Production of space, intercultural encounters and politics: dynamics of consummate space and spatial intensity among the Israeli Bedouin

Avinoam Meir¹ and Yuval Karplus²

The ‘spatial turn’, represented primarily by the Lefebvrean theory of production of space, fails to internalise insights from the ‘cultural turn’ which delves into high cultural resolutions of minority ethnic or religious sub-groups within Western culture. These insights suggest that space may be characterised by spatial pluralism that originates in ontological pluralism of place and space. This ontological pluralism originates in the contemporary reality of cultural pluralism within the same space. By deconstructing the classical Lefebvrean theory of production of space as a super concept into finer scales, we facilitate internalisation of these cultural insights through a series of new sub-concepts of consummate space, spatial imbrication and spatial intensity. These successive concepts are capable of creating a process of production of space with possible political consequences at group level. That is, violation of a space perceived and practised as consummate may lead to political action by group members. This conceptual framework, highlighting at high resolution the agency of space in culture, is demonstrated through a detailed analysis of a unique cultural group, the indigenous Bedouin of the Negev desert in Israel, through three phases of their spatial history over a period of two centuries – semi-nomadic pastoralism, sedentary farming and urban wage labour. This case may serve to illustrate the value of this theoretical approach for future analysis of other unique cultural groups and a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of production of space.

Key words production of space; indigenous ontologies; consummate space; spatial intensity; Bedouin; Israel

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Introduction

This paper deals with the limited encounter between social and cultural understandings of space and the incongruence of their research resolutions. We argue that their limited mutual engagement results in oversight of significant sub-processes that are masked by low resolutions of spatial research. This proposition originates in our study of the spatial relationships between the spaces of the indigenous Bedouin in Israel and the enveloping Western culture. In our interpretation, studying these relationships at high resolutions reveals concealed spatial situations that may produce political outcomes. The issue is related to the interface between the spatial and cultural ‘turns’ of the social sciences. The essence of the ‘spatial turn’ lies in realising the centrality of the built environment in understanding social processes (Warf and Arias 2009). Space, as initially elaborated by, primarily, Harvey (1973 1985 1996), Lefebvre (1991) and Soja (1989 1996), and further interpreted by Elden (2004), Shields (1999 2013) and Stanek (2011), is generated by individuals and institutions in the process of ‘Production of Space’ (henceforth PoS). In contrast, the ‘cultural turn’, in its shifting away from positivist epistemology (Best 2007), attempts at understanding society through such concepts as meaning, consciousness, affect and symbols. It regards as essential an understanding of how individuals, communities, organisations and institutions bestow meaning on the world, establish identities, and define beliefs and values.

Our concern here is with the degree to which the ‘spatial turn’ has fully embraced the ‘cultural turn’. In our reading this has been accomplished only partially, primarily because there is a scale gap between them in their conceptual and analytical applications. The ‘spatial turn’, and analysis of PoS, are customarily applied at the macro scale, and fail thus to adopt high cultural research resolutions offered by the ‘cultural turn’, those working at local specific and group scales (Howitt 2003), resulting in its tendency to flatten culture. Adopting local or group analytical resolutions of culture may unravel different cultural ontologies and hence various and finer processes often contradicting...
those observed at coarser resolutions, carrying the potential of producing new spatial concepts.

In this paper we wish to propose a set of concepts arising in the encounter between entities at contrasting scales and cultures that may possibly produce a spatio-political process. We begin by presenting the main components of the theory of PoS in modern urban society as the major representative of the ‘spatial turn’. We then highlight its shortcomings in neglecting other spaces of unique cultural groups at local scales that nest within macro-level Western urban culture. Issues of scale are thus inevitably introduced into the analysis. Following this we present the spatial concepts that may unfold from understanding the encountered micro and macro spatial scales of culture. This conceptual approach is then illustrated with a case study of the indigenous Bedouin community in Israel. We conclude by discussing the potential of these concepts for a more nuanced understanding of processes of PoS.

‘PoS’ and its cultural shortcomings

From among the many components of Lefebvre’s ‘PoS’ we have chosen to highlight those most relevant for our case. The concept of social spatiality (Harvey 1973 1985 1996; Lefebvre 1991 2003 2004 2009; Soja 1989) refers to capitalistic mechanisms of urban space as produced by social agents that are contextualised in their economic, cultural and political structures. Understanding PoS involves comprehending the three simultaneously constitutive facets of space (spatial triad). Perceived space (concrete space) is the space as perceived by the senses, the material arrangements and characteristics of societal uses of space. Conceived space (representation of space) is an abstract formation produced by administrators and technocrats that imposes order on concrete space through laws, assigned values, demarcation of jurisdictions and administration. It may denote an arena for spatial appropriation by groups from within society who hold alternative or even subversive perceptions, conceptions and ideologies of the established space. Lived space (space of representation) embodies the total experience of inhabitants in their everyday life. Through its use space is produced, modified and invested with symbolism and meaning, offering a resolution of the concrete (perceived) and the abstract (conceived) spaces as real-and-imagined. It may denote an emotional bonding between society and its space, an ideology of space and sense of place.

Highly relevant for our discussion is the question as to whether a congruent whole evolves between these facets of space. For Lefebvre, congruence evolves under supportive circumstances of common language, shared code of conduct and consensus of goals, generating a trialectic which resolves contradictions and is capable of generating a new space. He maintained that congruence implies the group is able to ‘produce a space, its own space’ (1991, 53).

Lefebvre’s approach became a platform for much theoretical discussion and empirical research on social conflict in urban space (to name a few examples: Charnock and Ribera-Fumaz 2011; Hillier 2002; Jableen 2017; Leary 2009; Yacobi 2003). However, it also invites criticism relevant to our discussion. Karplus and Meir (2014) remark that these discussions and research are aimed mostly at the urban formation which Lefebvre views as the dominant spatial formation of the producing society, and not at the nature of the producing society itself. In his framework the Western city, epitomised in the post-war French city, is the major medium in human existence within which control of space is an arena of conflict (Gregory 1994). In this space social heterogeneity, anchored in social class differences, generates contradictions which originate in disparities between experiences of local agents (their lived or desired/imagined space) and its material and conceptual production by state and market agents. This turbulence, as suggested by Elden (2004) and Schmid (2008), and highlighted by Lefebvre himself, generates the dialectical nature of PoS.

Yet, while Lefebvre’s lived space/space of representation refers to shaping meanings of space through the dialectics between the individual and his/her culture, he does not sufficiently articulate societal diversity, both within the same Western culture and among diverse cultural conceptions of space within it. Within the same culture, Lefebvre (1991) indeed suggests that differences exist on the margins of the homogenised normative realm due to the internal social contradictions inherent within abstract space, generating what he terms ‘differential space’. This points to Leary’s (2012) notion that the abstract and homogenous space contains immanent vulnerabilities. However, Lefebvre’s contradictions referred primarily to urban spatialities. A more inclusive conceptual framework is Foucault’s (1986) notion of ‘other spaces’, heterotopia, that are the real and effective, actually localisable spaces, which may carry a different and even a contradictory function within a single society. This implies expressions of a different spatiality desired by people from within the same grand culture who seek and struggle for alternative codes of spatial conduct. Two examples come to mind. The first is the case of England’s ‘radical ruralities’ where a heterogeneous and multi-faceted countryside is advocated in rejection of the homogenising normativity of the ‘industrial agriculture’ model (Halfacree 2007). The second is the conflict between UC Berkeley and the homeless people over People’s Park in the early 1990s. Mitchell (1995) highlighted experiences, affects and meanings expressed by the latter towards the Park as a public space that contrasted with those of university and city administrations,
producing different spatialities within the same grand culture.

More significant for our case is the presence of contradicting cultural conceptions of space. Lefebvre overlooks finer cultural resolutions of unique groups which do not necessarily represent the Western urban formation and culture. Contemporary Western culture’s space hosts numerous such sub-cultural enclaves due primarily to 20th-century international migration or earlier centuries’ colonisation. In many cases these minority ethnic groups have a different language, code of conduct and goals. These may contradict state’s or majority society’s ideology by maintaining a logic, world-view and unique modes of thought which are not necessarily sealed from external influences yet may produce cultural contradictions within the same space that are external to Lefebvre’s internal social contradictions.

These cultural contradictions and differences reflect part of the ‘cultural turn’ (e.g. Alexander 1988; Best 2007; Bourdieu 1977; Claval et al. 2003; Foucault 1977; Geertz 1973; Jameson 1998), posing thus a double challenge to the theory of PoS. First, the shift away from Lefebvre’s singular narrative of space in search for a unitary theory (see Pierce and Martin 2015) has ushered the relational ontology of space as participatory, emergent and dynamic (Massey 2005 2007). However this ontological shift has itself been criticised recently for its own tendency towards abstraction and deterritorialisation. In particular, concerns have been raised over its view of space ‘as absolutely fluid, open or conceptual – that is, moving from one abstraction to another’ and its ‘strange lack of materiality’, and hence ‘[m]ust relational space be open ended and fluid? Might [it] be bordered, placed and material?’ (Bawaka Country et al. 2016, 459–60). These questions echo earlier concerns by Jones (2009) about lived experience of many others that is neglected by relational ontology. Jones suggests that regions other than those serving early relational thinking may produce different theoretical perspectives, and cautions relational thinkers against ‘t[he obvious danger of] translating uniqueness into one-region-tells-all scenarios’ (2009, 493). By extension thus, spatial ontologies of many sub-cultural groups, particularly indigenous ontologies, are absent from Lefebvre’s PoS.

The second challenge, as a by-product of the cultural turn’s high resolution observation of society and space, is that this tension between spatial ontologies is reflected in the issue of scale. In recent years scale as dimension of space has been brought into spatial discourse through notions of ‘localism, specificity and diversity’ (Howitt 2003, 138). Obviously there is a scale gap between the Lefebvrean realm of PoS and the sub-cultural one. But it is not merely that the visible at one scale is invisible at the other. Moreover and more specific, this gap involves competing, or as suggested by Howitt (2002 2013), ‘contented spatialities’ between the local sub-cultural or unique group and the surrounding majority’s culture, as well as competing notions of scale between bounded space approaches and relational thinking that are governing how people understand and produce spaces and places. This is particularly highlighted by Bawaka Country et al. (2016), who suggest that, contra conventional openness-anchored relational thinking, relationality can also be strongly place-based through a complex and dynamic kinship system. Scale to Howitt is thus ‘deeply implicated in core cultural concepts such as identity, subject and difference’, implying thus ‘ontological pluralism’ (2002, 306; 2006, 50). He highlights therefore the middleground approach of scale boundaries as interfaces, whereby larger and smaller scale entities are relationally and simultaneously contained within each other. These relations generate what he importantly terms ‘messy overlaps’ between different scales (Howitt 2006).

Ontological pluralism thus implies spatial pluralism – subcultural groups strive at their own PoS nesting within that of the grand space. This corresponds with Lefebvre’s (1991) important notion of the unavoidable ‘trial by space’ and the imperious role of space in a group’s existence: ‘[A]ny “social existence” . . . failing to produce its own space . . . would . . . sooner or later disappear’ (1991, 53; see also Eizen 2004; Halfacree 2007). We will return to this concept below. For now, however, we argue that from the perspective of the ‘cultural turn’ this notion has not been pursued further into diverse cultural conditions of PoS that contradict those dealt with by proponents of the ‘spatial turn’. In its Western urban orientation Lefebvre’s PoS, as a super concept, was perhaps relevant for the mid-20th century when post-modern ideas of the condition of humanity were just emerging. As noted above, this super concept no longer satisfies the great cultural diversity contemporarily hosted in it. This calls in a new conceptualisation which may adapt PoS to these conditions and processes and facilitate its understanding more authentically and at the appropriate scale.

Proposed concepts
Consummate space
The universal supremacy of modern Western knowledge has been seriously questioned since the 1950s (e.g. Santos 2007) in an attempt to de-centre Western constructions. This knowledge has been home for Lefebvre’s PoS. As part of the ‘cultural turn’, a body of research has developed about indigenous, local and vernacular modes of knowledge particularly through the prism of landscape and their resilience against Western culture’s rational knowledge (e.g. Boissière.
throughout group and memorised stability of the consummate space is given. It exists within the imagination of those who abstract and real entity and therefore both desired and suggested that a consummate space or place is both an endogenic PoS and is viewed as informal (Roy and AlSayyad 2004). Hence, the grand space is vulnerable itself.

Emergent mosaic and imbrication of PoS

It follows that a culturally unique group, situated within a Western-culture space, can produce its space independent of state and market macro powers. Indeed, from a cultural perspective, as shown above (see also Castree 2004; Hewson 2010; Howitt et al. 2009; Porter 2010) the geographies of these groups are fundamentally contrasting with Western ones, and group members seek control over their PoS. This implies, as suggested by Karplus (2010; also Karplus and Meir 2013), an ‘endogenic PoS’, as against the ‘exogenic’ production of the grand space by the hegemonic sectors. As state and market powers desire spatial homogeneity and smoothness of society–space relationships at a macro scale (see also Howitt 2006), the endogenic PoS is often unrecognised by the hegemony and is viewed as informal (Roy and AlSayyad 2004).

As this takes place at local scale there emerges a mosaic of PoS’s and scales with contrasting logics and interests. The consummate space is desired by the local unique group for cultural and social sustainability and as buffer against the external hegemony. Following Lefebvre’s concept of ‘the right to the city’, we suggest the group may insist on what in another context has been referred to as indigenous right for endogenous spatiality (Karplus and Meir 2010). It follows that spaces exist and co-exist not only due to internal social dialectics within the grand space, as per Lefebvre, but also due to encounters with spaces of sub-cultural groups. In these groups’ culture, place (and space) is supreme and given, and its agency determines people’s relationship with it, thus shaping their identity. In the greater society, in contrast, space and place are emerging and evolving due to the social agency of social relationships and contradictions. That is, among the former space is, whereas among the latter space evolves. This implies that Lefebvre’s notion of ‘trial by space’ may not be relevant in such indigenous ontologies, as space and place exist regardless of human agency, or in Larsen and Johnson’s words (2016) place is a more-than-human geographical self.

The question is what is the nature of space that is produced by such an encounter? Addressing this question requires understanding of the specific
relationships between the modes of PoS. Karplus and Meir (2014) propose the concept of imbricated space which involves superimposition of a layer of space produced by a group onto that of another in a partial overlap. In its layering meaning this notion corresponds with Massey’s metaphor of a ‘palimpsest’ (2005, 110). Studying the pre-imbrication perceived, conceived and lived nature of each space facilitates understanding the newly imbricated space produced by the synthesis. In this synthesis certain components of the tri-spaces (perceived, conceived and lived), that are in conflict or obsolete in both the endogenic and exogenic layers, are abolished while others that are vital and in mutual congruence are preserved.

The relationships between the spaces raise the question of whether the imbrication process is capable of an irreversible erasure of all space layered underneath. The partial overlap may leave unabolished part of the once-perceived space and its material components. A group can preserve various manifestations of the earlier space partially in what Salzman (1980) referred to as institutionalised cultural alternatives in reserve. These can be re-constituted when circumstances emerge for a new cycle of PoS. The imbrication is thus not necessarily irreversible, depending on experiences in the previous situation and present contexts. The concealed components may become a platform for re-constituting some past settings and components of the endogenic PoS which are presently imagined by group members as historically consummate. Such is the case with the spread of informal spaces into formal ones (Yiftachel 2009), re-nomadisation of settled pastoral nomads (FAO 2001; Janzen 2005), and contemporary religious re-formulated spaces of fundamental Islamic communities in many West European cities (Varady 2008).

**Spatial intensity**

The major question from our perspective concerns now the impact of spatial imbrication with the grand space on the particular sub-cultural group. This question assumes an inter-group tension over the imbricated layer, particularly under conditions of hegemonic relations with PoS by state apparatus, what we referred to above as scale gap or Howitt’s (2009) scale politics. The imbrication process may then emerge as an issue in the agenda of the local group. Space, previously existing passively at backstage of individual and collective consciousness due to its relative or ideal consummate nature, requiring thus little attention, is now challenged and moved to the fore. While indigenous cultures are our central concern here, this notion generally corresponds with the rise of space in politics since the 1990s as manifested in Lefebvre’s ‘right to the city’ (Brenner et al. 2012). Even more interesting for us, however, is England’s new ‘politics of the rural’ and the conflict over the meaning and regulation of rurality and rural identity, as activists ‘seek to defend . . . the countryside, as they imagine it’ (Woods 2006, 593; italics added). This corresponds with Jones’ notion that when performing their practical politics, agents imagine and identify a discrete, bounded space characterised by a shared understanding of the opportunities or problems that are motivating the very nature of political action. (2009, 494)

Space thus assumes a property of presence in a group’s individual and collective consciousness and existence. This expands on Larsen and Johnson’s notion that ‘in fact human embodiment and awareness are an extension of the agency of place’ (2016, 151). Therefore another question concerns the degree to which space as an issue is capable of mobilising the group to assert its consummate nature. Meir’s (2013) concept of spatial intensity reflects the level of prominence of space in the internal agenda of the group. Spatial intensity is stretched along a range depending on specific circumstances. At the ‘low’ edge, spatial issues are absent from group’s consciousness and daily agenda, representing groups who are balanced endogenously, i.e. their space is imagined and experienced as consummate. As this balance can be obstructed due to a swift cultural change or external political intervention, threatening the consummate nature of space, the spatial issue begins to appear in group’s agenda. It may generate stress such that at the opposite edge of spatial intensity, reflecting presence of the spatial discourse at high intensity, the group is mobilised into political action. In certain respects the circumstances of movement between these poles correspond with Halfacree’s (2007) three formats of rural coherence.

**Bridging the ‘turns’**

Here, through observing PoS at a high inter-cultural resolution, the spatial and the cultural ‘turns’ meet. PoS originates thus in the contradictions between different forms of PoS held by different cultural groups within the grand space and not from social contradictions. This high-resolution observation produces the concepts of consummate space, a mosaic of imbricated spaces and, finally, spatial intensity within the minority group. There is a logical succession of these concepts which may be possibly viewed as a process, but not necessarily a deterministic one. Imbrication may not necessarily violate consummate space to a degree of positioning space high on a group’s collective and individual consciousness that requires assertion of rights for spatiality.

The final question is hence, when does spatial imbrication lead to place or space-based struggles thus reflecting high spatial intensity? This depends on the nature of the inter-cultural gaps. In this paper we refer particularly to indigenous groups vs Western culture.
However, we suggest these issues are relevant to other situations such as highly orthodox religious minorities vs secular majorities, or groups with unique social ideologies requiring distinctive and exclusive territorial expressions vs the grand hegemonic space. Each of these cultural groups carries sufficient uniqueness for an endogenously produced space, with conditions for becoming consummate. As such its degree of intensity may rise during imbrication, with the consequent action by group members for defending this uniqueness.

Below we outline a case study illustrating these concepts consecutively as a process among the Bedouin in southern Israel. This case represents a space of an indigenous semi-nomadic culture that has been nesting within the space of a hegemonic imperial/state power. The study spans almost two centuries. Methodologically, it is based on fieldwork (Karplus 2010) whose primary findings were already published (Karplus and Meir 2013 2014) and its insights serve now as raw data in our analysis here. Due to the limited scope, these data are presented only in a summary tabular format. Countless other studies of this unique group (e.g. Center for Bedouin Studies and Development 2016), several of which are cited below, have also served as sources of raw data for outlining the nature of Bedouin space. These data are discussed and interpreted in two ways: synchronically, the spatial triad is presented for three phases of Bedouin spatial history – semi-nomadic pastoralists, sedentary farmer pastoralists and urbanised wage labourers; diachronically, facets of the triad are compared across these phases for highlighting the encounter with external spatialities. Throughout the analysis, the phases are interpreted in terms of the above proposed conceptual framework.

The case of the Bedouin

Pastoral semi-nomadic space

We attempt first to elaborate the meaning of space at Bedouin’s most fundamental condition as a pastoralist-tillers culture that existed until the mid-19th century. This is the base-point for understanding the emergence of subsequent processes of spatial intensity. Nesting within the Ottoman Empire’s macro-level space, the critical component in understanding this society is its indigenous customary law system as an internal judicial and regulative social institution. It constitutes an oral system of rules of conduct sharply distinguished from its surrounding cultural systems. Despite being unrecognised externally by all state systems, it has been very constitutive and highly formative within Bedouin culture to the present day (Bailey 2009; Stewart 2006) leaning on historical accumulation of social and environmental knowledge and on customary social contracts and behavioural codes. It serves as an infrastructure for the social system which is anchored in tribal organisation, and characterised by hierarchical, patriarchal, patriloc and gerontocratic relations (Marx 1974 2005). It also covers various spatial aspects: delineation of territorial hierarchical boundaries (from tribe to clan and down to extended family); management and regulation of access to material resources (grazing and arable land, water, flora and others); and cyclical movement and location of fixed and mobile residential sites (Mintzker 2015; Perevolotsky 1987; Stewart 1986). Taken together, these components were the central pillars of Bedouin culture. Some relics of its landscape still persist today among some tribes and our study revealed the congruence of its perceived, conceived and lived spaces. Its major components are presented in Table I.

Within this system land ownership was a central component within Bedouin customary law and culture and was determined and agreed on internally, free of any external intervention, shaping very considerably their indigenous spatiality (Meir 2009a). Its centrality in their affairs spans their entire modern history.

The internal balance between these facets of Bedouin grazing-tilling PoS generated personal and collective security and wellbeing with coherence among its economy, society and environment. This sense of wellbeing was supported by the group’s common language, vernacular indigenous-local knowledge, agreed custom and conducts and consensus of goals, facilitating thus its sustained existence for many generations. Such long evolution reflected relative stability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table I</th>
<th>Pastoral semi-nomadic PoS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived space</td>
<td>Conceived space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilising natural resources and topographic features</td>
<td>Functional-egalitarian and kin-related socio-spatial homogeneity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed-permanent residential area and temporary pasture lands</td>
<td>Semi-private area and no man’s area are distinguished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-built family dwellings symbolically fenced, animal pens and a communal shig (hospitality tent)</td>
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</table>

Source: Adapted from Karplus and Meir 2014

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and overall Bedouin cultural identity despite considerable tribal fragmentation and rivalry. Negev space was a distinct Bedouin cultural space, and until the mid-19th century it was practically free of political and administrative intervention (Yiftachel and Roded 2015). Hence endogeneity of its PoS was almost entirely independent of the production of any hegemonic imperial or state space. It is the combination of congruence between the facets of PoS, the coherence of society/economy/environment, the longevity of endogenous production on lands customarily possessed from times immemorial and owned under their tribal customary law and its autonomous nature that warranted this space a consummate ‘trial by space’.

**Shifting to agriculture**

Tilling was not alien to Bedouin pastoralists (Meraïot 2011). However, the Ottoman Empire’s new Land Law of 1858 required the Bedouin to cultivate their grazing land continuously intensively and at greater expanses to avoid its becoming crown land. This was a major spatial landmark in Bedouin subsistence economy, contrasting their inclination towards tilling as only supplementary to pastoral subsistence, with a substantial impact on their endogenous PoS (Table II). It also encouraged the migration of fellahaen (peasants) into Bedouin space as sharecroppers from the mid-19th century, which also had an impact.

Several spatial imbrication effects emerged in the evolving PoS. In perceived space, the first effect is the partial disassociation of material-physical characteristics of land use from their environmental qualities. Pastoral PoS relied entirely on the physical infrastructure of topography and pasture. In farming in contrast, topography remains as an environmental component, but resources (means of agricultural production) begin to incline towards exogenous purchase in the market. Second, in pastoral space flocks are moved across spatially extensive and seasonally alternating grazing fields within tribal territories while preserving household tilling plots. In farming the range of actually produced space contracts considerably. Abodes gravitate towards the concentrated permanent tilling fields, while flocks are moved over space only part of the time. The perceived space gradually becomes an intensively built and tilled sedentary one. Third, advanced adaptation of means of delineating household abodes is required for protecting the supreme socio-cultural values of privacy and honour, even within lineage groups. In pastoralism, resort to delineation of abodes was minimal and passive (e.g. natural landmarks), because delineation was realised primarily through movement with flocks. The group was thus employing the socio-spatial resource of physical distanciation between families. In contrast, in sedentary denser residential and agricultural space, this resource is gradually depleted and peasants resort to planting shrubs as fences around abodes. Sediments of past perceived space, such as the self-constructed household tent and pastoral storage facilities, the traditional hospitality tent and the flock pen, are still retained. Together with the new means of physical delineation, they generate the imbricated space at the micro household scale as part of PoS.

Conceived space refers to social structure and economic mode of production. In pastoral economy space expanse *per se* is regarded as an economic resource for grazing. However, similar to many other pastoralist cultures (Janzen 2000; Matampash 1993), its material manifestation as land is ‘owned’ by a supra-natural power. In agriculture in contrast, space assumes a different meaning as an economic resource because considerably more units of land have a potential of high-yielding assets. Thus, conceived space is produced under two new principles of spatial management. First, intensification of the productive value of space means introducing the concept of ‘land’ as a valuable asset more intensely into local being in space compared to pastoralism. This requires more complex mechanisms for allocating the productive value of space among group members under whose pressures space becomes now susceptible to a new range of ownership categories – private, semi-private and tribal, still under the purview of Bedouin customary law. In this imbrication the relic of the previous principle of space management, that of tribal non-private land ownership, is still manifested within tribal space.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table II Sedentary farming PoS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived space</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilisation of topographic features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential area, rainfall-dependent wheat-field, an olive-grove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-built family dwellings, planted vegetation for privacy, agricultural sheds and a communal shed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Karplus and Meir 2014
The second principle refers to space as a social rather than an economic resource. The imbricated space contains relics of pastoral practices of sociospatial homogeneity that generated a very distinct tribal territory. Territory is essential in facilitating strong material and emotional bonds between individuals, tribe and territory in both pastoralism and farming. The emerging sedentary-farming principle of managing conceived space is, however, one of social definition of spatial relations whereby affiliation of the individual with a predefined space a priori depends on tribal affiliation. While in pastoral production such association is based too on tribal belonging, the individual has no specific material ownership of a distinct piece of tribal space. In contrast, in the farming mode of production this practice gradually yields to one of parcelisation of tribal space to individual holders, but is still based on tribal belonging and customary law if economic benefits are desired.

This principle is also essential in the production of lived space and communal sense of place. As shown, the transition involves fundamental changes in the material relations with space, from pastoral dependence on dispersed pasture and water resources to intensive and spatially concentrated production in farming land. This dynamic entails changes in the way lived space is ideologically experienced. In pastoralism certain qualities were highlighted as experiential components of consummate space. These include unobstructed movement within tribal territory, foot-stepping ancestral pastoral tracks, unobstructed fields of vision into desert expanses and landscapes, and living close to relatively uninterrupted nature. In contrast, sedentary peasant spatial ideology highlights qualities such as stronger paternalistic bond to a particular parcel of land rather than to whole tribal territory, growing sense of property, commitment to its perpetual cultivation as per the Ottoman Land Law, and a fulfilment pride in retaining its ownership, all still pursued within the protective tribal territory. The noticeable new components of the imbricated lived space of sedentary agricultural spirituality are thus material and emotional bonds of family ownership of a land parcel within uninterrupted tribal territory and residential places, and developing sense of place and place attachment at the local internal tribal scale.

These components of peasant sedentary farming space began to replace the previous ones of semi-nomadic pastoralism. However, within two decades of the promulgation of the new Ottoman Land Law the competing spatialities began to generate dynamics in the intensity of space. This took place at the meso-scale inter-tribal arena, and between the latter and Empire scale. Space has become very intensive as the growing benefits from land, due to high-yielding agriculture, and internal pressures for expanding cultivated lands, clashed with the needs for pastoral resources and spaces by those still grazing-oriented groups. The inter-tribal conflicts and wars over these lands in the 1880s (Ben-David 2004) reflect the competition between these spatialities at different scales – the endogenous PoS and the exogenously driven one. This internal high spatial intensity was echoed by the Ottoman government. In pursuing its interest in furthering Bedouin farming and pacifying the tribes, it took action in PoS in 1895 by issuing an official tribal territorial map with agreed boundaries (conceived space) and establishing Beir-a-Saba (presently Beer-Sheva) as a regional government centre in 1905 (perceived and conceived space). This contributed to reduced spatial intensity within the Bedouin public agenda both internally and externally vis-à-vis the imperial government.

In the coming decades, particularly with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1917 and the incoming British Mandate in Palestine, the Bedouin expressed considerable confidence in their autonomy-like life (Yiftachel et al. 2012). This implies a sustained congruent sedentary farming spirituality and sense of consummate space. Even the land registration act in 1921, a failed space action conceived by the Western-culture British Mandate government, was not regarded by the Bedouin as a threat. They mostly ignored it, preferring to rely on their traditional customary law which remained intact, regarding it fully capable of protecting their indigenous property rights. This state of affairs prevailed until Israeli statehood in 1948.

Transition to urban space

Since the 1960s the Bedouin have been undergoing a second major cultural transition, again an involuntary one, through an aggressive policy of modernisation. The Israeli state adopted a spatial approach anchored in what was described as ‘abstract space’ (Meir 2005). This meant emptying space’s previous economic social and cultural code, with its rich vernacular knowledge, and implanting instead a modern urban code in order to align with the grand Western culture space. This coercive state project has been radically re-shaping Bedouin space in terms of settlement and subsistence modes. Its major tool was the adoption of many components of the Ottoman Land Law as state law in 1958, which implied rejection of practices of Bedouin customary law and transformation of unregistered land to state ownership. Following this, since the mid-1960s the state initiated seven planned townships to which all Bedouin were to be relocated from their traditional tribal territories. This took place amidst a massive Jewish settlement effort within these territories (see Figure 1). Once again the Bedouin faced an exogenous spatiality infiltrating their culture. The facets of the urbanised Bedouin PoS are outlined in Table III.
Bedouin relocation to towns since the mid-1960s re-activated the formation of imbricated spaces. Perceived space is now produced in several manners. First, the Bedouin are situated within an increasingly denser and more intensely built environment. Thus, while nature exists within urban space, space continues its disassociation from its environmental properties in terms of relevance to their subsistence, becoming thus more abstract. Second, the actually produced space continues its shrinkage as extensive agricultural fields are replaced by denser and condensed residential plots in very close proximity. Third, similar to urbanising nomadic groups elsewhere (Rapoport 1978), increased undesired inter-group and personal social encounters and exposure of women within town space reflect the total depletion of distance as a social resource. This requires taller and even more robust fencing with outward sight-fields almost completely blocked. Fourth, the most fundamental change is commodification of the construction of the brick home and urban physical infrastructure through greater reliance on externally produced materials and expertise, with greater linking into and dependence on the Western market economy. Notwithstanding, the relics of past perceived space, such as small pens for animals and the hospitality tents, are preserved in the back yard of homes.

In conceived space, peasants viewed their space as an area resource with high-yield value, requiring management through tight territorial rules. In urban hired-labour economy, space as area has no productive value for the individual household or even the community, as in certain respects (e.g. public spaces or

Figure 1  Bedouin contemporary space in the Negev
street-roads) a considerable part belongs to the state or municipality as part of being subject now to an external spatial planning regime dictated by the state. Also, despite assignment of residential plots by the state as owned property to individual families, the absence of a real housing market among the Bedouin (Ben-Israel 2009) renders plots valueless. In the imbrication process, past practices of quasi-communal ‘ownership’ of space are maintained. They are applied in leveraging inter and intra-tribal political arrangements such as creating distinct and protected group territory (neighbourhood) barred for other groups, or various municipal space-based benefits such as representation in town council on a tribal neighbourhood basis.

These properties project on lived space. The experiential space of pastoralists and peasants implied an almost complete merger of daily life with local space and knowledge. That is, space was controlled by their life, beliefs and culture rendering it consummate. In Bedouin hired-labour urban space, life and culture become disassociated from local space, being now controlled by extra-territorial and extra-community knowledge and experiences of a market society. This reflects state attempts at emptying space’s previous economic social and cultural code. Spatial imbrication still takes place as family life, contrary to work life, is still practised in homogenous lineage spaces (neighbourhoods), but this is perhaps the sole lived component remaining from traditional PoS. Thus, within urban reality a sense of alienation and unrest towards space develops due to the compulsive urbanisation process. This is followed by emergence of narratives of forced uprooting from ancestors’ territories and yearning for the imagined consummate spatiality of the agricultural and even pastoral past (Abu-Rabia 2013).

It follows that lived space is no longer congruent with the perceived and conceived spaces. This conclusion is supported by insights from other recent studies (Abu-Rabia-Queder 2013; Ben-David 2004; Ben-Israel 2009 2013; Kissinger and Karplus 2015; Tamari et al. 2016). They report significant tensions in the towns around insufficient integration into the labour market, unemployment, a demanding urban cost of living, declining power of tribal coherence and leadership, growing individualism and a general reality of a regressing physical and social environment, all of which are reflected in deep bottom socio-economic national rankings (Dinero 2010; Lithwick 2000). Bedouin town space is not consummate, and as such does not support any longer the built-in coherence that existed previously between economy, society and environment.

Thus, contra an exclusive autonomous Bedouin agro-pastoral spatiality, Bedouin urban space has become an arena for exogenous and endogenous competing spatialities. Yet, there are dozens unrecognised Bedouin squatter villages (100 000–120 000 population, 40–50% of the total Bedouin population) with sustained significant relics of pastoral and peasant life (Figure 1). These villages are unrecognised because the state does not recognise dwellers’ claims for historical land ownership. In comparison to what they perceive as the evil urban space (Ben-David 2004) they still largely produce their local space endogenously, asserting their ‘right for indigenous spatiality’ under the same past principles of perceived, conceived and lived spaces and thus view it as consummate. Yet their space is heavily obfuscated by the nature of the new spatiality of the neighbouring towns. Space has thus become a conscious and active entity in the being of dwellers of these villages that fear both loss of their property rights and infiltration of urban spatiality into their consummate rural space.

This reality generates an increase in the intensity of space to a point where the Bedouin begin to take action. Indeed, they have been involved in growing political protest against the state particularly since the late 1970s. The protest revolves primarily, but not exclusively, around state non-recognition in the unrecognised villages as a product of the land ownership conflict. In terms of our current conceptualisation, this is a demand for recognition in the right to indigenous endogenous spatiality based on state recognition in their historical land ownership within indigenous traditional tribal territories. The protest has taken various forms (Meir 1997 2009b), and for several decades has been leading the Bedouin’s personal and communal as well as the regional, national and international agenda. The major recent milestones

### Table III Wage-labourers urban PoS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived space</th>
<th>Conceived space</th>
<th>Lived space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intensively built environment bare of any natural features</td>
<td>Two-layered territorialisation and kin-related socio-spatial homogeneity</td>
<td>An ideology of spatially dissociated life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household residential lot</td>
<td>Private territory and tribal territory are distinguished</td>
<td>Spatial alienation, resentment on being coerced to urbanise, narratives of forced displacement and a utopian longing of return to traditional lands and villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outsourced planned and built family dwellings screened by high fences for privacy; self-built backyard pens, a yard shed and a communal shig</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Adapted from Karplus and Meir 2014*
have been the establishment of the Regional Council of
the Unrecognised Bedouin Villages as an NGO shadow
local government in 1997, submission of an alternative
regional plan for recognition of their villages in 1998, a
highly critical response to the governmental Goldberg
Committee Report for Settlement of the Bedouin in
2009 and its successor the Prawer Report in 2011,
submission of a second alternative regional plan in
2012, and violent riots in 2014 and 2017 against state
intensions to implement the Prawer Report and evac-
uate villages.

Conclusion

While until mid-19th century Bedouin PoS was pre-
dominantly endogenous and autonomous, in the past
two centuries it has been a target for exogenous
intervention by hegemonic political entities that
attempt to impose their own spatialities. The major
tool has been legislation that culturally contradicts
Bedouin customary tribal law. Bedouin PoS has
changed, and in transition from semi-nomadic pas-
toralism to sedentary farming generated imbrication
processes that at the tribal-local spatial scale quite
successfully stood the trial by space and produced an
alternative consummate space. At a greater spatial
scale (the inter-tribal and imperial arenas), however,
spatial intensity increased due to these competing
spatialities. The transition to urbanity was considerably
more coercive and the associated urban space has
become in-consummate. In order to preserve their
remaining consummate space Bedouin recent attempts
to thwart imposition of an urban mode of PoS over the
rest of their space (that of the unrecognised villages)
has ignited its growing intensity, this time however,
wholly exogenously, that is, vis-à-vis the culturally
external state governing hegemony. There is thus an
expansion of scales at which the tension between the
internal and external spaces emerges through time.

As shown by Karplus (2010), there is certain
diversity in PoS among Bedouin tribal sub-groups.
There are various degrees of closeness/openness of
their cultural boundaries and of violation of their
consummate space, and diverse consequences in terms
of spatial intensity, depending primarily on the specific
land ownership status. This diversity reflects our notion
that progression from consummate space to spatial
intensity is not deterministic, and space does not
necessarily become intensive due to penetration of
the exogenous PoS of the hegemonic cultural group.
There is a host of conditions and circumstances that
yield smoother processes of spatial integration. Con-
versely, spatial intensification is not necessarily a
product of a weakening group’s congruence of PoS
and deteriorated or threatened consummate space.
High spatial intensity is due possibly to internal
demographic growth and expanding group’s space
whose consummate nature it asserts even when pene-
trating the grand space.

We attempted here, through the case of the Bedouin
in Israel, to adapt the super concept of ‘production of
space’ to unique cultural groups whose culture and
space are significantly distinct from the greater society
and grand space. In so doing we advocate the notion
of spatial pluralism that corresponds with ontological
pluralism which originates in indigenous ontologies.
This constitutes a post-humanistic view of space and
place as more-than-human (Larsen and Johnson 2016).
We maintain that the above proposed conceptual
framework is particularly suitable for these groups. It
is a product of implanting high cultural analytical
resolutions into the Lefebvrean concept of PoS. In so
doing it de-centres the latter’s inclination towards the
macro-level urban Western culture which reflects its
tendency to universally dominate constructions and
understandings of space and place. In illustrating the
inter-cultural spatial encounter of the Bedouin we have
shown that spatial intensification is a possible product
of an external hegemonic intervention, with both
external and internal impacts.

Several insights from our discussion point to the
social and cultural significance of the concept of spatial
intensity. First, intercultural conflicts can erupt due to a
multitude of non-spatial causes, such as school curric-
ula or religious beliefs and practices. We submit that a
violated consummate space is capable too of generating
such conflicts through growing spatial intensity, some-
thing which research on PoS has overlooked. Second,
the Lefebvrean approach views space as a social
product, that is, it is produced by society. However,
our analysis of the intercultural dynamics of PoS
reveals also the opposite, that is, society is mutually a
product of space in the sense that its intensive long-
term presence in societal agenda is capable of shaping
societal nature and spatial identity. This insight corre-
sponds somewhat with that of the agency of place and
space (Larsen and Johnson 2016). In general terms,
this notion is supported also by Lefebvre himself
(1991), who suggests that a changing space changes
society. Third, the mutual process may be manifested
from the cultural perspective too. That is, the group’s
action for asserting its need to live within a space
produced as consummate, and the conflict generated
with needs of other groups, become a significant
political power capable itself of reshaping group’s
culture.

These insights are significant for social and cultural
theorisation of integrating space and culture. We
opened our article with the question of whether and
to what degree the ‘spatial turn’ has introjected the
‘cultural turn’. In our attempt to bridge this gap,
through the proposed conceptual framework, the
opposite question becomes now obvious: whether and to what degree the ‘cultural turn’ itself is now capable of introjecting the above reproduced insights and understanding of PoS and the ‘spatial turn’.

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