniks* in the sixties and seventies. Over years of isolation, mythical Jerusalem has gradually been replaced by modern Tel Aviv, the archetype of the wealthy Western city...

*Figure 1 – Répartition de l'immigration d'ex-URSS (en %) selon les districts de résidence et les*

---

<sup>1</sup> This article is based primarily on the results of a Ph.D. dissertation in Geology, entitled “Israel and Immigration, the Jews of the FSU, actors in Israel’s Territorial and Identity Stakes” University of Poitiers, 2000, 560 p. This article was also supported by a Lavoisier post-doctoral scholarship from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, enabling a year-long collaboration with the CRFJ. This article provides me with the opportunity to thank the Center as a whole for its support, and to express my gratitude to Lisa Anteby for her assistance

*Territoires occupés (1990-1998)*



(a) données du recensement; (b) dont Jérusalem-Est; (c) dont Golan; (d) Israéliens dans les colonies juives  
 nb. Non inclus les enfants nés en Israël de mères originaires d'ex-URSS

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics. Immigrant Population from USSR (Former), selected data 1998, Jerusalem, 2000, p.30

Secondly, beyond these “predictable” choices of residence, the most striking feature in this analysis of the distribution of Jews from the FSU in Israel concerns the South. By the end of 1998, as shown in Figure 1, this district had the highest contingent of ex-Soviets, with 172,000 immigrants. The change in the distribution of the flux of ex-Soviets by district from 1990-1996, as compared to the total Jewish population in the country, confirms the assumption that there was a reinforcement of the “power of attraction” of the southern district on the ex-Soviets: whereas in 1990, immigrants were underrepresented there as compared to the total Jewish population of the district (-1.9 %), their proportion was 11 points higher in 1998.

This initial finding is remarkable since this district, basically a desert region, has always been one of the State’s prime targets in terms of demographic expansion. This is also the case for the North, even though the contingent of ex-Soviets is not as high as in the South (93,000 immigrants). Nonetheless, this contribution in number of inhabitants is a major geo-strategic trump card in the policy of territorial domination in the Galilee.<sup>2</sup>

Analysis of the ex-Soviets’ geography hence yields, at this level, preliminary figures that underscore the impact of this wave of immigration in Israel, since in 1998 these “new Israelis” made up almost one-quarter of the population of the southern district (24.6 %) and almost 20 % in the Haifa and the North. In addition, even though this point is touched upon again later, it should be stressed that the ex-Soviets make up almost 8 % of the population of the Occupied Territories.<sup>3</sup>

In 1995, in terms of sub-districts, data analysis clearly highlights the power of attraction of the large urban agglomerations in Israel. The sub-districts of the Sharon, Petah Tikva and Rehovot<sup>4</sup>, on the periphery of Tel Aviv, are similar to the Jerusalem area, absorbing respectively 27,100, 31,600 and 33,400 ex-Soviets, as compared to 28,600 for the Jerusalem district. Less central locations such as the sub-district of Ashkelon in the South have also gained considerably, in addition to the attraction of the

<sup>2</sup> On this topic see works by Oren Yiftachel and by Ghazi Falah, in particular “Israeli Judaization Policy in Galilee” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol.XX, #4, Summer 1991.

<sup>3</sup> Not including the Jewish population of East Jerusalem.

<sup>4</sup> These three sub-districts form, in addition to Ramla, the Central District.

cities of Ashkelon and Ashdod, which bound it, benefiting from the zone of influence of Tel Aviv in ex-Soviets' choice of residence. The influence of the large localities on immigrants' spatial distribution is also seen in the high number of ex-Soviets in the sub-district of Acre (Akko) where more than 31,000 have elected to reside. The job market in the Haifa area is one of the main motivations guiding the choice of residence.

As will be shown later, in the case of the Ashkelon and Ashdod sub-districts, the demographic impact has also been considerable, since the ex-Soviets make up more than one fifth of the total population (23.1 % and 20.3 %).

The preliminary hypotheses concerning the power of attraction of urban centers in Israel on choice of residence of the ex-Soviets is hence confirmed by analysis of the geography indicative of type of locality preferred by the immigrants. Their strong "urban culture" prompted them to reject settling in rural localities, in particular the kibbutzim. In the 1995 census, only 0.6 % chose this type of location (2.8 % for the Jewish population as a whole), which was nevertheless targeted as a specific location for absorption in the first flush of immigration.

The ex-Soviets also differ from the rest of the Jewish population in that they have "abandoned" Jerusalem – as mentioned earlier – and prefer Haifa, but also cities between 50,000 and 100,000 and above all 20,000 to 50,000 inhabitants. The proportion of ex-Soviets is respectively 6.6 and 5.6 points higher than the population as a whole in these two types of localities. Such preferential choices are the outcome of the ex-Soviets' perception of the country; in terms of Israeli absorption policy, they were presented with a dualistic vision of the country: either locating in the urban centers of Israel with high prices and maximal job opportunities, or locating on the periphery of the urban centers at lesser cost but with the risk of not finding a job.

The geography described here on the level of distribution according to type of locality raises in part an issue that is dealt with in the analysis of immigrant logic. The urban level of immigration is analyzed further below.

The figures provided by the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption reveal the impact of choices of residence on the demographic structure of the host cities. Table 1 and Map 1 present cities that have been the most affected by the wave of immigration since 1989. Because of the magnitude of Soviet immigration, these localities all have immigration figures of more than 85 % of ex-Soviets. The only real exceptions are Jerusalem (61 %), as mentioned earlier, and Bet Shemesh (75 %), which has a high number of Ethiopian immigrants. In the other localities, the proportion of ex-Soviets confirms the incredible impact of this wave of immigration on Israel, as can be seen for example by Nazareth Illit where 19,300 ex-Soviets have decided to live, and made up 40 % of the total population in 1997.

In smaller cities such as Dimona, Ma'alot Tarshiha, Sderot or Or Akiva, where 99 % of the immigration was made up of ex-Soviets (see Table 1, Map 1) there is a tangible feeling of Russification. It's enough to wander down the streets of these cities to feel the "Russian" presence. The wave of immigration was so high that middle-sized cities such as Ashdod and Ashkelon (respectively 128,400 and 84,200 at the end of 1995) have demographic structures composed of almost one-quarter of ex-Soviets.

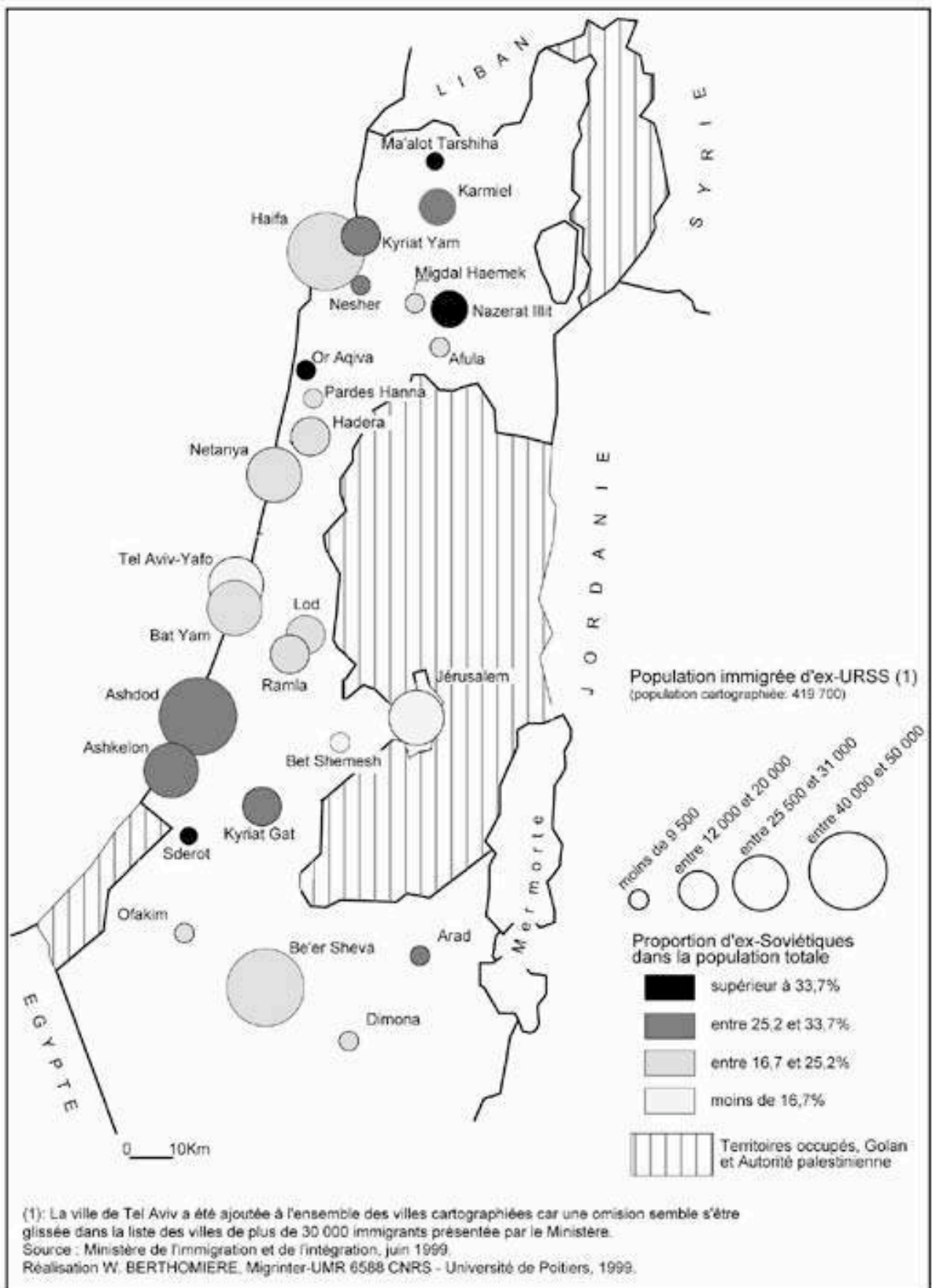


Table 1 - Cities absorbing 5,000 immigrants or more for the period between 1989-1997 and the proportion of immigrants from the FSU in the total immigrant population (%). (The localities mentioned only include cities where the proportion of immigrants in the total population is equal or higher than 20 % or 30,000 immigrants or more)

	Immigrants total	Immigrants from FSU	Proportion of FSU immigrants in total pop.
Total	821 000	692 400	84
Haifa	55700	49 700	89
Ashdod	49900	44 200	89
Jerusalem	45 200	27 700	61
Be'er Sheva	44 800	40 900	91
Netanya	38 100	31 100	82
Bat Yam	33 400	30 200	90
Ashkelon	29 300	25 400	87
Nazareth Illith	20 400	19 300	95
Hadera	19 700	16 700	85
Kiryat Gat	15 700	14 400	92
Karmiel	14 400	13 000	90
Lod	14 100	12 700	90
Ramie	13 300	11 500	86
Kyriat Yam	13 100	11 900	91
Afula	10 500	9 100	87
Sderot	8 100	7 800	96
Arad	8 100	7 300	90
OrAkiva	7 200	7 100	99
Dimona	7 200	6 900	96
Ma'alot Tarshiha	7 000	6 700	96
Ofakim	6 900	6 300	91
Migdal Ha'Emek	6 200	5 700	92
Nesher	5 900	5 500	93
Bet Shemesh	5 900	4 400	75
Pardes Hanna-Karkur	5 200	4 200	81

Note: the data do not include births or deaths

Source: Ministry of Immigration and Absortion, June 1999

Before concluding this section on this urban geography of immigrants from the FSU in Israel, it is worth pointing out that some localities were left virtually untouched by this wave of immigration. Three hypotheses can be put forward to account for the lack of interest of the ex-Soviets for these localities: first of all, for localities in the greater Tel Aviv area, the lack of available housing (costs too high, no plans to build housing projects, etc.) is a good candidate explanation. Secondly, some of these localities are far from any urban center: this is true for example of Bet Shean. Thirdly, the 'Social climate' of the localities was refractory to integration of all the ex-Soviets; this is the case for example of Bnei Brak, the city of the "men in black". Primarily an Orthodox center, only the traditional fringe of the immigrants would choose to settle there (about 1 % of the immigrants).

More generally speaking, an understanding of the geography of the ex-Soviets thus arises from a grasp



of socio-economic logics and migratory channels which guided this wave of immigration. For this purpose, the next section outlines a typology of socio-spatial logics.

### Geographic origins in the FSU and choice of residence in Israel

As suggested by the macro-analysis on the district level for all geographic types of origins, the Tel Aviv and Haifa areas have been the prime choices of place of residence of immigrants from the FSU. Individuals from the Caucasus and Central Asia, the Baltic States, the Ukraine, and Russia headed primarily for the Tel Aviv district, whereas individuals from Moldavia and Belarus tended to prefer the Haifa area (see Table 2). As regards other localities, the choices of the ex-Soviets show a wider range of diversity.

Table 2 – Proportion of ex-Soviets per district and sub-district as a function of geographic place of origin in FSU (1990-1994)

Districts, Sub-districts and Occupied Territories	Origins in FSU						
	All origins	Caucasus and Central Asia	Baltic States	Moldavia	Belarus	Ukraine	Russia
Total Population	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	t
<i>Jerusalem District</i>	6,4	5,4	5,9	1,6	4,5	5,1	9,7
<i>Northern District</i>		7,9	7,5	12,1	18,0	12,3	10,1
Safed Sub-district	1,3	0,9	1,0	0,4	1,4	1,3	1,6
Tiberias Sub-district	0,8	0,7	0,5	0,5	1,3	0,8	0,8
Jezreel Sub-district	4,2	2,8	2,5	6,6	7,0	4,4	3,6
Acre Sub-district	4,7	3,3	3,3	4,5	8,2	5,6	4,0
<i>Haifa District</i>	19,6	14,1	17,7	24,5	20,9	22,1	20,2
Haifa Sub-district	16,9	12,1	15,8	21,0	19,6	20,4	15,6
Hadera Sub-district	2,8	2,0	1,9	3,4	1,3	1,7	4,5
<i>Central District</i>	21,8	22,3	30,4	28,1	23,3	21,4	19,7
Sharon Sub-district	6,2	5,9	6,4	6,5	5,4	6,7	6,2
Petah Tiqwa Sub-	6,0	4,9	10,2	7,4	7,0	6,7	5,4
Ramla Sub-district	2,3	6,8	1,5	1,3	0,8	0,9	1,3
Rehovot Sub-district	7,3	4,7	12,5	12,9	10,1	7,1	6,8
<i>Tel Aviv District</i>	25,7	36,9	25,2	17,1	17,7	23,4	24,1
<i>Southern District</i>	14,5	12,9	12,2	16,4	14,5	15,1	14,9
Ashqelon Sub-district	7,2	6,3	5,5	8,9	9,5	7,6	6,5
Be'er Sheva Sub-district	7,3	6,6	6,7	7,5	5,1	7,4	8,4
<i>Occupied Territories</i>	0,9	1,3	0,9	0,3	1,0	0,8	1,3
<i>Golan</i>	0,1	0,1	0,2	0,0	0,1	0,1	0,1

According to data from the Central Bureau of Statistics, 1993-1995

As concerns the third district (or sub-district) of residence, the attraction of Tel Aviv remains perceptible since four of the groups analyzed opted either for the sub-district of Rehovot, which includes the city of Rishon Lezion on its outer fringes, or for Ramla, both of which are located within the zone of influence of Tel Aviv.

Immigrants from the Ukraine and Russia preferred a more southern location (for the Ukrainians) in the Ashkelon district, and a more symbolic one – Jerusalem – for the former Russians. It should be noted however that for both of these groups, the Rehovot area was the fifth choice and that both chose Beer Sheva as fourth choice. On this level of analysis, the preliminary conclusions concerning the power of attraction of the southern district are confirmed by the fact that the Beer Sheva area was the fourth and fifth choice of residence of immigrants from Central Asia, the Caucasus and Moldavia.

One striking particularity characterizes the first choice of residence in immigrants from Belarus: they are the only ones to include a northern district – Akko – among their first five choices.

The findings, in terms of broad geographic origins for this period, thus confirm the patterns for choice of residence. The dominance of the Tel Aviv area is clear, and the distribution of immigrants in the adjacent districts clusters around its metropolitan pole. The first choice of residence of immigrants from Central Asia and the Caucasus speaks for itself. More than one-third of these Jews from the FSU

are grouped in the Tel Aviv district (36.9 %) and 22 % in the outlying areas (see Table 2). On a lesser numerical scale, the case of immigrants from the Baltic States also indicates a strong attraction for the Tel Aviv district with one-quarter of its population in the area itself, and almost a third in the outlying areas, including 12.5 % in the Rehovot area and 10 % in Petah Tikva.

Superimposing the existing over-representations in spatial distributions of groups of immigrants from the FSU with the average patterns for overall FSU immigration highlights residence preferences, although the figures are relative. These findings reveal three main types of choice of residence: type 1 reflects Tel Aviv as first choice for its central location, type 2 is indicative of average behavior of Jews from the Ukraine and Russia, and type 3 covers marginal preferences in other groups.

### ***Type 1: The Greater Tel Aviv Area: a major center of attraction***

Type 1 covers groups of immigrants drawn by the Tel Aviv conurbation. This first of all includes ex-Soviets from Central Asia and the Caucasus. The data clearly show that this group chose Tel Aviv as its first choice of residence (+11.2 points compared to the average) and the Ramla district (+ 4.5 points). There is clear-cut clustering of these Jews in these two localities because they have tended to avoid the Rehovot area, although it has been very involved in absorption of ex-Soviet immigrants. In absolute numbers, the latter area has clustered 2,450 Jews less from the Caucasus and Central Asia than the Ramla area: 5150 versus 7500.

Baltic State immigrants also belong in type 1, showing a strong preference for the greater Tel Aviv area. In contrast to the previous group not all have chosen the Tel Aviv conurbation, since the Rehovot and Petah Tikva areas have absorbed a considerable number of Jews from the Baltic States. It is noteworthy, as a stepping stone towards the hypothesis of migrant territories, that the sub-district of Ramla appears to have been totally passed over by the Baltic Jews, in contrast to Jews from the Caucasus and Central Asia. Among Baltic Jews, seven times more immigrants opted for the sub-district of Petah Tikva than for the Ramla district (1510 immigrants in the former versus 216 in the latter).

Moldavian Jews are the last group in type 1, attracted by the Tel Aviv conurbation. They are also under-represented in the Tel Aviv district proper, but over represented in greater Tel Aviv (+5.6 points). They thus confirm the attraction for immigrants for this central district as a first choice of residence, an attraction that will be discussed below with regard to internal mobility.

Overall, as regards first choice of residence, the greater Tel Aviv area predominates. Analyses show that the second circular zone of greater Tel Aviv clusters a high contingent of ex-Soviets. Examining along the radius of this circle shows that this localization can be accounted for by immigrants living primarily in the city of Petah Tikva, and in the southern part of Rishon Lezion (within the Rehovot municipality). The eastern and southern sections of the third circular zone also show immigrant presence because these sections include much of Rehovot and Ramla. It is worth stressing once again that the desire to integrate as rapidly as possible into the Israeli economy was a prime motivator in choice of residence. In interviews with new immigrants, it was clear that they were aware of the limitations of the greater Tel Aviv area as 'the outer fringes of employment in Israel'.

### ***Type 2: Jews from the Ukraine and Russia: a fairly homogeneous type of immigration***

Through the prism of spatial over-representation, the profile of choice of residence of the Ukrainian and Russian groups yields a fairly homogeneous distribution. In terms of average weight, all the districts and sub districts of Israel have all been affected, globally speaking, by this wave of immigration. Note that these immigrants, somewhat like the Moldavians, are under-represented in the Tel Aviv area. Each of these two groups nevertheless has its own specificities. The relative proportion of Ukrainians in the Haifa area is 3.5 points higher than the average for total immigration (20.4 % versus 16.6 %) and the proportion of Russians is 2 points higher than the proportion for Hadera. Thus the preliminary conclusions suggesting that Russian Jews were the only group to be really attracted by the Jerusalem district are confirmed (+3.5 points).

### ***Type 3: Jews from Belarus: "a separate group"***

This final group of immigrants from the FSU presents choices of residence in complete opposition to type 1. Whereas Jews from the Caucasus and Central Asia were fairly over-represented in the Tel Aviv area, the Belarusians are truly under represented, with 8 % less than the average of the total



immigration.

Aside from the Ashkelon area, the Belarusians tend to prefer the North. The Akko and Jezreel areas are over-represented with Belarusians, respectively +3.5 and +3.2 points. This group is thus the only one, along with the Moldavian Jews to be over-represented in the Jezreel area and the sole to show a 'relative attraction' for the Acre area.

As Gabriel Lipshitz emphasizes, all these choices of residence must be reinterpreted in the light of internal mobility, since the immigrants "acquire new skills and first hand information and knowledge about the opportunities of the receiving country and may choose to relocate." [1998:101].

### Recasting of the geography of immigrants from the FSU in Israel in terms of internal mobility

This last facet of the geography of ex-Soviets in Israel analyzes their internal mobility. Because of the policy of direct absorption, internal mobility quickly impacted on the immigrant population. Out of the total number of ex-Soviets who entered the country between 1990 and 1991, 75,000 (or 22.5 % of the immigrants) moved [Hasson.1996:173]. Their pattern of internal mobility corroborates the preliminary findings, since the migratory balances are positive for the North and South districts of the country. Studies by Shimo Hasson show that, as of 1991, the South had a migratory balance of +6000 immigrants and the North +4,800 (See Table 3).

Table 3 – Internal mobility of ex-Soviets who arrived in Israel between 1990-1991, compared to the Israeli population, as a function of geographic area

District	Internal Migration					
	Immigrants			Other inhabitants		
	arrivals	departures	Net result	arrivals	departures	Net result
<i>Toutes régions</i>	75 500	75 500	0	128 900	128 900	0
Jerusalem District	3 000	4 300	-1 400	8 400	11 600	-3 200
City of Tel Aviv	17 200	19 800	-2 600	34 600	38 000	-3 400
Tel Aviv Conurbation (excluding the city of Tel Aviv)	13 900	16 200	-2 300	31 000	28 900	2 100
Haifa District	13 000	19 100	-6 000	13 600	16 200	-2 600
Northern District	13 200	8 400	4 800	13 800	13 000	800
Southern District	13 100	7 000	6 100	17 300	17 700	-400
Occupied Territories	2 100	700	1 400	10 200	3 500	6 700

Source: Shimo Hasson, "From international migration to internal migration: the settlement process of immigrants from the FSU in Israel", in N. Cannon (ed.), 1996, *Immigration and integration in post-industrial societies: theoretical analysis and policy-related research*, London: Macmillan Press, p. 174.

The occupied territories also emerge as one of the preferential locations for the immigrants, with a migratory balance of +1400 ex-Soviets. These gains were made to the detriment of the Haifa area (-6000 immigrants) as well as the Center and Tel Aviv, with the city of Tel Aviv alone losing 2,600 immigrants from the FSU.

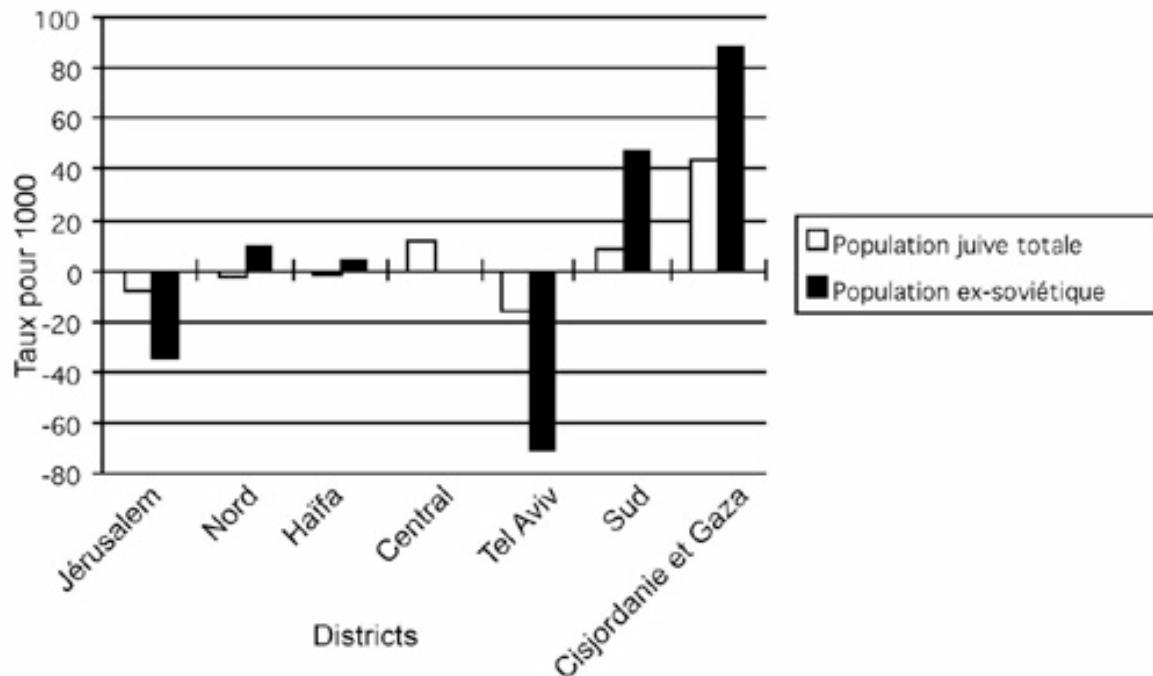
The migratory behavior of the ex-Soviets in comparison to the Israeli population in its entirety presents several specificities. Although their internal mobility appears to be in phase with the mobility of the general population as regards the districts of Jerusalem, Haifa, the North, the city of Tel Aviv and the occupied territories, it is diametrically opposed to trends as regards the South and greater Tel Aviv. Greater Tel Aviv experienced a migratory balance of -2300 immigrants from the FSU whereas this balance is positive for the rest of the population (+2,100, see Table 3). This disparity can be accounted for by the fact that the non-immigrant population has tended to gentrify and move to the suburbs, whereas the ex-Soviets were motivated by economic and job-related reasons, once they had acquired "first-hand information and knowledge about the opportunities of the receiving country".

The South also shows disparities: the migratory behavior of the ex-Soviets reverses the trend for the general population. Whereas the ex-Soviet population is clearly attracted by this district (+6100), the general population tends to leave it (-400 people). As will be shown later, this migratory trend constitutes a success for the government's population dispersion scheme.

According to Shimo Hasson, 55.9 % of the ex-Soviets who remained in their first choice of residence because of the presence of family or relatives, and 48.5 % who relocated did so for reasons of

employment or housing. He also points out that internal migration based on the latter motivation was oriented towards the periphery of the country and migration which took place within the central districts of the country were motivated by employment opportunities [Hasson, 1996: 175-176]. Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics highlight the recent trends in the ex-Soviets' internal mobility: the South and North, as well as the occupied territories show positive migratory percentages, and also suggest that this mobility schema is subject to change (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Immigrants from the FSU and the total Jewish population: internal migrations per district



Source: Immigrant population from Former Soviet Union, 1995 Demographic trends, CBS, 19, p.21.

Overall, on the district level, two main systems of mobility can be seen among the ex-Soviets. The existence of a central system is demonstrated by massive internal migration from the Tel Aviv district towards the center (26 % of the recorded mobility) and the reverse (13 %). There is also a migratory flow from the Tel Aviv district towards the South (21.6 %). Within this same mobility system, the Central district contributes to the Northern districts with a total of 20 % of all relocations recorded from this district. Parallel to this first system of internal mobility, the North of the country also shows a similar structure, even though it only covers 16,459 internal migrations versus 31,600 in the preceding system. The Haifa area primarily shows a departure of its immigrants towards the North, 19 % of the total flow, and the latter has seen a departure of 23 % of the ex-Soviets to the Haifa area. Within the other trends in the system, the South emerges as a prime location for absorption: in the case of the Haifa area, the South is the second destination for ex-Soviets after the North, respectively 1,136 and 1,859 immigrants.

In contrast, the South shows a set of internal migrations which impact to only a slight extent on the Northern districts, since the majority of the internal migrations are drawn to the Tel Aviv district (30 % of the total flow). Note that the South, along with Haifa, shows the same ability to retain immigrants from the FSU since almost half of the relocations in 1995 were within its municipal boundaries. In contrast, Jerusalem only tabulates 15 % internal mobility within its district. This district is rendered even more interesting by the fact that the first two choices of ex-Soviets who leave Jerusalem are the occupied territories, with 823 immigrants.

The singularity of Jerusalem can most likely be explained by the attraction of Jewish settlements located on the border of the eastern (unofficial) part of the city, such as the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim. As will be discussed later, this type of internal mobility enters into the economic logic of the former immigrants, and serves the Slaters geostrategic imperatives.

In terms of the localities themselves, the migratory channels of the ex-Soviets within Israel can also be

charted. For the period between 1990-1995, the three main Israeli cities overall show negative rates of internal mobility, losing out to middle sized cities (50,000-90,000 inhabitants) and above all cities with fewer than 20,000 inhabitants. In 1995, for all the former Soviets as a whole since 1990, smaller cities absorbed 12,728 immigrants with 7,629 departures, for a migratory balance of 5,099 and a rate of internal migration of 62 % (See Table 4).

Table 4 – Rate of internal migration of immigrants from the FSU in 1995 as a function of type of locality and by year of immigration to Israel

Type of locality	Immigrants from the FSU who arrived in the year:						Total
	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	
Urban localities	0.3	3.2	4.2	4.7	17	10.5	4.8
200 000 or more	-32.6	-41.4	-32.7	-17.8	-38	-677.3	-71.4
Jerusalem	-34.9	-50.8	-40.4	-23.4	-27	-35.6	-38.4
Tel Aviv-Jaffa	-45.1	-64.1	-35	-32.1	-144.8	-1751	-155.8
Haifa	-22.2	-12.6	-23.7	2	43.1	-171	-19.2
100 000-199 000	-17.8	-28.1	-23.1	-30.5	-3.2	182	-6.9
50 000-99 999	16.5	25.6	29.5	40	43.8	195.5	36.1
20 000-49 999	9.8	25.6	7.1	3	6.3	137.9	19.2
up to 19 999	29	48.1	80.2	73.6	118.8	157.9	62.2
Rural localities	-10.3	-101	-189.6	-223.9	-444.9	-234.9	-157.5

Note: the rate per 1,000 corresponds to the number of immigrants from the FSU who arrived or departed for 1,000 people in the general population for the geographical district under consideration. The highest figures include the years 1992-1995 for the first place of residence, which could have been an hotel or the adress of relatives or friends who immigrated at an earlier date.  
Source: *Immigrant Population from Former USSR 1995, Demographic trends, CBS, n°1076, pp.85-86.*

This table highlights once again that the ex-Soviets contribute to strengthening the urban nature of Israeli society. For 1995, the rural localities presented a negative rate of internal mobility calculated for all immigrants since 1990. The fact that some of the immigrants were absorbed “temporarily” by kibbutzim can explain this shift from rural to urban. It should be recalled that a very large majority of the former Soviet immigrants came from large urban areas within the Western regions of the FSU and that their “urban culture” means that residence in rural areas can only be transitory, a phase, in the absorption process.

The raw data for internal migration show that cities with 100,000 to 200,000 inhabitants and those between 20,000 and 50,000 inhabitants are the areas where the highest amount of mobility took place. In 1995 (for all years of immigration pooled), the larger cities recorded 15,913 arrivals for 16,853 departures and the smaller cities 14,885 arrivals versus 11,673 departures. These same data also demonstrate that ex-Soviets who left Jerusalem in 1995 primarily relocated in localities of fewer than 20,000 inhabitants, whereas immigrants leaving Haifa preferred cities with 20,000 to 50,000 inhabitants, and immigrants leaving Tel Aviv, cities between 100,000 and 200,000 inhabitants.

These data on internal mobility as a function of type of locality also reveal a dynamic that contradicts the logic of spatial dispersion in the country. This is because immigrants from cities having 10,000 to 20,000 inhabitants tend to move to larger localities (between 100,000 and 199,999 inhabitants) located for the most part in the Tel Aviv conurbation, and this dynamic is enhanced by departures from cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants.

The last geographical analysis focuses on internal mobility in terms of years since immigration. As for the number of migrations, what emerges is that internal mobility decreases considerably as a function of length of residence in Israel. In 1995, the relative proportion of internal mobility was three times higher for ex-Soviets who made aliya in 1995 than for immigrants who arrived in 1990, respectively 19.4 % and 6.5 % (see Table 5). These data are illustrative of the gradual sedentary trend of Jews from the FSU in Israel.

The figures from this analysis of statistical data on the spatial distribution of Jews from the FSU in Israel can be recast as a typology of spatial implantation logic showing the exogenous and endogenous factors which contributed to shaping it.

Table 5 – Internal mobility and relative proportion of mobility for the total immigration from the FSU in 1995, and by year of immigration in Israel

	Immigrants from the FSU who arrived in the year:					
	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Internal mobility	12 120	11 152	5 964	7 277	12 301	12 558
Proportion of internal mobility	6,5	7,5	9,2	11,0	18,1	19,4

Note: These data do not include the first place of residence in the arrival flow.

Source: *Immigrant Population from Former USSR 1995, Demographic trends, CES, n°1076, pp. 12, 83-84.*

### **Typology of spatial practices of immigrants from the FSU**

In the light of the statistical data presented above, this section attempts to paint a general picture of the logic behind residential choices which guided Jews from the FSU, in order to better grasp the dialectical relationship created between the logic of the State and group logic.

By examining the geography of this immigration, various types of spatial behavior emerge as regards choice of residence, in particular because of the wide range of Jewish communities within this group of immigrants. The fact of being Ashkenazi or Sephardi, a Dagestan Jew or one from St. Petersburg, for instance, prompts different forms of mobility and types of spatial integration strategies, even though the lower cost of housing appears to be the prime element in determining the spatial distribution of the former Soviets as a whole in Israel. Despite the inevitable reductionism inherent to the construction of a typology, field study findings suggest four broad types of spatial behaviors that have contributed to the geography of immigrants from the FSU in Israel.

### ***Choice of Residence linked to the presence of immigrants from the 70-80s***

Unquestionably, immigrants from the Soviet Union who arrived between the seventies and the nineties played a key role in the choice of spatial location of more recent immigrants. A study conducted on the city of Karmiel, located in the heart of the valley of Bet Kerem that divides lower and upper Galilee, emerges as a typical example of choice of residence induced by the presence of “Refuzniks” (See Map 1).

During the 1970s, the new town of Karmiel expanded with the arrival of Soviet Jews, in particular from Baku (Azerbaijan). Over 1,600 Soviet families had chosen to locate there over the previous twenty years [Eldar, 1992:274]. During the events of late 1989, a group of these families joined forces and mobilized to prepare for the liberalization of emigration from the USSR. Appeals to emigrate to Karmiel were broadcast via the Kol Israel radio station (which could be heard in the USSR) and the seriousness of the absorption staff in Karmiel did the rest. Emigrants became aware of Karmiel and at the peak of the wave of immigration between 1990 and 1993, 7600 ex-Soviets located there. In 1995, the population of former inhabitants of the USSR who had immigrated since 1990 was nearly one-third of the total population of 35,000 of Karmiel.

Within the framework of the “adoption” program launched by the municipality, each of 310 families who arrived between 1990 and 1992 were assigned to a Karmiel family in order to reduce the difficulty of absorption caused by isolation and lack of familiarity with the local administrative structures [Eldar, 1992: 277]. The success of this host group, relayed as time passed by the new immigrants themselves, was such that the mayor of the city planned to go to the airport to ask immigrants not to come to Karmiel anymore. Through feedback, and the availability of housing in Nazareth Illit, this migratory channel was deactivated and redirected in part towards this city, located several kilometers to the South. Like Karmiel, the cities of Beer Sheva and Haifa absorbed Jews from Baku because of the presence of immigrants from the seventies. Interviews with the ex-Soviets showed that these patterns of residence are characteristic of the various groups of Jews from the Soviet Union who made up this immigration. For instance, the Caucasian Jews of Baku, attracted by their predecessors, settled primarily in Migdal Ha’emek (near Nazareth Illit), Lod and Ashdod. These choices contributed the initial building blocks for a concentration of the ex-Soviet community, as will be shown below.

In addition to this type of behavior motivated by networks of friends and relatives, what emerges is

that the spatial practices of the ex-Soviet immigrants were influenced, logically enough, by the search for lower cost residential areas.

### ***A geography of immigration dictated by the cost of housing***

The massive waves of immigration in 1990 and 1991 created a housing crisis (due to lack of absorption housing and a sharp rise in prices in particular), and immigrants were forced to look for less expensive places of residence. The high number of new immigrants in cities such as Petah Tikva, (in the suburbs of Tel Aviv), or Kiriat Yam, (near Haifa), are excellent examples. Despite the fact that most of these Jews came from large urban centers in the FSU, the majority of them thus chose to settle in outlying areas where the cost of housing was lower than in the urban centers of the country.

Faced with the prohibitive cost of housing, the immigrants' residential zones spread towards the periphery of Tel Aviv and Haifa. As concerns the top twenty immigrant absorption localities (for the first five years after aliya), the main localities are grouped around the two large economic centers of the country. Within greater Tel Aviv, Bat Yam, Holon, Petah Tikva, Ramla and Rishon Lezion have absorbed a large contingent of ex-Soviets, as well as Akko and Kiriat Yam for the Haifa district. Aside from these cities, a whole group of localities in the economic sphere of Tel Aviv or Haifa have also been affected by immigrant absorption, but very quickly reached their maximal capacity for absorption. This was the case in particular for Herzilia and Ra'anana, which dropped respectively 9 and 14 places in the ranking of absorption cities, or Kiriat Bialik with a loss of 7 places. These saturations of the initial host locations due to lack of housing or job opportunities redrew, through internal migration, a new spatial distribution of immigration, and created a second area of immigration somewhat farther away from the economic centers of the country. Within the Tel Aviv zone of influence, cities such as Lod could thus maintain their role as absorption city while a series of smaller cities became targets for immigration. Two types of cities fall into this second category.

The first type is made up of cities located at the intersection of two different employment basins in Israel. The case of Kiriat Gat is a representative example. By increasing its contingent of immigrants by two and a half in 1992, and in 1995, this city went from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> place on the list of absorption towns.

In the Northern part of Israel, the town the most representative of this dynamic is Or Akiva. A small locality near Cesarea, at the center of the Haifa and Netanya employment zones, it benefited considerably from the restructuring of immigration absorption with a gain of 14 places. Strangely enough, the city of Pardes Hanna, located in the same economic zone, was not affected by this new absorption trend. The hypothesis that increased migratory channels exclusively to a small number of cities can account for these particularities, as will be shown later.

Parallel to this first type of dynamic, a new geography of absorption locations developed through encouragement of the State's habitat policy. By building new low-cost housing in peripheral areas of the country, many towns in the Galilee and the Negev attracted growing numbers of immigrants. Towns such as Ma'alot Tarshiha, in the zone of influence of Karmiel in the Galilee, or Arad and Ofakim, dependent on the Beer Sheva zone, are good examples.

Another city which deserves mention as part of this dynamic is the settlement of Ariel located in the center of the West Bank. As of 1993, its population of former Soviets grew rapidly to reach 3,300 individuals in 1995 and 6,054 at the end of the year 2000 (see infra). As will be discussed in greater depth below, the "success" of settlements such as Ariel is part of a synchronous relationship between State policy and migrant logic.

These installation logics as a whole thus corroborate the initial findings concerning internal mobility. Progressively, as the result of economic crisis and the policy of building public housing in the outlying areas of the large urban centers of the country, the immigrants have partly been redistributed to the peripheral areas of Israel, in small and middle sized cities in the North and South. Nevertheless, the policy of encouraging the dispersal of the immigrant population has not been without hitches.

Some of these small and middle- sized towns were unprepared for such immigration because they were also facing severe socio-economic problems (deficits in the city budgets, high rate of unemployment).<sup>5</sup> The city of Kiriat Gat, developed to be a relay town at the upper limit of the Negev (Lakhish district) was faced with severe problems of urban and industrial growth. The influx of ex-

---

<sup>5</sup> See in particular works by Colette Aymard [1998].



Soviets destabilized city planning, since the city was not capable of responding to the infrastructure needs created by immigration. As Colette Aymard states: "The city is faced with a dual problem: providing services to a population with low revenues and retaining the core of the population with high incomes in the city." This situation led the municipality to have recourse to "a policy of selective absorption of immigrants, by favoring skilled workers", while coping with the negative impact of state policy "which continues to develop its pool of low-income housing" in the city [1998:36]. Colette Aymard's analysis highlights the extreme difficulty of the management of spatial distribution of immigrants. Three logics – the State's, the city governments – and the immigrants' – act and interact in the same areas. The economic weaknesses of these cities quickly turn them into bedroom towns. Note nevertheless that despite these difficulties, these cities are part of the effort to absorb immigration, whereas the cities located along the northern border such as Kiriat Shemona, have been "excluded" from the geography of immigration locations because of their geographic isolation and their lack of economic opportunities.

In terms of population growth, the massive arrival of immigrants from the FSU in smaller cities has gradually created "ghettos". The new neighborhoods of these towns absorbed virtually all the former Soviets. For the period between 1992 and 1995, the peripheral cities saw the proportion of ex-Soviets in their populations increase from 10 to 20 % as a function of internal mobility. For example, the city of Or Akiva had a proportion of Jews from the former USSR above 40 % in 1995 whereas the proportion was 22.5 % in 1992.

The case of Ma'alot Tarshiha is also a good example. This city benefited from a redistribution of absorption areas caused by the "economic inaccessibility" of the Haifa district but also from the first dispersal of the immigration area created around Karmiel in the Galilee. In 1995, this locality had a record number of 46.7 % of ex-Soviets in its total Jewish population.

The immigrant families do not necessarily perceive these localities as enclaves, because as they state, they are close to their fellow countrymen. These logics of installation show to what extent the dividing line between mobility based on community attraction and economic concerns is tenuous. Nevertheless, the choice of living in a city like Arad, in the Negev desert, or in a Jewish settlement in the West Bank such as Ariel is dictated first of all by economics. The cost of purchasing housing in Arad is about \$70,000 and can go as low as \$35,000 for a prefabricated home in the new Gevim neighborhood, which is 3 to 6 times less expensive than in Tel Aviv. The prices are as attractive in the Ariel settlement, which, as the immigrants point out, despite its location in the center of the West Bank, is only 40 minutes from Tel Aviv.

### ***The "temptation" of community enclaves<sup>6</sup>***

As shown above, choice of residence motivated by economic reasons has logically been accompanied by spatial choices dictated by community ties. The social networks of the former Soviets living in economically feasible areas has produced migratory channels that have served to reinforce further the community atmosphere of certain localities or certain neighborhoods.

The data on the cities of origin of Jews from the FSU who arrived in Israel between 1990-1993 reveal trends towards community cohesion in this immigrant population.

First of all, a study of the main cities of origin in the former USSR shows a clear trend of immigrants from large cities in Russia such as Moscow and St. Petersburg to live together in Jerusalem. An analysis of the first six absorption cities shows that Jerusalem with 5,000 Moscovite Jews or one-third of the immigrants, emerges as a major pole of attraction for immigrants from Moscow (see Table 6). Along with this Russian specificity, the Ukrainians clearly prefer the city of Haifa (32 % of the flow). Within the Ukrainian group, Jews from Kharkov most prefer Haifa. Out of 4885 immigrants recorded between 1990 and 1993, 2089 (42 %) chose the capital of the North, far exceeding Jerusalem with only 640 immigrants. On the basis of interviews about attraction of Haifa on Ukrainian Jews, it appears that the site itself of Haifa plays a role. "Naturally" the Odessa Jews said, because it reminds them of Odessa and for this reason many of them chose to live there. Similarly, Jews from St. Petersburg said that the site of Karmiel had influenced their choice of residence. The emotional and environmental factors were the prime considerations in many cases that prompted community

---

<sup>6</sup> Conclusions based on an analysis of the author's subset of data from the Ministry of Immigration for 465000 ex-Soviets who arrived in Israel between 1990 and 1993.



concentrations.

Table 6 – Six main cities selected for first residence by Jews from the FSU in Israel, as a function of the largest cities of origin in the 15 ex-republics of the USSR (immigrants arriving in Israel between 01/01/90 and 31/12/93)

RUSSIA			BELARUS			ARMENIA		
Rank:		Number of immigrants	Rank:		Number of immigrants	Rank:		Number of immigrants
First	Jerusalem	5 360	First	Haifa	1 672	First	Haifa	106
Second	Tel Aviv-Jaffa	3 246	Second	Netanya	1 086	Second	Petah Tikva	102
Third	Haifa	3 073	Third	Jerusalem	884	Third	Tel Aviv-Jaffa	74
Fourth	Netanya	1 509	Fourth	Petah Tikva	852	Fourth	Jerusalem	58
Fifth	Beer Sheva	1 432	Fifth	Rishon le Zion	831	Fifth	Bat Yam	47
Sixth	Bat Yam	1 372	Sixth	Nazareth Illit	757	Sixth	Netanya	41
			LATVIA			KAZAKHSTAN		
Rank:		Number of immigrants	Rank:		Number of immigrants	Rank:		Number of immigrants
First	Jerusalem	3 502	First	Haifa	495	First	Haifa	296
Second	Haifa	2 924	Second	Tel Aviv-Jaffa	389	Second	Tel Aviv-Jaffa	274
Third	Tel Aviv-Jaffa	1 530	Third	Jerusalem	373	Third	Bat Yam	228
Fourth	Beer Sheva	1 283	Fourth	Beer Sheva	370	Fourth	Petah Tikva	219
Fifth	Bat Yam	1 105	Fifth	Bat Yam	366	Fifth	Jerusalem	173
Sixth	Netanya	1 090	Sixth	Rishon le Zion	324	Sixth	Holon	151
			LITHUANIA			UZBEKISTAN		
Rank:		Number of immigrants	Rank:		Number of immigrants	Rank:		Number of immigrants
First	Haifa	3 535	First	Rishon le Zion	396	First	Tel Aviv-Jaffa	3 087
Second	Jerusalem	1 926	Second	Petah Tikva	275	Second	Holon	1 389
Third	Netanya	1 589	Third	Netanya	258	Third	Bat Yam	1 268
Fourth	Bat Yam	1 540	Fourth	Holon	242	Fourth	Haifa	1 130
Fifth	Holon	1 358	Fifth	Bat Yam	209	Fifth	Jerusalem	1 091
Sixth	Petah Tikva	1 350	Sixth	Rehovot	208	Sixth	Beer Sheva	1 040
			ESTONIA			TADJIKISTAN		
Rank:		Number of immigrants	Rank:		Number of immigrants	Rank:		Number of immigrants
First	Haifa	1 287	First	Jerusalem	105	First	Tel Aviv-Jaffa	2 455
Second	Netanya	1 023	Second	Haifa	79	Second	Ramla	592
Third	Bat Yam	876	Third	Ashdod	75	Third	Petah Tikva	461
Fourth	Tel Aviv-Jaffa	738	Fourth	Rehovot	62	Fourth	Holon	457
Fifth	Rishon le Zion	665	Fifth	Tel Aviv-Jaffa	55	Fifth	Haifa	429
Sixth	Holon	485	Sixth	Petah Tikva	43	Sixth	Jerusalem	403
			GEORGIA			KYRGYZSTAN		
Rank:		Number of immigrants	Rank:		Number of immigrants	Rank:		Number of immigrants
First	Haifa	2 089	First	Bat Yam	902	First	Tel Aviv-Jaffa	258
Second	Jerusalem	640	Second	Holon	800	Second	Jerusalem	156
Third	Netanya	594	Third	Jerusalem	433	Third	Beer Sheva	133
Fourth	Tel Aviv-Jaffa	575	Fourth	Ashkelon	422	Fourth	Haifa	112
Fifth	Bat Yam	513	Fifth	Netanya	386	Fifth	Bat Yam	101
Sixth	Rishon le Zion	474	Sixth	Beer Sheva	311	Sixth	Petah Tikva	109
			AZERBAIDIAN			TURKMENISTAN		
Rank:		Number of immigrants	Rank:		Number of immigrants	Rank:		Number of immigrants
First	Haifa	1 462	First	Haifa	1 971	First	Tel Aviv-Jaffa	29
Second	Rishon le Zion	1 346	Second	Netanya	1 569	Second	Beer Sheva	20
Third	Netanya	1 191	Third	Beer Sheva	1 244	Third	Haifa	19
Fourth	Rehovot	1 132	Fourth	Akko	1 062			
Fifth	Beer Sheva	1 121	Fifth	Tel Aviv-Jaffa	944			
Sixth	Ashdod	987	Sixth	Kiryat Yam	686			

Source: Ministry of Immigration and Absorption: data selection and analysis by the author, 1996.

The Jews from the Western sectors of the FSU often said that they had preferred and encouraged their families and relatives to settle in the North because the climate is much more bearable for people unused to Mediterranean or semi-arid climates.

Another group of Jews who tends to cluster together in Haifa are from Belarus. Almost one quarter of the immigrants from Minsk chose to live there. Note that the latter, as pointed out in the analysis of distribution by district, are the only ones to select Nazareth Illit among their first six choices of place of residence. In this case, the influence of State is clear: by making low cost public housing available

in this city<sup>7</sup> it drew the immigrant population, and developed this city on the basis of migratory channels within the migratory flow.

The case of Jews from the Caucasus and Central Asia shows striking community cohesion. The Jews from Tbilisi tend to concentrate in cities such as Bat Yam and Holon, located in the Tel Aviv conurbation. This Jewish group, from one of the capital cities of the FSU, is the only one to have clearly chosen these two cities as the main choice of residence, since more than one-half of the Georgians live there. It should be stressed that on the neighborhood level, there is no discernible concentration of Jews from the former USSR. Only the North neighborhood of Bat Yam has a slight over representation of immigrants, with a concentration index of 1.3.<sup>8</sup>

Among the Jews from large cities in the FSU, the cases of those from Tashkent and Dushanbe are the most noteworthy. Most of these immigrants settled in Tel Aviv. As is shown in Table 6, 3,807 Jews from Tashkent and 2,455 from Dushanbe chose Tel Aviv as first choice of residence. This high concentration can be explained by the fact that these migrants were attracted by the southern neighborhoods of Tel Aviv.

Two features help explain this attraction. First of all, these neighborhoods were the location of Jews from Central Asia who arrived at the turn of century, in particular the Shapira neighborhood; secondly, these neighborhoods are mixed areas where industrial zones border on older housing, which means that in this area housing prices are low. The development of a migratory channel from Central Asia towards the southern neighborhoods contributed rapidly to making these areas a zone of community concentration. As works by Gila Menahem have shown [1966:157-158], the high social cohesion within this Asian group contributed to excluding non-oriental immigrants from the southern area, creating a true “Asian” enclave in the south of the city.

Analysis of localities preferred by Jews from the FSU and originally from secondary localities in the ex-USSR also show interesting community concentrations. The data for middle sized cities show that:

- almost one third of the Jewish community of Derbent (Daghestan) went to Hadera (1,250 people), far outdistancing the second absorption city. Beer Sheva (600 people) and despite the government policy of encouraging settlement in localities in the south of the country. New immigrants from Derbent make up almost one third of the Russian community of Hadera (the Moscow and Leningrad communities only make up 15 %).

- Within the Belarus community, almost six times more immigrants from Gomel than Minsk went to live in Naharia, a middle – sized city located on the northern edge of the Haifa metropolitan area (respectively 600 and 100 people).

- The city of Or Yehuda is home to 880 Jews from Samarkand. Thus Or Yehuda and Tel Aviv, where 1,450 members of this community have settled, collectively lodge more than two-thirds of the Jewish community of Samarkand who immigrated to Israel.

Interviews with former Soviets who have become directors of new companies in Israel<sup>9</sup> were conducted on their perception of the choices of residence made by their immigrant group. Surprisingly enough, the vast majority stated that the socio-spatial behaviors described above were not so salient. This lack of perception of the logic behind community concentrations reinforces the idea that future work should focus on the issue of the representation of space of this wave of immigration. In addition, these findings also show once again that this immigration, because of its size, makes the immigration of the Jews from the FSU a reality that affects all the geographic areas of Israel. This section on examples of spatial behavior concludes with a group that, in contrast, is highly aware of its territorial strategy: the *Intelligensia*.

### ***Residence and Social Status: the case of the Intelligensia***

This is an example of a spatial practice that deserves attention even though it only involves a limited number of immigrants. The “*Intelligensia*”<sup>10</sup> – the label Soviet Jewish intellectuals themselves use –

---

<sup>7</sup> See in particular works by Niva Foran [1992:281-289].

<sup>8</sup> This concentration index is a ratio, calculated as follows: proportion of immigrants in the population of a given neighborhood / the immigrant population in the city as a whole.

<sup>9</sup> See in particular my article “De nouveaux entrepreneurs en Israël ou les ‘péripiétés’ de l’intégration des Juifs d’ex-URSS” *Migracisjke Teme*, December, 2000.

<sup>10</sup> See works by Daniele Storper Perez, in particular “Intelligent’ en Israël. L’intelligensia russe aujourd’hui, entre repli et ouverture” *REMI*, vol 12-3; pp. 153-171 and *L’Intelligensia russe en Israël. Rassurante étrangeté* 1998, Paris, CNRS

primarily from Moscow, St. Petersburg and Kiev – have very clearly chosen to reside solely in one of the urban centers of Israel (see box).

This trend is perceptible in the statistical analysis: almost two thirds of the Russian community of Jerusalem is composed of immigrants from Moscow or St. Petersburg, whereas they are only 40 % of the total flow of immigrants from Russia. This preference can be explained in part by the attraction of this mythical city on migrants from the two large agglomerations in Russia, and

What is the intelligentsia according to Dina Rubin?

“This concept can't be translated. It doesn't have the same meaning in French. The intelligentsia forms a very special mentality. It's the ability to experience things and ideas that the ordinary person cannot and should not experience. The ordinary person consumes them. And we live on them: in other words, we live on literature, the arts, not because we earn our living through them, but because our lives are replete with them. For me, the best part of the Russian intelligentsia are these “bearded ones,” engineers and others who, every Saturday, go camping and who, around the fire, sing their songs (lyrics, philosophies, etc.) they live from that, their lives are full of that. They live on ideas that are impossible to grasp. Take an example: Yoske, although he is Belgian, could be a figure in the intelligentsia. He comes and says: We have to go to Haifa to see the Mane Katz museum. Although he is overdrawn 3000 shekels at the bank, he invites everyone, fills up his car and takes us all to Haifa to see Mane Katz. Then he stays at our house until the wee hours to discuss all the details of the work of Mane Katz. It's hard to explain.

Source: D. Storper Perez, 1998. *L'Intelligentsia russe en Israël. Rassurante étrangeté*, Paris, CNRS Éditions (CRFJ, Hommes et Sociétés).

mainly on the intelligentsia. In interviews within this group, it was clear that this group was characterized its high concentration in Jerusalem<sup>11</sup> and Tel Aviv. Analysis of the spatial distribution of immigrants according to their former professions is suggestive of their attraction to these two cities, since the North and South were only weakly populated by immigrant writers and other artists.

The attraction of these two Israeli metropolitan areas “areas of production and dissemination of culture” is unquestionable. Artists<sup>12</sup> interviewed for this study stated that in their original immigration plans it would have been inconceivable for them to live elsewhere than Jerusalem. The Knesset – the Israeli parliament – has hosted a major exhibit of recent immigrant artists from the FSU. Aside from this official event, the large number of ex-Soviet artists has made Jerusalem a gigantic forum of Art from the East. Restaurants and other “Russian” social gathering spots have become major venues for artistic expression where numerous and varied Russian literature and philosophy clubs hold meetings. In recent years, Jerusalem has seen the blossoming of “cultural clubs” where the intelligentsia meet as a function of their republic of origin. On Jaffo Street, a building houses the cultural center for Soviet Jews where different *landmanschaft* have been formed, such as the one for Moscow and St. Petersburg, and where different groups of Jews from the former USSR meet in a central location for intelligentsia, the Russian library of the Zionist Forum.<sup>13</sup> Here the intelligentsia discuss their new living conditions and recall previous meetings in the ex-USSR.

### **Immigration and geostrategy: a successful synthesis?**

After having denned the set of logics which has contributed to forming the geography of immigration and hence the distribution of the population in Israel, we now turn to a comparison of the immigrant logic with that of the State of Israel, and its leaders. This question also raises the issue of the demographic dimension underlying the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.<sup>14</sup>

For more than twenty years, the demographic issue has gradually become more crucial in the Israeli-

---

Éditions (CRFJ, Hommes et Sociétés).

<sup>11</sup> Despite their low incomes, many have chosen to live in the wealthy neighborhoods of Jerusalem such as Rehavia or Baka, because they symbolize for the intelligentsia areas with vast intellectual riches. Their representation in these areas stems from the fact that when they were founded, these neighborhoods absorbed intellectuals from Eastern Europe.

<sup>12</sup> Between 1991 and 1995, more than 15,500 immigrants registered as artists. Nearly half of them received absorption aid, from the State or from other Israeli institutions.

<sup>13</sup> See the chapter by Narspy Zilberg “Modalités d'altérité : Pourquoi changer de culture ? Un dilemme posé à l'intelligentsia russe en Israël” in Daniele Storper Perez, 1998, *L'Intelligentsia russe en Israël. Rassurante étrangeté*, 1998, Paris, CNRS Éditions (CRFJ, Hommes et Sociétés)

<sup>14</sup> This question recently gave rise to a debate organized by IED and entitled “L'arrière-plan démographique et l'explosion de violence en Israël-Palestine (Jeudi 30 novembre 2000).

Palestinian conflict, as shown in particular by the use in scientific circles of terms such as “war of the cradles”, “demographic bomb”, or “battle of the figures.” Thus, at the peak of the first Intifada<sup>15</sup> the idea that demography the “strongest Palestinian weapon” impacted strongly on the Israeli leaders. The power struggle where traditionally the natural dynamism of the Palestinian population set against the demographic reinforcement from the Jewish Diaspora tends to tip in favor of the Palestinians: the curve of Jewish immigration stays globally at a low level punctuated by several migratory artifacts and the annual migratory balance was even negative twice during this period.

By opening the door to Jewish emigration from the FSU, the collapse of the Soviet bloc provided a clear-cut migratory gain for Israel and created Palestinian fears of a change in the balance of power, since until this immigration, the Israeli ability to settle the occupied territories was gradually reduced to ‘internal’ migrations.<sup>16</sup> The events of 1989 could thus be interpreted as a strategic weapon when Itzhak Shamir stated that a “great immigration called for a Great Israel”<sup>17</sup> and migratory repercussions were watched carefully by Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian leaders; Abu Mazen<sup>18</sup> went as far as to state “To understand the danger which lies in immigration, we should recall that when Israel conquered 78 % of Palestine, it only had 600,000 inhabitants. This is when immigration started from Iraq, Yemen, Egypt and Morocco to correct the deficit. I am convinced that if the numbers had remained those of the past, Israel would not have survived. For Israel, immigration is like an artery connected to a man's heart: it nourishes the economy, the troops, the labor force and the farmers. This is why we feel that it represents the key challenge which the Arab nation has to face.”[Fargues, 1995:73].

Thus as the current conflict deepens, it is worth presenting a brief overview of the role which ex-Soviet immigration has played in the demographic background of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

#### ***Is immigration from the FSU a secondary actor in the geopolitics of Jerusalem?***

The wave of immigration from the ex-USSR only moderately affected the district of Jerusalem, and hence the city itself. In terms of the “reunited” city, 24,700 immigrants from the FSU were registered in Jerusalem in 1995, which only represented 5.8 % of the total Jewish population of the city, and today this proportion is even lower, at about 4.5 % (or about 31,850 ex-Soviets). However in the context of the population drain that has affected Jerusalem since the 1980s, the arrival of the ex-Soviets helped reduce the negative migratory balance of the city (-6000 in 1996).<sup>19</sup> For the years between 1989 and 1995, the raw increase in the Jewish population was 59,400 people, with the relative proportion of ex-Soviet immigration accounting for 41.5 % of this growth. The reinforcement through immigration is in itself noteworthy, even though the raw growth of the Jewish population of “reunited” Jerusalem is not much higher than the figure for the period between 1983 and 1989, during which time there was no strong migratory wave to Israel (+ 4,200 people – see Table 7).

Table 7 – Total population and Jewish population of Jerusalem (1993-1998)

	1983	1989	1995	1998	Population Growth for the period:		
					1983-1989	1989-1995	1995-1998
Total Population	428 700	504 100	602 700	633 700	75 400	98 600	31 000
Jewish Population	306 300	361 500	420 900	440 200	55 200	59 400	19 300

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Jerusalem, 2000.

Since then, the trend has not changed with growth: less than 20,000 people for the recent period of immigration (1995-1998). These findings support the assumption of a lessening of Jerusalem's ability to retain its population [DellaPergola, 1999; Riviere-Tencer, 2000].

On this level of analysis, what emerges is that immigration from the FSU has not radically altered the growth dynamic of the city. The proportion of Arabs has been in continual increase since the conquest

<sup>15</sup> From December 1987 to 1991.

<sup>16</sup> The term internal migration is used here in the sense of non-international migration.

<sup>17</sup> See in particular the article by Alain Franchon, *Le Monde*, 16.01.1990.

<sup>18</sup> Secretary General of the Executive Committee of the PLO.

<sup>19</sup> Internal mobility of new immigrants only accounts for one-fifth of the negative migratory balance.

of the eastern sector of the city in 1967. At that time, the proportion of Arabs in the total population of Jerusalem was 25 %, grew to 28 % in 1989, 30 % in 1995 and has reached 32 %<sup>20</sup> today. In contrast, an analysis of demographic growth in terms of geo-strategy shows that immigration has favored the fulfillment of “Israeli objectives”; namely the installation of a Jewish majority in the eastern sector of the city. In 1993, the data published show a shift in the demographic majority in favor of the Jewish population and this change is based primarily on immigration from the FSU. At the end of 1995, the new Jewish quarters of East Jerusalem had absorbed more than 10,500 ex-Soviets, or more than 45 % of the “Russian” immigrants of the city.

To the south of the eastern sector of the city, the neighborhoods of Gilo and East Talpiot have been the main areas for immigrant residence whereas in the north, the neighborhoods of Ramot Alon (north) but above all Pisgat Zeev and Neve Ya'akov have more than 7,000 ex-Soviets.

Nevertheless, the stagnation of raw growth of the Jewish population and the consolidation of ex-Soviet migratory channels towards cities such as Haifa, Ashdod, Beer Sheva and even Bat Yam have not enabled the Jewish population to maintain the majority in the eastern sector of the city. According to recent data published by Peace Now, the figures are currently 181,000 for the Arab population and 156,662 for the Jewish population.

This type of dynamic has only weakened the “demographic claims” aimed at establishing a “Jewish majority on the scale of Greater Jerusalem” even though the settlements in the West Bank have benefited from a considerable increase in population with this wave of immigration.

### ***A considerable and highly circumscribed contribution to the demographic growth in settlements in the West Bank***

Recent data show that a majority of ex-Soviets have chosen to reside in the West Bank, this area covering virtually all the 15,530 immigrants residing over the Green Line. Out of 9 urban settlements where approximately half of the Israeli settlers live, five are the main centers of residence of ex-Soviets (see Figure 3). These choices are illustrative of a representation of the geography of the settlements dictated by “utilitarianism”. The proximity of the Tel Aviv employment basin (for Karne Shomron and Ariel) and Jerusalem (for Givat Zeev and Ma'ale Adumim) appear to explain these choices of residence. Interviews conducted in Ariel confirmed this feature. For example, a young immigrant from Gomel, working as a taxi driver, stated that ex-Soviets saw Ariel as a ‘quality bedroom town’, at less than 30 min. from the suburbs of Tel Aviv and that the ideological dimension was a minor factor in choice of residence.<sup>21</sup> Even though, unquestionably, the immigrants are aware of the political implications of their choice of residence over the Green Line, their representation of space is above all focused on the search for a place where the quality of life/ socio-professional integration ratio is best optimized.

*Figure 3 - Immigration totale et immigration d'ex-URSS dans les principales colonies urbaines de Cisjordanie, selon le type de colonies (periode du 01.01.1989-30.09.2000)*

The existence of true ideological motivation does not appear to be a strong factor in choice of residence because most of the ex-Soviet contingent is found in secular settlements, mainly Ariel and Ma'ale Adumim, which are bedroom towns of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem (see Figure 3).

Among the ‘religious’ settlements, only Kiriath Arba, near Hebron has a large ex-Soviet community (about 1,000 immigrants or nearly 19 % of the total population of the settlement). The other settlements where the number of immigrants exceeds one-fifth of the total population are Tekoa (21.3 %), Nokedim (22.4 %), Barkan (21.7 %) and Yitav (35.5 %). For the first three, their location suggests motivations similar to those found for Ariel and Ma'ale Adumim, and only Yitav, located in the Jordan Valley raises questions. The history of this settlement provides a response since it was founded by Soviet immigrants who came in the wave of the seventies; the choice to live there is apparently based on a migratory family network.<sup>22</sup> In addition, analysis of the distribution of the forty or so settlements where more than 30 ex-Soviets reside shows clustering around the Green Line and in “greater Jerusalem”; the only exceptions being the settlement of Eli and Ma'ale Ephraim with respectively 220 immigrants (or 19.7 % of the population of the settlement) and 275 immigrants

---

<sup>20</sup> These arguments were restated in even stronger terms during interviews in Ma'ale Adumim.

<sup>21</sup> See Ha'aretz English Internet Edition, May 2000.

<sup>22</sup> The low population of the settlement (110 people in all) seems to confirm this assumption.



(16.5 %).

Without entering into considerations related to the deep-seated changes in Israeli society caused by this wave of immigration, it should be stressed, even though the statement may seem an oversimplification, that this aliya has constituted a true upheaval in the history of Israel. As shown throughout this article, the contours of its demography and the profile of its geography have been radically reshaped by immigration. The peripheral districts and primarily the southern district have been given a second chance through the arrival of this population. Ben Gurion's wish to see the desert bloom again has clearly been brought closer to realization. From a geo-strategic point of view, the impact of immigration is far-reaching. Even though in terms of proportion the presence of ex-Soviets in the West Bank and Gaza is less than half that of the Israelis 'veterans', this immigration has nevertheless buttressed the settlement policy. The continuation of the policy of construction over the Green Line has served to attract numerous new immigrants from the former USSR; in 1997, of the real estate transactions in Ariel were with new immigrants.<sup>23</sup> The growing links between immigration and geo-strategy have thus had an impact on territorial restructuring and on the current negotiations concerning the shape of a future Palestinian state.

#### Bibliographical references

- AYMARD, C., BENKO, G., 1998, "Immigration et restructuration urbaine en Israël. Le cas de trois villes de la région sud : Be'er Sheva, Ashkelon, Kiriath Gat", in VALLAT C. (ed.), *Petites et grandes villes du bassin méditerranéen. Études autour de l'œuvre d'Étienne Dalmaso*, Rome : École Française de Rome.
- DELLAPERGOLA Sergio, 1999, "A new look at the Jerusalem's future population: demography, multi-culturalism and urban planning", communication faite à la European Population Conference, The Hague, The Netherlands, 1999.
- ELDAR, Adi, 1992, "Absorption of new immigrants in Karmiel" in GOLANI Y. (*et al.*) (ed.), *Planning and Housing in Israel in the wake of rapid changes*, Tel Aviv: R&L Creative Communications.
- FARGUES Philippe, 1995, "Les données démographiques de la paix au Proche-Orient" in L. Blin et Fargues Ph., *L'économie de la paix au Proche-Orient*, Tome 2, Paris : Maisonneuve et Larose-CEDEJ.
- FORAN, Niva, 1992, "Upper Nazareth: The City that absorbs New Immigrants" in GOLANI Y. (*et al.*) (ed.), *Planning and Housing in Israel in the wake of rapid changes*, Tel Aviv: R&L Creative Communications.
- HASSON Sh., 1996, "From international migration to internal migration: the settlement process of immigrants from the FSU in Israel" in CARMON N. (ed.), *Immigration and Integration in post-industrial societies: Theoretical analysis and policy-related research*, London: Macmillan Press (Migration, Minorities and Citizenship).
- LIPSHITZ Gabriel, 1998, *Country on the move: Migration to and within Israel, 1948-1995*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers (The GeoJournal Library, vol. 42).
- MENACHEM, Gila, 1996, "Urban restructuring and the absorption of immigrants: a case study in Tel-Aviv" in CARMON N. (ed.), *Immigration and Integration in post-industrial societies: Theoretical analysis and policy-related research*, London: Macmillan Press (Migration, Minorities and Citizenship).
- RIVIERE-TENCER Valérie, ATTAL Armand, "Jérusalem, une paix pour demain ?" in J.-P. Chagnollaud *et al.*, 2000, *Palestiniens et Israéliens, le moment de vérité*, Paris : L'harmattan (les cahiers de Confluences).

William Berthomière  
Migrinter

---

<sup>23</sup> Ha'aretz English Internet Edition, June 16, 1999.