

HAIFA AND İZMİR: STRIKING SIMILARITIES BETWEEN TWO MEDITERRANEAN CITIES

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Let me say at the outset, that the work I am going to present here is at a very exploratory stage. It was inspired by the invitation I received to this conference, which made me think what contribution I can make to the subject matter of the conference. The more I thought, the more convinced I became that I do have an interesting topic in my hands, well worth pursuing further, though this audience would at the end be the better judge of that. In any case, it needs considerable further research in data collection and analysis. This is not simply "a work in progress", the cliché that we use all too often to conceal our uncertainties, this is truly "a work in conception" being created right now, as we speak. I hope it would have a healthy birth which would lead to a robust development in the months that will follow this conference.

And now, to our subject matter:

Haifa, in Israel and İzmir, in Turkey, two important cities in the Eastern Mediterranean region show striking similarities on a number of fronts. This similarity is not noted in literature and has been overlooked by observers, whether officials, scholars or common visitors. This is unfortunate, as a more careful analysis of the similarities between the two cities could have, as I hope to show in this paper, a much broader implication on what befalls on the cosmopolitan nature of port cities, in the Mediterranean region for sure, but perhaps even beyond, when faced with nation-state formation in the 20th century. I checked to see if, by any chance İzmir was paired with Haifa as twin or sister cities and found, to my surprise, that it was paired with Tel Aviv, but not with Haifa!... A gross mistake, in my view, as İzmir has much more in common with Haifa than with Tel Aviv.

First, as any visitor to the two cities will notice, they have a similar landscape. They are both located at the tip of a bay, much deeper in the case of İzmir, at its southern edge, so that the northern edge of the tip, Karsiyaka in the case of

İzmir and the Krayot (Kiryat Haim, Kiryat Bialik, etc.) all the way to Acre in the case of Haifa, are clearly visible from the cities' shoreline. Moreover, they are both flanked to the south by rugged hilly terrain, Kadifekale in the case of İzmir, the Mount Carmel ridge in the case of Haifa, though the ridge is more marked in Haifa than İzmir and also displays a significant difference in the pattern of urban expansion in the two cities. Many of Haifa's higher class residential neighborhoods have developed on the slopes of Mt. Carmel while its industrial zone has developed in lower areas. As people looked for areas with better air and better views, they moved up to the empty stretches on the heights of Mt. Carmel, and with the expansion of residential areas to the heights, so did the city center move up to higher ground. The lower city remained dominated by the port and related industries, and hence less desirable for residence. Also, as the new more fashionable areas emerged at the heights, there was little motivation to develop the waterfront, which remained rather unattractive and polluted, though still a hub of ground (train and bus central stations) as well as sea transportation.

In İzmir, the higher grounds surrounding the city, especially around Kadifekale, were populated by squatter settlements (*gecekondu*) which are omnipresent in the periphery of every large city in Turkey but are markedly absent in Israeli cities. This created a barrier to the expansion of desirable residential neighborhoods upward towards the hills and away from the sea. The city thus developed on a more level terrain, mostly westwards along the bay, and its desirable neighborhoods remained close to the waterfront. This also led to a greater investment in upgrading its waterfront with promenades and places of entertainment where people would congregate for leisure. The city center remained along a lively and visually attractive waterfront, much more so than in Haifa.

Despite this significant difference, both cities do have an upper and a lower section and the upper town present beautiful (and strikingly similar) views of the city below as well as of the bay itself. Whereas in Haifa those higher grounds also became the more fashionable districts, in İzmir, despite the better view, the higher town has a significantly lower value than the lower town closer to the sea.

Secondly, both cities are the third largest cities of their respective countries. With a population of about 300 000 people living in the city itself, and another 600,000 in the surrounding contiguous urban inhabited area, the Haifa metropolitan area follows that of Tel Aviv and of Jerusalem as the third largest urban agglomeration of Israel. It is interesting to note that both Tel Aviv and Haifa have a relatively extensive metropolitan area of suburbs and satellite cities whereas Jerusalem's extra-municipal suburban areas are smaller, and are found more in the mostly Arab-inhabited Eastern part. In Jewish-inhabited Western Jerusalem,

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