

Dalya Yafa Markovich, Christiane Dätsch (eds.)

# SHARED HERITAGE REVISITED

National and Postnational Dimensions  
on the Example of Germans, Palestinians  
and Israelis

[transcript] Cultural Heritage Studies

Dalya Yafa Markovich, Christiane Dätsch (eds.)  
Shared Heritage Revisited

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## **Shared Heritage Revisited**

National and Postnational Dimensions on the Example of Germans,  
Palestinians and Israelis

**[transcript]**

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# Introduction

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*Dalya Yafa Markovich, Christiane Dätsch*

How do heritage and cultural narratives mediate ideology? The intersection of cultural heritage and nationality has been the focus of research that attempted to answer this question in the field of heritage studies in the modern state. The aim of this book is to problematize the conventional conceptualizations and debates by shedding light on non-European societies that are characterized by emerging nationalism as opposed to Western European societies that face multinational unification, immigration, and refugee waves, as well as post-national political and economic forces.

The concept of nation is closely tied to the idea that heritage, material and visual, tangible and intangible, is a testimony of the group's origin and history. This concept of transformation from the old order to modernity has originated in Europe during the 19th century (Greenfeld 1993). It was at this point that the potential contribution of "cultural goods" to the national construction of collective identity became recognized. The concept of cultural heritage itself is variable. Cultural heritage is interpreted differently, depending on place and time, and on the national contexts and conditions in and through which heritage has evolved. A vast body of research is already dedicated to the mutual effects of nationality and cultural heritage. From a rather essentialist point of view, cultural heritage is taken as the material that generates the sense of belonging and identity, that all people are supposed to seek, and that eventually ties the groups' members together.<sup>1</sup> In this manner, cultural heritage is perceived as synonymous with the modern concept of nationality. In other words, different nations (democratic, fascist, socialist) are conceptualized through different cultural aspects or forms that are part of their "ethnic cores". These cultural aspects or forms are believed to be driven by different ethnic and religious primordial ties (ethnonationalism), and shared, to reunite the group in a subconscious (and

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1 Researchers have made a distinction between civic political nationalism and ethnic nationalism, which eventually became the dominant type of nationalism (Kohn 1944; Kedourie 1960). Despite the claim that there are two distinct forms of nationalism, Tamir (2019) argues that in reality the boundaries between them are blurred, allowing for advocates of civic nationalism to distinguish themselves from ethnic nationalism while promoting a vision of "nationless nationalism".

sometimes nonrational) manner under the national umbrella (Smith 1971; Connor 1994). Thus, cultural heritage is perceived as the main component of nationality; nationality is perceived as a cultural system that infuses heritage (Smith 2009).

Some less deterministic theories view cultural heritage as a process that does not contain fixed ingredients that have been bequeathed to the nation (Sewell 2004). Cultural heritage is rather viewed as a dynamic arena that is being structured, built, shaped, negotiated, and modified through the national lens (Anderson 1983; Gellner 1983). Cultural heritage is perceived as one of the dominant resources available in the process of making the national “figures of memory” transcendent (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995). Furthermore, cultural heritage is even believed to be imagined mostly in light of the nations’ interests and in line with its class stratification and class power relations (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1991). Hence, ethnic and religious groups tend to understand their cultural heritage and identity mostly when they are combined with the national ideology, which becomes one of the main focal points and banal ideas of the modern states’ culture and identity (Billig 1995). The positions and access of different groups to the project of nation building, which shape the nature of the national heritage, like gender inequalities (Yuval-Davis 1998) and race and religion inequalities (Goldschmidt and Mcalister 2004), have usually not been taken into consideration in the theorization of the national phenomena.

### **Cultural heritage definition from a Western European angle**

The first definition of cultural heritage in international law was not blind to the connections of cultural heritage to nationality. Cultural heritage was defined as material and visual goods that should be cared for or protected because they are an important part of the culture of a nation, or a region that is part of a nation, that owns those goods, and require legal protection (Hague Convention 1954). But when referring to the protection of heritage, even as early as in the Hague Convention, “cultural property” was also described as the cultural heritage of all humankind (ibid). In UNESCO’s Convention in 1972 it was declared that cultural and natural heritage should be protected in order to protect human civilization as a whole. When expanding the definition of heritage to include intangible sources – living expressions, oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, languages, and traditional skills (UNESCO 2003; González 2008), as well as archives and libraries (Documentary Heritage 2010) – the local collective memory was described as part of the memory of the world.

Even when the preservation of these sources possessed a significant symbolic meaning that aimed to protect specific ethnic minorities, the definition of cultural heritage presupposed a less deterministic and more dynamic concept of culture that blurred the boundary between the ethnic and national divisions and the world. In

other words, UNESCO was not ignoring the emergence of the nation state, but still, heritage conventions were more occupied with care for all humankind than with approaches that relate to a particular nation and national feelings and identity (Weigel 2016).

Shifts towards the universalistic discourse were further driven by the increasing interconnectedness of Western Europe through technology. Technological practices allowed cultural heritage to sever its ties to a specific geography or ideology (UNESCO commission) and sabotage the concept of homogeneity offered by nationalism. The various aspects that enabled to communicate and translate culture, among them: the digitization of cultural heritage and online interactive preservation projects (Bachmann-Medick 2004), were undermining the commitment to a certain ethnic-national group by highlighting supranational commonalities. These trends preferred to view culture not as a process that holds fixed national, ethnic, racial, and religious semantics (Sewell 1999), but rather as “shared heritage”. Sharing heritage through consultation, dialogue, and cooperation redefines culture as an ever-expanding universal archive that presents a transcultural, dynamic, and multi-layered narrative or space. Even in its local forms, heritage is no longer perceived as the asset that defines the imagined borders and locus of a particular identification, but as a perspective that should blend with other perspectives to create a multicultural arena of ideas.

The striving for all-encompassing universal definitions can be understood in light of the criticism directed at the link between nationalism and heritage. Firstly, the connection between self-rule, self-definition, and nationalism, which seemingly found its expression in cultural heritage, was attacked based on a conception of the nation state as a weakened democratic mechanism. Nationalism was identified with ethnocentric societies and states in which the need for self-definition and governmental autonomy was translated into creating a cultural heritage that helped create a dominating political community. In other words, the nation state was perceived as an invisible knowledge-power mechanism that sought to create hegemony by constructing cultural heritages that served the ideological agenda of the holders of political capital, while marginalizing the Other. The national community was defined by contrasting it to other ethno-national communities, and sometimes by dispossessing other ethno-national groups of their civil and even human rights. Although nationalism still constitutes the most significant unifying force in the modern era, it is also identified as a divisive and isolationist force, undermining liberal-democratic principles, and therefore as a social arrangement that must not be consecrated by creating a shared cultural corpus. The examples in which culture or the democratic

mechanism are trampled in the name of preserving national cultural heritage are legion.<sup>2</sup>

Secondly, the nation state is perceived as a force driven by the capitalist economic logic. And in particular, when capitalist power seeks to profit from propagating national narratives. Turning the national narrative into a commodity requires adapting it for the broadest possible consumer public;<sup>3</sup> a tendency that undermines the autonomy of culture, both in terms of preserving the past and in terms of its future development.

## Cultural heritage definition from a non-European angle

The nation-state's understanding of cultural heritage is inextricably linked to the emergence of the Western way of understanding both history (as a remembered construct of the past), and the culture of memory (as a narrative of the collective's shared history) (Assmann 2018). In the 18th century, cultural heritage was mainly used as an argument for the demarcation of European culture from non-European cultures,

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2 Such as for example the Israeli-Palestinian struggle over the respective demarcation of each of the groups' ethno-national cultural heritages. The management of archaeological sites in the West Bank illustrates this. See the public debate following the discovery of a Hebrew inscription from the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC (probably the earliest inscription found to this date) at Mount Ebal in Samaria, which is under Palestinian civic control and Israeli security control (Area B). In this case, the finding was discovered in three large piles of debris. While the Palestinians neglected the piles and even trampled them, the Israelis invaded the area, loaded the debris onto trucks and drove it to an Israeli settlement where it was sifted through, and the inscription was fished out. The question of the legality of transferring the debris from one ethno-national group to another, and of the ownership of the findings, provoked a heated public debate over the definition of "cultural heritage".

3 Such was the case of the Disney Park which was supposed to be built in the town of Haymarket, Virginia. The park was meant to comprise 9 theme complexes dedicated to different periods in American history. The idea was shelved after an organization called PHA – *Protect Historic America* argued that the park would compromise the emotional and educational effect that a visit to a national heritage site is supposed to induce, by recreating the heritage out of rubber, fiberglass, and neon lights. In this case, ethno-national zeal protected the cultural heritage from turning into a commodity depleted of ideology and values. However, in many other cases it is precisely ethno-national zeal that objectifies the cultural heritage and turns it into a generic commodity. Thus for example, in the port city of Vlorë, Albania, which was home to a tiny Jewish community of 200 people, a Jewish museum is currently being built under the initiative of the *Albanian-American Development Foundation* (AADF) in order to attract tourists, thus turning the "Jewish Museum" into a decontextualized brand and commodity that are supposed to enhance the economy of the nation state by inventing a cultural heritage.

and in the 19th century for the self-description of the newly emerging European nation-states. Since the 20<sup>th</sup> century the concept of the nation state has been spread and legitimized in other parts of the world. This is when the career of “cultural heritage” in non-European identity-construction projects started. The discourse in the emerging post-colonial nation states was tied to sovereignty and territory, especially in countries that had been torn by conflict. And this is when the concept of shared heritage became split from the common universal-liberal perspective adopted in European settings (Tauschek 2013; UNESCO 2018).<sup>4</sup>

The mobilization of cultural heritage for battles between different ethno-national groups within the new nation states founded outside Western Europe also came side by side with struggles against Western globalization forces. The nation state’s opposition to the activity of supranational corporations stems from the fear that the latter would erode the local cultural traditions from the outside, in favor of an amalgam of styles, perceptions, and tastes under an imposed Western cultural logic.<sup>5</sup> The non-Western nation states’ opposition to globalization also stems from the fear that capitalist globalization processes would lead to the sale of cultural heritage for profit, and thus contribute to the continuing erosion of the nation’s cultural uniqueness.<sup>6</sup>

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- 4 Thus, for example, a Palestinization of the Arab public sphere in Israel has been evident since 2000. The tendency finds its expression most markedly in monuments that are being erected in Arab towns in Israel, representing symbols and events from the Palestinian national history. These include the column in the city of Tira commemorating the Palestinian casualties of 1948; a commemoration site in memory of the Palestinians killed by Israeli security forces in Kafr Qasim; a monument built in the city of Tayibe to commemorate those killed on Land Day; a huge mosaic dedicated to the Arab Revolt of 1936–1939 installed in the center of the city of Baka al-Gharbiyye; and more. This commemoration effort operates “from the ground up” and is sometimes backed by institutionalized commemoration by the Arab municipalities. Similar initiatives in joined Jewish-Arab cities have encountered opposition, such as the attempt to change the name of Lohamei HaGeta’ot (Fighters of the Ghettos) Street in Ramle to Tawfiq Ziad (a well-known Palestinian politician, member of the Israeli Parliament) Street.
- 5 An example relating to taste, in both senses of the word, is the attempt by national groups to fight global corporations’ efforts to gain control over the taste of food. See for example the Palestinian Authority’s *Khaleek Baladi* (Stay Baladi or Go Local) campaign (in collaboration with the European Union), which markets varieties of local heritage in an endeavour to represent the Palestinians’ authentic ties with the land. The concept of “balad”i is derived from the Arab word *balad* (Arabic for village, town, region) and signifies an intimate connection with the land. A project of this type demonstrates the doomed rear-guard battles waged by national cultural heritages against globalization.
- 6 See for example the public outcry that arose in the state of Israel around the sale by the *Pentagon public auction house* of the control stick of one of the IDF fighter jets that bombed the nuclear reactor in Iraq. The state of Israel claimed it “is a part of the history of the state of Israel, and has cultural, research and historical value” (Aderet 2022, p. 14), but the court rejected the claim and allowed the sale.



The processes of digitization and online preservation of national heritage fostered by international organizations constitute another threat on the perceptions of nationalism prevalent outside the West. Ever since the ontology of cultural heritage stopped being written by humans alone, the online world has turned cultural heritage into an active, agencied player that together with human beings drives networks of history, psychology, economy, and society. These moves are not only perceived as undermining the non-Western national narrative, but also as failing to take into account possibilities such as “digital forgetting”, which might be caused due to the biased choices of eurocentric (and English-language-based) algorithms, or to the impossibility of maintaining online sites in non-Western parts of the world.<sup>7</sup>

### **Cultural heritage definition as “shared cultural heritage”**

How is a shared cultural heritage created? Where should the shared cultural heritage be preserved and by whom?

The concept of shared heritage suggests a different juxtaposition of cultural heritage, sovereignty, and self-determination. It allows a reading that understands shared heritage as a pre-modern universal archive and as a transcultural thought that can reveal contacts, communications, and transformations like layers of rock (Weigel 2016). The aim of this concept of shared heritage is to make cultural exchanges and transfer processes concretely visible in order to revise nation-state narratives and property claims in favor of new narratives that emphasize aspects of a shared history. Nations who once faced each other as strangers or enemies could find commonalities rather than differences through this new way of viewing their history. This discourse raises cardinal questions regarding inclusion and exclusion mechanisms, collective memory, and the canonization processes. The idea of a worldwide access to objects of one’s own culture of origin deconstructs notions of concrete ownership of cultural heritage, while emphasizing a borderless human heritage that is free of nation-state power relations and property claims.

This discourse, which is sometimes called the “multicultural” or “communitarianism turn”, removed the national factor from the political program of acknowledgement and recognition (Kymlicka 1989). In this liberal democratic narrative, nationality was supposed to be cut off from the nation state. Emotions, feelings, and memories that infuse the desired congruence between people and cultural ideas, were expected to go beyond the national ideology and experiences, while marking nationality as a dividing force. According to the shared heritage definitions, cultural

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7 Thus, for example, a site that has not been updated will not come up in search results, because Google’s search engines don’t show more than 1,000 results.

heritage is a more individual-participatory based affinity, which goes beyond the national ideology and can intersect and create a hybrid, in-between, “third space” identities and focuses of identifications. This approach creates non-difference and even diminishes the morality of the national approach, seeing nationalism as an inferior stage of political development in comparison with the liberal one (Tamir 2019). If the introduction opened with the question: how do heritage and cultural narratives mediate ideology? then it ends with the question: can shared heritage be an ideology-free concept? At the time, these questions are invaded again by the murderous reality in the Middle East. On October 7, 2023 the Hamas terrorist organization carried out a horrific massacre that took the lives of more than 1400 Israelis, most of them unarmed civilian (babies, women, elderly people, and Holocaust survivors), who were raped, shot, mutilated, and burned alive. The bloody war raging in Gaza, at the time of writing, is causing sufferings and numerous casualties of Hamas members and their civilian supporters that fight against the IDF troops, and of unarmed civilians. These horrific events reposition (national) ideology at the center of the discussion: how can one construct the past, the memories, and the heritage without the mediation of ideology?

## About the book

The edited volume delves into 18 insightful case studies that cover a wide range of heritage types from a variety of disciplines in the Middle East and Europe, exploring the negotiation between culture and national ideology in the construction of cultural heritage. To elaborate the distinctions between the different case studies through the prism of the various national modes and forms, the book is divided into 4 sections that illuminate the possibility to produce and understand cultural heritage with and beyond national ideology.

## Part I Theoretical approach

Chapter 1. *The concept of heritage – A national perspective* by Dalya Yafa Markovich, elaborates the ways in which the Israeli nation state constructs its heritage, which owes its existence to various ethnic, race, and ideological groups or cultures, by unifying them through patriotic emotions that are soaked with trauma. The chapter delves into the constant tension between particular cultural heritages and the common national heritage, and into the social construction of hierarchies and inequalities between specific groups and the national heritage. It concludes by arguing that groups that share the national identity, but hold a different cultural heritage, are excluded to the social-cultural margins since they are labeled as ethnic-national hybrids. The chapter concludes that the use of heritage in nation states, even in societies that

are consolidated by a common national affiliation, establishes structural hierarchies that fuel processes of exclusion of particular ethnic, race, and religious groups.

Chapter 2. *Common, shared, contradictory heritage? A concept and its dimensions* by Christiane Dätsch describe different reference points that exist beyond the national concept: globalization, digitalization, supranationally, and migration. It tries to trace the fields of application, dealing with migrated material heritage (through travel or theft) as well as migrated people (as recipients of their own, but also foreign cultural heritage). On the one hand, “shared heritage” reflects the desire of the world community to show its connectedness, to encourage a dialogue, and to understand culture as a work for peace. On the other hand, “shared heritage” makes visible the limits of its own application, for example, when the cultural heritage of minorities is not visible in the majority society, or when questions of ownership have not been clarified, as in the postcolonial context (once oppressed ethnic groups insist on visibility and recognition). Thus, the concept of “shared heritage” makes visible the “simultaneity of the non-simultaneous” in different heritage discourses between the West and the rest of the world.

## Part II Nationality and the construction of cultural heritage

Chapter 3. *The Dawn Multicultural Theater: Sharing heritage through documentary theater* by Sigal Peres analyses the contribution of theaters to the construction of heritage through the lens of the national culture. While canonical theaters aspire to contribute to the creation of a powerful communal national solidarity and heritage, theaters of marginalized groups tend to represent an alternative to that heritage. The case of the *Dawn Theater* is different. The Theater tells the story of the Iraqi Jewish community, which was not included in the Israeli national narrative and heritage due to the Arab-Muslim context in which the community evolved. Despite that, the theater preferred to highlight the Iraqi Jewish community’s contribution to the nation. Thus, while the “Dawn Theater” claims that the Iraqi Jewish ethnic group’s heritage and narrative should be acknowledged, at the same time it accepts the hegemonic national heritage and narrative by wishing to be included in it.

Chapter 4. *From the Mellah in Marrakesh to Israel and back* by Gil Kenan tells the story of the *Marrakesh Jewish Association in Israel*. Using the methods of auto-ethnography, Kenan analyzes the role of the Marrakesh Association, founded by his father, in safeguarding the narratives and authentic material traces of the marginalized Moroccan Jewish ethnic group within the Israeli national heritage. In their annual yearly conferences, the Marrakesh Association shifted the community’s heritage from the *Mellah* – the Jewish quarter – to the heart of Israel, where a model of the quarter was built to host the members’ meetings. This shift bypassed the Zionist binary division between Israelis and immigrants, Jews and Arabs, center and margins, through the spatial and cultural deterritorialization of the Moroccan Jews’ her-

itage. The bricolage created in these conferences did not wish to replace the nation's shared heritage, but to widen the boundaries of the national cultural heritage and be included in it.

Chapter 5. *War memorials as a non-monologic heritage site* by Sapir Barel puts at its center the way a war monument can act as an alternative visual-material sign of the nationalized collective heritage and memory. Delving into the case study of the *Monument to the Negev Brigade* (1963–1968) in Israel, which was designed by Danny Karavan in memory of the Israeli fallen soldiers who lost their lives during the '48 war, the chapter shows how the Monument avoids a mono-perspectival culture of memory. The analysis of the symbolic landscape of the monument reveals the visual and material ways in which the monument is involved both in the nation and military building project, and in questioning the necessity of war. By folding together the geometrical-abstract and the realistic shapes and forms, which blend on the desert's horizon, the Monument suggests a new narrative of heritage that can be shared alongside the mono-perspectival culture of memory.

Chapter 6. *Arab-Hebrew bread: The story of the hubeza and the split local heritage* by Michal Levit describes the complex story of the *hubeza* – a local, wild, edible, and widespread plant in Israel. The *hubeza* is part of the traditional Israeli Palestinian cuisine and heritage and was part of the mythologized Jewish-Israeli cuisine and heritage after playing a major nutritional role in the '48 war. At the end of the war the *hubeza* was marginalized from the Jewish-Israeli cuisines and left only in the geographically-separated local Palestinian cuisine. Then it was repositioned in exclusive upper-class Jewish restaurants, in line with the “from farm to table” global culinary discourse. The analysis of newspaper articles and restaurants' menus featuring the *hubeza* shows that these changes reflect ethnic, national, and class differentiations. Thus, the history of sharing this culinary heritage, then removing it from recipes and from the Jewish-Israeli dis(course), and then adding it back again, reflects separated heritages that evolve in a disconnected manner rather than a shared one.

### Part III Multinational divisions and the construction of cultural heritage

Chapter 7. *Liselotte Grschebina. A woman with a camera wandering between two heritages* by Orly Zimmerman analyzes photography through the lens of the central role photography played in the “cultural industry” that built the visual archives of Zionism. Lizelotte Grschebina, a German-Jewish photographer that worked in Palestine/Eretz-Israel in the service of the *Jewish National Fund* (Keren Kayemet) until the founding of the state of Israel, was one of these Zionist photographs. Armed with the techniques she acquired in Nazi Germany, Grschebina focused mostly on the image of the “New Jew”, i.e., the Zionist pioneers that were constructed against the stereotypical antisemite Jewish image. The combination of the Nazi photographic praxis with the Zionist ideological narratives created affinities between these two

opposing cultures. The merging of these two components helped to construct the Zionist collective heritage against the Nazi heritage, while using the German techniques to portray the Zionist everyday life and heritage.

Chapter 8. “*What shall I cook?*” *Erna Meyer’s WIZO-Cookbook in the field of tension between nation building and shared cultural heritage* by Ann-Kathrin Müller tells the story of the cookbook *Wie kocht man in Erez Israel* (How to Cook in Erez Israel), published in 1936. The author, Dr. Erna Meyer, a national economist and household expert that emigrated from Germany, translated her knowledge to the Jewish-Zionist inhabitants of mandatory Palestine. Analyzing Meyer’s cookbook as an intangible cultural heritage shows the ways that food culture contributed to the new Zionist cultural heritage and identity. While until the 1920s the translation of the European cuisine to the local cuisine was influenced by a romantic fascination with the Arab population, this changed with the increasing tensions between the non-Jewish population and the expanding *Yishuv*. From that stage the “exotic” was turning into “primitive”. The evolution of Meyer’s cookbook as a cautious in-between site reflects the effects of the opposing national groups on the possibility to create shared heritage.

Chapter 9. *Modernist interior design as a shared heritage? The Frankfurt kitchen in Tel Aviv* by Elfi Madeleine Carle expands on the architectural concepts of the Bauhaus *International Style*, developed in Weissenhof Estate (1927) in Stuttgart, and adopted by Jewish immigrants that fled Germany and settled in Tel Aviv in the 1940s. The analysis follows the process of adoption of the interior and exterior architectural designs, and the ways they were implemented by the Jewish-Zionist pioneers. Even though the Bauhaus was characterized by designs that were supposed to be derived from a rationalized universal functionality, like the *Frankfurt kitchen*, their adaption reveals that the International Style was localized and recruited to the developing local national culture and heritage. The Bauhaus was used to construct the Zionist local national heritage by emphasizing its Western-centric appeal and recruiting it to the nation building project, while rejecting the Middle-Eastern, and especially the Arab and Muslim styles.

Chapter 10. *Colonial monuments and the treatment of history. The example of the toppled Colston monument in Bristol* by Jana Weyer examines the connection between monuments and heritage. Monuments have been erected since ancient times as representations of the power and authority of ideas and values. As such, the monuments meant to anchor the hegemonic ideology and implement it in the consciousness of monument’s subjects. In the 18th and 19th centuries monuments that represent the hegemony, mainly nobility, were joined by statues of civic figures, mostly from the fields of art, education, and philanthropy. However, some of the new civic role models had an ambivalent past. The case of Edward Coleston (1636–1721), a philanthropist to his hometown of Bristol, England, is one of them. Coleston’s monument was erected in the city at the end of the 19th century. But the fortune he made from slave trading came to haunt him in the 1990s. Becoming a material representation of

the colonial heritage, the statue was toppled during a *Black Lives Matter* demonstration, creating a controversy regarding the ways cultural heritage should be transformed and readjusted in order to create a new collective heritage and memory that can be shared.

Chapter 11. *The Story of a monument, Land Day in Sakhnin, 1976–1978* by Tal Ben Zvi analyzes the struggle embedded in the *Land Day monument* in Sakhnin, Israel. The monument was designed by Palestinian and Jewish artists to commemorate six Palestinian citizens of Israel who were shot in 1976 during demonstrations against the government's attempt to confiscate land. How can we understand the supposed role of a monument that echoes the national struggle of an ethnic-national group that has no sovereignty, and whose members are citizens of another nation state with which they have a tense relationship? In the troubled space between "Otherness" and "belonging", the Land Day monument displays particular Palestinian ethnic-national characteristics as well as universal-humanistic characteristics that strive to normalize the Palestinian struggle within the national majority. Instead of representing just the national Palestinian uprising, the monument wished to become a bridge for dialogue between groups – an opportunity that was missed.

Chapter 12. *Musical (world) heritage? The West-Eastern Divan Orchestra* by Kai Erdlenbruch and Kinneret Suissa explores the *West Eastern Divan Orchestra*, which is composed of musicians from Arab/Muslim countries and from Israel. Having been constructed as a project that aims to integrate Muslims and Jews, Arabs and Israelis, through classical music, the Orchestra imagines itself as a transnational phenomenon that is stronger than any opposing national affiliation/culture. Thus, classical music is perceived in this case as an integrative force. Even though classical music represents the heritage of European cultures, it acts as a humanistic-universal platform that can overcome national cultures and conflicts. This transnational concept is not only supposed to replace the national concept, but also to create a new shared heritage that marks a moral humanistic and a-historical divan diaspora. In other words, the trans-national is the global power, capital, and habitus of the West.

## Part IV The postnational concept and the construction of shared heritage

Chapter 13. *Encoding the spatial DNA of Tel Aviv's White City* by Sharon Golan expands on the significant architecture in the heart of the city of Tel Aviv. This part of the city, characterized by Bauhaus designs and named the "White City", was built mainly by German-Jewish immigrants, using German knowhow and German building material. Hence, one can argue that the heritage is a shared German Israeli one. However, one could also argue that by building a new home in the Levant, the immigrants differentiated themselves both from the common traditional Arab building style and from the common traditional German Heimat style, which was considered as degenerate art by the Nazi regime. Moreover, the local Bauhaus style cannot be referred to

as purely German, as it adapted itself to the local and cultural conditions of the Levant and the surroundings of a different socio-geographic setting. Thus, if the heritage is a shared one, what does its narrative represent? The historic urban landscape of Tel Aviv can be understood as a physical manifestation of a “shared heritage” that stands for diverse international influences, creating a new language and public domain, and symbolizing a unique historic manifesto of modernism situated between Europe and the Levant.

Chapter 14. *German remembrance? Jewish museums in Germany. The example of the Jewish Museum Göppingen* by Sarai Hannah-Marie Schulz deals with the case study of ethnographic museum. Ethnographic museums are dedicated to selecting and transmitting shared heritage through the institutionalized public commemoration of what is perceived to be worth remembering as well as forgetting. Thus, exhibiting cultural heritage can serve to unveil the past beyond the hegemonic conventions. That is not always the case with the German Jewish museums, which are mostly managed by non-Jewish curators for non-Jewish spectators. This tendency has been accused of leading to an exoticization of the Jewish communities and their disattachment from the German cultural heritage and context. The Jewish Museum *Göppingen-Jebenhausen* tries to tackle this phenomenon by crossing the boundaries between the local German residence and the former Jewish one. By creating a transboundary discourse and praxis, the museum is fighting against the de-Germanization of the Jews on the one hand, and against their interpretation solely through a German point of view on the other. This policy can lead to an intercultural understanding that overrides national and religious affiliations towards a construction of shared heritage.

Chapter 15. *Shared memories, shared heritage? Museal concepts of (im-)migration in Germany* by Christiane Dätsch reveals the role of museums as agencies of material and cultural heritage, which constructs public remembering and canonizes significant identity. As opposed to the traditional role of museums, this chapter explores *DOMiD – House of Immigrant Society* – a museum-in-the-making of non-hegemonic ethnic-national groups. The process led by *DOMiD* to create an exhibition of various German “guest workers” communities that were not included in the German culture and heritage shows new heritage-building in the making. This process wishes to create a migrants’ collective heritage that represents the diverse origins of the migrants or the “culture of migration”, and also to construct a shared heritage of migrants or a “culture of migration” that can be integrated with the German heritage. However, rather than the process of assimilation, the museum’s narrative emphasizes the dialogic nature and the transcultural potential that heritage holds, by moving beyond the binary structures East/West and national/multinational.

Chapter 16. *Own or foreign heritage? Young Muslims in Auschwitz (2012–2021)* by Sophia Isabel Baur problematizes the heritage construction of disadvantaged young Muslims with an immigrant background in Germany. These youngsters have

been usually socialized by their communities on narratives that oppose Jews and Judaism. However, German heritage is being thought in German schools against the backdrop of the holocaust of the Jewish world. In other words, the school demands the abandonment of antisemitic views in order to be included in the German heritage and society, and thus further alienates various underprivileged Muslim communities. The project *Young Muslims in Auschwitz*, held in Duisburg-Marxloh, attempted to deconstruct this contradiction by visiting Auschwitz with the youngsters. The tour aimed to challenge the complexity of being German and Muslim, and also to enable an overcoming of the polarized cultural-ideological views by juxtaposing the Muslim and German narratives in a universal-humanistic oriented shared heritage.

Chapter 17. *The use of digital space for equal shared cultural heritage for Jews and Arabs in Israel* by Boaz Lev Tov and Kussai Haj-Yehia shows the effects of the digital revolution on the cultural heritage of excluded groups. Marginalized groups usually suffer from a lack of cultural visibility due to deliberate policy. This situation, which characterizes the Arab Palestinians living in Israel, led to the construction of an open, non-institutional, digital space called *Tarasa Digital Initiative* that documents oral memories and heritage of everyday life activities from a non-experts' point of view. The study examines the modes of engagement that the digital tools make possible. The findings show that even though more Jews than Arabs shared their heritage on the platform, the mutual exposure to memories and cultural heritages creates multiple, ongoing, public interfaces between Jews and Arabs that hitch the democratic digital space to the development of a shared heritage.

Chapter 18. *Shared heritage on the Hartmannswillerkopf* by Gerd Krumeich tells the story of the *Hartmannswillerkopf* memorial site from the perspective of the 21st century, when Western Europe can look back on the longest period of peace on the continent. The time when national conflicts were resolved with the help of wars and at the cost of countless human lives seems to be over. It has been replaced by a desire for supranational European solidarity and an emphasis on commonalities rather than divisions. And yet, the commemoration strategy of different European countries often follows their national history(s), which tend to adopt the narrative of heroism. This narrative serves as a symbolic representation of the hegemonic collective values. An examination of the historical site of Hartmannswillerkopf in Alsace, France, which serves as a military cemetery, a museum, and a walk-in war site of the First World War, shows how a new narrative can emerge through dialogical remembering, joint research, and educational programs that are aware of the various perspectives of the nations involved. This transnational collaboration interprets the past in ways that strive to deconstruct the national monologic remembering of war, and thus create a shared heritage of peace.



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## **I. Theoretical approach**



# The concept of heritage – A national perspective

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*Dalya Yafa Markovich*

## Introduction

The definition of the terms “culture” and “cultural heritage” is subject to profound debate due to the questionable ontological status ascribed to the concept of identities (Jahoda 2012). According to essentialist approaches, the legacy of the past is an inseparable combination of the culture (language, myths, and symbolism) that has been accumulated in the group and the “blood ties” that have formed among its members. The mixture of the two together has defined cultural heritage as the result of an inevitable natural process. In light of these primeval and essentialist characteristics, cultural heritage has been defined as a kind of undisputable truth. Perspectives that emphasize social construction view culture as one of the major variables that build and shape the social system: norms, values, beliefs, and practices at global, national, and local levels. In other words, culture is perceived as an entity that exists outside the minds and actions of individual people. Rather, it refers to the force molding to which individuals are exposed by virtue of living in a particular social system (Schwartz 2009). Being structured through conditions governed by social dynamics that occur in a specific time–space, cultural heritage is subject to various ideological forces. One of them is the process of homogenizing and stabilizing the collective identity. Rituals, custom, narratives, and material objects take part in the intensive “cultural work” needed to shape the groups’ symbolic borders and uniqueness and to distinguish them from Other groups. Particularity thus becomes the requirement for and consequence of the levels of participation in the process of (re)building cultural heritage (Griswold and Wright 2004). In this manner, subcultures are often identified by sufficiently homogeneous and autonomous cultural characteristics that are consistently distinctive from the dominant culture and act as instruments for establishing and reinforcing intra-group social solidarity (Thornton 1995; Smith, Bond and Kagitcibasi 2006). At the same time, subcultures demarcate the boundaries that position groups as either the binary pole of the dominant culture or a hybrid juncture between opposing cultures (Hebdige 1979). Correspondingly, labelling the Other as culturally different (“subculture”) and thus inferior, is perceived as one of the currently prevalent oppressive strategies and as a means for

creating social hierarchies and inequality among groups regarding their heritage. Furthermore, labelling the Other as culturally different can prevent a full and equal inclusion of cultural elements that comprise the Other's heritage and identity (Asante, Yoshitaka and Jing 2008).

## Cultural heritage and the concept of nation

Cultural heritage is believed to be the essence that glued the pre-modern nation together (Smith 1981). According to this approach, nationality was created historically from the consolidation of cultural elements that trickled from the past to the present. The encounter of cultural heritage with modernity, and especially with the modern demand of civic equality, gave rise to the national ideology and the nation. The identification with the nation and the national sentiment, which permeated the hearts of its citizens, were therefore perceived as the result of cultural tradition which united and unified them from time immemorial.

In contrast to approaches that see the idea of a cultural heritage as a platform that gave rise to the modern nation and nationality, critical perspectives define cultural heritage as a category that owes its existence to the modern process of nationalization itself (Balibar and Wallerstein, 1991). Emphasizing the role of nationality in establishing and reinforcing cultural heritage does not only negate the existence of cultural heritage as a natural category that develops in and of itself along the temporal axis, but also stresses that heritage is structured and reflected through the interests and aims that serve the national discourse in the present and the future.

Cultural heritage in this context is the result of a strenuous imaginative effort. The imaginative work creates a correspondence between bits of past heritages and the political needs of the nationality in the present. At times, this activity has even completely fabricated the group's cultural heritage. The work of the imagination was concocted out of and through the use of various visual means (the map, the stamp, the emblem) that produced collective cultural codes, that is: a heritage (Anderson 1983). Or, as Renan remarked as early as 1882, the process of nationalizing cultural heritage requires constant upkeep for the uniting culture to overcome every social split, compartmentalization, and stratification. Along with the building and maintenance work, stoking the sense of national belonging also requires creating awareness and collective consciousness. The nation's members must be aware of the cultural tradition that binds them together and of the danger awaiting them should this cultural heritage disintegrate (Gelner 1983). This awareness is attained through diverse social institutions and agents, including: schools, libraries, museums, and commemorative sites.

For example, the education system has played a central role in formulating national collective memories and implementing them in the students' identity (Gel-

ner 1983). The integration of different events, narratives, and symbols into cultural heritage that legitimizes the nation is mostly organized through various rituals implemented in the school curriculum, among them: ceremonies, trips, and parades (Handelman and Shamgar-Handelman 1998). This praxis is communicated through a unique pedagogy that makes extensive use of the pupil's senses and feelings in order to shape and strengthen their national affiliation, identification, and commitment (Ben Amos and Bet-El 1999).

Nevertheless, defining cultural heritage and nationality as constructed entities exposes the complicated interactions between the two. First, nationalities can be distinguished on the basis of the centrality of culture in shaping their identity. Thus, some nationalities are based on a myth of a separatist cultural-biological heritage, and others are based on a more voluntary-civic foundation (Kohn 1944; Greenfeld 1992). Second, nationalities can be distinguished on the basis of the role that cultural heritage plays in the shaping of their identity. History shows that while a certain kind of cultural heritage may take control over the nationalization project and become dominant in it, as in the case of the culture of the English people that became hegemonic in Britain, a different kind of cultural heritage may be eroded in this process and lose its status, as in the case of the Welsh people.

The incomplete integration of cultural minorities in the hegemonic cultural tradition may create genuine socio-political rifts. In order to incorporate in the nation-building project, cultural minorities are forced to erase the cultural markers that sabotage their assimilation/integration process. And third, it is possible to distinguish between the different influences nationality has on cultural heritage. Hence, while nationality may blur distinct cultural markers and unite them together in one common cultural alliance (transforming and recreating the "Other from within" as "one of us"), it can also sharply delineate identities and differences between groups that were not distinct prior to its appearance, as a counter-reaction to the national dominance (Rabinowitz 2001). However, in order to avoid "third spaces" where the dominant cultural heritage is challenged by the constant negotiation of incommensurable cultural differences (Bhabha 2004), or "ethnoscapes" that deconstruct solid national conception with a multi-cultural-fluid character (Appadurai 1996), an intensive boundary work is needed. The collective effort maintains the project of cultural heritage under a significant national identity/narrative. These acts have contributed to the perception of cultural heritage as a temporary project subject to continuous structuring and change, which wishes to become a convention and a banal norm (Billig 1997).



## Jewish cultural heritage as nationalism

The idea of Jewish nationality (Zionism) was conceived and shaped for the most part in light of the central-eastern European Ashkenazi Jewish culture (Boyarin 1997). Alongside this trend, Jewish nationalism fed on diverse Jewish communities that made the state of Israel one of the world's largest immigration countries. In addition to Jews of European origin (Ashkenazim), immigrants to Israel also included many Jewish communities originating in the Arab and Muslim world in North Africa, Asia, and the Middle East (Mizrahim). These communities made up around 20% of the overall Jewish world at the time. The emigration of Jews from Arab/Muslim countries coincided with varied interests. The rulers of the Arab countries wanted to get rid of the Jewish minority and enjoy their confiscated/abandoned property, and the Israeli state needed a cheap workforce and a demographic advantage over its Palestinian inhabitants (Meir-Glitzstein 2022). The Jewish communities that had settled in Asia and North Africa encountered Jewish nationalism while in possession of a solid and diverse cultural heritage, which had formed in relation to and alongside the Arab/Muslim communities among which they had lived for hundreds of years. Since these heritages drew inspiration from the Arab/Muslim culture, and since in the course of the twentieth century Jews became more and more involved in the society, culture, and politics of some of the Arab countries (Levi 2008), these heritages created a cultural mix that was termed "Arab-Jewish" (Shalom Shitrit 2004; Shenhav and Hever 2012).

Common to all the Arab-Jewish cultural heritages was the affinity they had with the Arab/Muslim world prior to immigrating to the state of Israel. Nevertheless, the different communities were spread over a vast and diverse social-cultural-political realm. Each of the communities (Iraqi Jewish, Persian Jewish, Syrian Jewish, Yemenite Jewish and so on) differed from the others in many characteristics: linguistic, ritualistic, material, and visual-aesthetic. The differences existed not only between Jewish communities that had solidified in different geo-cultural regions, but also within the Jewish communities in the same region/country. Despite the great divergence, upon arriving in Israel the Jewish communities that had emigrated from Arab/Muslim countries were perceived as having a shared and unified cultural heritage. The absorbers, mostly Ashkenazi Jews, gave them various generalizing names: "Jews of Mizrahi extraction" and "Mizrahim" (Hebrew for East/Orient). Unifying all the Arab-Jewish communities under one simplifying heading stemmed from the ignorance of the Ashkenazi Zionist Jews, which made it difficult for them to perceive the divergence that characterized the cultural heritage of each of the Eastern communities. Many of the Ashkenazi Zionists of European origin were also plagued with orientalist views in which the East constituted the inferior mirror image of modern Western progress (Khazzoom 2003). Despite the attitude directed towards the Mizrahi Jews, the dominant Ashkenazi Zionist group adopted the notion of the

“melting pot” to mark the boundaries of the Israeli society. The “melting pot” policy wished to integrate the Jewish diasporas under one unifying umbrella while erasing the diasporic Jewish cultures and shared heritage that characterized their lives outside of the state of Israel (Raz-Krakotzkin 1994; 2005).

For this reason, for example, and in contrast to national movements in Europe, folklore did not serve as the unifying glue between the different Jewish subcultures that comprised the Jewish nation, since folklore represented a link to the Jewish cultures in the diaspora and was therefore perceived as a spanner in the wheels of the Zionist movement (Schrire 2019). Thus, the goal of the “melting pot” process was to reform the Arab-Jews’ heritage by ideologically reintegrating them into the national identity.

This approach relied on a logic that had developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that claimed that only ethnic groups that underwent a cultural evolution could succeed in solidifying into a national movement (ibid). Furthermore, this policy was perceived by its founders as colorblind, even though it aimed to blur the cultural differences between the various Jewish groups and especially to erase their Arab/Muslim characteristics. While trying to fulfil the “melting pot” goals, the Ashkenazi group was torn up by internal tension as to the cultural nature of the Mizrahi Jews. This led to the adoption of a double-faced approach. On the one hand, the Ashkenazi Jews perceived and used the Mizrahi Jewish groups’ cultural heritage as the primordial raw material through which the Jewish nationality was imagined, due to the authenticity that was attributed to it. On the other hand, the very existence of a non-European Jewish cultural heritage undermined the validity of the modern Western national narrative that Ashkenazi Zionism wanted to adopt (Forum 2002). Moreover, after immigrating to Israel the Mizrahi Jewish groups maintained a profound affinity with the culture of the Orient in general and the Arab/Muslim culture in particular, while resisting the cultural codes and heritage that were created by the Ashkenazi Jewish Zionists. The Mizrahims’ connections to the Muslim and Arab world positioned them in the margins of the Zionist, European based, culture and heritage. Being perceived as the dichotomous opposite of the Ashkenazi Zionist cultural heritage, the Mizrahim were described by the Ashkenazi Jewish Zionists as having a traditional, primitive, and even irrational culture and beliefs. These orientalist assumptions about the Mizrahim’s cultural heritage excluded them from the dominant Ashkenazi national culture (Shenhav 2006). Since any resemblance between the Mizrahi culture and the Arab culture was understood as a transgressive juxtaposition that is threatening the national unity, the cultural borders were continuously kept under guard. These efforts prevented boundary crossing, or any kind of hyphenation that could configure hybrid Muslim-Jewish or Oriental-European identities. Thus, in order to maintain the differentiation between Zionism and the rest of the Arab cultures and heritage, a binary distinction was constructed between Mizrahi-Jews and Arabs (Shohat 1988). The process of the

de-Arabization of the Mizrahi Jews led to cultural segregation that was enforced in order to blur any possible Jewish–Arab definition/identification (Hochberg 2007; Shenhav and Hever 2012), while strengthening the cultural heritage that evolved from the Holocaust and the wars in the Middle East and constructing them as a powerful contrasting heritage in relation to that of the Arabs (Handelman 1998; Handelman and Katz 1998; Yonah et al. 2010). The project of de-Arabization had a double effect with regards to issues of cultural heritage: it promised the Mizrahi group full integration into the Israeli national heritage and identity, and at the same time it created and reproduced the hierarchy between the Mizrahi cultural heritage and that of Zionism. The rift between Mizrahi and Ashkenazi Jews also reflected the rift that occurred between Mizrahi Jews and the Arabs within the state of Israel. In other words, the stratification process that emerged along cultural lines (Mizrahim/Ashkenazim) contributed to stratification along national lines (Arabs/Jews). Thus, the battle in the field of culture exposed the immanent tension between cultural heritage and nationality in the Israeli context. These hierarchies and tensions produced simultaneous processes of inclusion and exclusion of the Mizrahi group, tensions which had, and still have, a crucial effect on the Israeli culture (Hertzog 1984). The simultaneous social mechanism constantly sabotaged the presumably stable boundary that distinguishes between Mizrahim and Arabs and between cultural heritage and nationality, uncovering the existence of Mizrahiyut and at the same time locking it in a labeled and stereotyped image. In light of this, the Mizrahim and the Mizrahi cultural heritage were positioned in a nonhegemonic status and were sometimes also excluded to the margins of the dominant national society and culture (Yonah 2005). Only after Israeli politics underwent dramatic changes, when the ruling party of *Mapai* lost the election in 1977, did the Ashkenazi hegemonic narrative allow the visibility of a more diverse and multi-vocal culture and heritage and the Mizrahi group gained dominance in the public sphere (Abutbul-Selinger 2022). Museums that were created in communities of non-Ashkenazi Jewish immigrants and represented different past legacies and different national narrative and culture, started to flourish in the Israeli public sphere (Katriel 2013). For example, the *Babylonian Jewish heritage center* in Or Yehuda opened its doors in 1988 (Meir-Glitzstein 2002); the *Cochin Jewish heritage center* in Moshav Nevatim was established in 1996 (Cordaro 2013); *The center for the heritage of Libyan Jewry* in Or Yehuda started to work in 2003 (Rossetto 2013); and the *David Amar World center for North African Jewish heritage* in Jerusalem has been operating since 2011 (Trevisan Semi 2013). Even though only some of these museums and heritage centers are officially recognized by the state, the fact that these voices are being narrated, preserved, and exhibited shows that the Israeli-Jewish hegemonic narrative is broadening and challenging the “melting pot” narrative and praxis. Thus, while the hegemonic national discourse negates the intra-Jewish ethnic boundaries, it also acknowledges an ethnic multivocality. This tendency is also accompanied by

a heated public debate regarding the historical injustices caused by the national discourse and praxis, and has even given rise to public apologies (Amir 2012). But despite that, the tensions among various Jewish ethnic groups that share the common national identity continue to deepen (Kimmerling 2008).

## Israeli Palestinians cultural heritage as nationalism

The case of the Palestinian society living in Israel is different. The Palestinians had a bloody relationship with the old Jewish inhabitants that lived in the region for thousands of years as well as with the new Jewish-Zionist waves of migration. The Jewish-Zionist immigration did not seek to govern the Arabs from the outside (like for instance Belgian colonialism in Congo or British colonialism in India), but to reestablish in small parts of the land their primordial home, in its national version. As a result, after Israel was established and after Israel survived the harsh war imposed on her by the Arab world in '48, the Palestinian population that remained living in Israel was defined as an ethno-religious-national minority. Comprising a Sunni Muslim majority as well as Christians, Druze, and Galilee and Negev Bedouins, and constituting around 20% of the country's inhabitants, Israeli Palestinians are also defined as a collection of small minority groups that divide among themselves in their relation to the Israeli state. Thus, the Israeli Palestinians cannot be perceived as a nationally cohesive group. Driven by this, Israeli Palestinians are sometimes identified as a national enemy from within, while at the same time they are full citizens of the state of Israel (Samocho 1999).

The co-existence of Jews and Arabs in Israel had various effects on the Israeli Palestinian society. The Palestinian population has grown over the years from 108,000 Palestinians living in Israel after the '48 war to 2.1 million in 2024.<sup>1</sup> Israeli Palestinians hold Israeli citizenship and are part of the Israeli supreme court and the Israeli parliament since the first *Knesset*. As the only Arab group living in a democratic state in the Middle East, Israeli Palestinians enjoy a flourishing civil society that includes 3,895 organizations (N.G.O's) that work to benefit the Arab society in Israel, including LGBTQ Israeli Palestinian organization.<sup>2</sup> Approximately 70% of the Israeli Palestinian students finish high school and pass the matriculation exams, while 20% attend universities and colleges (Hadad Haj Yahya et al. 2021). Despite that, the Palestinians suffer from inequality in the social, economic, cul-

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1 The growth rate of Palestinian population is 2.2 (1.8 in the Jewish population). Life expectancy has increased 27 years since '48.

2 The first Israeli Palestinian N.G.O was registered in 1969. Since then, 200 new organizations are registering annually.

tural, and political spheres, as well as segregation (Yiftachel 1997), separation (Abu-Asbeh 2006), and marginalization (Shafir and Peled 2002).

Due to their positioning in the Israeli stratified society, the translation of the Palestinians' ethnic affiliation into a separate national heritage was largely prevented (Yonah 2005; Jamal 2007). At the same time, Israeli Palestinians were not included in the national construction of the Palestinian state by the Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza (outside of the borders of the state of Israel). Neglected and even abandoned during the political processes conducted since the 1990s, the Palestinian political leadership in Israel was also exempt from vital discussions regarding their national-cultural affiliation, while the Palestinians' partial assimilation in the Israeli-Jewish society was de-legitimized (Mar'a 1995). As a result, the post-Oslo struggles of the Palestinian community were directed towards civic issues within the state of Israel rather than towards (inter)national issues (Al-Haj 1995). The civic tendency weakened with the collapse of the peace narrative. The model of autonomy, which would have allowed maintaining a cultural heritage with the Palestinians living outside of Israel, was forgotten (Ozacky-Lazar and Ghanem 1990). The model of "a state for all its citizens," which was supposed to rely on a civil shared cultural heritage (Bishara 2002), was harshly rejected by Israel and the Palestinians, and the bi-national state that has been emerging in Israel in recent years cannot grant the Israeli Palestinians equal national status and/or a multicultural society.

As the national struggle with the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza became more heated, the Palestinian community in Israel turned to a process of local nationalization and national-Islamization (Rechess 2002). Nationalization was believed to be the route to equality in the Israeli society. In order to become a nationally-recognized minority, the construction of the Palestinian nationality within the state of Israel was realized by the recreation of the memory of the lost Palestine (before '48). The memory awakening of the lost Palestine served to combat their previous cultural heritage, which was mainly characterized as oral, local, and non-formal, mostly presenting a non-historically contingent heritage that is disconnected from current affairs (Hazan 2017). For example, the national Palestinian identity and the collective memory of the *Nakba* (the catastrophe) are not represented in the small Arab museums that are operating in Israel (Kark and Perry 2008), while most of the museums are dedicated to the documentation of Arab village life and folklore as they existed in small communities before '48 (Haj-Yehia and Lev-Tov 2018).

Palestinian cultural heritage also served to combat the policy of exclusion and neglect implemented through diminishing governmental funds and support for local cultural centers, museums, music halls, archives, and libraries (Sorek 2015). Thus, for example, the first monument for fallen Palestinian civilians in Israel was designed in Sakhnin in 1976 (Amit 2008; Ben Zvi, Khalilieh and Farah 2008); the first cultural center for the Palestinian public in Israel was established in Nazareth in the

1980s (Landau 2015); the first cultural-historical museum, dedicated to the canonization of the collective memory, opened its doors in Sakhnin in 1990 (Shay 2011); and the *Association for the Arab Culture*, aiming to reinforce national-cultural identity, began to operate only in 1998. In other words, national Palestinian narrative and heritage are either avoided or presented in a subtle manner. Only few museums, like the *Kufr Kassem Massacre Museum*, deal with direct political issues, but these institutions are not supported by the state. When diversity is presented in order to reinforce local communities, it is done in a way that does not threaten the national narrative and cultural heritage, like in the case of the *Umm al-Fahm Art Gallery*, which adopted a pluralist approach that allows it to make the Palestinian national narrative and heritage visible and at the same time serves as a way to receive government recognition (Haj Yahya 2021). The re-imagination of the Palestinian nation/nationality was handled by the state in various ways. While some of the Palestinian attempts were limited by the state-driven process of national identification, others were equated with the Israeli-Jewish cultural visibility and aimed to safeguard the procedural rights of the Palestinian's cultural self-determination (preserving distinctive linguistics, history, and tradition). These developments mostly exemplified processes of “heritage from below” (Robertson 2012) that wished to preserve the lost cultural heritage of the past and use it to build the national heritage of the future. Despite these tendencies, in 2022 the state of Israel decided to build cultural institutions in the Palestinian communities living in Israel, which will give each community's heritage voice and visibility. The cultural institutions scheduled to be built in 2023 include a repertory theater, an art museum, a cinematheque, a performing arts school, music centers, and art galleries. The plan included a first ever mapping of conservation sites in Arab settlements in Israel. Following the survey, a list of thousands of sites representing the Palestinian heritage in Israel was drawn up (Kashti 2022). 365 million NIS were allocated through the Ministry of Culture in order to realize the plan. The first tender published so far deals with founding an artistic repertory theater in Arabic. A central element of the program is conserving historical centers. So far, all the sites recognized for conservation have been in Jewish settlements. The conservation sites in the Palestinian settlements in Israel have been defined as buildings of historical and architectural value built after 1700. Sites built before this period are classified as ancient sites. In this sphere too there is an ongoing struggle that may lead to change. The main struggle is over the question of the attribution of archeological findings found in Palestinian settlements in Israel (or those under partial Israeli control). The issue of the legal status of archeological activity and archeological findings is caught up in a tangle of regulations and recommendations deriving from the Oslo accords, international law, and the civil administration appointed by the Israeli state (Kersel 2008). Since an archeological exploration is methodologically-speaking a process of controlled destruction, questions arise concerning the kind of findings that would get destroyed in the excavation process, as well as questions concerning the cultural-

national attribution/ownership of the findings extracted from the ground. These questions remain to a large extent without a clear answer. At the same time, new resources – websites discussion groups, online communities, vlogs, blogs, and social networks – are accessible to Palestinians living in Israel. The internet provides a platform to exhibit and share collections of photographs, documents, music, art, and films that expose and explore various features of the Palestinian nationalized heritage.

Caught in the grip of these contrasting forces, Palestinian citizens of Israel try to articulate their identity and cultural heritage as part of their attempts to position themselves in the Israeli society. Thus, tensions among the various Palestinian groups and between Israeli Palestinians and Israeli Jews, which split along national, religious, and ethnic lines, continue to deepen (Kimmerling 2001).

### **Epilogue: Cultural heritage as an unstable category**

National narrative and identity play a constitutive role in the creation of cultural heritage in the modern state. Nationality participates actively in the construction of cultural heritage by using practices of negotiation, selection, classification, assimilation, and exclusion. It seems that for the time being this concern, which seeks to tie nationality with cultural heritage, is not dropping off the political agenda. The cultural heritage in its visual and material manifestations (flag, emblem, caricature) still constitutes the glue that binds nations together and mobilizes them to struggle for self-definition and sovereignty. The notion of a shared heritage becomes associated with values and worldviews such as freedom, democracy, and resistance to oppression. The sovereignty of a nation that has unified itself through cultural characteristics even becomes associated with responsibility for the welfare of the human world as a whole. Thus, for example, the danger of nuclear catastrophe looms over the world when the sovereignty of a nation claiming the existence of a cultural tradition (Ukrainians) is threatened by a nation that doesn't respect this tradition and even refutes its existence (Russians). However, cultural heritage has also been accused of resisting values and worldviews such as freedom, democracy, and resistance to oppression. In its name, social groups have sought to distinguish themselves from other groups in a separatist act that has created regional danger, caused bloody civil wars, threatens to jeopardize the democratic regime, and has maltreated foreigners. The cultural heritage is a platform and a praxis that make it possible to create a unified political community, and at the same time cultural heritage challenges the attempt to overcome differences and create dynamic and agreed-upon cultural federations that do not submit to political and symbolic borders.

The Israeli case study demonstrates the Gordian knot that binds nationality and cultural heritage. Addressing issues of preservation, designation, representation,

and positioning, heritage-making in Israel has evolved in-between the poles created by the Palestinian/Jews and the Ashkenazi/Mizrahi divisions. Thus, basing the demand for national sovereignty on the existence of cultural heritage allows the state of Israel to have it both ways. Cultural heritage promises intra-Jewish national unity that challenges various Jewish-Arab hybrids and amalgams. At the same time, cultural heritage strives to grant Palestinians living in Israel a cultural autonomy that would reduce the contact between Arabs and Jews and thus make it possible to refrain from engaging with political issues and minimize the conflict, yet without drawing a permanent border that would split the Jewish national state between two peoples (Lustik 1999). In this trade-off, Arab-Jews (Mizrahim) are given a national identity instead of their cultural heritage, whereas the Israeli Palestinians are given a cultural heritage instead of a national identity. It is an inconclusive and ongoing situation that tries to neutralize forces that push for a separation between the nations on the basis of cultural traditions, and at the same time tries to neutralize the creation of a bi-national/cultural state or a state characterized by multiculturalism. It seems that we should pay close attention to Balibar's (1991) claim that it is precisely processes of nationalization that make societies more and more ethnocentric, since nationality feeds on and emphasizes the cultural heritage of the past as the unifying power of the future.

Flipping the gaze from the past to the future, while experiencing radical changes of knowledge-construction and transformation, will make it possible to shift the focus of heritage to global issues such as nuclear waste, climate crisis, change landscapes, and other troubling phenomena. Transforming heritage from a "national treasure" approach to more of a "all humankind" approach, freed from national regulators, experts, and authorities, can guarantee a new deployment and access to culture as a source of humane value. A wishful thinking that collapsed since some of the Palestinians have turned to radical Islam.

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# Common, shared, contradictory heritage?

## A concept and its dimensions

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*Christiane Dätsch*

### Introduction

Cultural heritage, as it is widely defined in Europe, is the visible sign of a past that an individual or a collective preserves, transmits and communicates. For this purpose, actors resort to artifacts or customs whose materiality and messages have proven to be adequate and durable for their collective memory. Cultural heritage, in this description, is both an intellectual and social idea that relates to time and space and is realized through objects, people, and knowledge. In this sense, cultural heritage is a factor of public and of educational discourses that engage in identity politics through material culture, but also of economics and global tourism. But can cultural heritage be shared beyond one's own collective?

This essay attempts to address this question by outlining what cultural policy and scholarship are currently discussing as the concept of shared cultural heritage. The concept can be seen as a variant of the cultural policy discourse on heritage, which comes into play in transnational contexts (Labrador 2013) and is based on the realization that the ideas of cultural heritage developed in the 19th century no longer apply. Thus, states find that their national memory can come into conflict with a global public, that they are highly differentiated, and that the old self-image of the nation no longer holds – and that is irritating.

At least four developments can be outlined as causes for this phenomenon in the second modern age:<sup>1</sup> Globalization including digitalization, the emergence of supranational alliances such as the EU, worldwide migration, and postcolonial discourse (Thiemeyer 2016). Both states and institutions try to find answers to these transformation processes and react with searches that preserve the official cultural heritage (Harrison 2013). At the same time, first approaches to solutions are presented: Among them is the concept of shared cultural heritage, which explores the function of heritage at the interfaces, and links national heritage narratives with

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1 On the terms of the first and second modernity see: Beck (1996).

global contexts. The fact that the idea of sharing cultural heritage is not always unproblematic, however, becomes apparent where the relationship between heritage and communities of heirs changes and where questions of ownership and interpretation shift. This is the case in Europe, among other places, where non-European cultural heritage in local museums is at stake and where decolonized states demand to reclaim their heritage for the construction of a (national) culture of memory in their own countries.

Based on these observations, the chapter attempts to clarify the preconditions for the concept of shared cultural heritage and to outline possible applications. It then narrows its focus to an example in Germany, for which it refers to a postcolonially transformed culture of memory: the Humboldt Forum in Berlin. Using this inclusive “cultural forum” (Humboldt Forum Foundation 2020, p. 9),<sup>2</sup> will shed light on the ways two contrasting varieties of the concept of shared heritage can meet in one house, and on the opportunities and limits of the concept.

## Definitions and terms: Cultural heritage revisited

In everyday language, cultural heritage is often used as an undefined collective term referring to the recognized artifacts and cultural practices of a community (Harrison 2013). In a narrower definition, cultural heritage is a policy term that seeks to “ensure the protection of cultural heritage for the enjoyment of present and future generations” (Hauser-Schäublin 2021, p. 64). This makes it clear that the term does not primarily refer to ownership issues, but to a social function. To better describe this function, three components of cultural heritage are often used: the inheritance, the community of heirs, and the horizon of values in which the inheritance is inscribed (Schüppel and Welzel 2020). Accordingly, agents in the policy field ascribe meaning to a cultural heritage and refer to religious, national, aesthetic, historical, or anthropological contexts. These also determine the respective accentuation by means of “memory frames” (Halbwachs 1985) that a society gives itself. The selection and application of contexts to heritage thus reflect, on the one hand, the beliefs of the actors who shape the policy field of cultural heritage and, on the other hand, the values of the society that preserves that heritage. The combination of selection, interpretation, discourse, and transmission also gives rise to that culture of memory that, according to Aleida Assmann, is “just another term for a political education” (Assmann 2018, p. 56).

As Michael Falser (2013) and other researchers have shown, the frame of reference against which the understanding of cultural heritage emerged in the first

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2 For better readability, quotations from German literature have been translated into English. German sources and literature are marked as such in the bibliography.

modernity is that of the nation. With this historical concept, which was established in the course of the modern reordering of Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries, a description could be found not only for enlarged state territories, but also for a past that was shared by all those who inhabited these territories (Bolten 2007). Thus, connected to the idea of the nation from the very beginning was an essentialist understanding of culture and heritage, which France was the first nation to apply it to the realm of cultural heritage. After a wave of destruction during the French Revolution, the heritage of the old elites was reinterpreted as a symbol of revolutionary thought, to which fell the task of visualizing the “universalization” (Nietzel 2021, p. 149) of the principles of “liberty, equality, fraternity” on the basis of the greatness of the French nation (Thiemeyer 2018).

While France (and in its wake the other European nation-states) initially followed the normative concept of culture of the Enlightenment, and therefore focused primarily on objects of art, the 19th century saw a broadening of the concept of what was worthy enough to be preserved and collected. Now, not only art and objects of antiquity were considered cultural heritage, but also objects that were ascribed a symbolic or exotic function – objects from overseas, for example, which symbolized earlier stages of human development within the framework of an evolutionary understanding of history and served as a counterpoint to Europe’s progress in civilization (Conrad 2008). Even if this understanding was apparently modified in the course of the decolonization of the Global South, and even if at the beginning of the 21st century the intangible cultural heritage of indigenous peoples was given equal status with the material heritage of Western and Arab cultures (UNESCO 2003), the imagined connection between cultural heritage and nation and the method of cultural comparison (with all its implications) have persisted in the political and legal thinking of many actors. The former can still be found in the formulation of a “national culture of memory” (Assmann 2018).

The question of the extent to which the reference point “nation” is also useful as a frame of reference for the discourses of the second modernity is answered differently in view of the increasing interconnectedness of the world (Beck 1996; Thiemeyer 2018). While the nation-state and its understanding of culture is experiencing a boom in some regions, the model is proving increasingly outdated for others. Critical historians are re-examining national historiographies (Houben and Rehbein 2022) and showing that migration and cultural exchange is the real constant in human history (Conrad 2013; 2017). Such findings also have an impact on national memory discourses, as well as on their conventional closure mechanisms such as nation, territory, ethnicity, religion, or language (Geertz 1995; Bolten 2007). Worldwide migratory movements of people and objects explode genealogical notions of identity, just as the simple equation that a cultural heritage and its heritage community must be located in the same (geographical) place no longer holds. It is against this background that the concept of shared cultural heritage emerges.



## Components of cultural heritage: (How) can cultural heritage be shared?

As Sigrid Weigel (2016) points out, the concept of shared cultural heritage is often conflated with the controversy over the restitution of cultural property.<sup>3</sup> Shared heritage, however, is less about questions of legal ownership than about how a cultural heritage is interpreted by transnationally or culturally positioned communities of heirs. Crucial is the idea that cultural heritage can be interpreted beyond the borders of a nation, that cross-community connections exist, and that they can be made fruitful for remembering in an increasingly interconnected global society. In highlighting these qualities, the concept also reimagines the question of the memory frames to which a collective refers. It emphasizes both the possibility that different heritage communities share a (hitherto nationally contextualized) cultural heritage and that individuals can belong to multiple heritage communities. Shared heritage thus means allowing and actively thinking about multiple meanings and affiliations for cultural heritage. Such a denationalized culture of memory focuses less on the homogenization of national memory and more on what the multiple interconnected past means for the actions of the collective in an equally interconnected present. Such an approach changes the mission of those institutions responsible for preserving cultural heritage. Hence, the concept of shared heritage is referred to in some studies as a “tool for transformative heritage management” (Küver 2022, p. 139). How this transformational idea is realized in the three components of cultural heritage will be outlined briefly.

(1) *Heritage*: The realization that different cultures have been in contact with each other since the dawn of mankind is not new. The consequences of this “cultural exchange” (Burke 2000) are also well known. The transfer of ideas, artifacts, and customs spurred adaptation processes and new contextualizations; these processes are often described as cultural hybridization (Bhabha 2000). Overlapping, culture and context-dependent processes of reception in turn have an effect on the artifacts. Communities into which these artifacts “migrated” endow them with new meanings, and not infrequently they see the artifacts as their (own) cultural heritage after a certain period of time (Hauser-Schäublin 2021).<sup>4</sup> This leads to the fact that cultural

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3 This is the case, for example, when cultural heritage is equated with cultural property and artifacts are understood as property whose (rightful) owner is to be determined. The concept of cultural property is therefore used primarily in legal contexts, where – as the following definition from international law shows – it refers to movable or immovable property that is “of great importance to the cultural heritage of all peoples” (Hague Convention 1954, in Federal Office for Civil Protection 2012, p. 33).

4 For example, in the case of the bust of Nefertiti, which Egypt has been reclaiming since the 1920s and most recently in 2009, as a “central symbol of Egyptian identity” (Tauschek 2013, p. 139), it is argued: The bust, cared for and preserved by the *Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation*, is now also “German” cultural heritage.

heritage, especially migrated heritage, is never one-dimensional, and that different narratives are possible to activate meanings. To be aware of such (cultural) interdependencies, historical knowledge is necessary, including of the appropriation processes of heritage. This is where the concept of shared cultural heritage comes in: it is about enabling “the recovery of submerged knowledge” (Weigel 2016) and initiating a process of shared research that takes into account aspects of meaning, provenance, and appropriation of heritage (Koch 2021).

(2) *The community of heirs*: Cultural exchange not only leads to multiperspectival “object histories” (Mostafawy 2014), but also to the dynamization of communities of heirs that can form beyond the reference size of the nation – as individuals, as sub- or pan-collectives (Hansen 2011). Conversely, this means that people no longer (have to) automatically ascribe to a certain cultural heritage through a national culture or culture of origin, but decide for themselves on a cultural heritage and thereby (can) also belong to several communities of heirs. The right to freely choose one’s cultural heritage is declared as a cultural human right in the Fribourg Declaration (1998/2007). This declaration, commissioned by UNESCO, carries forward the Universal Declaration of Human Rights into the cultural sphere and therefore emphasizes the individual as a central factor in the heritage process. At the same time, the Declaration dissolves the spatial connection of heritage and inheritance and replaces it with a universal, inalienable approach: “Every person has the freedom to identify with one or more cultural communities, even across national boundaries, and to change this choice” (Freiburg Group 2007, Art. 4a). Since in the second modernity many inheritors are no longer located at the place of their (genealogically based) heritage, but form new communities where they live, social heritage communities<sup>5</sup> emerge which are characterized by a communicative and pragmatic relationship to heritage. What holds these communities together is not a common, geographically or ethnically defined origin, but an attitude that Gabi Dolff-Bonekämper (2013) describes with the expression “shared concern” (2013, p. 113).

(3) *The value horizon*: A heritage community thus deprived of its spatial and ethnic closure mechanisms must orient itself to other coordinates; as a rule, these are social ones. Likewise, it has to take into account different ranges of and perspectives on the heritage, which is why a collective culture of memory that is formed on the shared cultural heritage gives itself a transnational memory framework (Sandkühler, Epple and Zimmerer 2021). For the concept of shared heritage, this means that the value horizon on which the previous (national) memory cultures were based has to be questioned anew, compared, expanded, and de-nationalized. As a rule, this

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5 This term is first found in the EU’s Faro Convention, which, like the Fribourg Declaration, strengthens the cultural rights of individuals: “A heritage community consists of people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations” (Council of Europe 2005, Art. 2b)

means confronting nations with universal issues such as those of human rights. This leads to a different (self-)perception of the remembering collectives, which have to re-locate themselves in international, multi-perspective contexts.<sup>6</sup> That cultures of memory can be both reconciliatory and irreconcilable in this process is a realization that shapes the discourse on shared cultural heritage, but also the work of heritage agencies.

### Varieties of understanding: Common or shared heritage?

With regard to previous theories of heritage, two approaches can be distinguished: the institutionalized heritage discourse as represented by the politics of nation-states and UNESCO, and Critical Heritage Studies, which see themselves as a critique of the former. They expose conceptual distortions and the asymmetrical power relations in the institutionalized heritage discourse. For the concept of shared heritage, both approaches are relevant. However, they accentuate the understanding of sharing differently (Lowenthal 1998; Smith 2006; Harrison 2013; Meskell 2018; Simpson 2018). While institutionalized discourse interprets shared heritage as a common heritage that people share because they have common values and stand on common ground as a community of heirs (Bernecker 2023), critical heritage studies emphasize that this precondition does not exist. They criticize the institutionalized heritage discourse for ignoring, for the sake of the notion of common ground, opposing memory frames (usually of the Global South) as well as hegemonic relations. Critical Heritage Studies base their critique on a discursive concept of culture, as developed by Cultural Studies, which assumes that cultures have always been intertwined but that power asymmetries prevent a consensual reception; this also applies to cultural heritage. They therefore speak of a shared but not a common heritage and also call for a critical revision of the framework of remembering (Harrison 2013). Shared heritage thus emphasizes the hegemonic, which is why the concept is said to have transformational power where an intertwined but contradictorily remembered heritage is up for discussion. Before showing that these two interpretations of shared heritage can clash in one and the same institution, I will first outline four contexts of application in which different parties in the policy field of cultural heritage currently explicitly refer to the concept of common or shared heritage.

(1) *Common heritage as a universal archive*: The notion that a selected cultural heritage can have world validity is represented by the institutionalized heritage discourse. It is based on the conviction that this cultural heritage has a universal value,

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6 Examples of programs with this goal include the Polish-Jewish dialogue or the Shared Heritage program of the Netherlands (see Other Sources: No. 1, 2).

i. e. it is an expression of the creative power of the human spirit, and as such acts as a universal archive of humanity. On the basis of this assumption, UNESCO has defined World Heritage Sites of Culture and Nature since 1972 and Intangible Heritage of Humanity since 2003; it lists both (UNESCO 1972; 2003). It justifies the international protection of this heritage by its scope. It must be available to all people, who can thus reflect on their “humanity”.<sup>7</sup> This notion dissolves the spatial connection of heritage and inheritance in favor of a philosophical principle. By “transforming a recognized local cultural asset into a world-public asset” (Hauser-Schäublin 2021, p. 64), the label “World Heritage” expands local heritage. Locally produced cultural heritage enters into a relationship with the heritage community of humanity, which has neither produced nor transmitted this heritage, but classifies it as relevant to itself in an ideational sense. This can entail a tension between the local community of production and the global community of reception. Sometimes the expansion also goes hand in hand with an arbitrariness of the place of storage, because “global” heritage no longer necessarily has to be stored at the place of production, but can also be found in other places, such as the great museums of the world (Hauser-Schäublin 2021).

(2) *Common heritage as a transnational memory space*: The idea that cultural heritage can create a transnational space of thought and memory beyond the nation also goes back to the institutionalized approach. It is advocated in cultural policy by heritage communities that form along national borders as well as by supranational agents such as the European Union that seek to form a common canon of values. For example, the EU assumes that emphasizing the de-national value of cultural heritage can lead to a supranational heritage community based on a shared culture of memory and a transnational collective identity. Unlike UNESCO, however, the EU pursues this goal primarily with respect to its members and thus within the supranationally defined territory of the EU countries. In the eyes of its critics, this leads to the EU resorting to geographical and genealogical closure mechanisms for the idea of Europe, as already known from the discourse on the nation, and applying them now to an enlarged territory instead of the model of the nation (Vinken 2018). In this variant, the sharing of cultural heritage is once again linked to the criterion of scope. The heritage of member states is to be experienced as a common European heritage, which is why historical lines of connection between regions and cultures are emphasized, national perspectives are modified, and transnational narratives are designed. Such

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7 The idea of the universality of cultural heritage also refers to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) of the United Nations, which grants inalienable dignity and rights to all human beings. Although culture and cultural heritage are not yet reflected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UNESCO makes up for this in its Fribourg Declaration (1998/2006). Postcolonial approaches criticize this approach to universality as eurocentric (Smith 2006; Harrison 2013).

an understanding is also propagated by the EU's Cultural Heritage Year, proclaimed in 2018 under the motto "Sharing Heritage", which, with the help of civil society players, was intended to convey more knowledge about common heritage and increase Europeans' emotional approval of Europe (German National Committee for Monument Protection 2019). This attempt to use cultural heritage as soft power for political purposes actually replicated in some ways central ideas of nationhood in the 19th century (Al Dajani and Leiner 2022). While the imagined community is enlarged into the supranational, it continues to pursue the goal of homogenization.

(3) *Shared heritage as a discursive practice*: In contrast to the institutionalized approach, critical heritage studies ask what these "new", enlarged heritage communities look like when they are no longer thought of as homogeneous. To do so, they focus on two heritage communities: migrated people and societies of the Global South. People who migrate to other societies often find that as minorities they are exposed to hegemonic thinking in the host country, experiencing exclusion mechanisms that make them or their culture invisible or devalued. Therefore, Critical Heritage Studies first pose the question of the distribution of power and point out that heritage communities in migration societies are hybrids (Simpson 2018) – just as they are in societies of former colonies. Members of these communities of heirs must therefore first negotiate the rules of the game by which their remembering takes place. The first prerequisite for this is that people from different cultures, who bring their knowledge and perspectives to the process of negotiation, are on an equal footing. In this sense, the concept of shared heritage in a hybrid society is realized as a social inclusive idea. Through the process of negotiation based on different cultural knowledge, multi-perspective approaches to heritage emerge, which are interpreted and received at eye level. Thus, important for this understanding of shared heritage as a discursive practice is that heritage and heritage communities are seen as hybrid, but also that access to heritage communities is free and that people can belong to multiple (social) heritage communities. That such a process of negotiating meaning and the collective also entails conflict is obvious. It reveals cultural overlaps, but also conflicting perspectives and untranslatability.

(4) *Shared heritage as a conflict research*: Where there are no preconditions for inclusive narratives, on the other hand, the concept of shared heritage has a difficult time. This is especially true where "difficult heritage" (Grimme 2018) is negotiated, as is the case with cultural artifacts from former colonies and especially from Africa; they can be found in large numbers in European museums today. In terms of the concept of shared cultural heritage, this heritage proves to be the most complex because it is opposed in all three components that make up the social heritage function. Neither have the cultures of memory of the victims and perpetrators involved in colonialism converged – the joint reappraisal of trauma is taking place hesitantly (Assmann 2018) – nor do the communities of heirs have a common understanding of how to deal with the shared heritage. The particular geographical situation of the

mobile and immobile heritage that makes up this cultural heritage as a whole also contributes to this (Küver 2022). While Africans on their continent have to deal with the question of how to relate to a heritage that reminds them (in the form of buildings, sites, or monuments) of the suffering of their ancestors during the colonial period, European states see themselves in the role of owners of mobile heritage that was made by Africans for export or forcibly stolen as elite art by Europeans; they are also confronted with the question of how to deal with this heritage today (Van-Hee 2016). The spatial relationship between inheritance and community of heirs is thus more thoroughly turned upside down in this variant of shared inheritance than in any other. At the same time, the answers to the question of how to deal with inheritance often differ among those involved. While politicians of the decolonized countries see in the restitution of artifacts an (at least partial) correction of historical injustice and its reparation, the successor states of the former colonial powers invoke the fact that not all ethnological objects were acquired illegally, or that many of them would not even exist anymore without European “rescue ethnology” (König 2017; Kohl 2019; Penny 2019). Instead of restitution on a grand scale, they suggest researching provenance and clarifying individual contexts. In the case of “difficult” heritage, two discourses thus intersect that were kept apart at the beginning of this essay: that of ownership and restitution and that of transnational appropriation through joint research, interpretation, and provision of cultural heritage (also digitally). How both discourses are currently merging in the German culture of remembrance and the Humboldt Forum as a highlighted heritage agency will now be shown.

### **Political framework: Postcolonial memory culture in Germany**

In Germany, the concept of shared heritage first appeared in the context of the Humboldt Forum, which was conceived in 2011, and was intended as a proposal on how to deal with non-European cultural heritage in a globalized world. This question, which had already been discussed in expert circles for some time, met with a public mood in the 2010s that was ready for self-questioning with regard to German colonial entanglements. In this way, Germany reacted to a general, postcolonially inspired critique of European memory culture on the one hand, and on the other hand to the fact that the country itself had been a colonial power, a fact that had barely been addressed (Foundation German Historical Museum Berlin 2016). Activists drew attention to the truth that streets were named after military figures in colonial service, that monuments concealed hegemonic contexts (see: Jana Weyer in this volume), and that the history of German colonies was still largely told in a monoperspectival manner (Bechhaus-Gerst and Zeller 2018). More and more agents

entered the discussion, demanding a change in thinking as well as the illumination of global contexts and their reassessment (Sandkühler, Epple and Zimmerer 2021).

In 2018, these demands received political support from a document that took an unequivocal stand on issues of colonialism. In their report on the restitution of African cultural property (2018), the French art historian Bénédicte Savoy and the Senegalese economist Felwine Sarr recommended that African cultural property, which was widely held in French ethnological museums, should be returned to its original owners. On behalf of French President Emmanuel Macron, they had re-examined these holdings and, according to them, had come across a clear set of files (Sarr and Savoy 2018; 2019). Their findings corresponded with the political stance of the president, who had himself initiated a reconciliation process during a visit to Burkina Faso in 2017, which was intended to contribute to the “healing of traumas” (King 2021a, p. 308). In this context, the restitution of circulated cultural property was seen as a prerequisite for a shared culture of remembrance. The approach of placing cultural property in the service of such a “radical” cultural policy earned both approval and criticism (Schüttpelz 2021). Above all, however, the discourses on cultural property and shared cultural heritage have been inextricably intertwined ever since.<sup>8</sup>

In view of such international considerations, the German government also grappled with questions of colonial entanglement and its consequences for the German culture of remembrance. In Germany, moreover, it became increasingly difficult to answer the question of why the Holocaust, as an incomparable crime, had a central place in the all-German culture of remembrance, but not the genocide of the Ovaherero and Nama in Namibia (1904–1908).<sup>9</sup> Hesitant at first, but then determined, the German government faced up to the task of coming to terms with the past and in 2021 recognized the genocide in Namibia, officially asked for forgiveness, and pledged to pay reparations (see Other Sources: No. 3). However, Germany refused to make sweeping judgments similar to France’s on the subject of cultural property, choosing instead the path of individual provenance research and establishing its own program at the German Center for the Loss of Cultural Property to clarify the contexts of appropriation of colonial cultural property (Grütters and Müntefering 2019). This research soon led to the first returns of objects from clearly

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8 As early as 1952, UNESCO had put a stop to the circulation of cultural property through art theft, trafficking, loot, or other forms of relocation of national cultural property outside the country, with its Convention on Measures to Prohibit and Prevent the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. The Convention had been renewed in 1970 (UNESCO 1970).

9 In this regard, Thomas Sandkühler, Angelika Epple, and Jürgen Zimmerer (2021) note: “There are increasing signs that colonialism is regarded as a comparable violation against elementary principles of humanity [to the Holocaust, Ch. D.], so that the principle of intertemporally under civil and international law is legally in question” (2021, p. 22).

documented contexts of injustice, such as from the suppression of the uprising in Namibia (Bernsdorff and Thiemeyer 2019).

Involved in such framework conditions, the directors of the approximately 20 ethnological museums and university collections in Germany also issued a declaration in May 2019. In their Heidelberg Statement, they asked for the differentiation of the debate with regard to acquisition contexts as well as for support in the decolonization task. Not only the readjustment of the culture of remembrance, but also the “delegation of decision-making authority to the museums” (The Directors 2019), as well as the improvement of research and concrete working conditions in the museums, were needed. In July 2019, the German Museums Association reacted and published its revised guideline for dealing with collection items from colonial contexts, in which it clarified terminology, divided case groups for collection items, and recommended an international perspective on German remembrance culture, and a fundamental examination of museum collections for “colonial contexts” (German Museums Association 2019). Accordingly, colonial thinking was not only a problem of ethnological museums, but of all heritage agencies. The central challenge of decolonization, then, was to critically examine the past and modify the culture of memory on this basis.

Despite these statements, ethnological museums were increasingly caught in the crossfire of public criticism and found themselves in the situation of having to justify not only overcrowded depots, but also the way they presented the heritage of the Other (Sternfeld 2009; Kohl 2019). Ethnological exhibitions were deconstructed as exoticizing or eurocentric, and museums were asked to relocate themselves in the face of postcolonial entanglements beyond hegemonic thinking. This was accompanied by the call to reflect on their own actions as heritage institutions and to develop new forms of dialogue. The concept of shared heritage seemed to offer good possibilities for this. It is now to be tested at the Humboldt Forum in Berlin.

### **An example from Germany: The Humboldt Forum in Berlin**

No other museum manager has made the concept of shared cultural heritage as well-known in Germany as the president of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, Hermann Parzinger (Parzinger 2021). Together with four other partners (the *Humboldt Forum Foundation in the Berlin Palace*, the *Humboldt University*, the *City Museum Berlin*, and the *Berlin Society Cultural Projects*), the Foundation runs the Humboldt Forum in the center of Berlin, which has been inviting visitors to engage with Germany, Europe, and the world since 2021. At the same time, the Forum is continuously the focus of media criticism. (Fig. 1) The reasons for this are manifold and do not only concern the holdings that the Foundation has exhibited on two floors since the opening of the Humboldt Forum: the collections of the Asian Museum of Art and the Eth-



nological Museum, which were formerly on display in Berlin-Dahlem. Already the decision to house the Humboldt Forum in the partially reconstructed Berlin Palace of the Hohenzollerns (and thus on the site of the former Palace of the Republic of the GDR) had caused long discussions in the media, but also among activists and the Berlin population (Dorgerloh 2021).

The name of the Forum and the concept intended for the interior of the building were perceived as just as backward-looking as the postmodern, yet nostalgically transfigured architecture of the palace. According to the conception of the founding directors, the Forum was to be a “cosmopolitan place” (Appiah and Thiemeyer 2021, p. 55) in the spirit of its namesakes Wilhelm and Alexander von Humboldt and to follow the principles of the two natural and educational researchers in its programmatic work. Accordingly, the Forum was intended as a place for “linking the self with the world”, for the “realization that everything is interconnected” (Humboldt Forum Foundation 2020, p. 38), for the diversity of views, and for the aspiration to share knowledge from the past and present:

Conceived and designed as an inclusive cultural forum, it is a center for the arts, cultures and sciences that brings together (living) worlds, continents, and regions – an open, inviting place for encounters and equal coexistence, for experiencing and global learning (Humboldt Forum Foundation 2020, p. 5).

Dialogue, encounter, inclusion: these are the terms used by the Humboldt Forum to describe a transnational concept in the sense of a universal archive. Science and museums, architecture and art, nature and culture, the living environment of visitors and the cultures of the world are to be networked on around 44,200 square meters of floor space. Three museums, a library, a laboratory, a terrace, numerous open spaces, and a café invite visitors to engage with the world’s knowledge in one central location – Berlin (Humboldt Forum Foundation 2020). The cultural understanding of this concept is unmistakably essentialist. With its programmatic work, the Forum wants to contribute to discovering the “own” in the “foreign”, to understanding Europe and modernity. In doing so, it does not ignore the dark side of colonialism, but it also uses a homogenizing overall rhetoric that points to an understanding of history that affirms progress and idealizes rather than deconstructs Europe. Against this background, the reference to two humanist scholars, who at the same time symbolize the geographic coordinates of center (Wilhelm) and periphery (Alexander), is another point of criticism. Architecture, program, and name served the dialogue with the world from a European perspective and the “formation of a Prussian-German-European identity” (see Other Sources: No. 4), the accusation goes.

Fig. 1: The Humboldt Forum in the Berlin Palace, east façade (Photo: Christiane Dätch)



Fig. 2: Joint research: scene from the documentary (Photo: Christiane Dätch)



In fact, the three founding directors, the prehistorian Hermann Parzinger and the art historians Horst Bredekamp and Neil MacGregor, seemed to orient themselves less on postcolonial discourses than on the cosmological concept of the German history of ideas (König 2021a, p. 307). Thus, the directors did not notice that their decision to bring the ethnological collections into the reconstructed Hohenzollerns palace symbolically reiterated the ambivalence of an epoch that is now seen as Europe's negative legacy: the power of old elites and their colonial expansion. Many of the Ethnological Museum's approximately 500,000 objects that came to Berlin between 1884 and 1918 are also heavily burdened by this past. The collection contains objects that were captured after the suppression of uprisings, as in the former colonies of German East Africa (Tanzania) and German Southwest Africa (Namibia), or after punitive expeditions, as in Papua New Guinea (Aly 2021; Binter 2021; Parzinger 2021), or that were acquired in the international trade, which in turn drew its goods from colonial campaigns, as in the case of the so-called Benin bronzes (König 2021b). Thus, even while preparing the permanent exhibition at the Humboldt Forum, the Foundation was confronted with restitution claims from Nigeria, which stopped the work for a while. Since the 1970s, Nigeria, as the successor state of the Kingdom of Benin, has repeatedly requested the return of the bronzes. In July 2022, the federal government complied with this request and returned all 512 Berlin Benin bronzes.<sup>10</sup> The decision ultimately led to a compromise in the permanent exhibition, which has been fully open since the fall of 2022, and in which around a third of the transferred objects are now on loan for ten years (see Other Sources: No. 5).

Far less noticed by the media, other restitutions also took place during this period (Parzinger 2021). However, Hermann Parzinger does not see the return of objects as the only beatific solution, as many museum objects are not reclaimed at all because they are simple everyday objects or – as is often the case with artifacts from the trade – because their provenance can no longer be fully clarified (König 2017).<sup>11</sup> In light of such facts, the migration of many museum objects must be seen as a permanent condition – a realization that puts today's owners under an obligation to deal with collections in situ. To meet this responsibility, Parzinger advocates the concept of shared heritage, which is realized in the ethnological collection in the guise of conflict research. In binational research projects, German and curators from the countries of origin jointly interrogate the objects of the collection, identify contexts, elab-

10 According to its own statements, this is “the largest transfer of ownership of collection objects from a colonial context to date” (see Other Sources: No. 6). The term restitution is not mentioned in the press release.

11 Parzinger receives unexpected, albeit rather ironic, backing for this view from postcolonial quarters. The Cameroonian political scientist Achille Mbembe, for example, argues that the restitution of objects is far too simple a method of righting wrongs suffered and proposes that “Europe should be condemned to [...] live forever with what they have looted – and continue to play their Cain role to the bitter end” (Mbembe in: Habermalz 2018).

orate multi-perspective interpretations, and break down “old hierarchies of interpretation” (Parzinger 2021, p. 108). Such research brings to light shared expertise or “sharing knowledge” (König 2017) and recontextualizes the objects. This knowledge is also made fruitful in the permanent exhibition of the Humboldt Forum, which has radically changed its narrative and adapted it to postcolonial aspects.

When visiting the permanent exhibition on Africa, for example, the visitor learns in a documentary film (Fig. 2) about the research project with the Museums Association of Namibia (MAN), which examined about 1400 objects of the Namibia collection (Parzinger 2021), and about the country’s colonial history and the painful memory of this part of its history. In the display cases, the objects explored are explained by several texts from different dates that reflect different, sometimes conflicting interpretations. They represent the respective knowledge about the objects in the culture of origin and in museum culture, whereby the contexts of everyday life not infrequently conflict with the view of (Western) science on the object. In this way, not only multiperspectivity is generated, but at the same time the hegemonic view of African culture (often practiced in the past) is deconstructed. The exhibition narrative thus makes the curators’ learning and knowledge process visible on the one hand, and a piece of (Western) history of science on the Other. It questions practices and attribution processes as well as Western certainties of perceiving the world. This postcolonially inspired approach is complemented by subjective interpretations that artists from the countries of origin have made of the exhibited heritage and made visible in their own works. They address not only colonial conquests and violence, but also hybridized and migrated identities, ruptures, and traumas in their own culture of memory, and “white spots” in their material cultural heritage, as many objects of everyday life are missing. Through this form of mediation, the visitor also receives new information about the exhibited heritage and experiences artistic conflict research as part of that variant of shared cultural heritage that sees itself as a discursive practice.

As plausible as the implementation of the concept of shared heritage as conflict research is in the collection and in the exhibition’s communication, the approach raises questions when it touches the level of the museum as an institution. Thus, the founding director Parzinger formulates the thesis that “the cultural heritage of the museums is not only preserved, but is considered the property of all mankind” (Parzinger 2021, p. 108). He is referring to the ethnological collections exhibited in the Humboldt Forum, which he elevates to the rank of world cultural heritage with this sentence. By proposing to apply to these collections the idea of universal heritage (developed from the Western concept of art) – not only a different idea of shared heritage as common heritage comes to light, but also an essentialist idea of cultural heritage. It can also be used to justify the current location of these collections. Accordingly, ethnological collections, similar to world heritage, have a universal scope and no longer necessarily have to be presented at their place of

origin (Parzinger 2021). And similarly to how UNESCO perceives itself as merely the manager of this heritage, Parzinger ascribes to (national) cultural institutions the role of a “governor”, a non-partisan administrator in an internationally intertwined culture of memory that neither has to clarify nor automatically refer to questions of (national) ownership. This goes hand in hand with the denationalization of the museum as an institution and as a player in the policy field of cultural heritage, since such a museum does not have to see itself as committed to the self-image of the country that finances it, nor to questions of (national) memory culture; it serves a universal heritage alone. What at first sounds like a visionary way out of that aporia in which the institution of the museum as a 19th-century Western invention finds itself today (Tyradellis 2014), raises questions at a second glance. How can a museum, which also has the task of protecting the heritage it holds, be absolved of questions of (legal) ownership? And which decision-makers does such an institution follow, despite all the “democratization of museums” (Parzinger 2021, p. 108), if not the respective state to which it is subordinate? Even in the case of an institution like the Humboldt Forum, (national) politics does not remain without effects on concrete action. The museum as the “governor” of a common heritage remains a metaphor.

Parzinger’s concept of a shared cultural heritage furthermore shows an epistemic discontinuity. While it follows the understanding of shared heritage as discursive practice and conflict research on the object when researching and mediating the ethnological collections, it returns to shared heritage as a universal archive when describing the institution of the museum. Embedded in the overall narrative of the Humboldt Forum as a place of dialogue with the world, the argument shifts from questions of “sharing” to the transnational idea and finally to the argument of ethnological cultural property as a kind of world heritage. By invoking the universal in the transnational, the idea of cultural heritage as a universal archive overlaps that of shared heritage as a discursive practice. The ethnological collections and their post-colonial approach to research are thus reincorporated into the “master narrative” of the Humboldt Forum. In the end, the European, perhaps even eurocentric self-image of the Forum proves to be stronger than the confrontation with opposing African memories and their traumas. It remains to be seen whether, under these conditions, the Forum will indeed become the “epicenter of a [...] new kind of relationship with the world” (Parzinger 2021, p. 109).

## **Chances, limits, utopias? A brief outlook**

The concept of shared cultural heritage shows that cultural heritage is always located in contexts, with culture and politics not infrequently forming a single entity – especially when it comes to processes of identity politics. In the second modern era,

in which collective identities are increasingly formed beyond national self-understandings (at least in certain constellations), the concept of shared cultural heritage plays an important role. How differently it can be used in this context is shown by the four variants outlined as well as by the case study of the Humboldt Forum. Understanding the concept thus depends both on a critical revision of previous approaches to cultural heritage and on a reflection on one's own concept of culture. With regard to the European understanding of culture, it would have to be asked whether essentialist models can sufficiently respond to a globalized world, and whether they can sufficiently react to the processing of opposing cultures of memory, of trauma, and historical contexts of injustice. Likewise, possibilities of cooperation and encounter with representatives of the cultures of origin would have to be sought in order to research the object together. Thus, the concept of shared heritage on the one hand, offers the chance to respond to blind spots in one's own perspective through dialogue in a globalized and diversely interconnected world, and, on the other hand – and here lies its limit – makes visible the utopian character of a universal heritage that is bound to the borders of the nation-state in its care and mediation, at least in its institutional form. Against this background, the analysis of the contexts of application is an important key not only to critically illuminate political buzzwords, but also to enable civil societies to remember in a contemporary way through their heritage.

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## **II. Nationality and the construction of cultural heritage**



# The Dawn Multicultural Theater: Sharing heritage through documentary theater

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Sigal Peres

## Introduction

Historically, theater productions contribute to the construction of a society's cultural heritage. They are perceived as a legacy that echoes the past, as well as, providing an important contribution to the future. Hence, theater was defined by UNESCO (1984) as a cultural asset that should be protected for the next generations. Even though theaters can fulfill different roles in the process of heritage construction, national theater tends to adopt the ideological narratives and points of view of the dominant hegemonic group of their given nation. Through these ideological lenses, such theaters aspire to contribute to the creation of a powerful communal solidarity based upon a dominant heritage, which defines and legitimizes the existence of the state via this dominant lens. By doing so, the national theater can be described as a social institution and a performance that is invested in the canonical cultural work to preserve the collective memory (Carlson 2003).

The Israeli national theaters also promote the national narrative and heritage advocated by its dominant hegemonic group. This narrative emphasizes the contributions of the Ashkenazi community (Jews that emigrated to Israel from European countries) to the building of the State of Israel, while ignoring other ethnic, and cultural narratives and affiliations (Ofrat 1980; Urian 2004; Shem Tov 2022). Only a few independent theaters shed light on marginalized communities and tell their stories through their voice. *The Dawn Multicultural Theater* (The Dawn Theater), which operates in Israel, aims to be one of them. The theater presents the history of the Iraqi Jewish community (Babylonian Jewry),<sup>1</sup> that lived in Iraq before emigrating to Israel,

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1 Leading Iraqi-Jewish scholars describe their community by using the term "Arab-Jew". The term, which implies that Jewish and Arab cultures were interwoven, and thus rejects the binary division drawn by the Zionist political discourse between Jews and Arabs, has been the subject of heated controversy. See: Shohat (1989); Shenhav (2006); Somekh (2007); Levy (2008); Snir (2006); Yonah, Na'aman, and Machlev (2007).

and the community's immense support of the Zionist movement and the building of the State of Israel.

As a Jewish community that was part of the Arab-Muslim society and culture, Iraqi Jewry was caught in a paradox. The sharp division drawn by the hegemonic Ashkenazi Zionist group between Jews and Arabs underestimated the Iraqi Jewry's contribution to the nation, since its members were perceived as Arab-Jews (Cohen 2012). This hybrid cultural identity served to marginalize Iraqi Jewry, as well as the whole Mizrahi community (Jews that emigrated to Israel from Arab or Muslim countries) and exclude them from the national narrative and heritage. The Dawn Theater sought to reconstruct the Mizrahi community's image and their position in Israel's national heritage through a more inclusive lens, highlighting their experiences. Thus, while some independent theaters, especially documentary theaters, tend to prove that the heritage of the ethnic group that they represent is relevant, despite their rejection of the national culture and heritage, other ethnic groups use the theater's methods in order to be included in the national culture and heritage.

Given these understandings, the research examined the ways heritage is reshaped through the cultural experience of the of The Dawn Theater and its production of *Eliyahu's Daughters*. By analyzing the spectators' reactions to the play, I explored the ways in which the artistic event offered by The Dawn Theater is designed not only to mediate the narrative of the Iraqi Jewry by focusing on the past, but also to reshape it as a relevant event that influences the ways in which the group is included in the Israeli national cultural heritage.

Examining the various reactions of the audience that was exposed to the narratives of the Dawn Theatre reveals the power of the national heritage, and the ways in which local ethnic heritage perceive the national heritage as an important element in their identity and in establishing their sense of belonging to the collective.

## **Theater and the construction of national heritage: A case study in Israel**

As a cultural practice, heritage has received a broader definition, recognizing non-physical attributes, such as intangible heritage, as a part of a group's legacy (Smith 2006). Intangible heritage has social impacts at different levels, being a symbol of history, social values, and the development of goals. Intangible heritage is seen as quite diverse, including: storytelling, craft, literature, performance arts (theater, music, dance), cultural design, and artistic productions.

Theater and storytelling are cultural practices that can be found in almost every society, and are officially recognized forms of intangible cultural heritage (ICH). Both are practices that store and transmit customs, skills, traditions, and knowledge from generation to generation (Logan, Kockel and Craith 2015). And they both serve as transmitters of values, knowledge, and cultural heritage through the utilization

of words and performances. “Words and ideas that surround the emotions of listeners are the basis of stories”, claims Pereira (2019, p. 35). This act of storytelling happens in two different ways: they can portray “real life” events in a realistic way or tell a tale where creative license is given to reshape reality, creating a more appealing narrative.

As a cultural project, theater took part in what Benedict Anderson (1983) has termed an “imagined community”, by generating and legitimizing the ideological narratives of the nation. Zionism – the belief that Jews should return to their ancient homeland of Israel and continue to protect their right to live there – went through similar stages, within the process of recognizing and adopting national symbols and incorporating the myriad of ethnic Jewish narratives that represent the State of Israel.

Historically, since public displays of Judaism were generally forbidden in the diaspora, theater remained a small part of Jewish creative expression within the confines of the Jewish community. Thus, Jewish theater tradition was almost non-existent in Europe until the advent of Zionism. Only in the 1890s, during the Ottoman rule in Palestine/Eretz-Israel (mandatory Palestine), was the first play in Hebrew performed in Zionist schools. Since then, almost eighty original plays presenting the national narrative of the Ashkenazi pioneers, and their role in it, were published and staged before the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 (Aronson-Lehavi and Rokem 2010). The first established theaters that started operating in the *Yishuv* period (Hebrew for the Jewish settlement in Palestine/Eretz-Israel), aiming to become a forum that would influence the ideological-national perception of the *Yishuv* members in a real way, were the *Habima National Theater* and the *Ohel Theater*. Examining the political, ideological, and artistic roles of the Habima Theater (Hebrew for stage), founded in 1918 in Moscow and emigrated to Tel Aviv in 1931, exposes the national mission and role that the theater was fulfilling in its early days (Levy 1979). The Habima Theater took part in the Zionist cultural revolution by reflecting its commitment to the nation-building project and voicing the stories of the Zionist pioneers and their settled communities before the establishment of the State of Israel (Ofrat 1980; Abramson 1998). The glorification of the Ashkenazi pioneers and their contribution to the Zionist revolution, served to create the strong image and persona of the “New Jew” (as opposed to the antisemitic image of a weak, pale, and limited Jew). This “New Jew” theme was espoused in the repertoire of the Ohel Theater (Hebrew for tent), which was founded in 1925 as part of the socialist cultural activities (Feingold 2005).

The next generation in the Israeli theater presented nationalism as the ideal of self-sacrifice to the nation, as well as dealing with the Holocaust, mainly through the Ashkenazi point of view (Avigal 1996; Urian 2002). In the following years, the repertoire of the Israeli theater included more critical, satiric, and parodic perspectives that deconstructed the Zionist ethos. This move was still preoccupied with the Ashkenazi national culture and heritage. Even though the theater started to repre-



sent more groups that comprised Israeli society and questioned the relationships between Zionism and Judaism (Urian 2000), the Mizrahi Other remained in the margins (Urian 2001).

The image of the Mizrahim was highly influenced by the orientalist discourse (Said 1978), which served mainly the Ashkenazi Zionist viewpoint. Mizrahim were usually represented in the Israeli theater through stereotypes that resembled the representation of Arabs in Israeli culture.<sup>2</sup> Mizrahim were identified as aggressive, vulgar, and uneducated. Being perceived as trapped in their Arab culture, which the Ashkenazim looked down upon mainly because they didn't understand or appreciate the language and traditions, most Mizrahi characters in plays represented the fringes of society. The only way for these figures to escape their oriental "fate" was to experience interethnic integration by marrying an Ashkenazi character in the "happy end" of the plot (Gertz 1993). These representations marginalized the Mizrahim's contribution to the state of Israel, while espousing the superiority of the Ashkenazi culture and shared heritage. Thus, despite the Mizrahim's emergent representation in Israeli society (Samocha 1993), Mizrahim were still underrepresented in Israeli theater, culture, and heritage.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the preservation of the Mizrahim's ethnic culture faced difficulties. Even though theater can challenge the values of the dominant party's shared heritage, most theaters are still contributing to the construction of the national heritage as it is designed through the lens of the Ashkenazi pioneers (Shem-Tov 2022).

## Documentary theater and the construction of heritage

Only a few independent theaters in the Israeli theater scene shed light on narratives that represent minority groups and marginalized groups through documen-

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- 2 It was assumed that the Ashkenazi perception of the Oriental Jew was influenced by the stereotype of the Arab, because the Mizrahi immigrants of the 1950s and 1960s represented, in part, the disguised anxieties of the Ashkenazi Israelis concerning the "Jewishness" of their society. Hence, the flow of Jewish immigrants from the Arab countries would, from that viewpoint, lead to the erosion of the Western nature of Israeli society.
  - 3 Since the 1980s, the Israeli theater has produced a few plays that dealt with the Mizrahi Jews' history. The *Khan Theater* presented *Refuge* by Sami Michael, *Haifa Theater* presented *Demons in the Basement* by Sami Michael, and Habima National Theater presented *Moroccan King* by Gabriel Ben Simhon (Shem-Tov 2022). Mizrahi theater for youth includes two productions that concern Iraqi Jews: *Palms and Dreams* (1983) and *Scapegoat* (1987), which contests the orientalism of the Israeli education system and at the same time remains adherent to the conventional Zionist narrative (ibid).

tary theater. The Dawn Theater is one of them.<sup>4</sup> Recent attempts to define documentary theater have characterized it as having “a central or exclusive reliance on actual, rather than imaginary events [...] found in historical records” (Dawson 1999, p. 17). Hence, documentary theater is often focused on historical topics, which challenge the participants to engage with questions of cultural identity and heritage. As part of heritage work, documentary theater strives to provide the audience with a sense of history, community, and sensitivity to tangible and intangible cultural heritage that has been marginalized (Craith 2008). The practice of incorporating primary source materials into the spine of the play is one of the main features through which documentary theater composes a new understanding of the multifaceted and multicultural histories. Moreover, such theater groups aspire to create a “performative utopia” (Dolan 2005), that is an experience in which the audience feel a part of the event represented on stage, thus creating a connection and a sense of belonging between them and the historical event itself. Thus, documentary theater has been widely used to reconstruct the interpretations of historical events by derided communities through carefully chosen historical fragments, which were sometimes forgotten (Lev-Aladgem 2010).

There are few independent theaters currently operating in Israel, such as the *Al-Karma Theater*,<sup>5</sup> *Inbal Dance Theater*,<sup>6</sup> *Bimat Kedem Theater*,<sup>7</sup> and *Gesher Theater*.<sup>8</sup> Most of these theaters are voicing marginalized ethnic and ethno-national groups that comprise Israeli society today. Even though most of these theaters are using critical practices to present various cultural identities and heritage, they rarely engage in documentary theater.

The Dawn Theater was specifically founded as a documentary theater in order to create a theatrical experience that represents and promotes awareness of the history, culture, and heritage of Mizrahi Jews who immigrated to Israel in the 1950's and paid a high social and cultural price in the process of absorption, where their rich culture and heritage was denigrated by Ashkenazi cultural dominance (Meir-

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4 Documentary theater is known by a variety of names, such as historical drama, contemporary historical play, theater-of-fact, nonfictional theater, repertory theater, theater of journalism, and theater-in-education (Dawson 1999).

5 Alkarma Theater is the oldest Arab theater in Israel. The theater had put on plays for all ages, particularly children and youth.

6 The company was founded in 1949 to safeguard the rich heritage of Yemenite Jews. See: Roginsky (2006).

7 This theater promoted original Israeli productions with an emphasis on non-European Jewish culture. The theater was closed in 2013 due to insufficient financial support from the Ministry of Culture. See: Shem-Tov (2021).

8 This theater was founded in Israel in 1991. The theatre consists mostly of new immigrants from Russia and acts as a bilingual theater, performing in Russian and in Hebrew alternately. See: Gershenson (2005).

Glitzenstein 2018). The Dawn Theater was born out of a desire to address the life stories of these Mizrahi Jews, and for Israelis of every background to become acquainted with their unique legacy. Its first production, *Eliyahu's Daughters* written by Gilit Itzhaki (2015), tells the story of an Iraqi Jewish family in the years leading up to their emigration to Israel. Their lives in Iraq, relationships with their Arab neighbors, their connection to the Zionist Movement, as well as the dilemmas of departing to an unknown country (Israel) and leaving their lives behind were the backdrop of the play. The family's story takes place during the 1940's, when the Jewish community in Bagdad suffered from the *Farhud* (Arabic for looting or robbery). The Farhud was a brutal pogrom that erupted on June 1, 1941. It was two days of mayhem, led by an inflamed mob that was influenced by the pro-Nazi Iraqi regime of Rashid Ali. During the pogrom two hundred Jews were massacred, over two thousand were injured, jailed and tortured, raped, and left orphaned as their homes and property were looted (Saar-Mann 2018). This event marked the end of Muslim-Jewish co-existence in Iraq, and sparked the Iraqi Jewish community to seek eventual emigration.<sup>9</sup> The riots were described in detail in books (Kazzaz 2010; Shemesh 2011) and in a television series (*War and Memory*),<sup>10</sup> but despite that its history is virtually unknown among Israelis, with little to no representation in Israeli theater (Cohen 2012).<sup>11</sup> It is important to note that Ashkenazi Jews produced a rich cultural and historical narrative and heritage concerning their horrific suffering and martyrdom, as opposed to the lack of recognition given to the similar suffering of Mizrahi Jews, which lacked public expression. The play begins during the Gulf War,<sup>12</sup> when Israel was attacked by Scud missiles sent from Iraq. The juxtaposition of the past Farhud and the present Gulf War prompted the elderly parents to reveal the secrets from the family's life in Iraq to their daughters. While the historical events regarding the Jewish-Iraqi blood-soaked relationship collide, the daughters realize that the unspoken family past haunts them even though they had been living in Israel for decades. Through this personal story, the play exposes the audience to the Iraqi Jewry's customs, songs, and culture, and gives a window into their way of life. Although the play tells the story of one family, it presents the heritage and collective memory of the entire Iraqi Jewish community, and has universal themes for all Mizrahi Jewry.

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9 Following the Farhud, the establishment of the State of Israel, and the Arab defeat in the Israeli War of Independence in 1948, led to the exodus of nearly the entire Jewish community of Iraq in 1950 and 1951.

10 See Other Sources: No. 1.

11 Not much attention has been paid to the memoirs of the Jewish community in Iraq. See: Landau (1981); Levy (2006); Bashkin (2010). The only other play that dealt with the Farhud is *Ghosts in the Cellar* by Sami Michael, that was shown in *Haifa Theatre* (1983).

12 During the Gulf War, Iraqi forces fired approximately 42 Scud missiles into Israel from January 17 to February 23, 1991.

## Methods

The research is based on 6 semi-structured interviews as well as a news program (*Yoman*) that was produced about the Farhud in 2019 (see Other Sources: No. 2). The interviews were conducted with 4 audience members and two members of the production of *Eliyahu's Daughters*. Of the audience members, two were born in Iraq and two were born in Israel to Iraqi Jewish families that emigrated in the 1950s. The other interviewees were Lyrit Mash-Batish, one of the actors in the play, and Gilit Yitzhaki, the founder of the theater and the playwright. The interviews with the spectators were conducted privately while those involved in the theater play were absent. Interviews with the members of the theater took place at the theater. All were one-on-one interviews. The interviews were recorded in Hebrew and then transcribed and translated into English.

All interviewees were given explanations about the nature of the study and full details on how the data would be used. The interviewees' names were changed to protect their privacy, except for the names of the actor and the name of the founder of The Dawn Theater.

## Analysis

The interviews focused on exploring how the audience and the people involved in the theater reacted to the narrative of the Iraqi Jewish experience and what impact it had on them. Two main concepts emerged from the data: (1) An affective experience that expressed an emotional response; (2) a consciousness-raising experience that fostered reflexivity and re-positioned cultural identity in Israeli society. These responses stemmed from the theater's effort to enliven, represent, and reposition the narrative of Iraqi Jewry in the Israeli national heritage.

### Emotional resuscitation and revitalizing of personal memories

*Eliyahu's Daughters* tells a story that wishes to impact the audience's emotions by turning its gaze from the modern-day crisis of the Gulf War, in which the play is set, to flashbacks of life in Iraq. Boal (2008) suggests that turning to the past can create a path that enables communication which appeals to the audience's emotions, rather than just their reason. By reviving emotions that were hidden or ignored, the narrative can be used to encourage the audience to translate their individual emotions and stories into a collective narrative (Escalas and Stern 2003). In other words, using emotions can give a voice and build consciousness that will be used as a social intervention vehicle.

Fig. 1: Fragments from the play “Eliyahu’s Daughters” (Photo: Dalia Gal Sabardalin)



Fig. 2: Fragments from the play “Eliyahu’s Daughters” (Photo: Dalia Gal Sabardalin)



Most of the interviewees made sense of the past events shown by the play through the emotional route. Some of the interviewee's emotions were evoked while they were reliving memories of similar experiences to those shown in the play. Yitzhak, one of the people highlighted in the news interview, described his emotional state after watching the play. Replying to the news reporter of the *Yoman* news program, he said in heartbreaking tears, "I founded the underground organization myself."<sup>13</sup> The reporter then asked, "are you excited to see this [referring to the story of the Jewish Zionist underground] on stage for the first time?" Yitzhak replied in a voice choked with tears, "yes". Daisy, an audience member interviewee, who was a little girl in Iraq during the Farhud, also used her emotions to describe the effect the narrative had on her. She expressed: "It reminded me of the fears and the things [that happened]. It was hard, [the] memories that came up." Her emotional response ("it was hard") opened the door for her to detail more of her experience. Like Yitzhak, she shared her personal narrative, saying that she lost her two brothers in the massacre.

Pri'el, who immigrated to Israel at the age of four, recalled the emotions that arose after hearing the language and the stories from her old homeland, "the play brought back memories of my parents' house. It was exciting to hear the language, the songs, and the stories that were so familiar to me". Pri'el shared her excitement that there was finally a public, artistic outlet that shared her family's experience and that of countless other Iraqi Jews, which had been void in the Israeli public sphere. She also felt that this could be a turning point for highlighting the Iraqi Jewish experience. When asked if she thought that the play could change the narrative of Iraqi Jews in Israel, she responded, "without a doubt. The show powerfully transports the audience into the emotional experience of their history, leaving an impression that will last well beyond the final curtain". She added that, "the story was so touching that it would likely inspire viewers to want to learn more on their own about the historical events that took place." In trying to understand why theater appears to elicit such an emotional response from the audience, I turned to Gilit Yitzhaki, the theater's founder, for greater insight. She expressed her belief that:

Theater is a powerful tool. [...] Unlike an intellectual experience of admiring a piece of art, for example, theater makes one feel. It evokes emotion. Eventually people attend the show in order to go through an emotional experience.

Yitzhaki also believes in the power of theater not just to rescue the hidden narrative of the community, but also to evoke empathy and excitement that can change the viewers' perception of the community and its positioning in the national heritage.

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13 Referring to the Zionist underground movement that was established in Iraq (Sheena, Elazar, Nahtomi and Motzafi-Haller 2004; see Other Sources: No.3).

To my question: “Do you think the play will affect the Israeli narrative regarding Iraqi Jewry?” She answered: “A good play conveys the audience’s deep emotional experience, which remains long after the play is over.” In other words, Galit and Pri’el claim that the performance does not just validate the experience of the community whose story has been told by the play by evoking their emotions. Touching the audience’s emotions, the performance also reconstructs the historical event and embeds these events in the views of the spectators who are not part of the Iraqi Jewish community.

Hence, “performing history” (Rokem 2000) can enact emotions (and other physical experiences) that are brought up through the stories that were excluded from the hegemonic narrative and shared heritage. Thus, the combination of history, theater, and emotions can create a significant political awareness and effect of both the marginalized community and the general society.

### **Consciousness-raising: Repositioning memories of community heritage**

*Eliyahu’s Daughters* brings up historical events, which had been repressed, and attempts to weave them into a personal story that the audience could relate to and feel as part of a common heritage. This was the direct intention of the playwright. Yitzhaki painstakingly researched and documented testimonials and stories over a five-year period. She interviewed Iraqi Jewish immigrants and included the stories from her own relatives. When asked about the audience reaction, Yitzhaki replied:

This is a generation that comes to the play, leaves it and says, ‘Wow, this play is finally about us.’ The representation of the historical story was important to the audience, not only in raising their own consciousness, but also because they viewed the project of consciousness-raising as a political act in, and of, itself.

Yitzhaki further expanded on the sense of responsibility in preserving the history of the Iraqi Jewry and on the political aspect of this act with regards to the heritage of the Israeli society:

[Preserving history is] completely on our shoulders. This is the feeling that motivated me to explore and collect these stories. I realized that there is a collective story here that represents us all. Look, there are so many details that the people I interviewed tell me and ask me to put in the show. It is important for them that things are heard. [...] We actually took historical stories of the Farhud and revived them. The stories are so true on stage that they cannot be ignored. Suddenly the stories are validated. After the show people can discuss the subject, get interested. It is not a subject that is studied in school and when you see the play it becomes tangible.

The validation sought to focus on understanding the ways ethnicity shaped both the Iraqi Jewry experience and the Israeli national heritage. Yitzhaki said: “[...] an entire history is gone. I want to talk about this history. For an audience that does not know the stories explicitly, or even remotely, I offered something new.”

The practice of consciousness-raising and the notion of the personal as political fostered solidarity with the non-Iraqi Jewish community. The actress who played Mazal, the youngest daughter in the production, Lyrit Mash-Batish phrased it this way: “Before the show, I was not aware of the story of Iraqi Jews. I thought it was an Aliyah [Hebrew word for immigration to Israel] for Zionist motives. I had never heard of Farhud, it was a history I knew nothing of.” She added, “the play opened a window for me to stories that I couldn’t believe had never been shared, even in our school history lessons. The historical stories, especially about the Farhud, made me ask questions and want to learn more about the events in Iraq.” The process of identifying one’s own story as having political roots is closely related to processes of reconstructing what it means to be an Israeli. In an interview with Pri’el, regarding the Iraqi Jewry heritage and the events that led to mass Aliyah to Israel, she said: “It is [the Farhud] definitely very important, it is part of our history facing antisemitism, or more correctly it was hatred of Jews because it was committed by Semites themselves, part of things [part of the history of the Jewish people].” By recognizing the tribulations of the Mizrahi community, such as that of the Iraqi Jewry (i.e., the Farhud) and at the same time merging it with the common Israeli narrative of modern history [the Holocaust], a new heritage is being constructed. The new heritage that Pri’el suggests is searching for a stronger ethnic collective identity by seeking out national contexts that will validate and affirm Iraqi Jewry’s sense of belonging. Shedding light on the rich history of Iraqi Jewry brings visibility to its collective experience and shares its heritage within the larger national heritage – finally giving the group the sense of belonging and a window of understanding what binds them further within the national heritage.

## Conclusion

Theater can enrich heritage by bringing visibility to narratives and sharing the collective identities of marginalized groups within the public sphere, while creating a sense of commonality among the audience. The Dawn Theater used these “visibility politics” (Adams 2005) to negotiate the excluded, neglected, and forgotten history of Iraqi Jewry, to elevate the heritage of the entire Mizrahi ethnic group, and to integrate their legacy within the national Israeli narrative. Marginalized groups tend to politicize their heritage through struggles that strive to empower their ethnic, racial, and cultural uniqueness as opposed to the hegemonic culture and heritage (Taylor and Whittier 1992). In this case, The Dawn Theater made a theatrical attempt



to frame the ethnic heritage of Iraqi Jewish, not just as a unique heritage, but also as a path to belonging to the national heritage. Even though The Dawn Theater presents the uniqueness of the Jewish-Arab culture and heritage of Iraqi Jewry (Shem-Tov 2019), at the same time it strives to integrate it with that of the Zionist history and heritage. In other words, The Dawn Theater employed artistic practices to evoke audience emotions and raise political consciousness to shape the national conversation. This endeavor hoped to influence both the awakening of the young Iraqi Jewish community and educate non-Iraqi Israelis in order to promote awareness and the inclusion of Iraqi Jewish history within the wider Israeli identity. Thus, by empowering their ethnic heritage, The Dawn Theater wanted to break the ethnic barriers that separated Israelis of Iraqi descent from the national heritage, which was framed by the Ashkenazi contribution to the nation. Therefore, The Dawn Theater emphasized ethnic distinctness in order to highlight this marginalized group into the national mainstream.

In 2019, when I first saw the play, I distinctly remember feeling their intention without recognizing that was their point at the time. The play reintroduced me to my own Iraqi Jewish culture and took me back to the stories my grandmother used to share. For many years, I thought she had told me fairy tales. I didn't believe her stories. The play changed that, making them come alive and gave her tales credibility. Though, admittedly, some parts of the play were emotionally draining – i.e. the horrors of the Farhud, and the immense challenges and heartbreak they felt leaving their homes and financial security to move somewhere they had never even visited (Israel), even if they were already emotionally connected. I recall sitting in my chair at the end of the play, unable to move because of the intensity of my emotional awakening – it was like I had to process what I'd seen before I was able to get up again, so deeply was I moved. Theater is a dynamic tool for creating culture. The interplay of the story and its physical representation can play an important element in building heritage. The dialogue itself may be about creating and maintaining historical and social consensus, but simultaneously, it can also be a process of dissent. The example of *Eliyahu's Daughters* illustrates the personal transformations that looking back at life stories and sharing them may bring about. It can invigorate cultural heritage, as well as the struggles of the past, for new audiences. Looking back thus becomes an important element in drawing the contours of a future collective identity and heritage. The creative and theatrical techniques used in *Eliyahu's Daughters* can inspire the audience to become emotionally involved, to empathize, to want to learn more and research, and thus, hopefully, create new narratives for the collective. Theater opens the past to the present, as a creative resource for contemporary formulation of a future understanding, offering points to identify with, which reach beyond contested heritages (Pfeifferand and Weiglhofer 2019). Theater can problematize the dominant discourse by personalizing and humanizing the absent narrative (Park-Fuller 2000). The Dawn Theater demonstrates that

we make heritage by not only using the means of governmental policies, among other creative outlets, but also through the artistic power of theater spectacle, sensation, memory, and storytelling. The case study of *Eliyahu's Daughters* signified that heritage is not static, but vital and alive. It is not composed of frozen moments in time, but of a multi-layered, ongoing story that deserves recognition and to be incorporated into a shared historical narrative.

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# From the Mellah in Marrakesh to Israel and back

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Gil Kenan

## Introduction

Israel is perceived to be the “promised land” of Jews from all over the world. Hence, Israel has become a multi-cultural society, which demonstrates an unexpected richness and diversity of ethnic groups and a wide range of different voices and cultural traditions (Mautner 2011). One of the visible and material manifestations of this social phenomenon is the emergence and presence of associations, heritage centers, and ethnic museums that represent various ethnic Jewish communities that immigrated to Israel (Kark and Perry 2012). These multiple ways to preserve local heritage are considered, in Nora’s (1993) terms, as *lieux de mémoire* (realms of memory) that are striving to tell the cultural narratives of communities. Thus, the process of heritage construction reinforces the presence of identities, values, and relationships in the public sphere. In other words, the “heritage work” done by the various heritage centers is putting symbolic assets on display in order to provide focal points for the construction and reformulation of the group’s cultural heritage. My father was one of these cultural workers. He immigrated to Israel during the 1950s at the age of fifteen, from his hometown of Marrakesh, Morocco, and the streets of the *Mellah* (Arabic for the old Jewish Quarter).<sup>1</sup> In 1985 he founded *The Marrakesh Jewish Association in Israel* (the Association). The Association’s aim was to preserve and represent the heritage of the Marrakesh Jewish community in Israel.

Following the journey of the Jewish community of Marrakesh in space and time, this study analyses the process of heritage building of this ethnic community through one of the main activities of the Association – the yearly conference, and especially the tenth conference called *Journey to Our Past in Marrakesh*, which was held in 1995. The event wished to collect the dispersed community members from their places of residence, mainly in the periphery of Israel, and reunite them in the imaginary streets of the Mellah that were rebuilt in HaYarkon Park, one of the main public spaces in Tel Aviv. To analyze the *Journey to Our Past in Marrakesh*, I conducted an autoethnography by using both text and visual analysis of the Association’s

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1 The *Mellah* is the name of the Jewish quarter in Marrakesh, Morocco.

documents and photographs, as well as in-depth interviews with the Association's founders and a diary I kept during my family's "roots trip" to Marrakesh. I used these resources to create three heritage maps of the journey from the Mellah to Israel and back, in order to visualize the cultural path that the Marrakesh community members constructed in their re-gathering. These maps will shed light on the community's heritage journey within the dominant Zionist heritage in Israel, and on the possible ways that traditional heritage can be preserved and even shared with different ethnic groups.

## The Jews of Marrakesh and the immigration to Israel

Marrakesh is one of the five capital cities of Morocco. Today it is the second largest city, with a population of about two million people. The city was founded in 1070 and was known as the "Red City", or "Red Marrakesh", owing to the deep pink hue of its Medina's (city in Arabic) walls and buildings. The city's natural landscape displays a rare contrast, combining a desert character and the hundreds of thousands of palm trees that surround it, with the Atlas Mountains with their snow-capped peaks to the south and the Jbilet hills to the north. This combination gives the city a rare beauty at any hour of the day.

Marrakesh comprises an old, fortified city, surrounded by a wall with a well-preserved gate. The Medina quarter, which is part of the old city, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with its traditional marketplace – Jemaa el-Fnaa – and the old Jewish Quarter, the Mellah. West of the Medina is the Ville Nouvelle's, the Hivernage and Gueliz neighborhoods, built in the early 20th century during the French Protectorate in Morocco.

Jews have come to Marrakesh since its founding in 1062. The Jews came to Morocco in two major waves. The first is commonly linked with the destruction of the Temple (586 BC) (Bar-Asher 1976). Most of the Jews settled in rural areas, especially in the southern parts of Morocco, in the mountainous Atlas region, where they had close and prolonged interaction with the Amazigh (Berber) groups, who had also settled there before the Arabs (Toledano 1984). The second wave came when Jews were expelled from the Iberian Peninsula, after the Inquisition at the end of the fifteenth century (1391–1492). These *Meghorachim* (Hebrew for expelled) were able to come to Morocco thanks to the contacts they maintained with the Portuguese, who were established in the coastal areas. The Meghorachim began to live in the area, working in occupations such as finance and commerce, which were proscribed by Islam to Muslims (Cardeira da Silva 2018).

Communal life, for hundreds of years, blurred the distinctions between the two groups. The only thing that distinguished between them was their family names. For example, Biton, Vaknin, Abitbol, Darai etc, were common names of the "inhab-

itants". Rozilio, Pinto, Dhaloya, Kourkus, and Kabsa, were typical family names of the "exiled". Additional differences were found in the ritual slaughter and in the text of the *Ketubah*<sup>2</sup> (Hebrew for a Jewish marriage contract). Until a relatively later period, the community's leadership and Rabbis were descendants of the exiled (Pinto, Azoulai, Kourkus, Rozilio).

The Jewish community of Marrakesh was one of the largest communities in Morocco, and Marrakesh was a spiritual and cultural center for the country's inhabitants, who were spread across the Atlas Mountains, at the edges of the Sahara, and in the coastal cities. Thus, cases that were too difficult for rural judges were brought before the judges of Marrakesh. Youths from rural villages came to study at the yeshivot of Marrakesh. The city was also the center for learning the ritual slaughter and getting the "official" certification to work in this profession. Marrakesh was also the only economic center for villagers and city dwellers. In prosperous times, the Jews enjoyed economic profit and governmental protection, and a small minority were even employed as translators, advisors, and diplomats. In times of anarchy and changes of government, the Jews suffered from persecution, theft, looting, and murder.

"Of all the Mellah present in each of the cities of Morocco, the Mellah of Marrakesh is the most important", said Périgny (1918, p. 137). Within the Medina – the Old City of Marrakesh – an area between the Bahia Palace and the Royal Palace, is the Jewish quarter of the city. The walled Jewish quarter of Marrakesh was called the *Mellah*, originally referring to the salty marsh area to which the Jews of northern Morocco had been transferred. The Jews of Marrakesh were transferred to their new quarter during the reign of the Sa'di dyn (1511–1659). Based on the Jews of Marrakesh's oral tradition, scholars date the creation of the Mellah to the year 1557. It was a kind of closed ghetto, built to protect them. The status of the Jews was that of protégés. The usual explanation of the phenomenon of *Mellahization* in Morocco is that keeping the Jews within proximity to the Kasbah made it easier for the sultan, who was the patron of the Jews, to protect them from aggressors, while allowing the *makhzan* (Arabic for royal administration) taxation and control. The patronage was in accordance with religious law: in return for a poll tax the Jews were entitled to physical security, religious autonomy, and fair trial (Gottreich 2003).

During the 16th century, the Mellah had its own fountains, gardens, synagogues, and markets. Until the arrival of the French in 1912, Jews could not own property outside of the Mellah. Therefore, the growth was within the limits of the neighborhood, resulting in narrow streets, small shops, and taller residential buildings. The Slat al-Azama Synagogue (or Lazama Synagogue), built around a central courtyard, is within the Medina in the Mellah. On land adjacent to the Mellah is the Jewish cemetery which is the largest of its kind in Morocco, characterized by white-washed tombs and sandy graves.

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2 This refers to *Ketubah* in the Castile custom and *ketubah* in the regional custom.



Most of the Jews were artisans, financiers, moneylenders, gold and silversmiths, tailors, metalworkers, sugar traders, and peddlers. In the nineteenth century, the Jewish population, which focused on its synagogue, ritual baths, schools, and courts of law, was strengthened by a constant flow of Jewish craftsmen, including bankers, jewelers, embroiderers, and musicians, pilgrims visiting saints' graves, rabbinical students, and Jews from Palestine/Eretz-Israel (mandatory Palestine) seeking donations.

Although the majority of the Mellah population were Jews, the Mellah was not a Jewish ghetto and never quite achieved the ideal of an exclusively Jewish space, also serving as a quarter for non-Muslims. In the late nineteenth century, the Mellah provided place to people from Fez to Atlas villagers, to Christians from mainly Holland and Britain, and to Iberian Catholics who had their own sector. Muslims also had a large presence in the Mellah. The Mellah did not isolate Jews but facilitated their interactions with the sultan and his entourage, with the Muslims of Marrakesh, and with Jews and Muslims residing in the surrounding region. Roeme and Bar Cochba write:

What, in essence, is the Mellah? Some describe it as a 'ghetto', and some describe it as a 'Jewish quarter'. Those of my generation, and myself, can testify that it was a 'greenhouse', a place where no foreigner could bother us when we played in the street or when we walked to school. A kind of well protected womb where our parents were waiting for us, the children, in homes that were warmed with love (2006, p. 15).

These kinds of descriptions of positive childhood memories, innocent, full, and embracing, are familiar to me from my father's stories, and are repeated in many conversations with acquaintances, uncles, and aunts.

In 2015, I travelled to Morocco with my father and mother and all my siblings, for a "roots trip". In the past, tens of thousands of Jews lived in the Mellah; today there are about ten Jewish families. In the past the Mellah was conserved and clean; today the streets of the Mellah are narrow and neglected and the homes are extremely densely situated. The streets that once bore Hebrew names now bear new names that do not hint at the area's Jewish history. But even in 2015, many locals knew the Hebrew Street names. In the diary I kept on the journey in Morocco I wrote:

We are walking along Torah Study Road on our way to the Lo Azama Synagogue (the synagogue of the exiled), which is 500 years old and is the only surviving synagogue of the many that were here in the past. We pass through the iron gate from the narrow alley with its red walls to a new and unexpected space: a large, clean, and bright courtyard, with walls painted white and blue, surrounded all around with rooms, leading to the synagogue. In the past, the courtyard of the synagogue was home to a large yeshiva. Thousands of students came to study

and live in this complex. The Morning Prayer was held five times. The yeshiva no longer exists and in the rooms that once housed the students, now live the few elderlies and poor that the community support. A minyan<sup>3</sup> still assembles every once in a while, for prayer, keeping the embers of the community's glorious past burning. An even more exciting moment was the walk through the streets of the Mellah, between the narrow alleyways, on the way to my father's house. There he passed his childhood until the age of 15. My father feels totally at home, walking first with a wide grin on his face, on steady feet, talking, and joking with the passersby on the way to the house and place of business of his father (my grandfather), who was a merchant and owned a truck. The surviving yard of the packaging plant is used today as private residential housing (Kenan 2015). (Fig. 1, 2)

Shosh Roeeme adds:

Many entrances and exits to our Mellah from the outside world were bustling with Muslims, Christians, or members of Jewish families that were well-to-do compared to us. [...] At every entrance to the Jewish quarter was a heavy door that locked from the inside with a giant latch I very much loved to debate, at length, with the Muslim guard on my way, who could guess when and how the Jews were preparing to leave their homes and emigrate to Israel (Roeeme and Bar Cochba 2006, p. 15).

By the first years of the 20th century, Jews began a steady exodus from the Marrakesh Mellah to France and to North America and Israel. At the time of the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, there were close to a quarter of a million Jews living in Morocco. The majority of them chose to immigrate to Israel (Bashan 2000). The first wave of immigration took place between 1948 to 1956. Thousands of Jews began to leave Morocco illegally with the help of the Israeli security services following the bloody incidents in Jerada and Oujda in 1948. Moroccan Jews and Muslims remember this event as full of tragic moments. From the day the State of Israel was established in 1948 until Morocco declared its independence in 1956, some 85,623 Jews immigrated to Israel from Morocco (ibid). In November 1951 the Israeli government and Jewish Agency decided to institute a selection policy for the Jews of Tunisia and Morocco, which allowed only families that could be self-sufficient to come to Israel (Picard 2013). On behalf of the Israeli Health Ministry, doctors were sent to those countries to implement the selection policy.

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3 *Minyan* means a group of at least ten worshippers, the minimal number allowing public prayer in Judaism.

*Fig. 1: In the alleys of the Mellah of Marrakesh (Photo: Gil Kenan)*



*Fig. 2: The author's father in front of his childhood home (Photo: Gil Kenan)*



In 1955, with the declaration of independence in Morocco and with the threat hovering over its Jewish population beginning to grow, the Jewish Agency allowed only 3,000 immigrants from Morocco per month to enter Israel. The second wave took place between 1956 and 1961. In March of 1956, immigration of Moroccan Jews to Israel was prohibited, and in September of 1956, the *Misgeret* (Hebrew for framework), a Jewish underground organization, began organizing the secret immigration of Moroccan Jews, which was a very risky undertaking. The most traumatic event of this time-period was the tragedy of the illegal immigrant ship the *Egoz*, which sank on its voyage, on the night of January 10, 1961. On board were 43 immigrants and Chaim Tsarfati from the Mossad (Black and Morris 2012). The third wave began in 1961 and ended in 1964. This wave started when king Mohammed V allowed Jews to leave under a collective passport. From then till 1964, some 97,005 Jews left Morocco with the tacit agreement of the Moroccan authorities. Under this agreement, Israel paid 50\$ for each immigrant. Since the establishment of the State of Israel until today, close to a quarter of a million Jews have immigrated from Morocco, the largest number of Jews who immigrated from a Muslim country (Cardeira da Silva 2018).

### **Dispersal of Moroccan and Marrakesh Jews in the periphery of Israel**

The Moroccan Jews were asked to settle in the newborn state of Israel in areas along the border from where their “co-ethnic” Palestinian Arabs had been expelled. This was just one of the many factors that contributed to their discontent with the conditions of their reception in Israel. This made integration difficult, thereby increasing their part in Israel’s “ethnic problem” and demographic anxiety (Tsur 1997). While in Morocco these Jews had belonged to the largest Jewish community within an Arab State, in Israel they joined the larger group of “oriental Jews” or Mizrahim – Jews who immigrated from Muslim and Arabs countries – as opposed to the dominant group of Ashkenazim – Jews who immigrated from European countries (Shenhav 2006).

In light of the “population dispersal” plan, which was implemented in the first decade of the state of Israel, a significant portion of the Moroccan immigrants were sent to settlements near the Israeli borders, in rural and peripheral areas. The name given to this immigrant absorption policy was “from the Ship to the Village” (Picard 2013). In the beginning, the immigrants were housed in the abandoned houses left by their Arab inhabitants, and afterwards they were relocated to *maabarot* (Hebrew for transition camps). The population dispersal policy relied on the new immigrants’ dependence on government and Jewish Agency resources. The Jews of North Africa were sent to the remote areas without being given any other choice. An efficient absorption apparatus enabled organizers to bring immigrants, on the day of their ar-

rival to Israel, to their permanent places of residence in faraway settlements (Tzfadia 2000). While a small portion of immigrants came from Morocco with an agricultural background, the majority were accustomed to an urban lifestyle and had trouble adjusting to agricultural life. Dependency prevented them from leaving, and when the goal of population dispersal was achieved, the level of investment in the periphery dropped (Yiftachel 2000). The immigrants from Morocco established 111 settlements in the Negev desert, the Galil mountains, and throughout the land of Israel. Some of these settlements were defensive human barriers that strengthened the northern and southern borders of the state. Despite their contribution to the nation, Moroccan immigrants did not take part in the Ashkenazi pioneers' process of nation building, which became the most appreciated heritage of Israel: "we are not the generation that dried up the swamps and 'made the wasteland flourish,' but we are the generation that restored the past to relevancy. This was one of the burdens we carried on our shoulders" (Levi 2013, p. 48).<sup>4</sup>

Thus, while in Morocco Jewish Moroccans suffered due to their connection to Zionism, in Israel they suffered great difficulties due to the unique culture they brought with them and the different national role and cultural heritage that was ascribed to them (Trevisan Semi 2012).

## Moroccan Jewish associations and heritage centers in Israel

Heritage centers are an exemplar of the mutual dependence between heritage and history (Edson 2004; Croke 2010), combining "history's universality with heritage's possessive intimacy" (Waterton and Watson 2010, p. 2). Most of the heritage centers in Israel take on the complementary roles of a traditional exhibit-based museum and a community institution. They curate the stories of local personalities and heroes, and the settings of events that frame regional history. Preserving the unique objects of daily life and presenting heritage narratives to visitors are some of the everyday practices taken on at these sites (Katriel 1997). It is important to note that Jews that immigrated from Arab and Muslim countries suffered from marginalization in the Israeli Zionist narrative. Even though the "ingathering of the exiles" and the "melting pot of sects" were the official approach in Israel, the Israeli heritage presented a uniform image and identity based mainly on an Eastern European denomination (Shenhav-Keller 2013). This approach stigmatized Jewish cultural denominations of the Middle East as primitive representations of Judaism that must be uprooted to prevent the "levantinization" of the new state (Kahanoff [1972] 2011).

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4 The settlement towns that were inhabited by the immigrants from Morocco have expanded and become model communities. Among them are Dimona, Yavneh, Kiryat Gat, Ofakim, Sderot, Beit Shean, and more.

Only in the late 1970s and early 1980s did Israel witness a sort of Mizrahi counter-acculturation that strived to gain more visibility for their historical narrative and heritage (Stevens, Flinn and Shepherd 2010). In this spirit different ethnic museums, heritage associations, and heritage centers of marginalized Jewish ethnic groups were opened to the public (Trevisan, Miccoli, and Parfitt 2013). Most of the communal museums displayed a sense of urgency for the preservation and commemoration of their community's history before and after immigrating to Israel. The associations and heritage centers also declared that they wish to utilize these cultural arenas in order to give the various communities a proper place in the pages of history (Nissimi 2014).

One of the first associations of this kind was *The Alliance of The Moroccan Exodus* that was founded on October 23, 1967, in a small town named Sderot in the Negev desert. Its main goal was to preserve the Moroccan Jewish heritage: "to conserve, to promote, and to promulgate cultural values and the historical legacy of Moroccan Jewry, and to highlight its contributions to Israeli society" (Asraf 2008, p. 12). The international *Institute for the Research of Moroccan Jewry* was established as part of it to conduct interdisciplinary research, and to develop an awareness of the community's two-thousand-year history. The establishment of *The Seat of Moroccan and Moroccan Jewish History*, named after Robert and Michelle Asraf, was another steppingstone in the preservation of the community's cultural heritage. At the same time some more initiatives arose to save the community's heritage from oblivion, by publishing hundreds of the books which Moroccan rabbis from previous centuries couldn't publish and renewing the publication of copies that had run out.

## Methods

To analyze this ethnic community's process of heritage building, I conducted an autoethnography research. As a form of research that involves observation of an individual's lived experiences with cultural, political, and social meanings (Levy 2020), I made an in-situ observation of my family's "roots trip" to the Mellah in Marrakesh (2016). I described the journey in detail in the diary I kept during it. I also held an in-depth interview with my father, David Vaknin Keinan, who was one of the founders of the Association and served as its chairman for 35 years, as well as informal conversations with five members of the Association. Additionally, I collected maps, documents, and photographs of the Association's main events from the people who had participated in them through the years.

In the process of interpreting, writing, and researching the cultural heritage (*ethnos*) and the self (*auto*) (Bochner 2000), I used evocative autoethnography that focuses on narrative presentations (Ellis 2004; 2008), by organizing the analysis in three maps which I created. The maps sketch the "paths" made by the immigrants

and their cultural heritage in three different locations in time and space. These locations visually and textually indicate the physical and mental route made by the heritage. The event that lies at the center of this research began with collecting friends and names of friends from among the immigrants from Marrakesh, and with planning the first conference, which took place in the fall of 1985 (the *Sukkot Festival*<sup>5</sup>). Following this initial gathering, the conferences became the central annual event for the community. The first conventions (up until the tenth one) were held in Park HaYarkon, Tel Aviv<sup>6</sup> and afterward the conventions migrated to different cities throughout the country: Yavneh, Ashkelon, Yokneam Illit, and in recent years Ashdod.<sup>7</sup>

I became acquainted with the Association as part of the routine lifestyle in my parents' home while I was still a child. Throughout my childhood I remember the many conversations my father held with people about the importance of the unity of the Jewish community of Marrakesh, and I remember being greatly occupied with all matters of life in the Association, including community and cultural meetings, meetings with journalists, and conferences. I remember especially the lively traffic in the house and the many goings-on in anticipation of the festival of Sukkot, when the yearly unity conventions were held.

## Analysis

### The Association's political initiatives

In an interview I held with my own father about the need for the Association, he explained that this idea of heritage preservation goes back to a Jewish agency in Marseille, France, which was active during the early 1980s:

During the time I was in Paris, I sat with one of my friends who established the Jews of Marrakesh in Paris branch. He is from Marrakesh [...] we played together on the Jewish soccer team in Marrakesh. We sat and talked, and I invited some friends. One of them was Ori Sabag, who was a member of the Knesset and a leader of the community in Be'er Sheva<sup>8</sup> at the time. We decided to establish an organization of Jews from Marrakesh in Israel. That was in the early 1980s [...] It

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5 The *Sukkot Festival* is a Torah-commanded holiday celebrated for seven days.

6 Park HaYarkon is a large park in Tel Aviv, Israel, with about sixteen million visits annually.

7 All these cities were founded in the 1950s as development towns designed for settling immigrants from Arab and Muslim countries.

8 Be'er Sheva is the largest city in the Negev desert. A large portion of the population is made up of the descendants of Mizrahi Jews who immigrated from Arab and Muslim countries after 1948.



is amazing to think that today we are celebrating 40 years of the Alliance of the Jews of Marrakesh [...].

Afterward, I gathered a group of 15 friends, and we began establishing institutions. Managerial boards, secretariat, cultural committees, organizing committees, branch committees [...]. I was acquainted with Tel Aviv's city secretaries in the days of Cheech (the nickname of Shlomo Lahat, the mayor of Tel Aviv-Jaffa at the time). (The secretaries) Shmulik Levy and Ilan Moeal and I came together, and I presented the subject to them, and we got permission from them to hold the first convention in Park HaYarkon [...]. A few hundred people came to the first convention. There we started to keep an organized record of community members. In those days advertising the events was achieved through letters and searching out the community members' addresses. We divided the state amongst ourselves by towns: Be'er Sheva, Haifa, Yerucham, Netivot, Sderot, Ashkelon, Kiryat Gat, Netanya, Krayot, Hatzor HaGlilit, Kiryat Shemona, Tiberius. Wherever there were representatives, we gave them fliers in synagogues and through the post offices.

At the latest conference (number 37), which was held in Ashdod in 2019, my father briefly described in his opening words the idea and initiative for the establishment of the Association:

With the 37<sup>th</sup> year of the Marrakesh Immigrants' Association, I am honored to lay before you the story of its establishment and activities since 1982. Organization began with the actions of a handful of people. The goal was to maintain communication between us and to safeguard the legacy and the glorious rich traditions [...]. The hope was to bequeath this heritage to future generations of Marrakesh immigrants. A legacy of memories from the city's yeshivot and rabbis, from the synagogues, of songs and poems, of the Alliance School and its administrators and educators, from the youth groups, from the kindergartens and their songs, and in general, of the life of our community, inside the Mellah walls and outside. All this and more, is saved in our memories and in their light, we inaugurated the first convention on the Festival of Sukkot of 1985 in Park HaYarkon [...].

Many immigrants from Marrakesh that have participated in the events come from cities, developing towns, villages, and kibbutzim from all over the country. The meeting was extremely exciting. It turned into a celebration of the realization of the Zionist dream of the Jewish community of Marrakesh, which its thinkers and judges called 'little Jerusalem'. It was a special occasion not only of heritage celebration but also of the reunion of friends who had not seen each other in years; the reunion of administrators and teachers with their former students, of neighbors from the same buildings and streets. There were bursts and waves of indescribable happiness, rejoicing, embracing, and of course, the recounting of past experiences in Marrakesh and of experiences of immigration and absorption in Israel.

From that initial convention until today – the 37<sup>th</sup> annual conference – the Association has become a living and breathing body with activities all over the

country, thanks to the donations and actions of the volunteers heading it. We created and continue to provide community social activities, traditional events, national holidays, evenings of song and poetry, Sabbaths of study, heritage delegations to Morocco in general, and to Marrakesh in particular, and the crowning achievement of all these activities is our traditional annual conventions on every Festival of Sukkot, which have become the central event of Marrakesh Jewry in Israel and the diaspora. [...] Brothers and sisters, dear children of Marrakesh, I find it a sacred duty, with awe and admiration, to bless God that we merited this arrival. Yes, a wonderful duty to bless, in your names, and in my name, all our honored assistants and their continuing supportive assistance in the activities of the Association [...]. Likewise, the dedicated activists that selflessly volunteer and bring to fruition the Association as an exemplary and model social community body that safeguards its unique heritage, grounded in fraternity, and faithful friendship [...]. With sincere blessings, David Vaknin Kenan, Chairman of the Association (Vaknin Kenan 2019).

Shosh Roemee (2006), a descendant of Marrakesh and active participant since the founding of the organization, wrote about her memories from the gatherings on the Festival of Sukkot, beginning in 1986:

With excessive feverishness, I prepared together with my friends, also descendants of Marrakesh living in Dimona, for our first meeting with the Marrakesh Immigrants' Association, headed by David Vaknin, in Park Hayarkon in Tel Aviv.

In my mind's eye, I imagine the reunion with my childhood friends, neighbors, the butcher, the mohel,<sup>9</sup> circumciser, the shoemaker, the teachers, the principal, kindergarten teachers, and who didn't I imagine?

Our bus leaves Dimona at 9 am, in the direction of Tel Aviv. It crawls too slowly in the opinions of all my friends sitting next to me and behind me. I hold the position of representative of the Association and therefore, I am sitting in the first row, next to the driver. As the bus gathers distance from Dimona, his honor the rabbi, Mr. David Turgeman, sits down in the seat opposite me and calls out the Traveler's Prayer with great emotion. After the prayer, a tense silence prevailed on the bus.

None of us can imagine how many of our friends will come to the gathering, if any. There is a certain tenseness in the air. We are all wondering, smiling, breaking out in spontaneous laughter, falling quiet again. On all sides, jokes are heard, and after them, songs, and recitations from our distant childhood in Marrakesh.

As we get closer to our destination, shouts of joy break out from all around [...]. The driver takes ages to look for a parking space. Our necks are tense with pain. Our eyes searching to recognize. Shouts of joy [...] everyone recognizes this one and that one [...] everyone pushing to get through the doors of the bus that are refusing to part and to let us rush outside and hug our dear ones. Everyone

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9 *Mohel* is a Jew trained in the practice of brit milah, the "covenant of circumcision".

around us is laughing, crying, excited, sighing. From the distant stage, childhood songs are blaring. Everyone is experiencing happiness mixed with sadness. Everyone who arrived with baskets packed with food and sweets barely managed to open their bags all day. Every sandwich was stopped on its way to the open mouth, never making it in. Everyone who had once planned to immigrate together to Israel and to continue to build their futures together, found themselves face to face, mouths open wide, cheeks washed with tears.

The first conference brought after it many others, for the next 40 years at least. As the years passed, the number of members grew. Our children and grandchildren joined and were looking forward to them, enjoying seeing their parents dancing around out of joy and happiness.

### Returning “home” to the Mellah

The main annual event of the Association was the yearly conference. These conferences, especially the conference held in 1995 in honor of the Association's tenth anniversary, were experienced by the participants as a return to their childhood, neighborhood, language, and heritage. It was a return to the “family home”. The idea was to gather and use the conference as a small journey in time and space to return to the neighborhood, streets, and houses in the Mellah where the community once lived. The event was named the *Journey to Our Past in Marrakesh*. Members of the Association and their families convened together and relived the experience of the Mellah.

This necessitated some research in reconstructing the map of the Mellah and the original street names. After the map of the Jewish Mellah was reproduced, a small model of the Mellah's streets was built. The model was implemented amongst the palm trees in HaYarkon park. The main gate of the park represented the main gate through which the inhabitants of the Mellah in Marrakesh entered the neighborhood. The participants were requested to find their old homes, where they reunited with their neighbors and friends.

My father described this event as a tunnel to his heritage:

The main feature we had for the decade celebrations was to reconstruct the Mellah and its streets in HaYarkon park. A film was produced to document the event. Since Marrakesh was known as the city of dates and palm trees, and HaYarkon park is full of palm trees (that don't bear fruit), we decided that every row of these trees would be named after a street, while the gate at the entrance to the park would symbolize the gate of the Mellah. This way, everyone that came (to the event) entered their own street and every row was labeled with a hanging sign with the name of the street in the Mellah. And then [...] the embracing, the kisses, the excitement. For an instant we were once again those same children that met their neighbors, their teachers, and their old friends. Because since the immigration to Israel, most of the connections were severed.

Shosh Roemee (2006) wrote about her journey to the past as a way to bring heritage back to present life:

In the park there are planted palm trees like those we left in Marrakesh. We reimagined those small stores and asked their owners to take their places as if they had never left them. With eyes shining with happiness, the sphinge<sup>10</sup> seller fried golden doughnuts, their scent wafting, and found himself surrounded by the men and women that went back in time and were transformed for a moment back into playful youths. They laughed out loud, baring teeth that were once white.

The goal of the event was to bring to life the streets and the daily communal life:

The cloth seller was asked to bring with him colorful fabrics decorated with flowers and polka dots [...] the legumes seller recited the names of the spices and their healing properties. This soothes belly aches, and this soothes tooth aches. This is the Suak plant, which whitens teeth, and to our astonishment, from a clay vessel, was drawn a black paste that was used as vegan shampoo. The water seller (el grab in Arabic) moved among his friends, pouring filtered water into copper cups. Dressed in a colorful red robe decorated with colorful bells, atop his head sat a cone shaped fez, and at its tip a colorful cotton ball, which he spun with surprising deftness, for the adoring eyes of the crowd. Another water seller passed out tea with peppermint (Roemee 2006).

After the abovementioned conference, a film documenting the event was produced, as well as a pamphlet which endeavored to describe, restore, and invigorate memories of life in the Mellah of Marrakesh:

This modest pamphlet is presented on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Marrakesh Immigrants' Association, a revelatory expression of the experience of Jewish life in the Mellah of Marrakesh. We are beholden to perpetuate the distinctiveness of the immigrants from Marrakesh in Israel and in the diaspora, as well as to maintain contact between members despite their dispersal throughout Israel and despite leaving many years ago [...]. The urge to maintain contact arises from the people's desire to preserve the rich legacy of their community and their hope of passing it on to future generations.

These words testify to the urge to actively preserve the community's heritage, and to the great need to create new connections to that past heritage. The verse "know where you came from and where you are going" (Mishna Avot 3:1), which blends past

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10 *Sphinge* is a morrocan word for a doughnut that originated from Muslim Spain and was popular in the Maghreb.

and present into an inseparable notion of heritage, captures the participants' main motivation in this activity.

The research journey tracking the Association's actions to preserve the Mellah Jewish heritage and to rebuild the community upon its cultural heritage in Israel was visualized through a geographical and chronological reproduction of the journey made by the immigrants in their main event. To illustrate the three different points in time and space of the 15 families that participated in the event, three different maps were created. The maps describe Jewish life in the Mellah in Marrakesh, the families' distribution throughout Israel after immigrating to Israel, and their relocation at the 10<sup>th</sup> conference in Park HaYarkon. These three points in time and space illustrate the physical and conceptual distance of community members from the city of their birth and their ethnic heritage.

### **Returning back to Israel**

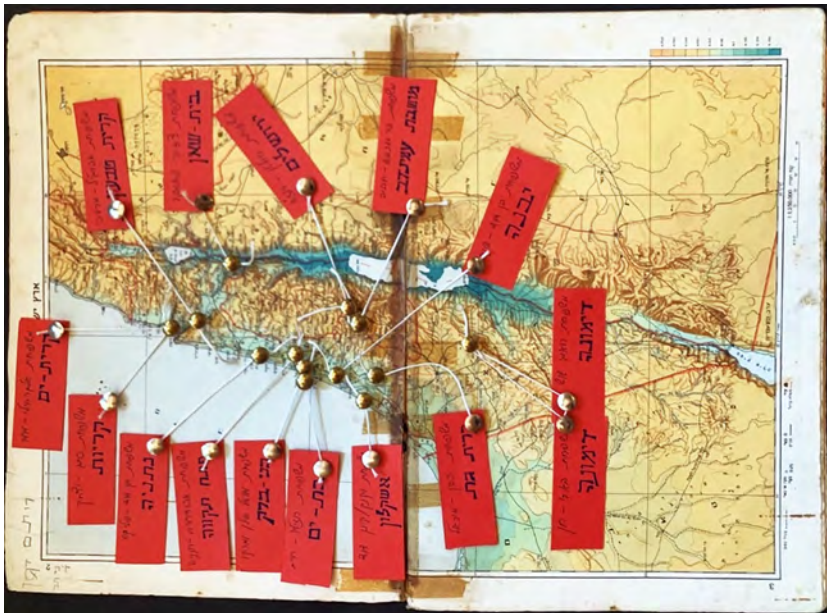
The first map visualizes the Mellah in 1945, including notable central places: businesses, synagogues, public buildings, and streets named as they were in those days. (Fig. 3) It also indicates the names of 15 families, members of the community of the Marrakesh immigrants' Association, and their addresses before their immigration to Israel.

The map marks the locations in which the Marrakesh immigrants' settled and resettled in Israel during the 1950s. (Fig. 4) The geographical distribution and the distances and gaps that were created between the Mellah inhabitants illustrate the way the community was scattered after arriving in Israel, leaving behind them the narrow intimate streets of the gated Mellah and the lives they used to share.

Fig. 3: Map 1. Life in the Mellah in Marrakesh, 1945 (Photo: Gil Kenan)



Fig. 4: Map 2. Immigrants' distribution in Israel, 1948–1956 (Photo: Gil Kenan)





|    | Family surname | Address in the Mellah | The settlement in Israel |
|----|----------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1  | Va'aknin/Kenan | El Harar              | Ashkelon                 |
| 2  | Bar Kochba     | A'suk                 | Aminadav                 |
| 3  | Moyal          | A-Sakaya              | Bnei Brak                |
| 4  | Ruami          | Lesna                 | Dimona                   |
| 5  | Ben David      | Sekuella              | Netanya                  |
| 6  | Asayag         | Brima                 | Krayot                   |
| 7  | Rozolyo        | El Calli              | Bat Yam                  |
| 8  | Cohen          | Ben Simhon            | Kiryat Gat               |
| 9  | Abudarham      | Rabi Yaakov Avitan    | Petah Tikva              |
| 10 | Zadya          | El Gazarin            | Beit She'an              |
| 11 | Sultan         | Imam El Ghazali       | Jerusalem                |
| 12 | Ben David      | A-Sabbah              | Yavne                    |
| 13 | Abargil        | A'afir                | Kiryat Tiv'on            |
| 14 | Beeri          | El-Hari               | Dimona                   |
| 15 | Algrabilali    | Ta'ajar Yeshua        | Kiryat Yam               |

The table, like the maps, shows how close were the inhabitants of the tiny Mellah, and how distant they became after arriving in Israel. The physical distance transformed into a mental distance and disconnection that started to erode the community's collective memory and heritage. The events organized by the Association were the only platform available for the community members to meet, reconvene, and activate their cultural heritage.

### **Epilogue: from the Mellah to Israel and back**

In recent years research has been brimming with studies about community ties and heritage. This plentitude of writings testifies to the importance of the sense of community in societal life in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. As a social unit, the community is a framework in which members can participate and influence economic, political, social, and emotional interests. According to Bauman (2001), this concept expresses people's yearning to acquire security in an insecure world, while Sedan (1990) claim that people are hungry for material resources as well as fulfilling and rewarding relationships. The sense of belonging is achieved through friendships, integration, influence, and the fulfillment of needs and spiritual connectivity, which has transcendence beyond the daily life of community members. Thus, community is described



as a process of identifying shared needs or goals that develop a sense of unity and confidence (*ibid.*).

Sedan (1990) refers to the concept of “level of community” as relevant to the level of interest and participation of people in the community’s educational and social activities. The assumption is that a population with a high level of community will be willing to participate in activities and contribute at a higher level than populations with a lower level of community. Based on this work, we can describe the level of community of populations in a particular geographical location by how close and lasting the relationships are between the inhabitants living in the area, how they empathize with each other and feel that they have ideological and ethical mutuality. These people would be defined as having a high level of community: people with positive interpersonal relationships with each other, sharing mutual ideological and social aspirations, engaging in activities that express a mutual dependence on social programs and a common public.

The establishment of the Association was aimed to achieve a symbolic “high level of community”, despite the widening geographical and emotional distance that existed between the members after settling down in Israel. The sense of closeness that was achieved in the new home (Israel) resembled the closeness that existed in the former home (the Mellah). Restoring the intimacy of the Mellah of Marrakesh by replicating and relocating the past space and time in the current space and time, allowed not only the re-engagement of the members but also the rehabilitation of their heritage. Furthermore, by removing the community’s heritage from the geographical margins of Israel (the development towns) to the center of Israel (Park Ha-Yarkon, Tel Aviv), the heritage also relocated itself inside the Israeli space and time. In this way the past connections were created anew in the community itself and in the Israeli society. Even though this shift happened only for a few hours, its symbolic meaning was echoed in the documentary film, the brochures, and the following conferences. Thus, the social-geographical-symbolic gathering can be understood as a continuation of the struggle to preserve the heritage while at the same time become and be Israelis. Building a model of the Mellah at the tenth convention and finding “anew” the old homes helped not only in the process of re-sharing the heritage, but also in adjusting the past heritage to the current Israeli cultural heritage.

Bilu and Ben-Ari (1992) describe the ways in which people of Moroccan descent relocated their community’s cultural tradition into the Israeli space (for example the tradition of pilgrimage to holy graves) in order to “sanctify” the Israeli space and make it part of their Moroccan-Jewish heritage. The move made by the Association demonstrates the reverse process, in which the Moroccan-Jewish tradition is displaced into the Israeli space in order to settle in this space along with it.

As someone who has been engaged in Waldorf education for 20 years and who dedicates many resources to the creation of school and classroom community and is aware of the deep and innate human value of and need for it (Steiner 1923), I was

excited to rediscover the commendable 40-year actions of my father in creating and cultivating, from amidst dispersal, a community for the Jews of Marrakesh. (fig. 7) I am made aware, as living proof, of how heritage is passed down within a family; and the recognition of the great importance and value of unity and human closeness lives on in my father and in the inheritance for generations to come, as well as in me.

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# War memorials as a non-monologic heritage site

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Sapir Bar El

## Introduction

War memorial sites are one of the most common visual and material arenas through which nations construct and share their past (Halbwachs [1941] 1992). Memorial sites have always been considered important for cultivating the national collective memory (Mosse 1990). War monuments act as a visual and material sign of the collective militarized memory, which is positioned in the public sphere and represents “the political reading of history” (Assmann and Czaplicka 1993, p. 48). By constructing the warrior ethos through monuments, the monuments wish to become an integral part of the nation's heritage to strengthen social solidarity, common legacy, commitment, and belonging (Anderson 1983; Gellner 1983). In other words, the nationalization of the slain soldiers and the glorification of the military acts has become one of the pillars of the nation's heritage to this day. Serving as symbols and keystones of the national heritage, war monuments usually express a mono-perspectival culture of memory that emphasizes the importance of militarized activities. However, in some cases war monuments can also expose and reflect lines of tensions and conflicts that fracture the national ethos, subvert it, and suggest alternative narratives of remembering (Osborne 2001).

The sanctification of the deceased in the Zionist culture contributed to the creation of a powerful communal solidarity and heritage that defined and legitimized the existence of the state of Israel (Zertal 2005). Being involved in an ongoing bloody conflict with parts of the Arab world and coping with the loss of thousands of soldiers and civilians, the geography of the institutionalized memorial sites and monuments in Israel is usually designed and manifested as a monolithic militarized narrative (Bilu and Witztum 2000). This narrative of heroism and sacrifice serves as a symbolic visual-material representation of the hegemonic collective values and justifies the tremendous loss of human lives (Levinger 1993). The design of the iconography of the memorial landscape exposes the various ways these sites are taking part in the nation's heritage construction (Amir 2006). *The Monument to the Negev Brigade in Israel* (The Monument), which was designed by Danny Karavan (1963–1968) to commemorate the fallen soldiers that lost their lives during the ‘48 war, manifests a complex

memory of this kind. The Monument is an unusual memorial site due to its visual and material language. Analyzing the design of this symbolic landscape, I use approaches that view monuments and heritage as a result of social construction that is mediated and narrated through specific historical and ideological frames. As opposed to critical perspectives that view heritage as a manifestation of power relations, this analysis does not reduce the complexity of culture by over emphasizing the effect of power. Thus, exposing the ways that The Monument is constructing the national heritage will decode various narratives and meanings that it offers through different practices and interactions with the site. Delving into these practices allows for a non-monologic reading of the monument that suggests that The Monument to the Negev Brigade is not only a result of reproducing or resisting the political agendas it is meant to convey. Hence, shedding light on the ways that the discourse of heritage is constructed, aims to widen the research about the potential roles of memorial sites in planting seeds of democratization of heritage and of ways of sharing.

## **Military memorial sites in Israel**

There are over a thousand monuments commemorating the fallen in Israel, which serve as tangible signs in the Israeli landscape (Shamir 2006). The monuments were established in memory of events and people that gave their life for the nation during the Zionist settlement period prior to '48 and after the state of Israel was established. The monuments are intended to serve a dual purpose – private and public – wishing to produce the sense of a shared past, and a present collective identity (Azaryahu 1992). In the private sphere, the monuments aim to console the families of the fallen and help them cope with bereavement, while honoring their loved ones who gave their lives for the nation. In the public sphere, the monuments aim to educate the nation by remembering the heroism and sacrifice of those who gave their lives so that others could live, while constructing the national heritage as the “sacred space” of the modern national secular community (Schwartz 1982).

The first monuments in Israel were built in the 1920s to commemorate the fallen in the Second World War and in the struggle against the British colonial rule in Palestine (Levinger 2006). It is important to note that at that time, martyrs' commemoration (ceremonies, political calendars, national holidays, oral poetry) also played an important role in the Palestinian nationalization process (Sorek 2013). The 1950s saw the appearance in the Israeli sphere of monuments commemorating members of the Israeli Defense Force who had fallen in the various wars and military operations that had taken place since the state's establishment. These monuments were characterized by figurative images, emphasizing the human figure and the motif of heroism and sacrifice for the collective. The role of the monuments was to arouse feelings of sympathy in the Israeli-Zionist public and reinforce the transformation of the her-

itage of the fallen into the national heritage (Bar 2020). In the following years some of the monuments were also designed as theatrical spaces hosting the annual commemoration ceremonies. Usually, the stage structure was created by casting a wide horizontal area backed by a wall bearing reliefs and an inscription. These served as the setting for the ceremony that took place on the stage (Ben-Amos 2002). The common memorial monument model featured a stone- or marble-covered wall engraved with the names of the fallen, alongside a relief of a wounded soldier or an allegorical description such as a lion figure.

In the 1970s the monuments' design began to take on a more abstract aspect, created by using abstract shapes made of concrete and iron. These monuments are large, tall, and imposing. With this appearance the monuments came to resemble environmental sculptures. Yet, despite the changing styles, most of the monuments did not convey an alternative message. New and old forms presented similar national ideological meanings. Whether it was a figurative form or an abstract form, the monuments usually presented images that displayed heroism and indicated that wars had a noble and uplifting cause on the one hand, and a sad, tragic, and dreadful impact on the other hand (Handelman and Shamgar-Handelman 1997); this was true both in the Zionist sites and in those of Palestinians living in Israel (Ben-Zvi, Khalilieh and Farah 2008).

## The Negev Brigade's involvement in the '48 war

The 1948 war was the result of more than half a century of friction between Arabs and Jews, which began with the immigration of Zionist Jewish settlers to the country. Over the years, the violent relationship between the Zionist settlers and the Arab inhabitants took on a more and more nationalist character (Morris 2008). The UN resolution of November 1947 calling for the Partition of Palestine was the spark that ignited the war in 1948. The war, called by the Palestinians *al-Nakba* (Arabic for The Catastrophe) and by the Zionist Jews *Milchemet Ha'atzmaut* (Hebrew for War of Independence, began as a "civil war" and ended as an all-out regional war after the invasion of armies from Arab countries (Syria, Iraq, Jordan, and Egypt). During the war David Ben Gurion served as the head of the Zionist Jewish *Yishuv*'s<sup>1</sup> leadership. In his view, the Negev and Eilat, nowadays the southern periphery of the state of Israel, held great economic and strategic importance. Although Ben Gurion insisted that the Negev should be divided between the Jewish state and the Arab state, he saw these areas as holding great potential for settlement and for creating a continu-

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1 The *Yishuv* refers to the Jewish settlement in Palestine/Eretz-Israel (mandatory Palestine) from the Ottoman period through the British Mandate.



ity of independent Jewish settlements to develop Israel's agriculture and economy. The fight for the Negev was therefore a central component of the war (Asia 1994).

The Negev Brigade took an important part in the war. The brigade was founded in March 1948 and included three of the *Palmach* Battalions. In October of that year, the brigade fought in the *Yoav Operation* and in the conquest of the city of Be'er Sheva. The purpose of the operation was to break through to the detached Negev, to fight off the Egyptian army, to conquer Be'er Sheva, and then to gain control over the Negev desert. Overall, 5,800 civilians and soldiers died during the war (5% of the Jewish Yishuv). There is no information regarding the number of casualties among the Palestinian civilians and soldiers (12,000 estimated). The Palmach brigade lost 324 Jewish fighters who fell while fighting in the bitter battles in the Negev desert (Cohen et al. 2011)

## The Monument to the Negev Brigade

The Monument to the Negev Brigade was designed by Danny Karavan and built from 1963 until 1968. The monument is erected on a hill on the outskirts of Be'er Sheva, the biggest Jewish settlement in the Negev desert, overlooking the city and the Hebron Mountains. The monument covers a large area of 10,000 square meters, consisting of 18 separate elements. It is made of exposed raw concrete, copper, and water. Karavan designed the monument to commemorate the fallen soldiers from the Palmach brigade, which was the major force participating in the battles in the Negev during the 1948 War (Eshel 2018).

The monument comprises geometrical elements, as well as the names of the martyrs, the symbol of the *Palmach*, the battle diary of the brigade, battle maps and records, verses, and songs. These phrases and images are engraved in concrete and copper plates. They also include the statement made by Karavan: "passer-by, you come through the gates of the synagogue of our love for the land of the Negev" (Karavan 2014).

The monument is part of 150 memorial sites that were erected to commemorate the 5,800 fallen in the '48 war (Cohen, Cohen and Mendelsohn 2011). There is approximately one monument for every 40 soldiers that lost their lives in the war. The war veterans, called the "canonical generation", were considered as heroes, and expected to symbolize the ideological narrative of the nation in a unified voice (Ben-Zeev and Lomsky-Feder 2009). Many of the monuments that represented the "canonical generation" were created in a figurative style where the army and the soldiers were shown as the authentic national patriots (Brog 2003).

As already mentioned, the Negev Monument deviates from this pattern. At the time he created the monument, Danny Karavan was already a well-known sculptor, set designer and painter who worked in the spirit of the *Land Art Movement*. Today

his sculptures are exhibited in open spaces in Israel and around the world, in numerous countries, including: The United States, France, Japan, Germany, South Korea, and Spain. From the moment of its creation the Negev Monument, one of his early works, stood out in the landscape of the previous monuments that adorned the Zionist-Israeli sphere of commemoration (Manor 2014).

## Methods

The research of The Monument was conducted during the year 2020. The field work included several participant observations of the memorial site. But my first visit to the monument happened at night, a few years before the research began. I joined a group of friends, living in Be'er Sheva, to hang out in the site. The location – a monument for the fallen soldiers – was not unusual for those living in the area. I had not known the monument before and knew nothing about the story it was seeking to tell. Despite that, the monument impressed me immediately. Trying to find my way in the dark I felt lost in it while the sculptural elements were leading me inside. Walking through the canal, hearing the whistles from the watchtower, the sound of the flowing water, and the fluttering flag provoked emotional and bodily experiences that were enveloping me into the place/story. A few years later I came back to the site as a researcher. The principal method used during the observations was filming. The monument was filmed on two different occasions. The first was on September 18, 2020. I chose to visit the monument during this period because the lockdown that was announced that day, due to COVID 19 instructions, enabled me to film the site without any interference (individual visitors, organized tours). On this visit I concentrated on the different shapes constructing the monument from various angles and during different hours of the day. My next observation was conducted on November 11, 2020. On this visit I concentrated on the relationships between the other visitors and the monument. The images were captured by using a camera (canon 80D) and a video camera. Visual methodologies were used to interpret the visual material (Rose 2001). Both the photographs and the videos were analyzed in order to expose the language of the monument and the ways this language creates and mediates the monument's narratives through shape, size, material, light, and interaction.

## Analysis

### Monuments of war as a monologic shared heritage

As The Monument is designed to commemorate the fallen of the Palmach brigade in the '48 war, the narrative of military struggle for the land is embedded in the site from the Zionist ideological point of view. The military struggle is demonstrated in the monument by using architectural symbolism that highlights the important role of the Palmach soldiers in conquering and controlling the land. The intersection between war, soldiers, and land was constructed by juxtaposing various large geometrical structures made of concrete. The cylinder, a perforated 70-foot high tower, alludes to a watchtower shelled with gunfire (Manor 2014). The horizontal composition also resembles the Tower and Stockade (*Homa U'migdal* in Hebrew) that was a settlement method and a configuration of sovereignty, used by Zionist pioneers during the 1936–1939 Arab revolt to create contiguous Jewish-populated regions in remote areas, which would later help determine the borders (Foote and Azaryahu 2007). The pipeline tunnel recalls the only water supply to the Negev. The canal conveyed water from the Jordan River, passing it on to Israel's densely populated regions to enable the development of the Negev desert settlements, and thus was glorified for its contribution to the effort to “make the desert bloom”. The long passageways that stretch along the site resemble military equipment and weapons storage and military communication canals. The ditches echo the military bunkers and pits trenches that protected the troops from the enemy's artillery and gunfire and become archetypically associated with war and with the mythization, exaltation, and justification of the war experience (Mosse 1990). The pyramid shape is reminiscent of sheets of military tents. Combined and connected, the structures represent a simulation of a war zone. A big split dome, standing opposite the vertical cylinder, integrates the human factor into the somewhat abandoned, abstract, and dramatic battlefield appearance. The names of the 324 fallen are engraved inside the curved dome's concrete walls, according to the period and battle where they sacrificed their lives. A wall situated at the entrance to the monument adds additional human artifacts, among them: the badge of the Palmach brigade, soldiers' diary passages, battle registry, songs, and verses from the Old Testament (2 Kings 2:12). To further symbolize the connection between the soldiers and the land, the monument includes within its structure traces of the human aspects by combining image and sound. Some of the walls are stamped with shoe prints that echo the existence of soldiers and pioneers who fought and established their home in the desert. As the visitors walk inside the structure of the dome and view the stamped shoe prints, they can hear, at the same time, the footsteps of the visitors walking outside the monuments. The image and the soundtrack collide and create an ongoing psychological sensation that echoes the soldiers' walking by with their troops. Moreover, creating the structures

from bare and raw cement also holds symbolic meanings. In the Zionist narrative, concrete was perceived as a strong, exposed, material that served as the basic infrastructure of the Zionist nation-building project. These rough and powerful features were associated with the image of the Zionist pioneers and soldiers (Almog 2000). Overall, the site echoes the Jewish Zionist binary meta-narrative “from destruction to redemption”, which is symbolically reflected in the spatial dualities created by the geometrical forms. The open-closed, below-above, and dark-light effects metaphorically represent the dead as opposed to the living, for whom the fallen gave their lives (Amir 2006). Through that, the symbolic architecture arouses the visitors’ patriotic feelings and emotions. The “spatially specific” positioning of the Negev Monument – on a hilltop that overlooks the landscape – further draws the visitors’ attention to the connection between the fallen and the centrality of the land in the Zionist ideology and actions. Being in the public sphere, the monument’s control can also be understood as the state’s control, not only over the land, but also over the memories attached to the land and the shared heritage it wishes to produce. In other words, the way The Monument represents man and land reflects the ways the dominant memories of the nation are constructed. These ties, which create a stone mosaic of men and land as an inherently zero-sum condition, are blocking counter historical narratives, like the contrasting memory of the Palestinian refugees who fled the Negev and the contrasting memory of the Palestinian-Bedouins who are living in the Negev to this day. Marking The Monument as a tourist site even strengthens the hegemonic national narrative, since the visitors, who are not necessarily related to the fallen, are invited to take part in the fallen memory and to be included in the national collective memory and heritage. Since the national Israeli-Palestinian conflict that The Monument represents has not been resolved yet, and since both sides of the conflict still hold different opinions regarding the war, being included in the memorial’s narrative holds an ideological-political meaning that does not apply only to the universal aspects of life and death, sacrifice and altruism. When constructing The Monument, the perspective of the enemy was disregarded. No conversation about the enemy’s ideological and political perspective was considered as a legitimate view to be expressed by visitors (Noy 2011). Being dehumanized, the enemy was excluded from the Zionist collective narrative, including the Muslim cemeteries in Israel (Bar 2020), and vice versa. This ethno-national spatial divide served to construct an essential distinction between Jews and Arabs, which not only encapsulates the ethno-national conflict, but also prevents any contradictory narration of the war that can challenge the Zionist point of view. The creation of an oxymoronic perspective that includes the other parties involved was perceived as a dangerous political transgression. Thus, the monument served as part of the political technology that safeguarded the symbolic boundaries of the nation. (Fig. 1)

Fig. 1: *The Monument to the Negev Brigade, Be'er Sheva (Photo: Sapir Bar El)*



Fig. 2: *The Monument to the Negev Brigade, Be'er Sheva (Photo: Sapir Bar El)*



## Monuments of war as a polysemic shared heritage

The Monument's presence also imposes polysemic meanings of space and place, even though the monument has been state-narrated. Some of these meanings resist the common national narrative imposed on memorial sites in Israel by recodifying the landscape outside of the narratives and signs that it was supposed to present. Even though state-narrated storied spaces are the product of social structures and relations that are framed by the dominant ideological narrative, The Monument enables the creation of meanings that open the site's politicized messages through the architectural experience it offers. The visual and bodily experiences are anchored in the ways the artificial existence of the monument is blended with the surrounding landscape. It is important to note that the land was heavily politicized and served as a crucial component of the Zionist ideology. The Zionist movement adopted a "territorial nationality" that perceived the land of Palestine/Eretz-Israel both as a holy place or space of Judaism and as the exclusive homeland and state of the Jewish people (Ravitzky 1999). To realize the affinity between history and nationality and to transform the Jewish immigrants to the (holy) land into "natural natives" of the (national) land, the landscape became an ideology, a narrative, and a practice to be performed in rituals and in everyday life activities (Gurevitch 1997). This national ethos was reproduced through intensive archeological digging (Feigeh and Shiloni 2008), mapping (Benvenisti 1997), and the materialization of the land through geographical lexicons, travel books, and guidebooks (Eliasz 2008). Alongside this nationalized concept of the land, The Monument offers more connections to the land that broaden the ideological framing. This connection of man-land admires the land, but not in the same way as in the national mythologization project. This connection to the land is mainly demonstrated by The Monument's desire to integrate itself and the visitors into the landscape in which they are located; a desire that is not framed by a national agenda. "I wanted the monument to be part of the landscape, and for people to be part of it when they are inside it", states Karavan in a documentary film produced by the Israel Film Service (1976). To interweave environment, man, and monument, the abstract structures appeal to the natural surroundings that are not necessarily connected to military objects and to the war. While memorial sites aim to concretize heritage in terms of place and time, The Monument also strips place and time of the militaristic narrative. The ball, triangle, cylinder, square, and circle act and can be experienced as a reification of the desert landscapes. Some of the shapes are designed as flat surfaces that turn and twist in different directions. The delicate streams blend into the desert surrounding the site, and almost assimilate into its curved sandy hills, dunes, and slopes. The way the site stretches out into the desert, together with the soil that heaps up along its sides, blurs the boundaries between the two and suggests that the monument and the land are integral parts. The yellowish-grey color of the materials used also

contributes to this effect/message; especially the huge planks of raw bare concrete that resemble the colors of the clay and sand that make up the desert soil. In certain parts of the day, they even blur the hills surrounding the monument. A different feature through which The Monument symbolically merges with the landscape is the various ways nature invades the monument and blends in with its overall looks. The concrete body of the monument is breached with round holes and straight sections that create windows onto the landscape and envelope the desert views within the site. Grains of sand and rays of sunlight that enter through the holes consolidate the inner body of the monument with its surrounding. Some more holes punctuating the central dome blend into the darkness and light up the structure, creating an assemblage of the desert's direct sun and the darkness of the heavy object (Welch 2013). Other spiritual aspects are derived from the geometrical shapes themselves. Some objects, like the circle and the dome, are associated with spirituality, as perfection, eternity, and even the heavens are ascribed to them in different cultures. These open forms create various levels of engagement that give the visitors the experience of "being part of". By using bodily practices, they enable the visitors to walk on and through The Monument and even to be swallowed up by The Monument for a few minutes. "Disappearing" in the concrete artificial structure and shapes in the middle of the desert enables the visitors to gain a somewhat existential perspective and even a sense of dislocation that is not tied to certain ideologies. In this manner The Monument can be viewed as a "negative representation" of war since it is detached from specific meanings. This "Zionist iconoclastic" mysticism is achieved, unexpectedly, through the experiences of melting into the desert land, which appears unrepresentable and transcendent without the national territorial mythologization.

Beyond the concrete desert space, the monument also contains the four natural elements: earth, wind, water, and fire. The desert earth covers and reveals the monument; the wind whistles in the slits of the vast shapes; water flows through the concrete canals; the memorial fire blazes beside them. Although the elements are not disconnected from the national ideological contexts, the various elements also function as abstract shapes in and of themselves, illustrating the existence of the material world and representing the power of creation and life in general. In this manner, The Monument is visualized as an abstract concept that is stripped of the descriptive narratives of war while offering a performative and even existential experience to its visitors. (Fig. 2)

## Concluding remarks: Remembrance, monuments, and the idea of heritage

The Monument offers a different understanding of the bereavement phenomenology. Two overlapping practices help in visualizing and materializing the historical events of the '48 war both through the particular patriotic perspective and through some more universal existential perspectives. By using architectural symbolism, The Monument “mirrors” the memory of war that lies beneath the surface in which it is embedded. This consolidation of monument and land mobilizes and shapes the visitor's national emotions and consciousness. By using architectural experience, The Monument “mirrors” the memory of the bare desert land that surrounds it. This consolidation of monument and land awakens the visitor's romantic and spiritual perceptions and feelings. The juxtaposition of both images and representations makes The Monument a spatial alternative to the Israeli bereavement culture. The double uses and coding of space do not only provide markers for the national processes of identity formation, but also provide the possibility of framing The Monument as a different “memory maker”; a “memory maker” that can create transformation. Even though the experiences of both sides of the conflict are not valued or shared, as suggested in critical perspectives like “memory activism” (Gutman 2017) and “spatial counter-sovereignities” (Gazit and Latham 2014), the entwinement of the national and the spiritual creates the “memory place” as a more polyphonic arena that simultaneously produces different voices. In this manner, resistance is not perceived as the only analytical tool that can deconstruct the power of the nationalized heritage. Instead of veiling and exposing political agendas and forcing this interpretation to exchange one agenda for the other, the analysis of the monument allows for a more saturated meaning.

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# Arab-Hebrew bread: The story of the Hubeza and the split local heritage

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Michal Levit

## Introduction

The *hubeza*,<sup>1</sup> a local wild plant that in the winter months grows everywhere in Israel, is absent from supermarket shelves and popular market stalls in Tel Aviv. Despite being so common in fields and wildlands, and though it is a tasty edible plant, easy to prepare, healthy and full of vitamins – qualities that make it what is called today “superfood” – the *hubeza* can be found almost exclusively in Arab markets, which are culturally and geographically removed from Israel’s culinary center. This research seeks to examine why and how the *hubeza* has been pushed to the margins of the Israeli cuisine, by analyzing its appearances in the printed Hebrew press from the foundation of the state up to this day. The study highlights three major themes that are associated with the *hubeza* in the Israeli society: one theme, prevalent mainly in the first decade of the state, was an attempt to mythologize the *hubeza* in the spirit of the Zionist narrative as having played a major role in saving the Jewish community during the siege of Jerusalem. The other two themes show that nowadays, the *hubeza* is perceived in Israel on the one hand as local and available, and on the other as exotic, distant, and belonging to the Other.

How can one edible plant be perceived as both distant and near at one and the same time? How can one plant become part of the heritage of two opposing ethnic-national groups? And what role does this plant play in the Israeli cultural heritages?

Through analyzing the allusions to the *hubeza* in the Hebrew press, the research questions the underlying idea of the *Slow Food* movement, and especially the assumption that promoting local food necessarily promotes ideas of justice and equality and contributes to the challenge of creating of a more inclusive Arab-Jewish shared heritage. Through analyzing the allusions to the *hubeza* in the Hebrew press, the research questions the underlying idea of the *Slow Food* movement, and especially the assumption that promoting local food necessarily promotes ideas of

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1 The Arabic name of Mallow.

justice and equality and contributes to the challenge of creating of a more inclusive Arab-Jewish shared heritage.

In the last two decades, movements that call for local food consumption have gone beyond the confines of activism to become a central component of the global foodie discourse. Food stores boasting “zero kilometers” and restaurants proclaiming “from farm to table” are opening regularly, and in 2007 the word “locavore” (a person who bases their nutrition on local food) was Oxford University’s word of the year. There are many motivations behind the idea of promoting local food consumption, among them ecological motivations such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions, social motivations such as supporting the local farmers, and cultural motivations such as preserving traditions. In his book *Loving the Earth* the founder of the international *Slow Food* movement,<sup>2</sup> Carlo Petrini, documents a conversation with one of the prominent voices preaching local consumption – Wendell Berry, an American writer, intellectual, and farmer. Berry suggests that a deep and continuous cultural connection to a piece of land is the key to developing stable and incontestable culture and agriculture (Heldke 2012; Petrini and Irving 2014).<sup>3</sup>

Although (and maybe because) the subject of promoting local food is close to my heart, and although the ideas expounded by Berry in particular and locavores in general sound beautiful and romantic, I would like to challenge them by trying to understand the ramifications that promoting local food consumption might have in a place like Israel. Israel is a relatively young state, whose founding was a realization of Zionism, an ideology associated, among other things, with an Ashkenazi (Jews from European origin) elite that had no knowledge of the local flora, and based on the myth of “a land without a people [and therefore without a culture, traditions or a local cuisine] for a people without a land” (Zangwill 1901, p. 615).

In order to challenge the ideas of local food promotion in Israel, I chose to focus on one local wild plant that has a symbolic status in the local culture – the hubeza. Through analyzing the representations of the hubeza in the Israeli press from the foundation of the state up to this day, and through reading contemporary menus in restaurants across the country, I will examine the ways local wild food deals with the

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2 The *Slow Food* organization promotes local food consumption, the preservation of culinary traditions and biodiversity, and agriculture and food sustainability – in the belief that each human being has the right to good, clean, and fair food. The organization was founded in 1986 by Carlo Petrini, and today operates in around 160 countries around the world through hundreds of thousands of activists engaged in advocating the organization’s ideas through diverse actions.

3 For Berry (and other locavores), there is a close connection between the physical plot of land and culture and agriculture. He claims that work on the land can begin only after it has been home to at least three generations of the same culture, otherwise the land will pay for the mistakes with every change of ownership.

challenge of fostering and creating a culinary heritage of both Arabs and Jews, while at the same time imposing segregation, appropriation, and oppression.

## Food as cultural language and heritage

In the last decades many theoreticians have discussed the inherent qualities of food as language,<sup>4</sup> making varied arguments about food carrying symbolic meanings and often serving as a signifier. Philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists, or communications experts have used food and its representations to read society's structures and analyze it.<sup>5</sup> One of the cornerstones of gastronomic studies is the assumption that we are not only what we eat,<sup>6</sup> but also how, when, and where we eat, and why we choose to eat in that particular way.

When Roland Barthes (1972) wrote about *Wine and Milk* or *Steak and Chips*, he examined the values and ideologies of the society that glorifies these products by looking at the myth created around them, their representations, and the ways they are customarily consumed.

In other words, a society's conception of the food it consumes shapes in numerous ways not only the nutritional agenda of its members, including the food's production, supply, storage, sale, and availability, but also their cultural agenda. The various contexts that link food, culture and tradition contribute to shaping the identity of the modern state. The culinary heritage creates foci for collective identification by shaping a variety of ethical-cultural conceptions, including: the types of food that are allowed (or prohibited), the ways food is grown/manufactured, how food is consumed in normal and in festive times, and so on. The social, economic, and religious contexts of food are present in the cultural heritage in diverse ways and

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- 4 For example: Massimo Montanari (2006) describes the disconnection between the stimulating caffeine in coffee and the idea of the "coffee break" as a practice of relaxation between two work periods. He suggests that unlike verbal language, food language cannot be detached from the concreteness of the object or from the predetermined semantic value, but it is the context that defines itself autonomously to the point of contradicting the nutritional value of the food it is attributed to, as in the case of coffee. Warren Belasco claims that "what we think about food may have little to do with the actual material properties of the food itself" (in: Johnston and Baumann 2010, p.31).
  - 5 Many scholars agree that the connection between identity and consumption gives food a major role in community building, and that we use our nutrition to convey images of public identity.
  - 6 To paraphrase the famous saying by Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, one of the forefathers of gastronomy: "Dis-moi ce que tu manges, je te dirai ce que tu es" (tell me what you eat, and I will tell you who you are), as well as the famous observation by the Ludwig Andreas von Feuerbach: "Der Mensch ist, was er ißt" (man is what he eats).

through various mediums. These include the rituals connected to how food is represented and consumed, canonical recipe books, the preservation of cooking practices, museums, and the legal protection of specific products/dishes (Luigi and Albinetti 2016). Furthermore, the ways food is featured in the cultural heritage influence the relations between different classes in a specific society, as well the relations between different ethnic and religious groups that comprise the modern national society. Hence the shared culinary heritage strives to regulate relations within the national group, while reinforcing its uniqueness against and in relation to secondary groups and the invasion of global flavors and food products. In this sense the culinary heritage offers a means and an arena for creating an ethnic-national hegemony that tends to reproduce the center-periphery relations that exist in other social arenas. In immigration states the culinary cultural heritage represents an actual arena of struggle where processes of integration and assimilation simultaneously exist side by side with appropriation, marginalization, and exclusion. The latter produce dichotomous categorizations such as “haute cuisines” and “popular cuisines”, “quality food” and “fast food”, “authenticity” and “junk” (Johnston and Baumann 2010). The agents in the culinary arena – chefs, cooks, restaurant critics, talk-show hosts, and judges in cooking contests – play in this field and take part in formulating the cultural narrative it is centered around. As a result, the shared culinary heritage is trapped between the wish to consolidate and preserve a unique cultural-geographic space, and responding to market forces, industrialization processes, the mobility of goods, and waves of immigration.

The local Israeli cuisine similarly represents an arena of struggle over the character and face of the shared Israeli cultural heritage. In this arena, fight against each other, the Ashkenazi cuisine and the Mizrahi cuisine, the secular cuisine and the kosher cuisine, the omnivorous meat-based cuisine and the vegan cuisine, the Jewish cuisine and the Palestinian cuisine. They all oscillate between the wish to formulate the cultural heritage as unique, authentic, and original, and the wish to create hybrids of flavors, dishes, and traditions with a more pluralistic and cosmopolitan character (Raviv 2015), which is present not only on the private plate, but also in the collective field of representations.

## Why not the hubeza?

The scientific name of the mallow common in the Middle East is *malva sylvestris*, and it is known to most Israelis by its Arab name hubeza.<sup>7</sup>

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7 I will use the name hubeza to describe this edible plant.

*Fig. 1: Hubeza Lasagna by Chef Asaf Doktor (Photo: Asaf Doktor)*



*Fig. 2: Hubeza Soup with cured egg yolk by Chef Raz Rahav (Photo: Raz Rahav)*





Both the Hebrew and the Arab names are derived from the word for bread, attesting to this edible plant's great importance in the history of the Mediterranean diet in general and the local one in particular.<sup>8</sup> But it's not just the name: Horace (in Conington 1882) mentioned it in his writings in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, when referring to his own diet: "me pascunt olivae, / me cichorea levesque malvae" (as for me, olives, endives and smooth mallows provide sustenance). Pythagoras forbade his pupils to consume it, because he believed the consumption of mallow encouraged brain activity and symbolized the attraction between the heavenly and the earthly (Flaccus and Conington 2017). One of the interpretations of the sentence from the Book of Job translated in the King James Version as "can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt or is there any taste in the white of an egg?" suggests that the original's *vir halamut* is not egg white but a flavorless secretion discharged from a plant named *halamut*, probably from the *malvaceae* family, and in the Mishna a plant named *helmit* appears in the Kil'ayim tractate (1, 8).

In addition to its great importance in the local culinary traditions, the hubeza is also attributed with medicinal qualities, and is considered healthy and nutritious, as can be gleaned from numerous sources in the local folklore (Azaria 1978; Zohari 1978).<sup>9</sup> Current studies prove that the hubeza contains active elements that can relieve mucous irritations, as well as anti-inflammatory elements and antioxidants (Barros et al. 2010; Benso et al. 2015). Despite that, the hubeza not been accepted as a full member in the Israeli-Jewish cuisine and has never been grown as part of commercial agriculture in Israel.

Even though the hubeza remained on the margins of the Israeli-Jewish culinary heritage it has gained a symbolic status in the Israeli society. The hubeza is local not only because it grows on Israel's land. In fact, it also grows in the wild across Europe and Africa (ibid). The hubeza is local because it has played a major part in the culture and history of the local cuisine. It has long been well-known to the country's inhabitants, and to this day is part of the foraging and cooking traditions among Jewish and Muslim families whose roots are in the Middle East. The hubeza is a wild plant not only because it grows in the wild all over the country, in fields, in courtyards, in traffic islands and in landfills; it is wild because it has been marked as such. Should an Israeli want to buy hubeza, they would have trouble finding it outside of the Arab markets, which are both geographically and culturally remote from the urban food markets in central Israel. Conversations with Israeli farmers and distributors and with Nativ Dudai, head of the Medicinal and Aromatic Plants unit at the

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8 The hubeza is considered one of the most important edible plants in the Middle Eastern foraging tradition (Zohara and Dudai 2014).

9 In popular medicine, mallow was considered a laxative. Mallow was used as cough medicine and for stomach problems (Ben Shabat 1944). Mallow leaves were also used as bandage (Buchman and Amar 2007).

*Volcani Center's Agricultural Research Organization*, suggest that it's not because of its natural traits that farmers in Israel don't grow the hubeza commercially. According to Dudai, and as will be demonstrated below, the reasons are purely cultural and consumerist ones.

## The authentic and the exotic: The contemporary foodie discourse

It is important to understand that the foodie<sup>10</sup> discourse is based on knowledge and takes place within frameworks of thinking that are influenced by the power relations in society and influence them back in return. Josée Johnston and Shyon Baumann (2010) describe the contemporary foodie discourse in their book *Foodies: Democracy and distinction in the gourmet foodscape*, showing how food acts as a status symbol that positions the economic and cultural elites and distinguishes them. This book laid the foundations for thinking about foodies as cultural consumers who in the sphere of food negotiate the tension between democratic tolerance on the one hand, and exclusive distinction on the other. The authors claim that this tension is governed by the frameworks of "authentication" and "exoticization" (Johnston and Baumann 2010). These two frameworks had been examined seven years earlier by Lisa Heldke (2003) that deconstructs the fashionable desire that inspires the foodie pursuit of ethnic food. Heldke (ibid) exposes and critiques the orientalist approach underlying Euro-American foodies' adventurous motivations, as she calls them, to consume exotic and authentic food.

## Methods

Drawing inspiration from Barthes (1972), the study is based on analyzing around one hundred scanned passages from the printed Israeli press, which mention the word hubeza or helmit (the plant's Hebrew name), the earliest from 1948 and the latest from 2018. The analysis focused on the dichotomy local/global, while bringing to light the traps inherent in promoting local food consumption in Israel and ways such promotion fosters segregation, appropriation, and oppression.

## Three periods, three themes

The analysis of the hubeza's representations in the printed press points to three central themes characterizing three different periods (see graphic): in the first period –

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10 *Foodies* [informal] is a slang nickname for those interested in preparing and eating fine food.

the first decade of the independent state – the hubeza is mentioned almost exclusively in the context of its role during the siege of Jerusalem; in the second period – from the beginning of the 1960s to the beginning of the 2000s – the hubeza is by contrast absent from the Israeli Hebrew press; the third period – between 2000 and 2018 – raises questions about how the local wild is perceived and promoted in Israel. These two decades have seen a sharp rise in mentions of the hubeza in two opposing contexts: on the one hand, it is linked to terms such as local and *baladi*,<sup>11</sup> seasonal and foraging, while on the other hand it is associated with terms that denote a nostalgic distance, expressed in longing for what is no longer there, or a material distance and an imagined rarity, expressed in words such as rare, oriental and treasures. As if the hubeza, a food with deep and strong roots in the local culture, was an exotic food found far away from here. How can the hubeza be perceived in Israel as both near and far at the same time?

Following the analysis, I will show the current representations of the hubeza as they appear in menus of celebrity chef restaurants across the country, and on the process of the hubeza's aestheticization. Through these representations I will raise questions about the promotion of local food consumption and about shared Jewish-Arab heritage in Israel today.

## The fifties: The siege of Jerusalem narrative

As mentioned above, the hubeza's fifteen minutes of fame in the Israeli society came in the decade after the 1948 War and revolved around its role as the heroine of the siege of Jerusalem. This is what Dr. Dov Yosef, Jerusalem's military governor in 1948, wrote in his memoirs:

At the beginning of March, the food supply situation became grave. We were completely out of animal proteins, and apart from flour we had vital foods for only four to fifteen days – each product and its amount [...] We sent children to the fields to gather mallow leaves,<sup>12</sup> a wild plant that grows after the rainy days and tastes like spinach and sold it to the public to cook soup. We had to stop for fear of landmines and because of the Arab snipers. [...] As hunger in the besieged city increased, the gathering of mallow, or hubeza, was renewed. The picked leaves were transported to Tnuva,<sup>13</sup> which was located at the time on Yechezkel Street near the Shabbat Square, where they were packed and marketed in the city as 'New Zealand spinach' (Genachowski 1988, p. 10).

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11 The Arab word *baladi* means "from the country".

12 Dr. Dov Yosef chooses to use the Hebrew word *helmit*.

13 *Tnuva* was established in 1926. Today it is the largest food manufacturer in Israel.

In the years after the founding of the state of Israel, the hubeza became a national heroine. The *Yediot Ahronoth* newspaper wrote in 1950: “He [Man] tends to forget the little stories of the war; he remembers the hubeza he ate during the siege, but has already forgotten its taste, unless he’s made it his habit to put a plate of hubeza on his table once a year as a souvenir” (Genachowski 1950, p. 1). This glorification had a goal and was instigated by the government and supported by propaganda in the press. In the early fifties a proposal was made by the department of nutrition at the Ministry of Education and Culture to name the hubeza as the official food of the Independence Day celebration:

Ahead of the festive family meal on Independence Day eve, the department of nutrition at the Ministry of Education and Culture is suggesting two menus for the meal, connected with the memories of the War of Liberation,<sup>14</sup> with the founding of the state and with the Ingathering of the Exiles. The menu can be adapted to the tastes of the family members, while keeping the fundamentals that are listed in the explanation for the menu [...] The first course consists of mallow (hubeza) in memory of the siege of Jerusalem: this wild plant, which grows in every courtyard and garden in Jerusalem, was almost the only vegetable on our diet during the siege of Jerusalem. The mallow can be served in various ways, such as: as a sautéed patty in tomato sauce, or salad with tahini, or in any other form, like you would usually cook spinach (no author 1956).

The Israeli government’s effort to mythicize the hubeza was so great, that in 1952 the then Minister of Education Ben-Zion Dinur came up with the idea of an “Independence Day Seder”, which included a revised version of the Passover Seder telling the story of the War of Independence. In 1955 the proposal was publicized in the *Maariv* newspaper:

The dictionary writer Even-Shoshan and the poet Yitzhak Shalev have prepared a tastefully written and edited modern Haggadah,<sup>15</sup> which is going to turn the festive meal into an experience worthy of a tradition. To complete the celebratory setting, we are instructed at the beginning of the Haggadah to decorate the walls of our house with the national flags, the state’s emblem, and pictures of its personages [...]. And then – the Seder<sup>16</sup> will begin! [...] One by one the members of the household and their guests will read the festive stories [...]. It also tells in a flowery haggadic style about ‘the rulers of the country who joined our enemies and appointed over us commissioners and policemen and oppressors’ and about the UN resolution that said Amen to our heart’s wishes. Here begins the story of the heroic struggle, and the Arab’s plots to ‘beat us and defeat us before

14 This is another name for the 1948 War.

15 The *Haggadah* is a Jewish text that sets forth the order of the Passover Seder.

16 The Passover *Seder* is a ritual feast that at the beginning of the Jewish holiday of Passover.

we become a state' [...]. The meal – a masterwork of the government's nutrition department [...]. But in stark contrast to the idea of the Merging of the Exiles, separate menus have been prepared for those with eastern and western tastes, and while those of Ashkenazi<sup>17</sup> origin are instructed to have a first course of 'mallow patties in tomato sauce', those of Mizrahi<sup>18</sup> descent will get 'mallow salad with tahini' (Bitzur 1955, p. 2).

Six years earlier, in 1949, the *Hed Hamizrach* newspaper had published a version of the Passover Haggadah for the Independence Day meal, with a different take on the song *Ma Nishtana* (Hebrew for "The Four Questions"):

Why is this Passover different from last year's Passover/ In 1948 we were under siege without leavened products and matzah – and this year we have both leavened products and matzah. / In 1948 we ate mallow [...] without all the other vegetables – and this year we have all kinds of vegetables and fruit (no author 1949).

By creating a symbolic connection between the hubeza and the powerful myth of the matzah that saved the Israelites in their Exodus from Egypt, the Zionist leaders in Israel hoped to create a national heroine, a local wild ingredient in the evolving Israeli cuisine. But they failed. In 1965 the *Haboker* newspaper published an article about the Independence Day meal, which described how a decade earlier, the forgotten idea of the Independence Day Haggadah and of eating hubeza in the festive meal was proposed:

In April 10 years ago the college for nutrition and home economy at the Ministry of Education and Culture made a proposal for the Independence Day meal. The proposal is reprinted here, but in the meantime the Independence Day Haggadah, as well as the Independence Day meal, has been forgotten by many and even the Education Ministry spokesperson didn't know it existed. We obtained it from the college for nutrition and home economy, and here it is in full (no author 1965, p. 6).

In the early sixties, when the Israeli culture started to cast its gaze outward and tend towards capitalist consumer culture, food became a leisure and luxury product (Raviv 2015). Moreover, when the years of austerity ended, the Israeli society was presumably no longer interested in a food like the hubeza, so closely linked with the poor nutrition that prevailed during the siege of Jerusalem.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, between

17 Ashkenazim are Jews that emigrated to Israel from European countries.

18 Mizrahim are Jews that emigrated to Israel from Arab or Muslim countries.

19 In a text thus titled *We are looking for a national dish* (no author), the writer wishes to find the common language for East and West in Israel, and the suitable dish "to symbolize the Independence celebration, the Gathering of the Exiles and the Merging of the Exiles." She remem-

1960 and 2000 there were considerably fewer mentions of the hubeza in the printed Israeli press, and when mentioned at all, it was almost exclusively in the context of its role during the siege.<sup>20</sup> It seems that the hubeza was pushed out of the Israeli-Jewish heritage. However, a fascinating semiotic process took place at the turn of the millennium, between 2000 and 2018, in which a food having symbolic meaning in the local culture became both near and distant at one and the same time.

## 2000–2018: Baladi-Local is great, Arabic even better

The global trend for local food consumption has not skipped the Hebrew food press, and the last two decades have seen a sharp rise in representations of the hubeza as a food connected to local food, foraging and seasonality. In these years many articles have encouraged their readers to get out of the city into the fields and gather hubeza or buy it at the Arab markets or even order a hubeza dish in restaurants.

Unsurprisingly, as the hubeza is increasingly mentioned in the context of local food, it is also increasingly mentioned as part of the Arab cuisine. This trend can also be linked to the hubeza being more frequently mentioned alongside the Arab word *baladi*, which means “from the city” or “from my home country”. Over the years, in different countries in the Middle East, the word has acquired meanings linked to the terms “rural” and “local”, and therefore many markets have started to sell local produce under the *baladi* moniker.

In an article from 2001, that discusses the market in Wadi Nisnas in Haifa, the vegetable store *Bshara* was described in the following way:

In the winter he has wild herbs. All the stuff they have in the nearby market, but more expensive, packed, and convenient. Hubeza and wild chicory and sorrel and sage leaves for filling and wild fennel. Everything. In the summer he has *baladi*. I know that it's already becoming a cliché, but I don't mind being a bit of an evangelist, a bit of a crusader. This food, which didn't pass through the Volcani Institute, didn't grow in hothouses, and has no brain, is a lot tastier than the perfect fruit and vegetables at the supermarket (Farber 2002, p. 8).

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bers the menu published by the Ministry of Education, which included hubeza in memory of the siege, and writes: “In truth, I don't believe that this synthetic menu will take root” (1962 p. 8).

- 20 It is interesting to examine the rise and fall of the hubeza as the national hero in comparison to the way the early settlers in Palestine perceived the fellahin and the Bedouins: “In the early days of Jewish settlement, the figure of the Arab worker, and especially the Bedouin and the fellah, gained a mythological status not only for being considered a relic of the Biblical past, but also for their association with desired masculine qualities like physical power, endurance, abstemiousness, and attachment to the land” (Hirsch 2016, p. 351).

Tsaban (2016) argues that by eating hummus in as distinctly Arab style as possible, Jewish Israelis acquire cultural status, preserve the power relations, and reconnect to the land. We may consider the word *baladi* in a similar way to the way Zaban considers hummus. Farber, and likely also many of the readers of his column, are interested in reconnecting to the land by consuming authentic Arab food. Using the Arabic word *baladi* to describe local food earns the writer and his readers a cultural trait that connects them to the region and makes them feel more authentic. By contrast, defining *baladi* as “food with no brain” marks it as a food that belongs to the inferior Other and distinguishes them from the relatively superior writer and readers.

In another article from 2000 the writer encourages his readers to go out and forage for herbs:

If you haven't yet met your salad when it was still alive, this is the time. Go out to the field, to the nearest *baladi* market, or to a restaurant that hasn't yet assimilated the secrets of commercialization. [...] It starts in the autumn, with the small leaves of the *hubeza*, that human-loving plant (what it really loves is nitrogen, and we and our rubbish provide it with plenty of that) which the kids used to call ‘Arab bread’ and ate its fruit, and even before that, during the siege of Jerusalem, its leaves were used to make soup and patties and salad. Even if some of us think that before we came to this land there was nothing here – well there was, or more correctly there were Arabs, and the *hubeza* leaves are an important part of their diet (Farber 2000, p. 4).

By using the term “Arab bread”, the Israeli society’s common nickname for the *hubeza*, the Hebrew language has pushed this wild plant to its seemingly natural place – to “their” diet (and whom is the writer addressing in this text?). In fact, this is how the local-Other food – Arabic food – becomes reinforced in the Israeli food discourse.

In time the food manufacturers and the restaurants realized the status symbol inherent in the word *baladi*.<sup>21</sup> Different food businesses slowly started using it to promote their products, and thus, with no basis in law or precise definition in Hebrew, the word was “becoming a cliché” (Farber 2002, p. 8). In fact, it is already such a cliché that it has changed its meaning.

On the *Milog* Hebrew dictionary website, which is the first result in a google search for the word *baladi* in Hebrew, the meaning is given as: “1. fine agricultural produce. ‘*baladi* eggplant tastes perfect’; 2. original.”<sup>22</sup> Both suggestions are a dis-

21 In the contemporary foodie discourse about quality, locality, organic, handmade, creativity, and simplicity, everyone strives to mark foods as a source of distinction for those with the cultural and economic capital (Johnston and Baumann 2010).

22 See: <http://bit.ly/3G7HiSH>

tortion of the word *baladi* in Arabic. As we shall see below, the semiotic change undergone by the hubeza as it takes on characteristics that lend its users a different status also leads to changes in the modes of its consumption and in the meanings it bestows on those who consume it.

### **When the local becomes exotic: The creation of local-Other food**

As defined by Johnston and Baumann, “exotic” is not only the geographically and socially remote; it can also be a “norm-breaking” object: “[...] foods that present difference as radically different, exciting, and desirable. These foods are not simply rare, or unusual, but they violate norms of the culinary and cultural mainstream” (2010, p. 108–109). Moreover, Johnston and Baumann (*ibid*) suggest that in the contemporary foodie discourse, the discovery of new exotic foods, restaurants, and cuisines grants the foodie a social status that was not of importance in the past, but whose value today, with the rise of globalization and the spread of different food cultures, has risen considerably.

Before we turn to the contemporary representations of the hubeza’s exoticization, let us look back and try to trace its positioning as the food of the exotic Other. Exoticization is created by a perspective that defines the Other as different, but – different from whom? What are the standards of normality, and who is the Other? A good example of the standards being positioned within the hegemony is the education system’s theme concerned with respecting the Other and the different.

In 1960, the children’s writer and educator Miriam Rot published an article titled *He’s so different from me – and yet so similar...* in which she sought to educate children to accept the different. The article was accompanied by an illustration showing a white girl facing a black girl:

The children of the kibbutz kindergarten regularly meet with Arab children from the neighboring village. The children know the pasture used by the little Arab shepherd. They like to make exchanges with him: Ahmed brings ‘pita bread’ in his rucksack and the children give him bread. The shepherd plays his whining flute and the children applaud. ‘Too bad we don’t understand Arabic [...]’ – they say – ‘He’s also sorry he doesn’t speak Hebrew, isn’t he?’ – ‘Ahmed is our friend – he’s nice, he’s a good Arab! Isn’t he?’ The children like Ahmed despite his dark skin, despite his tatty clothes, despite his scruffy hair and his incomprehensible words. [...] The children learned to appreciate him as a child and struck a pact of friendship with him. Ahmed taught them how to toast wheat in the field, Ahmed taught them how to eat hubeza, Ahmed knows which wild plants are edible and good for making salad. [...] Ahmed carves branches and makes beautifully decorated sticks. Ahmed is smart and quick [...]. He’s so different from the children and yet so similar [...] (1960, p. 4).



The presentation of the hubeza as a popular food that belongs to the Other, as part of a wider and less sophisticated knowledge, recurs in texts from the last two decades, as in this text from 2000 that was published in *Yediot Ahronoth*:

There are great experts, Bedouins who know every leaf and herb and know how to produce water by chewing small wild fruit, but even if you can't find yourselves an expert you can get by [...]. Many also know the hubeza (mallow). Round leaves, in dark green, on the sides of the roads. Here too preparation is nothing: you fry chopped onion in olive oil until golden (with a bit of garlic or without), add the roughly chopped leaves, some pepper and salt, and fry it for a few minutes until the leaves wilt but don't lose their firmness completely [...] (Farber 2000, p. 4).

By creating distance between the subject who holds knowledge and the readers that seek it, the writers preserve the local wild food as belonging to the exotic Other. This distance is well demonstrated by the three following examples.

### **Local and exotic wild food: Meet Nadima from the market in Wadi Nisnas**

The key word – hubeza – came up in three different texts discussing Nadima Sabiti, a veteran restaurateur who ran a restaurant in Wadi Nisnas in Haifa. In a piece from 2014 Sabiti is presented by the journalist and writer Miriam Kutz:

It's pretty amusing to hear Nadima, 71 years old, for 53 of which she's been cooking, talking about Aharoni and Gidi Gov<sup>23</sup> as if they were friends from the hood. This is maybe the most informal cook you're likely to find. A small alcove in the Wadi [Wadi Nisnas], maybe 20 pots on the go, and she's sitting and sorting leaves for rolling or black-eyed peas for cooking as if she was standing in her private kitchen rather than in the middle of the neighborhood. This is a cute homey little eatery, mainly due to the personality of the cook and the homeliness that sizzles in the pots: stuffed eggplants and zucchini, rice with meat, vine leaves, black-eyed peas, green beans in okra sauce, Mujaddara, and lots of dishes with spinach, beetroot, hubeza and more. Nadima learned how to cook from her mom. She has two children and seven grandchildren, but they're not into cooking (2014, p. 12).

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23 Israel Aharoni is an Israeli celebrity chef, and together with Gidi Gov, a famous Israeli actor and singer, they are *Aharoni & Gidi* – the hosts of an Israeli TV show that follows them through various countries as they study the respective culture while travelling in different sites and enjoying the local food. The show's first season aired in 2011, and only in 2017, after three seasons where they went to places like Sian, Buchara, Vietnam, China, Morocco, and more – they finally had a season about the local Israeli cuisine.

In 2006 the chef and restaurateur Pini Levi wrote about the market in Wadi Nisnas:

[...] In the middle of the market I stop in the tiny restaurant run by Nadima, who cooks Arab food on kerosene burners. I can always open the pots here and have a peek at the food, see what tickles my fancy most and ask for a plate. For 18 shekels you can get spinach, endive or hubeza, stuffed vegetables, okra or eggplants in tomato sauce. Nadima serves everything with a smile and is happy to tell you each time all over again what's going on in her pots (2006, p. 16).

In a piece from 2013 titled *The Hubeza Craze*, David Bender describes in his column *From the diary of a hedonist* the ways to eat hubeza:

You can eat the leaves chopped and cooked like at Nadima's in Wadi Nisnas, and at a lengthening list of other Arab restaurants, and not only there. The hubeza has made a grand entrance this winter also at Alma, Yonatan Roshfeld's new restaurant. He has chosen to serve it with fresh ricotta, and it's worked brilliantly (2013, p. 11).

These texts raise two central points:

(1) The local-Other food is transmitted to the readers as a silenced object by the food writers – agents of the Jewish hegemony, who come to visit and poke around in its pots. In the three examples, Nadima Sabiti's last name is never mentioned. It might be down to the fact that she is a woman, or an Arab, or both identities at once – an Arab woman. Either way, these texts frame Sabiti as inferior or less important. Certainly not as important as Israel Aharoni and Gidi Gov or chef Yonatan Roshfeld,<sup>24</sup> who has chosen to put ricotta on his hubeza, as opposed to Sabiti's simple cooking, which is based on a traditional recipe that she didn't choose but was passed on to her by her mother. The recurring opposition between “there” (the tiny restaurant, the cute homey little neighborhood eatery) and “here” (Yonatan Roshfeld's Tel Aviv restaurant; the cultural knowledge of Gidi Gov and Israel Aharoni) not only shows how food writers often address a Tel Aviv audience who is from a defined and known socio-cultural background, but also reveals the gap between the simply-cut green leaves and the innovative way of serving them in a more aesthetic, more European way (and combined with ricotta).

Thus, Nadima is a home cook, and entering her kitchen is like entering a private kitchen. In this case, the Arabic cuisine is kept within the feminine, domestic private sphere. But with the “help” of Israeli-Jewish chefs, the hubeza gets to enter a different sphere – more public, more sophisticated, more Western.

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24 A highly appreciated Israeli celebrity chef, who was a judge on *Master Chef* T.V. show.

(2) By using belittling words such as amusing, cute, and tiny, the writers perpetuate the social distance that stems from the power relations. This distance between the professional men (Gidi Gov, Israel Aharoni, Yonatan Roshfeld) and Nadima's little eatery paints Sabiti's hubeza as lowly, and she herself as uneducated, with an inferior unprofessional culinary knowledge, knowledge that passes from mother to daughter (which is probably why it was also important to note the number of her children and grandchildren), and as having norms of behavior that are different from the mainstream, which allow snooping around in her pots. Notwithstanding, however, Sabiti's culinary knowledge and eating norms are presented within the frameworks of the "authentic" and the "exotic". The true adventurers, those who have made it to Wadi Nisnas and were able to find the treasure – Nadima's tiny little eatery – have earned the cultural status which only true food adventurers earn.

At the center of the arguments expounded by locavores in general and by Berrylies the idea that connection to place and land promotes justice and trust in democracy in a way that can only happen if people buy directly from the person producing their food (Heldke 2003). It is important to understand that the direct consumption of local wild herbs, and in particular the hubeza – Arab bread – directly from the Arab vendors in the sphere of the Arab markets, is a kind of performance, in which the two sides fill their expected role, which is usually based on a shallow knowledge of the culinary culture of the exotic Other. For example, intentionally or unintentionally, Sabiti continued to cook the same dishes. After all, if she had decided one day to garnish one of her dishes with hubeza fries or labneh mousse (as did recently a few young Arab chefs in Israel, on which I shall expand later), the Jewish customers who make pilgrimages to her small restaurant would have probably raised an eyebrow and tell themselves that Nadima is no longer as authentic as she used to be.<sup>25</sup> And if so, does this direct encounter really promote trust, or does it merely perpetuate the existing power relations by stabilizing the hubeza as the cultural heritage of the inferior Other?

## Nostalgia and childhood: The imagined distance

The social distance is demonstrated not only through the opposition between "us" and "them", but also through the opposition between "today" and "then" – an imagined distance created, among other things, by correlating representations of the

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25 As Johnston and Baumann define it, "culinary exoticism can work to essentialize and stereotype ethnic cultures (e.g., Mexican-American) that are expected to present and preserve their cultural heritage for consumption by the dominant culture, often in a context of social and economic inequality where an ethnic community's exotic food is more welcome than members of that ethnic community" (2010, p. 102).

hubeza with notions of nostalgia and childhood. Nostalgia is a highly influential marketing tool often used by many tourism and food writers; it is also extensively used with regards to local wild plants.

In the hubeza's case, however, we seem to be dealing not only with a marketing strategy. This edible plant is not rarer today than it used to be in the past, yet still many writers seem to treat the hubeza as if it was a childhood memory of a food that has disappeared, that can no longer be found in these parts. For example, this is what food writer Nira Russo writes in a nostalgic collection published in 2013, in which "the best writers, personalities and stars return to their yearbook photos from kindergarten, the army and school":

I didn't know yet the Hebrew word: Wallah!<sup>26</sup> Nor was I able back then to put all this into words, but I started to breathe. Our classroom was, hooray, inside the water tower: round, many-windowed, with a stone courtyard from whose cracks sprouted wood sorrel and hubeza, and with the rusty stepladder to the forbidden water worlds above. There, on the warm stone, with the Tel Aviv blend mixed with tinges of hubeza and fragrant lantana on the fence, I relaxed in order to breathe, restfully, as a child can only breathe in their own home. Since then, well, 'years have passed, the gold has dimmed, hills have become plains. But I still remember a mountain echo, clear and vivid, then as now'. Not that there were hills at our high school, and in any case the poet put it better. But I remember every sunny and poetic and grassy and clear and vivid detail. And even without citing Rachel's poem, I'm crying as I write this (2013, p. 22).

In David Bender's piece *The Hubeza Craze* from the same year, the writer describes his childhood:

On muddy winter days we had roundabout ways to go back home from school. We preferred the wadis and the fields, which tripled the distance, but it was such fun. We walked through rocks, trees and tall grass that reached as high as our shoulders. Among those there was one kind with small pink flowers, which towards spring developed into round and squashed fruits. One of the gangs showed us one day how to pick the strange fruit, remove its green wrapping, and chew. It was a bit tasteless. These were fruits of the hubeza, a common wild plant, which drew our attention mainly when it dared to grow in a carefully groomed flowerbed and was immediately uprooted. If someone had told us then that in days of need its leaves were used as spinach substitute, we would have found

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26 *Walla* is an Arabic word which means: "I promise by Allah (God)." Nowadays it is used in spoken Hebrew and has two meanings: The first is to ask someone to approve what they say (is it really so?), for example: "Yesterday I had a great dinner – Walla? Yes." The second is to highlight the truth of a sentence (it is really so), for example: "Walla, I had a great dinner last night."

it hard to believe, because we knew that only animals feed on wild herbs. It's surprising to see how the hubeza has made its way from poor people's food to a trendy vegetable, as before did its lentils, Israeli couscous, and cornmeal porridge (2013).

Frequently, we can also find representations of the hubeza that feature a non-nostalgic connection with childhood, as in a text from 2004 published in *Yediot Acharonot* newspaper: "The mallow [...] is a common wild plant in Israel. [...] Many kindergarten children strolling in the countryside collect the leaves and later practice making mallow patties in class [...]" (no author 2004, p. 22).

Why does the exoticization of the hubeza go hand in hand with its representation as a nostalgic object consumed during childhood? It may be merely a marketing writing style, but this connection can also be explained through the dichotomy between the wild (in the sense of a natural wild plant) and the cultivated, and its correlation with the dichotomy between childhood and adulthood. Just as the adult is a cultivated child, so in many ways the wild Other is perceived as belonging to childhood or even as childhood itself. This distance between the adult and the child creates an additional way to turn the local into an exotic Other and to distance it from the mainstream's norms. The texts cited above use the hubeza to paint a nostalgic picture and a fantastical past. Even if the nostalgia illustrated in these texts can be related to the spirit of Berry's nostalgic locality,<sup>27</sup> it paradoxically also operates as a promoter of social, cultural, and economic distance and cultural gap between the Jews' cultural heritage and the Arabs' one.

## The knowledge gap, imagined rarity and changing identity

A 2016 satirical illustration by Daniela London Dekel shows a woman (Jewish, probably urban), standing in front of a market stall owned by a couple – a mustachioed man and a woman wearing a headscarf (signs suggesting that they are probably Arabs). The illustration's protagonist is holding a bunch of green leaves and asking

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27 As suggested by an interview with Petrini: "The present situation is by no means ideal. We are experiencing the failure of a model that has caused many losses, some of them irreparable. For the next few years we need to be guided by different principles. More practically, we have to start adopting an approach of the kind I call 'local adaptation'. It's a principle that every living species on earth has always followed and it's hard to see why human species shouldn't follow it too. In the past we did so because we had no choice. Agriculture was adapted to each local area because there was no alternative" (Petrini and Irving 2014, p. 63). Heldke defines the past that Berry talks about as "the gatekeeper for truly tasting terroir [the overall environmental conditions for agricultural cultivation]" (2012, p. 37).

the vendors if this is curly kale or hubeza. Under the illustration, London Dekel describes her own experience at the market:

The vegetable and fruit selection is simply staggering. Everything is so sensual. All kinds of these seasonal things that have come totally fresh and shiny straight from the earth's womb. Suddenly asparagus. Suddenly artichokes. Suddenly something kind of green that looks like lettuce, but is probably not lettuce [...]. And the prices! Say, a bunch of hubeza leaves at the supermarket would cost. [...] Well, I don't really know, because when did I last buy hubeza leaves at the supermarket, and what do you even do with them, but even if it's the same price? It's only because there is no comparison. Because when the vegetable is really baladi baladi, that is, smaller, uglier, and dirtier, you can feel it. It tastes totally different. Baladi baladi has a kind of concentrated taste of a Palestinian fellah who has smuggled his produce in at five o'clock in the morning (London Dekel 2016, p. 16).

London Dekel's satirical illustration and text convey the message with unerring precision. The creation of an imagined distance between the food section's readers and the local wild plants has also opened an essential knowledge gap, which draws the hubeza even further away from the readers and the markets' consumers. In fact, in this way it becomes seemingly rare and desirable. The food writers (and the curious readers) embark on journeys of explorations in pursuit of the exotic Other so it can be used later, thus fulfilling their desire for contact with the Other, and in line with Heldke's insights, also using it to become more interesting people.<sup>28</sup>

And if the local in Israel can turn into the exotic, and the exotic can turn into a resource – then even a common food that until recently was considered a poor people's food can be seen as a food that carries connotations of wealth. For instance, as suggested by a Sarit Sardas Trotino piece from 2011, in which she describes the menu in the Haj Kahil restaurant in Jaffa:

In the generous meze plate offered to each diner (20 NIS per person) you will find treasures such as hubeza, wild spinach and wild endive, which are in season and brought especially from the north, along with roasted eggplants, cauliflower in tahini, a wonderful avocado salad and more. [...] If you have guests from abroad whom you'd like to show the magic of the east, this is the place you should bring them to (2011, p. 2).

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28 According to Heldke, "in the contemporary foodie discourse, foodies are motivated by a deep desire to have contact with, and to somehow own an experience of, an exotic Other, as a way of making [themselves] more interesting" (2003, p. xvi).

The Merriam-Webster dictionary explains the word “treasure” as “wealth (such as money, jewels, or precious metals) stored up or hoarded; wealth of any kind or in any form; a store of money in reserve; something of great worth or value; a person esteemed as rare or precious; a collection of precious things” (Merriam-Webster 2003, p. 439). Do hubeza, wild spinach or endive meet any of these definitions?

It seems that the text’s writer has gained, earned, or simply acquired the knowledge about the place that serves such treasures, and is now able to tell her readers how they can impress their friends from abroad (which abroad? Presumably not the Arab countries). Thus, in practice, a common wild plant like the hubeza becomes a social status promoter for the readers who are “adventurous foodies” and is therefore perceived as rare.

Said (1979) claimed that by setting itself off against the Orient, the European culture gained in strength and identity and in fact used it as a surrogate for its own self, and sometimes even as an underground self. Hirsch (2016) notes that food consumption is not only an expression of our social identity, but can also be part of our identity-construction by allowing us to pretend that we are someone else. Heldke (2003) similarly suggests that in modern Western culture we abandon the familiar in order to encounter the unusual, the unfamiliar, the Other, the exotic, the strange, and to reflect how this Other changes our identity.

This change of identity can be demonstrated through the following text, written in 2008 as part of a piece titled “50 tips from the 50 people who have made our year”, and containing a recommendation by Lior Tsionov, a 33-year-old architect: “I recommend *Ezba*, a local-Lebanese-Arab restaurant in Kfar Rama in the Galilea. You arrive there mainly by recommendation. Since I heard about it, I have looked for excuses to pass by on my way north. The food is excellent and made of local and seasonal ingredients. At *Ezba* I had my first taste of endive, hubeza, mulukhiyah, akkoub and other plants and thorns” (2008, p. 40). Tsionov acquired new knowledge about the local food, and now he not only uses it to mark himself as having a higher cultural status, but is also interested in going back there himself, that is, from now on he possesses a different, more local identity, connected to the land and to its native elements. Thus, by adopting the local wild food and turning it into a status symbol, many Jewish Israelis attach an additional characteristic to their identity and widen the heritage of their status group.

### **The taming of the shrew: The aestheticization of the exotic as it is displayed in Israeli restaurants today**

The romantic gaze turned on the exotic Other has made it rare and valuable. Now, with the fetishization of local products and the cultural status associated with

them,<sup>29</sup> the hubeza has started to enter the menus of Israel's leading restaurants. In recent years the hubeza has been undergoing a process of aestheticization,<sup>30</sup> in which many chefs combine in its preparation European techniques and ingredients with complex aesthetics on the plate. This, of course, is in contrast with the simplicity and "preparation [which] is nothing,"<sup>31</sup> characterizing the local wild food of the exotic Other. For example, chef Yonatan Roshfeld used ricotta as mentioned above; chef Asaf Doktor in his restaurant *Dok* served hubeza lasagna; chef Amos Sion served hubeza tortellini, and chef Raz Rahav served a carefully-arranged dish of asparagus and hubeza.<sup>32</sup> The hubeza's aestheticization is part of the domestication of the exotic, or as Heldke puts it: "We need to whittle the exotic down to size, so it isn't too odd for us; we like our exoticism somewhat familiar, recognizable, controllable" (2003 p. 19).

It is important to note that this process is not happening only among Jewish chefs in Israel. Arab chefs too, especially the younger ones, are changing the classical way of serving the hubeza and making it more Western. For instance, in winter 2018 chef Omar Elwan served hubeza pizza in his restaurant. The same year *Arutz 10* broadcast a television report by Amit Aharonson titled *Why do I need politics now: The Arab cuisine revolution in Israel*, in which chefs Hmodi Okala, Nof Atamna Ismaeel, and Alaa Musa presented dishes they prepared for a special dinner at Okala's restaurant *Eataliano dalla Costa*. One of the dishes made by Atamna Ismaeel was kibbeh nayyeh stuffed with wild mustard, on a bed of garlic and lemon vinaigrette and topped with hubeza chips.<sup>33</sup> After presenting the dish, the chef looked at the camera and said: "Just like it seems natural to you and you don't raise an eyebrow and chuckle when

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29 The fetishization of local products and the cultural status associated with them come up time and again in Johnston and Baumann's (2010) study.

30 It is impossible to talk about aestheticization in such a political context without mentioning Walter Benjamin ([1935] 1992). When Benjamin talks about the aestheticization of the political, he claims that the aestheticization and spectacularization of the political, including political protest, are problematic because they divert the attention from the aims of the protest towards the aesthetic form. Benjamin argued that art cannot be a medium of authentic political protest, since using art to promote a political agenda necessarily involves the aestheticization of the protest act, turning it into a spectacle and thus in fact neutralizing the act's effect. For more on this, see: Jay (1992).

31 "Western aesthetics" here means adopting the characteristics of European cuisines, in particular the Italian one.

32 The information is taken from social networks, the press, television, and restaurant menus in the years 2013–2018.

33 Atamna Ismaeel (2017) herself wrote an article on the culinary revolution in the Arab cuisine and the hubeza in particular.



they make you basil chips at an Italian restaurant, why do you raise an eyebrow when I make hubeza chips? It angers me, and that's why I make hubeza chips."<sup>34</sup>

Pierre Bourdieu (in: Johnston and Baumann 2010, p. 194–195) described our relationship with everyday objects like food in a way that puts less emphasis on their functional value, and instead sees them through an aesthetic lens of cultural appreciation and potential for acquiring knowledge, as “aesthetic disposition”. The aestheticization of the hubeza, which until recently was considered a poor people's food, foraged outdoors and cooked in the kitchen of the Other, together with its representations in the Hebrew press, as can be seen in the above examples, which present a knowledge gap, a geographical distance and an imagined distance – all these have led to the hubeza turning in recent years from “a taste of necessity” to “a taste of luxury” – another term coined by Bourdieu (2017). This evolution of the hubeza raises important questions regarding the ways local wild food is being promoted in Israel and the way it is being positioned within the culinary heritage of the dominant group.

## Promoting local food in Israel

The “local trap” is a relatively new term in gastronomy, used to critique the way in which many scholars and activists tend to connect the “local” category with values of social justice and ecological sustainability. The critics maintain that the “local” scale, like other scales created in society, is the product of social and political power struggles and political agendas that serve the dominant powers in the society or market. They argue that resources and decisions that are based on the “local” value don't really promote justice and sustainability (Heldke 2012). Indeed, as the present research suggests, promoting local food consumption in the Israeli context contains many traps and raises many questions that need to be addressed.

The reality in which most (if not all) the food writers in the Hebrew press are Jews, addressing their texts especially (if not only) to an urban Jewish audience, has

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34 The piece was broadcast as part of celebrating the twenty years anniversary of “the Arab cuisine revolution in Israel” (the count started in 1998, with the opening of the *El-Babor* restaurant). In the piece, the senior chef Husam Abas compares his cooking techniques with those of the three young chefs. At the start of the program, Aharonson stands and looks at Abas as he forages, with an Oud playing in the background, and mentions the names of the herbs: “endive, hubeza. If you didn't grow up on this land, if you didn't grow up here, there's no getting around it, you won't know these ingredients” (in Central News Broadcast 10 2018). These examples raise the question of whether the modernization and Westernization of the ways of preparing traditional Arab dishes by Arab chefs is an act of taking the reins or not – in itself, an important question that merits a separate discussion.

created a gap between, on the one hand, the local traditions and the people practicing them, who are the objects of the texts, and on the other, the readers, who wish to get to know the local customs and study them. It is no wonder, therefore, that the hubeza has remained limited to the Arab markets. But the gap between the knowledge about the local wild plants and those who wish to consume them has become so wide, that it has reached a point where these common plants are perceived as treasures. And treasures, as we know, are something that people want to take and appropriate.

When Heldke (*ibid*) talks about exoticization, she devotes a chapter to food colonialism. First, she defines the term in its economic sense, as a practice that disrupts the local and independent food systems through international companies engaging in growing and production in poor countries, in order to exploit cheap workforce and land. According to Heldke, culinary colonialism of this kind creates real poverty, undernourishment, and hunger in the dominated economies, due, among other things, to producing cheap food and selling it expensively to the members of those dominated populations. Heldke goes on to show how the economic aspect also leads to cultural food colonialism, that is, to the appropriation of cultural customs by political and economic forces.

If promoting local food consumption in Israel is able to create a knowledge gap, an imagined rarity and a cultural appropriation, then it also might lead to food gentrification, to a rise in the prices of a basic consumer product that had been produced for the disadvantaged population, and to its marketing as an upscale superfood for the privileged populations.<sup>35</sup> That is, culinary colonialism in Israel manages to disrupt the local systems while simultaneously attempting to promote local food consumption (although this attempt apparently genuinely originates in good intentions) (Agbariya 2017).

To conclude, by analyzing the hubeza's representations in the Israeli Hebrew press, we can see how the way it is represented – distant, wild, connected to childhood, uneducated, exotic, unprofessional, oriental – contrasts with the way in which those writing about it perceive the normal – Jewish, urban, close, cultivated, adult, educated, familiar, professional, Western.

Thus, the hubeza was assimilated into the Israeli Jewish culinary heritage by Westernizing and Orientalizing the plant at the same time. In the name of promoting the idea of local food consumption, we see the use of exoticization, which not

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35 This happened for instance in the United States to Collard Greens, which until recently were a staple "soul" food for poor families in the South. With the increasing demand for local superfoods the prices went up, until the extreme case in which in November 2016, in the upscale online store Neiman Marcus, a frozen dish containing a few leaves with bacon sold for \$66, with the delivery price, around \$15, not included. Promoting the hubeza as a superfood (for being nutritious and easy to grow) might lead to a similar result (Ross 2016).

only presents the Other in a way that reflects the fantasies of the West, but also perpetuates the myth that the cultural center and the superiority belong to those who are looking on, the readers. By creating an imagined distance between the mainstream and the common wild plant, the value of the plant increases and accordingly so does its price, and therefore also its social and economic segregation.

The hubeza is a wild plant that for four decades was ignored by the culinary mainstream in Israel, or alternatively was considered a poor people's food associated with the Arab cuisine. The aestheticization of the hubeza, in the sense of making it more Western and more digestible by the Jewish consumers, is a process that, intentionally or not, is part of a mechanism that is associated with political conflicts in the Israeli society, that often creates segregation, appropriation, and oppression and that doesn't necessarily promote ideas of justice and equality.

Perhaps it is precisely the politicization of the local wild food that may offer a solution; that is, in order to foster a responsible promotion of local food in Israel, editors, journalists, chefs, and food people in general must operate with the understanding that food is a political issue. Such an understanding will bring about political culinary actions that might promote a shared cultural heritage between Jews and Arabs on a more equal basis. A wonderful example of such an action can be found not far from Israel, in Lebanon. A project named *Souk el Tayeb* (Arabic for market of good food) founded a farmers' market in Beirut that over the years has morphed into an activist culinary organization responsible for some wide-ranging and influential activities in Lebanon and abroad. Kamal Mouzawak, a *Slow Food* advocate in Lebanon, founded the market in 2004, where today organic produce is sold by around one hundred Christian, Muslim, Shiite, Sunni, Druze, Armenian, Kurdish, Palestinian and other farmers.<sup>36</sup> This has created a situation in which the power relations between the different ethnic groups and sectors are becoming blurred, creating an opening for real equality along with promoting local food.

In the food press as well, the way to promote local food consumption passes through equality. If the restaurant critics, food columnists, and guest chefs represent the different sections in a more egalitarian way, the knowledge gap will be able to narrow, and the readers will get the diverse culinary knowledge without mediators, just like the advocates of locality wish us to consume our food. We can avoid these traps if we manage to create shared spaces and thus heritage for buying,

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36 In 2008 the market's success attracted the interest of the business consultant Christine Codsí, who has since become Mouzawak's partner. Together they founded "Tawlet" (table) – a chain of small restaurants offering only buffet lunches. The restaurants, located in six cities and towns in Lebanon, each employ around 15 women who cook in rotation, along with a regular chef. In the last two years the many tawlets, which are run for profit at lunchtime, have operated in the evenings as "soup kitchens" designed to feed diners in need. For more on this, I would recommend watching Kamal Mouzawak's TED lecture (2019).

preparing, and consuming food, along with a shared media platform where we can discuss food together. It is impossible to promote local food in Israel without aspiring for equality. After all, you can't have your hubeza and eat it too.

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### **III. Multinational divisions and the construction of cultural heritage**





# Liselotte Grschebina.

## A woman with a camera wandering between two heritages

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*Orly Zimerman*

### Introduction

The national narrative represents the collective experience and memory constructed by an ongoing “cultural industry”. Photography serves as one of the main venues in the process of building and exchanging national knowledge (Manikowska, 2018; Moser 2019). Moreover, photographers play a central role in the creation of visual archives, that can become active cultural agents in the nation building project. Thus, photographs and photographers do not only play a central role in the making of heritage, but also contribute to the formation and preservation of heritage for future generations (Sekula 1986).

The Zionist movement used photography for national campaigns, in order to mediate their national ideological ideas, almost since the beginning of Zionist activities in Palestine/Eretz-Israel (Mandatory Palestine) (Azoulay 2012). The photos, which were produced by numerous photographers, were used as an instrumental tool in the creation of a collective national consciousness and played a key role in constructing the national narratives and myths. The rise of the Nazi party in the 1930s prompted the flight of Jewish photographers from Germany to Mandatory Palestine. Among them were Tim Gidal, Alfred Bernheim, Helmar Lerski, Hans Pinn, Walter Zadek, Alfons Himmelreich, Ellen Auerbach, Lilly Brauer, Anna Landes, and Liselotte Grschebina. Most of the photographers brought with them both cultural heritage and photographic techniques from their homeland – Germany.

The current case study delves into the private archive of the German-Jewish photographer Liselotte Grschebina, that worked in Palestine/Eretz-Israel from the beginning of the twentieth century until the founding of the state of Israel. Grschebina’s work is rooted in the German cultural heritage and photography techniques, as well as the Zionist ideology and national culture. By examining her production of imagery at the service of the Zionist group through the lenses of her socialization into photography during the rise of the Third Reich, the study questions the process of heritage construction through these two opposed ideologies.

Furthermore, as Grschebina engaged with the Zionist ideals in Palestine/Eretz-Israel by using German photography techniques, the term heritage will be examined while delving into the complex process embedded in the creation of local heritage.

The research was conducted by using mixed methods: visual analysis of Grschebina's photographs, located in the *Israel Museum* archive, and an interview with the photographs' curator. Analyzing Grschebina's corpus explores the affinities and the relations between the photographic techniques developed by the Nazis and the Zionist ideology, and the ways both technique and ideology, of opposing perspectives, create heritage.

### **German cultures migrating from Germany to Palestine/Eretz-Israel in the 1930s**

Between 1933 and 1941, nearly 90,000 German-speaking Jews that were living in Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia found refuge in Mandatory Palestine. The *Yishuv* (Hebrew for the Jewish settlement in Palestine/Eretz-Israel), which was in itself a community of immigrants, did not easily absorb the German-speaking Jews (Sela-Sheffy 2006). Even though numerous studies have stressed the German-speaking Jews' great intellectual contribution to the making of the Jewish nation and to the Westernization of Israel, the dominant narrative regarding the German Jews, called *Yekkes*, in Mandatory Palestine and the state of Israel is that of cultural alienation (Yosef 2014). Jews in the *Yishuv* rebuked the *Yekkes* for their unwillingness to integrate into the local Zionist community and culture. The term *Yekke* alludes to the stereotype of the emigrants as highly cultured urban intellectuals; it connotes cultural difference and formal stiffness as traces of their European bourgeois past. The term meant to ridicule German-speaking Jews and mock their deeply habitualized formal manners. In the Israeli context of a young Jewish nation in the process of being created, the *Yekkes* provided "an almost ideal projection surface for what the Israeli, Jew, should not be. They were the inner Other" (Farges 2018, p. 485). The emigrants were forced to adjust to the new society and culture designed by the local Zionist movement in order to create a unified "melting pot". Thus, the emigrants were forced to be incorporated through the adoption of a new set of norms, aesthetics, and behavioral gestures. The Zionist cultural repertoire was seeking to create the "New Hebrew man" also called the "New Jew" (Almog 2000). The "New Jew" was a pioneer, a farmer, and a fighter. His archetypal character included physical and mental strength as well as stubbornness and persistence against all odds. The image of "muscle Judaism", a term coined by Max Nordau during the Second Zionist Congress of 1898, represented the opposite of the German Jew (Shapira 1997). Resisting this cultural rebirth, the German-speaking immigrants would not, and in some cases could not, free themselves easily from their diasporic roots and become

*Sabras*.<sup>1</sup> The process of incorporating Zionism while erasing the traces of European socialization was an ongoing cultural battle between the veterans and the newcomers and among the German Jews themselves (Farges 2018).

## German Jewish artists in Palestine/Eretz-Israel

The immigration of Jews from Germany to Mandatory Palestine included quite a few artists. However, the artists' absorption in the field of Hebrew culture, which was then making its first steps and was largely immersed in the nation building project, wasn't simple. These migrant artists found it difficult to integrate in the local art field due to the limited scope of its activity and to the cultural difference between the new-immigrant artists and the established formulators of Hebrew culture in Palestine/Eretz-Israel. Nevertheless, the leadership of the Yishuv made great efforts to absorb artists who had emigrated from Germany before the founding of the state. Thus, for example, the renewal of the *Bezalel Academy of Art's* activities has been credited to encouraging the immigration of Jewish artists of German origin (Gelber 1990). As a result, in the 1930s about 70% of all students at Bezalel were of central European origin. No wonder therefore that the teaching language at Bezalel at that period was German, despite great opposition from the Zionist institutions. In the 1940s the head of Bezalel was the artist Mordechai Ardon (Bronstein). Ardon, himself of German origin, developed the institution and added, alongside the existing art course, also crafts courses, including: sculpture, metalwork, graphic design and drawing (Ofrat 1987). Jewish artists from Germany were not only engaged in developing the connection between art and crafts and between the academy and the museum, but even developed new creative disciplines and founded new factories. The ceramics artists Hedwig Grossman and Rudi Lehmann, who immigrated in 1933, are a typical example. The couple developed the art of ceramics in the Yishuv and even founded a few ceramics factories in Haifa and in Kibbutz Yagur, which employed Jewish, Arab, and Armenian ceramics artists (Keller 2005). However, despite the many successes, many artists found it hard to make a living and turned to other occupations: construction work, whitewashing, painting theater sets, and herding sheep, pushing artmaking to the margins. Another problem that prevented the artists from Germany from integrating into the local culture field was the Eretz-Israeli artists' frosty attitude towards Germany. In addition, artists of German origin found it difficult to translate the new cultural environment and landscape they were confronted with into their work, and to make art in the techniques they had been used to as active artists in Germany (Ofrat 2015). Most of them had been pupils of German expressionism and

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1 *Asabra* is a modern Hebrew term that defines any Jew born in Israel. The term came into widespread use in the 1930s to refer to a Jew who had been born in Mandatory Palestine.

the Bauhaus. Their attempts to create a local synthesis out of all of these elements were not welcomed by the art hegemony, which at the time operated mainly in Tel Aviv. The artist Miron Sima recounts:

In Tel Aviv there was a café [...] Zaritski, Frankel and others sat there [...] Zaritsky told me:<sup>2</sup> 'You come from Germany?' 'Yes' – I answered. 'Germans don't have painting at all', he said. I told him that actually in Germany there is important painting, and that modern art passes through Germany – the Bauhaus, Kokoschka, Paul Klee, Otto Dix etc. I felt very foreign, I saw that between their aesthetic approach and our less glamorous approach there was an abyss (in: Tamuz, Levite and Ofrat 1980, p. 86).

Nevertheless, and despite the many difficulties, Jewish artists of German origin became a central part of the Eretz-Israeli culture field, be it in the area of creation and publicity (Ruth-Cohan 2018), in developing the art academy, or in founding and directing galleries, museums, and craft-making factories. In particular, German Jewish artists made a considerable contribution to developing the discipline of photography and to documenting the Zionist project at its inception (Oren 1995; 2009; Hansen-Glucklich 2017).

### **Between two worlds: Liselotte Grschebina's photography project**

Liselotte Grschebina (1908–1994) was born in 1908 in Karlsruhe, Germany. During the years 1925–1929, Grschebina studied painting and graphic design at the local art academy, *Baden State Art School*, located in Karlsruhe (BLK), and commercial photography at the *School of Applied Arts* in Stuttgart. In January 1932 Grschebina opened her own studio, *Bilfoto*, announcing her specialization in child photography (Sela 2008).<sup>3</sup>

Having left Germany, Grschebina arrived in Mandatory Palestine in 1934, where she met Ellen Auerbach in Tel Aviv. The two opened a studio called *Ishon* (Hebrew for eyeball as well as little person) and promoted their specialization in children's photos. Grschebina then began to integrate into the German community in Palestine/Eretz-Israel and became friends with other photographers of German origin such as Walter Zadek, Walter Kristeller, Alfons Himmerlich, Fritz Cohen, Anne Landes,

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2 Joseph Zaritski (1891–1985) was a central member of the *New Horizons* artists group, which developed abstract painting in Palestine – Eretz-Israel.

3 It is important to note that during her days in Germany Grschebina also photographed "artistic images" of everyday object and sand plaster replicas of classical sculptures, using the technique of layer-combination to create unique textures. This style is more enigmatic and softer and less realistic and sharp than the photographs she made in Mandatory Palestine.

and Lilly Brauer. Together they founded the *Palestine Professional Photographers Association*. Grschebina undertook assignments for the *Palestine Railways* and the dairy company *Tnuva* (Hebrew for crop). She submitted photographs to the sports pages of Jewish newspapers, and from 1934–1947 was the official photographer of the *Women's International Zionist Organization* (WIZO). Grschebina was also one of the founders of Israel's first association of photographers – *Association of Professional Photographers* (Kaplan 2008). Grschebina's son, Beni Gjebin, discovered the photographer's archive only after her death. In the year 2000 the archive of Grschebina's photographs, with approximately 1,800 photos, was given to the photography department of the Israel Museum by Beni Gjebin and his wife Rina Shoham, with the assistance of Rachel and Dov Gottesmann.

## Methods

The visual data consists of 46 photographs which were selected from the Israel Museum's digital archive. The digital archive includes only part of the 1800 photos in Grschebina's archive, from which the photographs were selected chronologically, covering the years 1929–1940. The photographs included those that were taken in her old homeland (Germany) and in her new homeland (Palestine/Eretz-Israel). The photographs were divided into three general topics: "Portraits", "Athletes", and "Pioneers". Their "Artistic style" was analyzed through the main techniques that were used: the low angle perspective and the staged background and photomontage. In addition, an interview was conducted with Dr. Noam Gal (2020), the curator of Photography at the Israel Museum. The interview lasted approximately 1,5 hours and was recorded, transcribed, and translated from Hebrew into English.

## Analysis

### The low angle perspective: Between the personal and the collective

The low angle perspective was popular in Germany during the socialization of Grschebina as a photographer. This technique makes the photographed subject look larger, wider, and taller, giving them a hero-like appearance. Grschebina took a lot of portraits, using the low angle technique frequently. After settling down in the Yishuv she photographed portraits of the Palestine/Eretz-Israel human and ideological environment. Among the many portraits she took before the establishment of the state of Israel, one can find Jewish children in Tel Aviv, Zionist pioneers, Jewish athletes, and Jewish immigrants from Arab countries.

*Fig. 1: Liselotte Grschebina, Discus thrower, 1937 (Copyright: The Israel Museum Jerusalem)*



*Fig. 2: Liselotte Grschebina, Untitled, 1940 (Copyright: The Israel Museum Jerusalem)*





Most of the photographs that she captured using this technique wished to arouse admiration for the heroism of the photographed figures.

A comparison between the photographs taken in Germany and the photographs taken in Palestine/Eretz-Israel shows a similar use of the low angle technique. In other words, the photographic techniques developed within the German propaganda machine helped Grschebina create a wide variety of heroic images that championed the Zionist ideal. Thus, the practices of the fascist propaganda machine were harnessed to promote the Zionist propaganda, against which, among other things, fascism was directed. To add to and augment the effect of the image and of the photographed subjects who were taking part in the nation founding project, Grschebina usually shot figures in action from a low angle. The technique of freezing the movement was also widely used in German photography at that time.

For example, photographs of female athletes that were taken in Germany and capture bodies in motion were photographed in the same way by Grschebina. (Fig. 1) The local Jewish athletes were caught in Grschebina's lenses during movement: just before making an active bodily gesture like throwing the discus or lifting a Javelin. The athletes' poses, in which their masculine bodies were frozen in time by the camera, displayed a lot of similarities with the subject, style, and visual language of photographers that served the Nazi party. Gal points to Grschebina's visual dialogue with two German photographers in particular Lenny Riefenstahl and Anna Koppiz:

People say that they recognize exactly a similar photo of Lenny Riefenstahl. It is right. Yet it is interesting that it is not Lenny Riefenstahl photograph but Grschebina's. [...] Moreover, looking at Grschebina's athletes' photographs, you can also compare them to those of Anna Koppiz's who was recruited by the Nazi party to shoot sports photography. The two women photographers – Koppiz and Grschebina – were working at the same time and with same issues and materials.

However, despite using the same techniques, Grschebina aimed to reflect a different ideology than the one promoted by antisemitism. In her photos these techniques were used to admire the Zionist muscular archetype of the "New Jew". (Fig. 2) The Zionist athletes, the industry worker, and the farmer were portrayed as strong, confident, and impressive *haluzim* (Hebrew for pioneers). These images emphasize the healthy body and soul of those Jews that immigrated from the diaspora to the promised land. They functioned as a correction of the stereotypical image of the diasporic Jew that was portrayed as weak, pale, timid, and afraid. By recruiting the German techniques to show the strength of the Jewish body, Grschebina strived to subvert the antisemitic images while contributing to the creation of the national heritage.

Despite these similarities, Grschebina's photographs of Palestine/Eretz-Israel deviated from those she took in Germany. Most of the images created in Palestine/Eretz-Israel show anonymous and nameless figures, as opposed to her Germany photos where she captured her immediate family – sister and husband – as well as famous German actors and well-known bohemians and athletes. Even though she used the same technique that had been shaped in Germany, the changes she chose to make in her Palestine photography period may imply that in the local photographs, it was more important to her to emphasize the power of the anonymous collective. The anonymous collective, as opposed to the glorified individual hero, was presented in the figure of an altruist enlisting together with his comrades, “as one”, for the common project of nation building. Thus, Grschebina's photography disposed of the singular individual and the achievements he has accumulated thanks to his personal abilities, be it in the areas of culture, sports, or society. This decision, which may have stemmed from ideological motives, suggests that Grschebina made a distinction between photographic techniques she wished to keep using in the new country, and those that no longer suited her artistic intentions and her ideological goals.

### **Staged background and photomontage**

Constructing the background of a photograph, whether it is a realistic environment, a stage context, or a photomontage, enables the photographer to gain control of the composition. By putting together the background of the photo, the image can intensify the ideological narrative that is embedded in it. This tendency coincided with photographs taken after the Third Reich had come to power, which often showed backgrounds of activity and progress. These backgrounds conveyed a message of movement, building, and renewal. Physical construction in Germany sought to attest to the spiritual reconstruction of the German people (Prehn 2015). These backgrounds turned into a strategy for representing power. Sometimes, the visual juxtaposition of man and progress even diminished the man and gave more space to the background – progress – which became the central ideological-political message.

Photographs of the immediate living environment, with its objects (buildings, roads) and living creatures (people, animals), appear in Grschebina's photographs from Germany and from Palestine. In her photographs from Germany, the background focuses on the everyday-life scenery, especially the urban environment: city streets, laborers, and newspaper sellers. After her immigration to Palestine/Eretz-Israel in the 1930s, Grschebina was introduced to a completely different living surrounding than the one she had known in her home city of Karlsruhe. Like many Zionist photographers at the time, Grschebina's camera lenses were focused in Mandatory Palestine on the countryside, the collective settlements, and the new, emerging, Western cityscapes. These backgrounds of her photos were used to evoke admiration of the Zionist modernist progress.

*Fig. 3: Liselotte Grschebina, Tel Aviv, 1939 (Copyright: The Israel Museum Jerusalem)*



Fig. 4: Liselotte Grschebina, Wizo, 1940 (Copyright: The Israel Museum Jerusalem)



For this reason, the photo's background showed mostly new settlements, mainly that of Tel Aviv, which was being built at the time. (Fig. 3) Only a few photographs were taken of one of the most important cities in Palestine/Eretz-Israel – the Old City of Jerusalem, which showed the glory of the past instead of the national awakening of the present.

In other photos made by Grschebina the background was staged, usually by using a white or black cloth. This clean background served to detach the person that was photographed from any recognized place or space. Locating the figure against the backdrop of a heterotopian landscape erased all possible Oriental features, wrapping the photograph in a context that might imply that the local (Middle Eastern) was part of the global (Western) world. (Fig. 4)

Staging the background of the photographed figures was, as already mentioned, an important part of ideological photography. In other words, ideological photography needed the background and gave it great importance, since it was able to emphasize the political messages that the photograph wished to convey. Gal has emphasized the ways Grschebina was exposed to these techniques and the ways she was recruited to employ them in her new ideological setting:

Grschebina studied and created at a critical moment in the development of photography in Europe, especially in Germany. She was exposed to many genres, trends, and voices, and she implemented them in her work [...]. This is an ideological photography, in the sense that her [Grschebina] immediate commitment was to the procedure and practices of the Zionist ideology and beliefs. Their [the Zionist institutions'] way of commissioning a photographer would be to tell him [the photographer]: 'Now we want representations of pioneers in the kibbutz.'

In this sense, Grschebina seems to be an outcome of the socialization she received in an era that started to use photography in the service of modern political agendas. Regarding Zionist photography, Oren (2009) claims that the ideological photography was not only simply about translating political narratives into an image. The politicized photograph created an image of the different "brave new worlds" that were the wishful outcomes of these ideologies.

The monolithic, hegemonic iconography of photography is based on a Western point of view that had adapted to the modernism of the first half of the 20th Century. Photography thus created something that was not purely 'documentary', but mainly utopian (Oren 2009, p. 38). Grschebina, like other creators at the time, committed herself to this purpose. Being part of the Jewish intelligentsia, she served the main Zionist aims while holding both Zionist and modernist conceptions. As Gal indicated:

The series of sports photographs, both in Germany and in Israel, contain immediate beauty and visual attractiveness. Both series are communicative and affective. At the same time, they easily transmit embodiments of ideology that sometimes have the connotation of the Nazi or Soviet ideology. Nevertheless, and surprisingly, it is the service of a different ideology [Zionism], or maybe it is the same ideology but with different hands. The fact that national photography is abruptly passing into Jewish or Zionist hands is an interesting development and fascinating statement.

## Conclusion

The photographs taken by Grschebina, a photographer who immigrated from Germany to Mandatory Palestine, show that even though she moved from one continent to the other, she did not move from one technique to the other. While Grschebina was wandering between two territories, she took with her the practices that evolved in the Third Reich's photographic repertoire. Thus, when she struggled to establish herself in the new land and adjust to a new ideology, she continued to use the techniques she learned in Germany. In that sense, Grschebina's work did not undergo transfiguration. She changed the cultural heritage that she helped build, but did not change the praxis she used. The Third Reich in Germany and Zionism in Mandatory Palestine held two very different ideologies and narrative. Despite that, Grschebina managed to translate the methods that served the Third Reich and to apply them in the Zionist context and to the Zionist goals. Thus, the photographs involved the creation of a narrative of continuity with the past, and at the same time referenced the new home and a new set of ideological-political meaning.

The ways Grschebina transmitted the German cultural heritages and transformed it into a new visual language, show how cultural heritage can wander around and create new ideas that even oppose the original one. Grschebina imported a cultural tradition and created through it a new heritage in her new homeland. Using various elements of artistic work that were developed in Germany, and using them to recreate a new visual narrative/heritage, imply that heritage can cross cultural or ideological boundaries and be converted to a different ideological language/nature. Though Grschebina was employed by the *Jewish National Fund* (Keren Kayemet) and then by WIZO, the ideological component is present through all the issues she dealt with in Israel, even if not directly. This visual language that had already been visible in German photographs (Kaplan 2008) likens the Mandatory Palestine photographers to Georg Simmel's "stranger", who is located in "a vantage point that compares and judges [...] the unknown against the known, the present against the past, the indigenous against the foreign" (in: Ashkenazi 2018, p. 93–94). The strangers embody "two worlds"; they have a position of "inside and outside" and a

bifocal vision. Their photographs constitute an in-between gaze, a manifestation of a ceaseless dialog with both “here” and “there”. This description perfectly describes Grschebina’s work, which holds a dual perspective, always containing both past and present, distance and intimacy.

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# “What shall I cook?”

## Erna Meyer’s WIZO-Cookbook in the field of tension between Nation building and shared cultural heritage<sup>1</sup>

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Ann-Kathrin Müller

### Introduction

French food culture, Spanish flamenco, and the Mongolian *Naadam festival* are all part of the heritage of humanity. This was decided by the UNESCO Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage at its conference in Nairobi, Kenya, on November 16 and 17, 2010. A total of 51 traditions and customs from 29 countries in Europe, Asia, and Latin America were newly included in the lists of intangible cultural heritage at this conference (UNESCO 2003). In order to keep this heritage alive, active transmission is just as necessary as storage media that contain information and directives on the practice and maintenance of this cultural heritage (Assmann 2018).

Such storage media include cookbooks and household guides. They contain knowledge about food culture(s) and recipes, providing information about food and tips on how to use it. Cookbooks also implicitly communicate norms, for example in the form of information about ingredients, preparation, and other recommendations for action in the kitchen. In this way, they depict and at the same time establish social models of their time. As the content of cookbooks is handed down and received, a heritage is created that increasingly appears to be worth protecting. However, this heritage, which usually offers a high degree of identification, does not always remain at the place of its origin. Through migration, the knowledge associated with cooking and household management is transferred from one social context to another and undergoes adaptations there. As it is practiced under different conditions and shared with other cultures, it undergoes modifications. In the case of cooking, such transcultural influences are reflected in visible adaptations.

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1 This text emerged from the artistic research project *What shall we eat this time?* that Julia Schäfer and I founded in 2019. I thank Julia for the joint viewing of the archival material in Jerusalem and for the intensive exchange.

Cookbooks alone, however, provide only limited information on how the knowledge they contain can be related to collective identification processes. Therefore, the contribution of individual cookbooks to the intangible heritage of cuisine can only be assessed in connection with other sources (Thoms 1993). By examining how Dr. Erna Meyer, the author of the cookbook *Wie kocht man in Erez-Israel* (How to cook in Palestine), Tel Aviv 1936, transferred her knowledge as a national economist and household expert from Germany to the social and geographical conditions of Palestine, sheds light on the making of fruitful political Zionism. Meyer had emigrated to mandatory Palestine (in Hebrew Palestine/Eretz-Israel) in 1933 after the National Socialists came to power, in order to do reconstruction work, there. In mandatory Palestine she benefited from her familiarity with the architecture of the *Neues Bauen* movement and its kitchens, which also shaped the young Tel Aviv (see: Elfi Carle in this volume). In order to answer the question of whether Meyer's cookbook is an intangible cultural heritage that connects Germany/Europe and Israel, the historical background of the cookbook will be outlined and the question will be asked to what extent the food culture was to contribute to the new (Jewish) cultural identity in Palestine and, from 1948, in Israel. To this end, attention is also drawn to the author of the cookbook and to the image of women that modernity produced in Europe around 1920. The analysis of the cookbook will show to what extent the cultural heritage of food can be considered a connecting link for migrated Jews from Germany and Europe, and where Erna Meyer's efforts found their limits. Finally, I will ask to what extent cookbooks contribute to a pragmatic or normative approach to cultural heritage.

## Components of a new Jewish identity: The Zionist image of women

The concept of cultural identity reflects social and material contexts, but also political ideas. The political movements of the 19th century largely define cultural identities as national: the nation is metaphorically thought of as a family, an imagined community based on a common language and history. In the modern nation-state, the functional level of the state as an organization that "claims the monopoly of legitimate physical violence within a given territory [...]"<sup>2</sup> (Weber 1919, p. 4), becomes largely identical with this imagined community. The European national

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2 For better readability, quotations from German literature have been translated into English. German sources and literature are marked as such in the bibliography. This applies also to Erna Meyers cookbook although it contains an English (How to cook in Palestine) and a Hebrew (איך לבשל בארץ-ישראל) translation. Since the English translation of 1936 differs in parts considerably from the original German manuscript, it was necessary to work with a literal English translation.

movements of the 19th century are preceded by events that are subsumed under the term "modernity". The Enlightenment of the 18th century, the major event French Revolution, and industrialization artificially establish a break between an "old" and a "new" time in order to radically open up to the future and, as a consequence, produce a permanent present (Habermas 1988).

As a political movement, Zionism emerges in the context of European modernity and its national movements. It has a vision of the future and a goal: the creation of a public law [Jewish] home, as stated in the *Basel Program* of the first World Zionist Congress in 1897. In Herzl's reading, the Jewish community constitutes itself as a political one. In the Zionist reading, the Jewish community in Palestine represents a new beginning in the "old-new homeland". The name of the Jaffa suburb founded in 1909, Tel Aviv (Hebrew for Spring Hill), also reflects political Zionism's narrative of rebirth, new beginnings, and departure. The *Yishuv* (Hebrew for Jewish settlement in mandatory Palestine) had been steadily expanding through *aliyah* (Hebrew for immigration) since the late 19th century in response to pogroms and anti-Semitism in Europe. In the 1930s alone, the Jewish population had grown from 160,000 to 400,000 people, and thus from about 18 to about 30 percent of the total population of Palestine (Schoeps 1998, p. 40). Women's organizations and their institutions, such as the *Women's International Zionist Organization* (WIZO) founded in England in 1920 and its Palestine Federation, contributed to the integration of immigrants in the "old-new homeland":

About sixteen years ago, a group of leading Zionist women in England concerned with the pioneer woman in Palestine set out to help her become rooted in the land. [...] WIZO ramifies into every phase of life, educational, social and cultural; its program is elastic and it has adapted it to suit every mode of immigration: it fed *Chaluzim* during the *Aliyah* of the first post-war years, in 1927 it planned its program to teach new immigrants vegetable growing and rational housekeeping; to teach those persecuted by Hitler gave great impetus to its agricultural institutions, to absorb girls from Germany. Its growth is intimately connected with the growth of Palestine [...] (WIZO n.d., CZA F49-2185).

The paragraph, written in the mid-1930s, not only provides an overview of the development and scope of WIZO's activities in Palestine, but also illustrates the extent to which the establishment of the Jewish polity was imagined through the land and linked to it with household, food, and agriculture. The progress of cultivation, the reclamation of the land, indicated in this logic the degree of prosperity and growth of the Jewish polity. This polity, despite the prospect of "equality" (Herzl 1902, p. 83) of female Jewish pioneers with their male comrades, was established via a bourgeois binary gender order centered on the preservation of male labor through care work

performed by women. This order can be seen, among others, in Nadia Stein's<sup>3</sup> text *Mütter füreinander!* (Mothers for each other) about WIZO:

Poor nutrition reduced the efficiency of the pioneer settlers and undermined their health. Unkempt domesticity with all its bad consequences in the warm climate had a depressing effect on the high-spirited mood; ignorance not only made the kitchen list monotonous and irrational, but prevented the girls from doing productive work. Here the mother felt the giant burden of responsibility. Throughout the centuries, she had bequeathed to her daughters the knowledge of home and kitchen management. Now that mastery of these matters had gained national importance, she had to take the difficult and complicated detour of organizing the women (Stein n.d., CZA A217-15).

The importance of Zionist women's organizations in the incorporation of Jewish women into the Yishuv cannot be underestimated. The quotation makes clear that political Zionism made use of a bourgeois family metaphor and declared the woman to be the guardian and mediator of (Zionist) norms and values – the private was also political in political Zionism and placed cooking and household management in the service of the collective. Against this background, the question of the value of cooking arises anew; food and drink are among the basic needs of human beings. Food and the nutrients it contains sustain the human body and renew it again and again:

The living (animate) thus consumes itself, it uses up its own body mass. In order to replace what has been consumed and to continue, it takes from its surroundings, the environment, substances which allow it to secure its existence. Thereby it is remarkable that the substances serving the nutrition, which are taken from the environment, are substances foreign to the body [...]. The organism must first transform them. Thereby they become endogenous substances (assimilated) (Balzli 1928, p. 32).

This is what the physician Hans Balzli writes in the first volume of his reference work *Kunst und Wissenschaft des Essens – Gesundheit und Volkswohlfahrt durch basische Ernährung* (Art and Science of Eating – Health and Public Welfare through Alkaline Nutrition) (Balzli 1928). The aphorism of Ludwig Feuerbach taken up by Balzli: “Man ist, was man ißt” (man is what he eats), which goes back to Paracelsus, can be understood against the background of his intention to show the “great connections be-

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3 After her emigration to Palestine, Nadia Stein (1891–1961) headed the WIZO Propaganda and Public Relations department in Tel Aviv. In this function, she was also the editor of the *WIZO Journal* and worked for about fifty WIZO associations (Fortus 2014) She was also privately connected with Erna Meyer (Stein n.d., CZA 217–15).

tween nutrition and health or disease, national economy, politics, etc." (1928, p. 23), and can thus be interpreted politically. It is through the transposition of food and dishes received in a specific context that the human being is first produced as a political and cultural subject. This subject acts back on their environment and shapes it in certain ways.

According to Aleida Assmann, the stomach, that is, the place where food is processed, is "the counterpart of the thesaurus: a place of passage, not of permanence, a place of processing and transposition, not of preservation" (2018, p. 166). Accordingly, in the reading of political Zionism prior to the establishment of the State of Israel, cooking and eating do not have a conserving, preserving function, but rather a primarily transformative one that is meant to contribute to the creation of a new Jewish identity. Here, the normative nature of cookbooks plays a crucial role. As guidebooks containing instructions, and recommendations for behavior, they depict the "as-is" state of the cooking subject and at the same time have an effect on the future by influencing (as mass media) individual as well as collective behavior and consumption decisions (Thoms 1993).

### **The household as a "business": Erna Meyer's understanding of the New woman**

The Zionist idea of a new Jewish identity also falls on fertile ground in Erna Meyer. Erna Konstanze Fanny Karoline Pollack was born in Berlin on February 13, 1890, studied national economics and completed her studies in 1913 with a doctoral thesis on *Der Haushalt eines höheren Beamten in den Jahren 1880–1906* (The household of a higher civil servant in the years 1880–1906) (Maasberg and Prinz 2004). During World War I, she moved to Vienna with her husband Arnold Meyer, where, according to her own account, she worked in one of the largest war kitchens (Meyer n.d.). After the war, the couple settled first in Nuremberg, then in Munich, before moving in 1927 to Unterzeismering on Lake Starnberg to live in a wooden house they had planned themselves, from which Erna Meyer continued to pursue her career. In 1929, the couple founded the magazine *Neue Hauswirtschaft* (New home economics), of which Erna Meyer served as editor until she was dismissed in 1933, after the National Socialists came to power.<sup>4</sup> She emigrated to Palestine in the same year.

In Germany between the wars, Meyer, who holds a doctorate in national economics, is a sought-after author, publicist, and expert – also for many architects of

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4 The newspaper article *Dr. Erna Meyer – 70 years* in the German-language daily *Yedioth Hayom* (Hebrew for News of the Day) states that Meyer was summarily dismissed by her publisher in 1933. Arnold Meyer had already died in 1932 (Stein n.d., CZA A217-200).

the *Neues Bauen* (New Building). In 1927, Meyer is involved in the Werkbund exhibition *Die Wohnung* (The Dwelling) in Stuttgart, in which architects of the *Neues Bauen* movement such as Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier and J. J. P. Oud take part under the artistic direction of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. As an expert in practical household matters, she not only draws up guidelines on kitchens and kitchen furniture, but is also responsible for the kitchen section of the indoor exhibition<sup>5</sup> at Gewerbehallen-Platz. Four so-called Stuttgart kitchens are presented here, intended to help demonstrate so-called “rational housekeeping”. Three of the four kitchens were designed by Erna Meyer herself together with Hilde Zimmermann: the Stuttgart small kitchen, the Stuttgart kitchen, and the Stuttgart teaching kitchen (Much 1998).

The Stuttgart kitchen is a kitchen with a small number of movable elementary pieces of furniture, from which different variations of kitchen cabinets can be built, which can be put together in the store according to the individual needs of the buyer<sup>6</sup> (Meyer 1928; Much 1998). In this way, the Stuttgart kitchen differs fundamentally from the so-called Frankfurt kitchen, which Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky had developed for the Frankfurt housing program (see: Elfi Carle in this volume). It was precisely the kitchen's adaptability to its context of use that was typical of Meyer's empirical-methodological approach. As a supporter of the household rationalization movement, she called for a planned, systematic organization of the household and methodically drew on the reform pedagogical approaches of Pestalozzi and Montessori for this purpose. She saw the rationalization of household management as a task that affected all areas of life and was also intended to transform society. She introduced this approach to her audience in her guidebook *Der neue Haushalt – Ein Wegweiser zu wirtschaftlicher Hausführung* (The new household – A guide to economical housekeeping) (Meyer 1931b). With over 40 editions, it became one of the most successful household guides of the interwar period, far beyond the borders of the Weimar Republic.

In her book, Meyer makes a direct address to her readers, whose destiny she sees primarily in the household, in care and reproduction work. She does not question the division of labor between the sexes in society, although she herself sets other

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5 The Werkbund exhibition *Die Wohnung* (The Dwelling) took place in Stuttgart from July to October 1927. In addition to the model housing development on the Killesberg, which featured 17 architects, there were three other parts of the exhibition that were intended to convey the intentions of the Deutscher Werkbund: the Experimental Site, also located on the Killesberg, which explored technical issues related to the construction of the dwelling, the International Plan and Model Exhibition of New Architecture at the Interim Theatre Square near the New Palace, and the Hall Exhibition, which was devoted to the furnishing of the house (Much 1998).

6 Parts of the Stuttgart kitchen are now in the collection of the *Stuttgart City Museum*, having been salvaged in 2016 before the demolition of the *Cugel House* in Stuttgart (Gaukel and Lange 2016).

priorities in her marriage. The aim of her book is to contribute to the recognition of housewifery as "the most serious professional work" (Meyer 1926, p. 3), in other words, to the professionalization of the housewife. The housewife should learn to enable herself to organize her household according to economic principles, as a business.<sup>7</sup> The focus of the book is therefore the "realization of the economic principle in the household," modeled on the "household of nature" (Meyer 1926, p. 5). In nature itself, Meyer sees the ideal model for an all-encompassing social rationalization and reorganization:

[...] that which has formed the core of our technical-industrial production for half a century now, that which has left its mark on our entire culture, the striving for economic success, i.e. such work that achieves the greatest success with the least effort, with the smallest exertion – that has long since been realized in Mother Nature to an extent never attainable by ourselves (1926, p. 6).

Following the model of "natural rationality", Erna Meyer thinks of the household as a suborganism in a system of branched organisms. As the smallest economic unit, it forms this system's essential pillar and contributes to the continued existence of society as a whole. According to Meyer, the household can thus be understood as the genuine "nucleus" of the demanded comprehensive social modernization and progress.

For if the principle of 'struggle of all against all' stood invisibly over the last millennia of human history, the coming time will in any case endeavor to prepare the ground for 'mutual help'. But where should we be better able to develop the forces for such a community which lie dormant in each of us than in our homes, in our own families? (Meyer 1926, p. 161)

The quotation illustrates the normative charge of the woman and the family in Meyer's imagination around 1925. Looking into the future, the housewife embodies the "new", to which she turns "with head, heart and hand". "Self-study, self-judgment, self-decision, inner further development of one's own personality" (Meyer 1928, p. 6), promote the "inner mobility that forms the contrast to today's general rigidity." Accordingly, the modern housewife is not only at the service of her family, but of the whole collective, in whose daily renewal she is to actively participate. Equipped with such an ideological "superstructure" in the Germany of the Weimar Republic, Meyer actively applies these ideas in the construction of a Jewish community after her emigration to Palestine – home economics becomes for her an

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7 In addition to appropriate professional clothing, this also included bookkeeping and the domestic office (Meyer 1928, p. 96).



elementary building block of Jewish nation building. This will now be shown by means of an initial analysis of her cookbook.

### How to cook in Palestine: Erna Meyer's WIZO cookbook

Already three years after her arrival in Palestine, in 1936, Erna Meyer, together with the cooking teacher Milka Saphir,<sup>8</sup> publishes her cookbook *Wie kocht man in Erez Israel?* (How to cook in Palestine) on behalf of *Histadruth Nashim Zionioth*, the Palestine federation of the WIZO. Exact edition and sales figures of the book are not available. At the price of 10 piasters<sup>9</sup> it can be bought in all WIZO offices, in bookstores, at kiosks and presumably also during the *Levant Fair* – at least this is suggested by a photograph showing an automobile decorated with books and a poster in front of the Italian pavilion (Zlocisti 1936; Meyer 1936/ n.d.; Meyer n.d.).

The physician Theodor Zlocisti, who reviewed the cookbook in the *Newsletter of Hitachduth Olej Germania*, attests not only to its tasty dishes, but also to its tendency toward Jewish nation-building. He sees cooking and eating here as a contribution to an all-encompassing political and social transformation, which is why he recognizes a closeness between the vocabulary used and the narrative of the “revolution”. The Jewish “revolution”, like the French Revolution, is connected to all areas of life:

It is a social and at the same time a national one. And it is also a revolution in Jewish cuisine! Not only because the ‘Schickse’ has disappeared. But because the new climate, the new employment opportunities, the new dwellings, the inner relationship of even the city dweller to the village, actually restructures even the non-restructured – from the soul to the throat (Zlocisti 1936, p. 10).

For him, the disappearance of the “Schickse”, as Zlocisti puts it, and the influence of the new environment are equally basic prerequisites for the formation of a new Jewish (female) identity. By addressing the immigrant woman and appealing to her influence on Jewish cuisine, he makes clear how intertwined food and cuisine are with the national context, and how mutually dependent the two are.

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8 Milka Saphir was a teacher of nutrition and cooking at the WIZO Home economics school in Nachlath Yitzhak, Tel Aviv. Before her *aliyah*, she had attended a seminar for home economics teachers, so she knew Erna Meyer's household guidebook (Stein n.d., CZA A217-200).

9 One British pound was equivalent to about 100 piasters at that time (Stein n.d., CZA A217-15).

Fig. 1: Erna Meyer: *Wie kocht man in Erez-Israel* (How to cook in Palestine). Book cover (detail), Tel Aviv, ca. 1936 (Source: Ann-Kathrin Müller)



However, the design of the cover<sup>10</sup> leaves no doubt as to who this “revolutionary” cookbook is ultimately aimed at: the European immigrant. (Fig. 1) A woman is shown, dressed according to the fashionable conventions of interwar Europe, standing behind a table in front of an outdoor brick wall. She is engrossed in a book, which she holds in her left hand, while with her right she is stirring a dish in a cooking pot heated by a kerosene stove. To her right is a tray, with vegetables and fruits of the Levant – grapes, oranges, *kussa* (Arabic for zucchini) and *chatzilim* (Hebrew for eggplants) – and to the left, a prepared dish attractively decorated on a tray. In the background, on a terrace or balcony, the family sits at the set table under a striped awning – a man and two children. Nanny Margulies-Auerbach writes about this in her review of the cookbook in the *Jüdische Rundschau*: “All these little things, however, conceal a deep seriousness: the preservation of the family and the community through healthy, stimulating food appropriate to the climate and the purse” (1936, p. 16).

The cookbook appears during a high point of Jewish immigration to Palestine, the *fifth aliyah*. In addition to 208 recipes printed in German, English and Hebrew, it contains advice on cooking and household management in general, illustrations for replication, an extensive section on weights and measures, a glossary of herbs, and a dictionary intended to teach the newcomers Hebrew kitchen vocabulary. As in Germany, Erna Meyer propagates a determined will for reform in Palestine. It is no coincidence that the book the woman is holding in her left hand is precisely that cookbook. Designed as a *mise-en-abyme*, the scene is repeated and continued indefinitely as a “picture within a picture”. Together with the composition of the image, which conveys through the sharp cut-outs that the scenery is taken directly from life, which continues beyond the frame, Meyer’s intention is already formulated on the pictorial level. With her cookbook she promises to introduce a community-building, uniform “Palestinian cuisine”, which is to be based on the agricultural products of the country. She underlines this intention in her introduction:

What should I cook? This anxious, thoroughly international housewife’s question gains a special topicality in our country. For the difference of the climate and some related side circumstances force the European woman to a reorganization of the whole life and not least of the cooking, which is not at all so easy to cope with as it would seem at first sight (Meyer 1936/n.d., p. 7).

The text excerpt shows that Meyer tries to use the rupture in her readers’ lives caused by migration for her purposes. Food preparation becomes a crystallization point that marks the transition from the old to the new life and calls into question habits that

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10 The illustrator of the cover, the painter and graphic artist Rico Blass, had emigrated to Palestine in 1934 and lived in Tel Aviv before settling back in Frankfurt/Main in 1952 (Blass 1982).

are hardly possible anyway given the lack of resources in the new country. (Fig. 2) In contrast, new, healthier foods are available for the new beginning:

Yes, it must be noted that among the mass of the population, the eating and cooking customs of the previous countries of residence are held on to with tenacious conservatism for several generations. It is now high time that we housewives try with more energy than before to free our kitchen from the *Galuth* [Hebrew for exile, diaspora] traditions clinging to it, as far as these are not appropriate in our country; that we consciously change to healthy Palestine cuisine [author's note: parts blocked in original] (Meyer 1936/n.d., p. 7).

Erna Meyer thus launches her call for renewal through the medium of food. With its help, the habitual of the countries of origin is to be discarded, a new Jewish identity is to be internalized and strengthened. The cookbook is thus not only about the integration of tens of thousands of newly immigrated Jews into a Mediterranean cuisine, but also about the political process of nation-building and the development of a (necessary) Jewish national economy. For this purpose, Erna Meyer links her approach, which she had already developed in Germany, with the concept of the "self-thinking woman", by defining women as the bearers and mediators of this new Jewish identity, and addressing them directly and emphatically:

[...] We are not to carry out this changeover grouchily, [...] but in the affirmative, in the knowledge that this is one of the most important means for our own rootedness in our old-new homeland [author's note: parts blocked in original] (1936/n.d., p. 7).

So, what characterizes this "healthy Palestine cuisine" proclaimed by Meyer? She predominantly favors vegetarian food, freshly cooked from local agricultural products and, wherever necessary and possible, supplemented by industrially manufactured *Totzeret Ha'aretz* products (Hebrew for products of the land). She not only calls for their consumption in her recipes, but also has producers and traders advertise themselves in the cookbook (Reuveni 2010). In accordance with the formula "five olives equal one egg" (Schlör 2010, p. 168), she cautiously introduces the new and unfamiliar, sometimes frowned upon, from the local cuisine.<sup>11</sup>

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11 Eyewitness Gad Granach recalls his difficulties with the new ingredients used in cooking on the kibbutz: "When the food was already distributed on your plate and you asked yourself, 'What is this?' it was usually chatzilim – eggplant, eggfruit, eggplant. That was the most horrible thing you could imagine, and THAT tasted even more horrible!" (Hoba 2017, p. 192, emphasis in original).

*Fig. 2: Ladies in Tel Aviv, reading in Wie kocht man in Erez Israel. With Erna Meyer, second from left (Copyright: German Exile Archive Frankfurt on the Main)*



*Fig. 3: "Dinner Performance Telawif", Liebling Haus, November 2022 (Photography: Goni Riskin, Copyright: Ann-Kathrin Müller, Julia Schäfer/VG Bild-Kunst Bonn 2024)*



On page 60, for example, there is a recipe for raw sauerkraut garnished with olives that can be recognized as a variation of the recipe *Junger Sauerkrautsalat mit Tomaten* (Young Sauerkraut Salad with Tomatoes) from her cookbook *Koch schnell und frisch für den Sommertisch!* (Cook fast and fresh for the summer table!) written with Maria Kirchgessner in 1931 (Meyer 1931a). The *Sauerkraut* familiar from Germany is combined in Palestine with the unfamiliar olives, and fresh tomatoes are replaced by Assis brand ketchup. While Meyer does not mention any spices for the recipe in 1931, she lists cumin, pepper, and paprika as ingredients in 1936. She now devotes a separate chapter to seasoning, which goes beyond the usual salting and peppering. In addition to enriching the taste of vegetarian cuisine, seasoning is also intended to bring about a turn toward a balanced, healthy diet adapted to the climatic conditions and culinary traditions of the Levant. She therefore advises immigrants to plant a herb garden. In the *vegetables* chapter, 14 out of 24 recipes are devoted to the "native specialty fruits" *chatzilim* (eggplant) and zucchini – Meyer consistently uses their Arabic names, *kussa*. As a new immigrant herself, she draws on the expertise of her co-author Milka Saphir, who already has many years of experience in preparing the native "specialty fruits" through her work at the WIZO Home economics school. One of the recipes suggested by Milka Saphir is as follows:

Chatzilim meatballs

2  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounces of chatzilim, 1 small onion fried in *megeed* [oil], 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  spoons of flour, 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  grated bread, salt, pepper, 1–2 eggs, oil. Peel the chatzilim, cut them into cubes, stew them in a minimum of oil until soft, put them through the meat machine at the same time as the fried onion, add bread crumbs, egg, salt and pepper, form patties and fry them (Meyer 1936/n.d., p. 56).

The main ingredient of meatballs, minced meat, is replaced by eggplants steamed and minced in a meat grinder. Erna Meyer is convinced that a cuisine adapted to the climatic conditions of the Levant should largely dispense with meat and consist essentially of vegetables, salad, and fruit. She is still skeptical about regional legumes, fearing digestive problems. Alternatively, she advises rice, semolina, oatmeal, bulgur, and potatoes (Meyer 1936). With appropriate ingredients and an adapted cooking method, excessive heating of the body in the hot summer months should be avoided, which is why she recommends never preparing vegetables other than steamed and using fat sparingly (*ibid*). With the recommendation to turn away from northern European butter and toward mediterranean oil, Meyer not only credits the cuisine of the Levant, but also transfers her call for healthy nutrition to the new regional context:<sup>12</sup>

12 Theodor Zlocisti writes in his review that only with the use of oil would the transition to "oriental cuisine" (1936, p. 10) be completed.

The 'food reformers' of the Central European countries have for many years been very concerned about oil and have tried with all their energy to introduce it into the kitchen, although it is much more difficult to get it over there and has to be bought quite expensively. Here, where we have it well and cheaply at hand, we should be grateful and use it eagerly in our own interest, instead of resigning ourselves with a sour face to cooking with oil and possibly buying foreign butter (Meyer 1936/n.d., p. 25 et seq.).

Wherever possible, Meyer calls on housewives to be frugal and encourages them to consume local products. Therefore, in her cookbook *Küchenzettel in Krisenzeiten* (Kitchen notes in times of crisis), published in 1940, she proposes a "national dish" based on the Italian model: "macaroni with tomato sauce and parmesan" would find its equivalent in "bulgur stewed with tomato sauce and white cheese." In line with the demand for a healthy nutritious dish made from ingredients of regional or "own production", it should be eaten in variations, by all social classes, several times a week (Meyer 1940). In this point, too, she seamlessly continues the concepts she had developed in the interwar period. The consumption behavior of each individual, she concludes, sustains the Jewish community as a whole. In addition, economic, i.e. rational housekeeping should help the housewife to adapt optimally to the respective conditions of her housekeeping. The structure of the cookbook also follows this: concisely formulated basic recipes leave the "independently thinking" and "not copying" housewife enough room for variations and experiments. Illustrations, which are placed as marginalia in the outer right margin, are intended to support this thinking and acting by conveying at a glance hand movements, work techniques, or the preparation of dishes. In similar pragmatic vein, the author advises avoiding dishes that require long-cooking, keeping the "noise production" of the widely used *Primus* stove<sup>13</sup> to a minimum in order to reduce the heat effect to a minimum, or using a homemade cooking box (Meyer 1936/n.d). For Meyer, it can be concluded, these principles of household rationalization are universal. That is also why they can be transferred effortlessly from one context to another. They are important in order to be able to act optimally according to external circumstances.

In view of this universalism, her attempt to transfer the principles she had gained in Europe to Palestine and to adapt them to the countercultural conditions there can only be called transcultural to a limited extent. Even if Meyer refers to the cuisine of the Arab population in *Wie kocht man in Erez-Israel?* (How to cook in Palestine) and even if she refers to the cuisine of Sephardic Jews in her cookbook *Küchenzettel in Krisenzeiten* (Kitchen notes in times of crisis), the central European

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13 The term *Primus* is used by Erna Meyer as an appellative for a kerosene or petroleum stove. Accordingly, the cover of the book does not show a stove from the Swedish manufacturer *Primus*, but a *Totzeret Ha'aretz* product of the *Tooval* brand.

cooking tradition is still in the foreground for her. She argues for "native special fruits" for economic reasons, emphasizing their health aspects, or taking up the ideas of a "good" life developed in connection with the *Essreform* (Food reform). Where it becomes (trans-cultural), on the other hand, she remains reserved. The inhabitants of Palestine, who were already present before the emergence of the Yishuv, she refers to rather distantly as "Arabs" (Meyer 1936/n.d., p. 30) and as the "native population" (Meyer 1936/n.d., p. 33); at the same time, she points out the limits of the Europeans' adaptation to the "spicy food" of the native population (Meyer 1936/n.d., p. 33).

Thus, Erna Meyer's cookbook proves to be a work on the threshold: on the one hand, it wants to accompany its readers as a forward-looking tool and breviary on the way to the New (Jewish) man. On the other hand, it remains faithful to European modernity and sees its ideals realized only in essence against the backdrop of the factual new beginning in Palestine.

## **Nation-building through cooking? Acculturation versus transculturation**

With regard to the performing subject, the New woman, Erna Meyer was already convinced in the mid-1920s that the changes in the external world could only be met with a lifestyle aimed at an inner mobility (Wimmer 2011).

The ancient tradition, which has been the almost exclusive teacher in the household, arose from completely different circumstances than today's [...]. Therefore, it no longer makes sense today to still refer to the 'traditions', to hold on with timidity to the 'traditional' and to believe that especially in the home, a greater conservatism is necessary, the more mercilessly time makes it impossible in all other areas of life to hold on to what has been (Meyer 1926, p. 24).

At the same time, such self-techniques were to enable the subject to become "creatively" active, i.e., to participate actively in the shaping of a new society: "With the spirit of the new household", according to Meyer, the housewife attains "the key to mastering her life in general, because through it she advances to the essential in herself" (Meyer 1926, p. 163). The purpose of her WIZO cookbook can be interpreted doubly against the background of this statement. In the healthy, agile and increasingly Hebrew-language-mastering New person she saw a successful return to the "Jewish" self. While in Germany she links her argumentation to the demands for a comprehensive social modernization of the Weimar Republic – not coincidentally, the New woman of the Weimar Republic and the one in Palestine resemble each other – after her immigration to Palestine she uses the household system to propagate the construction of a Jewish nation-state. At the center of this is a new Jewish identity,



which she defines negatively, as a departure from that of the *Galuth*. Here, as there, the small family of European character is the supporting pillar for these ideas – it is also the heart of European national thought, which invokes a “new” bourgeoisie.

Johann Gottfried Herder, going back to Samuel von Pufendorf, had already linked his concept of culture to that of the nation. According to him, every nation has “its *center of happiness within itself*, like every sphere” (in: Welsch 2017, p. 10, emphasis in original). At the same time, it manifests its distinctiveness outwardly in this way “and generates the urge to keep the supposedly foreign ‘outside’” (ibid). Homogenization and external demarcation also characterize the national movements of the 19th century and the meaning of culture as a specific national culture. In this context, and against the background of the centuries-old experience of anti-Semitic exclusion in Europe, the idea of a Jewish state emerges, bringing (Jewish) nation and (Jewish) culture into alignment. Culture, as an expression of the totality of practices, actions, and making, is equated with progress in the reading of future-oriented and present-focused modernity. In this reading, culture becomes for Herzl the normative basis of a new Jewish state, wherever it will be established:

For this, first of all, a *tabula rasa* must be made in the souls, erasing many old, outdated, confused, limited ideas. Thus, dull brains will think at first that the migration from culture must go out into the desert. Not true! The migration takes place in the middle of culture. One does not return to a lower level, but climbs a higher one. One does not move into mud huts, but into more beautiful, more modern houses, which one builds anew and is allowed to possess without danger (Herzl 2011, p. 47, emphasis in original).

The idea that one could found a nation-state – Herzl even speaks of a “model state” (2011, p. 60) – on any piece of “earth’s surface” refers not least to the self-image of modernity, which thinks of its values – detached from tradition and history – universally (2011, p. 61). Ultimately, Erna Meyer also follows this logic when she urges her readers to use their “knowledge of European cuisine to bring a pleasing variety into the local one” (1936/n.d., p. 8). In the sense of household rationalization, to cook Zionist means neither to adapt completely to the “local cuisine” nor to develop a common diet, but, in the context of nation-building, to contribute to the physical constitution of the New Jewish community. Such an understanding of culture also implies minimizing influences from outside (Welsch 2017) in order to preserve one’s own culture from within.

“But we want to give the Jews a homeland. Not by forcibly uprooting them from their soil. No, by carefully digging them out with all their root system and transferring them to a better soil” (Herzl 2011, p. 103). This metaphor could also describe Erna Meyer’s biography: as a mature tree, she was dug up and had to grow back elsewhere; however, the root system remains intact. Such a tree makes contact with the ground,

but no longer forms a completely new root system. Meyer's call for a "rooting in [the] old-new homeland" (the original English translation finds a different metaphor: "becoming acclimatized to our old-new homeland") (1936/n.d., p. 7) can accordingly be understood more as acculturation with varieties of segregation than as a genuine attempt at transculturation. Where it becomes transcultural, where a transition of cultures takes place, Erna Meyer with her cookbook remains reserved and rooted in Europe. Her "healthy Palestine cuisine", despite its demanded liberation towards something new, is thought of as European.

### **Conclusion: Cookbooks, migration, and shared cultural heritage**

In the context of migration, cookbooks have an important commemorative value, since they preserve native recipes and transmit cultural preferences that are revitalized in cooking. In this way, they point in two directions on the timeline: into the past and into the future. At the same time, they have a normative and preserving character, since the challenge of preserving one's own culture despite adaptation and transformation processes is immediately encountered.

What influence does the host country have in this context? Anat Helman (2003) has referred to Erna Meyer's distanced attitude toward Arab cuisine. The deterioration of relations with the Arab population in the 1930s certainly contributed to it. While there was a romantic fascination with the Arab population until the 1920s, this changed with the increasing tensions between the non-Jewish population and the expanding Yishuv (Helman 2003). Helman assumes that the increasing political tensions and riots, especially in the years 1936 to 1939, also had their effects on everyday culture: "Turning 'exotic' into 'primitive'. Imitating Arab habits, climatically suited as they might be, was not in vogue" (2003, p. 80). Against this background, Meyer's cookbook reflects not only the ideas of political Zionism, but also the impossibility of an absolute new beginning in the face of political and geographical conditions. The supposed blank slate, the image of the uncultivated desert of Palestine, covers a moment of greatest individual and collective insecurity and vulnerability – through migration. If one relates this observation to Erna Meyer, one can ask to what extent she, as a new immigrant from Europe, could have had the expertise and knowledge to convey the subtleties of the regional cuisine in the first place.

For all the politically intended demarcation, Meyer's distance can also be interpreted as uncertainty and her cookbook as a cautious in-between, as a first step towards rapprochement and change (Rautenberg 2013). Palestinian society has been in a constant state of change since the publication of *Wie kocht man in Erez-Israel?* (How to cook in Palestine) and especially since the founding of the state of Israel. Between 1948 and 1968, approximately 700,000 Jews immigrated from various Arab countries such as Yemen or Iraq (Schoeps 1998). In order to understand the (cultural)

impact on society at that time, it is helpful to compare it with the number of Jewish immigrants, most of whom came from Europe, who arrived between 1919 and 1948: 483,000 (ibid).

Using the example of falafel, which originated in Arab cuisine, Yael Raviv (2015) has shown how it was gradually naturalized against the backdrop of a (culturally) changing Israeli society. Today, it connects an entire geographical region. Moreover, it symbolically stands for a worldwide social denationalization (Zürn 1997) and the hybridity of its cultures. Erna Meyer's cookbook, on the other hand, the knowledge it contains about her "healthy" Palestinian cuisine, hardly plays a role in today's Israeli society. In terms of content, it has neither consistently handed down the old and familiar – in the sense of a cuisine of memory – nor fully admitted the unknown, new Other of regional cuisine. The model of the New Zionist woman drawn in it remains, for all the heart and soul required, mechanically pale, and in retrospect, the underlying a-historically conceived, supposedly a-cultural image of man in the modern age remains imposed and artificial.

Instead of filling the kitchen shelves of Israeli households or becoming a must-have for a younger European and North American generation like Yotam Ottolenghi's and Sami Tamimi's cookbook *Jerusalem* (2012), Erna Meyer's WIZO cookbook is known today more in professional circles or as an object for passionate collectors. Does it nevertheless represent a heritage shared between Germany, Europe, and Israel – and if so, who shares it?

Meyer's cookbook and her recipes can be seen first and foremost as a common heritage of Ashkenazi Israelis with Germany and Europe. With historical distance and despite the lack of practice in recipe preparation, the recipes are increasingly attracting interest. Against the background of the transnationalization of communication and culture, it is a matter of searching for the context of one's own cultural heritage in the context of an increasing social sensitivity to diversity. Such an interest can be detected in Germany as well as in Israel, as shown by the great interest in the *Community kitchens* of the exhibition *What shall we eat this time?* in the fall of 2020 in the Stuttgart Weissenhof Estate, and in the dinner performance *Telawif* in November 2022 on the roof terrace of the Liebling House in Tel Aviv. (Fig. 3) Precisely because food and drink affect the body and every human being enters into relationship with the world in this way, the intangible heritage of food culture holds the possibility of reflecting on the complexity of individual and collective identities. Erna Meyer seems to have been right in her perception of the kitchen as a site of transformation: the kitchen subversively transcends boundaries. The rest – whether it is perceived as a shared or a separate heritage – remains to be seen.

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# Modernist interior design as a shared heritage?

## The Frankfurt kitchen in Tel Aviv

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*Elfi Carle*

### Introduction

When thinking about modernist architecture today, one may envision white-walled buildings with sharp edges or iconic design objects and furniture, as recently recalled by the large-scale celebrations for the 100th anniversary of the Bauhaus school. Although the Bauhaus, founded by Walter Gropius (1883–1969) in Weimar in 1919, did revolutionize architectural and aesthetic concepts in a way that still has an impact today, the term Bauhaus is often used too broadly, as it encompasses various forms of architecture and design of the modern era. A look into the interiors that hide behind the iconic surface of modernist architecture offers an opportunity to critically question the radical monumentality that the term now claims for itself.

As modernist architecture is functional in nature, the distinction between interior and exterior spaces is often blurred. This can be observed in the case of Hans Scharoun's house in the Weissenhof Estate in Stuttgart, where the curved form of the inside staircase shapes the external façade.<sup>1</sup> While the functional exterior serves as a stylistic, political, social, and cultural frame for an idea, the interior space realizes a complex site- and time-specific concept that is shaped by the social and cultural contexts inscribed within it, as well as the requirements of practical usage. Through the transfer of modernist architecture to other regions of the world, including through migration and exile, a material and immaterial heritage was created that connects Europe with the rest of the world today. This heritage includes the White City of Tel Aviv, built in Mandatory Palestine, which is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. To simply label the White City with the Bauhaus stamp would be insufficient.

The present contribution focuses on the interior space of the early modern era and examines its architectural transfer processes, particularly in the context of the Stuttgart Weissenhof Estate and the White City of Tel Aviv through the lens of the Frankfurt kitchen. Furthermore, the study investigates the reciprocal relationships

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1 Author's interview with Friedemann Gschwind, former commissioner of the state capital Stuttgart for the Weissenhof Estate, August 5, 2020 (Video call, transcript).

of interior formations in Germany and Eretz-Israel (mandatory Palestine) since the 1920s and their material and cultural implications, beginning by illuminating the intentions of Margarete Schutte-Lihotzky's Frankfurt kitchen design, before sketching the rise of modernism in Tel Aviv to highlight its local, cultural, and material forms of expression. Finally, the study turns to the examination of the so-called Tel Aviv kitchen, a site-specific modernist fitted kitchen model that can still be found in the Liebling House in the White City, as well as an original Frankfurt kitchen imported and installed in 2021 in the same building. The goal is to question the changes in both function and meaning that the transfer of the Frankfurt kitchen implies, and furthermore, to identify indicators for a shared heritage in these transformative processes. The research is based on both German and English secondary research and primary data obtained through expert interviews with Dr. Sharon Golan, the Program Director of the Liebling House – White City Center, with Dr. Friedemann Gschwind, the former commissioner of the city of Stuttgart for the Weissenhof Estate, and with Anna Luise Schubert M. Sc. from the Centre for Documentary Architecture (CDA).

### **Towards the “heart of architectural composition”: Interiors**

Although much thought has been given to why architects of modernism, and specifically those of the Bauhaus turned their attention to the interior space as a “natural extension of their role towards the heart of architectural composition” (Benton 1990, p. 103), their efforts have been primarily received and theorized in the realm of furniture design. It is important to remember that the Bauhaus was originally a design school and not a label for an architectural style. This suggests that the objects and architecture of the Bauhaus school followed the early Bauhaus doctrine of “physical obedience”<sup>2</sup> in the same way. They were intentionally inscribed with the way in which spaces and things were intended to be used as part of the design. This raises initial questions about the possibility of transferring that functional approach to other cultural contexts.

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2 When considering the interior architecture influenced by the Bauhaus scholars, one comes closer to the initial and quite radical design-oriented approach of the Bauhaus school. It becomes clear that the school wanted to propagate its name and influence in diverse spheres, by designing a Bauhaus garment, a Bauhaus pipe, introducing a Bauhaus greeting, and composing a Bauhaus song (Ray 2001). Interestingly, in this spirit, which showed some signs of war-influenced sentimentality, “the worship of physical obedience” flourished (Ray 2001, p. 74). The school seemed to proceed with similar rigidity in creating identity for its students as it did in creating new identities for its workshop products, by emphasizing both “production (industry) and consumption (advertising)” (Ray 2001, p. 75), or, when thinking about interiors, materiality, functionality, and usage.

After World War I, architects, often due to a lack of infrastructure and money for building, “rediscovered their roots in the crafts, often in the new contexts of Expressionism, *de Stijl*, or Constructivism” (Benton 1990, p. 103). Tracing the Bauhaus back to its origins, we see that the craft workshops and their products were placed at the center of the early school’s approaches, aimed at creating “the impression of a magical spatial extension with modest means” (ibid). The modernist interior is thus closely intertwined with the influence of the Bauhaus school.

An early experiment in implementing avant-garde ideas of modernist architecture, and an initial attempt to rethink its interiors, was the Weissenhof Estate in Stuttgart. Originally built in 1927 as a Werkbund exhibition by 27 mostly Berlin-based architects (among them Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Hans Scharoun, and Bruno Taut), the buildings initially served as representative examples of the modernist ideology, rather than practical solutions for the construction of new housing. However, even within this representative exhibition framework, the architects intended to present solutions for the need for cheaper and faster construction of housing in an urban context. The interiors of the settlement, following the radically unadorned demands of their facades, were intended to respond to the needs of a modern lifestyle and therefore featured modular and flexible floor plans, some even equipped with modernist furniture. Mies van der Rohe’s apartment block is an example of modern interior design, as none of the 24 flats were identical in floor plan due to the thin flexible walls, that characterized the interior layout. It was one of many important innovations of the Werkbund exhibition, promoting modern flexibility and individuality in interiors, in contrast to the plain white and industrial-looking exterior spaces (Benton 1975). However, architect Hans Schmidt critically described the interiors of the 1927 Weissenhof exhibition as architecturally imprecise. All of the projects clearly stem from the desire to create as large a space within these small houses as possible and as a result we have a series of endless combinations: dining room/living-room/hall, study/living room/stairwell, and so on (in: Benton 1990).

Similarly, he expressed little conviction about the practicality of the architecture presented, which he deemed to be “very beautiful to look at, but completely useless”:

The movable wall is a true hallmark of the exhibition houses, and this too can hardly be considered a sign of progress. On the contrary, it painfully reminds one of the staircases and rooms connected by double doors of the 1890s (in: Benton 1990, p.103).

The interior architecture of the modernist era went beyond just redecorating or introducing a new flexibility, which was deemed useless by Schmidt. Rather, the design of interior spaces was influenced by scientific and economic perspectives as well as issues of materiality. An example of an interior concept that seeks to describe such



complex considerations is the kitchen, which will be examined in more detail in this study:

What the broader Central European context of kitchens contributes to our understanding of the modern kitchen is not just the repetition of features with which the modern kitchen is usually described: the use of forms of mass production, the attachment to certain national stories, the use of modern materials and the rethinking of the size and use of the workspace. These Central European kitchens also show how the modern aesthetic idea is created and implemented (McGaughey 2017, p. 101).

The kitchen, thus, represents an interior space that is shaped by several aspects: It utilizes new technologies to improve the efficiency and domestic working conditions for working-class women – and cannot be separated from the aspects of gender roles and the social requirements of its time (McGaughey 2017). At the same time, scientific data is used to design a significantly more rationalized and functional space. Kitchen spaces “of the 1920s, their technological innovations, their efficiency, their use of modern materials and their implementation of scientific research” (McGaughey 2017, p. 102) are thus a sophisticated example of modern interior architecture and demonstrate how architectural intentions and methods are interwoven with their time and socio-political reality.

### **Modernist functionality: The Frankfurt kitchen**

One of the kitchen models that was initially installed at the Werkbund exhibition was the Small Stuttgart kitchen, designed by Erna Meyer (1890–1975). Meyer also served as the commissioner for the kitchen section of the Werkbund exhibition. In her essay *Das Küchenproblem auf der Werkbundaussstellung* (The kitchen problem at the Werkbund exhibition), she mentions several iconic kitchen designs that were exhibited, such as the Frankfurt kitchen by Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky (1897–2000) and the cabinet-shaped Eschenbach Reform kitchen. She concludes that the central inspiration for all new model designs was “saving energy and time” (Meyer 1927). While the Small Stuttgart kitchen was presented as a modular kitchen model that could be flexibly moved within its architectural parameters, the Frankfurt kitchen went one step further by being fitted into its given architectural space, becoming one with the interior architecture, and thus intervening in the floor plan, which marked a leap in development for the modern, increasingly industrialized interior (Meyer 1927).

Today, the Frankfurt kitchen (1926), a design by Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky, is considered a standard example of the exploration of elaborate modernist interior spaces and space organization beyond furniture and decor. It not only represents

a culturally significant testament to the translation of industrial and rationalized work processes into the private household, a central aspect of modern architecture and everyday culture in the 1920s, but also structures and curates the interior space as well as the cultural and site-specific ritualization processes that shape both the layout and design. While it can be assumed that this kitchen is an adaptable idea that can theoretically and practically be modified to individual needs, the question arises as to whether it is possible to transfer it to another cultural context. This question leads to a reflection on the socio-cultural implications of interior spaces as sites whose inherent structures are heavily influenced by political and cultural, as well as religious contexts. To further develop this question, this contribution focuses on the so-called White City of Tel Aviv, where the concept of the Frankfurt kitchen can be examined in a different cultural, political, climatic, and religious environment, while also reflecting on the strong material and programmatic connections to its European origin.

The meticulously planned model kitchen, including floor plan, designed by Schütte-Lihotzky for Ernst May's public housing program of New Frankfurt in the late 1920s, was not only influenced by American ideas of Taylorism and Fordism, but also by the "time-motion studies of the Reich Research Society for Economy in Building and Housing to create a physical environment that improved the efficiency of the housewife" (McGaughey, 2017, p. 103). The design combined a) scientific management theories, b) contemporary insights on efficiency and work styles, and c) the knowledge of mass production methods and appropriate material sources, to create an interior concept that was intended to be "unswervingly modern from conception to production" (ibid). Schütte-Lihotzky based her design on the writings of American writer Christine Frederick and her book *Household Engineering: Scientific Management* (1919) (Jerram 2006). Frederick proposed an American-inspired "division of the house into a kitchen where work was done and the rest of the house, which served the enjoyment of new conveniences, leisure" (Jerram 2006, p. 545). This model was heavily criticized at the time for "constructing women as productive units that require rational control" (Jerram 2006, p. 549). May and Schütte-Lihotzky, on the other hand, "saw the 'open planes' of aesthetic and productive post-revolutionary order as a countermeasure against social unrest and cultural discomfort and a (quasi-)scientific paradigm as the best way to get there" (Jerram 2006 p. 548).<sup>3</sup>

Both gender and social narratives are closely intertwined within kitchen design. The Bauhaus school and movement in the early modern period, for instance, were initially "feminized". The school responded to the trauma of a lost war, which also

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3 McGaughey furthermore highlights a strand of recent criticism of the Frankfurt kitchen that criticizes the design as "elitist or anti-worker as well as anti-feminist", based on a persistent narrative describing a neutralizing quality of modernity that has the power to erase social and gender differences (2017, p. 103).

symbolized a seemingly failing patriarchy, with its new design and art, often in physical and theatrical form (Ray 2001). However, Walter Gropius, a former soldier, described “the war and the associated release of creativity” as “exclusively male experiences” (Ray 2001, p. 79). This resulted in a new identity model for the modernist designer that included “quasi-military rituals and a physical iconography that symbolically promised gender equality, but politically, socially, and economically reinforced the superiority of men over women” (ibid). The early “multiple, non-patriarchal identities” (which the Bauhaus so clearly showed as the foundation of the creative process) (ibid) were soon negated by “the ongoing harmful imbalances between genders and races<sup>4</sup> within the architect profession” (ibid). Schütte-Lihotzky’s kitchen, which was designed by a woman who hadn’t studied at the Bauhaus, was not just furniture or surface but fit into the framework of the modern apartment, which was structured by the predominantly male profession of architecture.

Schütte-Lihotzky was one of the first practicing female architects in Austria, and understood architecture not as an external form, but as shaped by social and economic factors. Her kitchen symbolized the new standard of avant-garde, rationalized thinking that permeated modernist residential architecture (Keim 2000). However, it must be remembered that a deep-seated gender bias prevailed in the design and architecture of her time, and particularly in the context of the Bauhaus school, is closely related to patriarchal, national statehood. Therefore:

[The] Central European [...] built kitchens symbolize aspects of economy and politics that are at the center of global modernist studies of colonialism and empire-building. So when we include this [...] architecture in our consideration of the modern narrative of the kitchen, we challenge the nation-state oriented science that currently shapes our understanding (McGaughey 2017, p. 105).<sup>5</sup>

Over time, various concepts shaped the structure of the interior space, and an examination of it must take into account both social and technological advancements. In the case of the kitchen, which in the last 70 years had to respond to new needs and demands with technical aids such as dishwashers and other electrical appliances, the spatial concept has changed significantly. Here, the development has led from a pure work-space to an open space that emphasizes social interaction and the integration of automated and individualized processes, shaping a strong emphasis on uniform practicality and modularity.

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4 The term “race” is written in cursive by the author to emphasize its status as a socially constructed category.

5 McGaughey (2017) points out that even Schütte-Lihotzky herself acknowledged pan-European influences in thinking about changes in kitchen spaces. However, this contribution refrains from referring to her design as “international”, as McGaughey does, choosing instead to refer to concepts of Western influence.

The Frankfurt kitchen is binary in its meaning. On the one hand, it is a specific design object, i.e. a specific built-in kitchen of a specific designer and time. The kitchen was designed for the context of social housing construction in the settlement of New Frankfurt, but which, more importantly, remains flexible in its layout and can be inserted into environments with similar modernist intentions, such as the Weissenhof Estate. On the other hand, the kitchen embodies the idea of an industrial approach to interior architecture that follows Fordist methods, both in its materiality and in the spatial organization of work processes.

## **Modernist architecture in Israel: The White City in Tel Aviv**

Before considering the interior and kitchen space in Tel Aviv and a transfer of the above outlined Western-modernist ideas, it is important to remember the historical, social, and material changes that occurred between Europe and the British mandate of Palestine. Tel Aviv houses, with around 4000 buildings, the world's largest contiguous collection of architecture often falsely referred to as Bauhaus architecture, which was built by mostly young European architects who fled to mandatory Palestine after the Nazi takeover (Enghusen 2018). While the Weissenhof Estate was an experiment aimed at presenting ideas for the construction and organization of social housing, the actual need for housing in Tel Aviv turned architectural modernism into a massive building enterprise (see: Golan in this volume). Due to its outstanding significance for the diverse architecture and urban planning trends of modernity, the White City was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2003. It is now considered the largest contiguous architectural ensemble built in the early pan-modernist, so-called International Style<sup>6</sup> (Golan 2019).

The architectural origins of the White City can be traced back to the Geddes Plan. In 1925, the British, who had been administering the region of Tel Aviv since 1922 under mandate, commissioned Scottish city planner Patrick Geddes to implement new urban planning ideas in the mandate territory of Palestine. Geddes developed a plan featuring many small plots of land and standalone buildings, which he worked on until 1929. His plan was a political, social, and cultural instrument intended to create a new "ideal" Jewish living space and was central to the ideology of the Zionist movement. Between 1932 and 1938, particularly following the Nazis' rise to power in 1933, approximately 200,000 European Jews fled to Palestine, which was often referred to as Palestine Eretz-Israel by the Jewish immigrants. Within a few years, by 1938, Tel Aviv's population had tripled to around 150,000, rendering many of Ged-

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6 A term introduced in 1932 by the architectural theorist Henry-Russell Hitchcock and the architect Philip C. Johnson (1932).

des' original designs obsolete.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, it is important to understand the White City not as a product of the dialectical use of Bauhaus and pan-modernist elements, but as an urban structure that took into account multiple ideologies, styles, cultural influences, and needs, and that had to be built quickly and efficiently. Both an economic crisis in the late 1920s and the *Fifth Aliyah* (1929–1939) led to an increase in construction activity and the adoption of modernist styles, including the International Style. In this way, Tel Aviv developed its own “glocal” architectural-modernist expression. This was shaped by European influences (Sonder 2015) on the one hand, and adapted to the given climatic and cultural conditions on the other hand. Its creators were driven by the desire to create a new architectural environment that would set a clear contrast to the building traditions of their countries of origin and the local building style of the Levant. The International Style represented a contemporary design approach with a functional, unadorned design that increasingly characterized modern European architecture from the 1920s, and soon spread worldwide, often in stark contrast to nationalist and traditionalist movements (Golan 2019).

Many architects of the later state of Israel who fled from Europe in the 1930s were influenced by the Bauhaus movement. Shlomo Bernstein, Arieh Sharon, Shmuel Mestechkin, and Richard Kauffmann were influenced by their teachers Walter Gropius and Erich Mendelsohn, while Ze'ev Rechter was primarily influenced by Le Corbusier (Sharon 1976; Golan 2021).<sup>8</sup> These young architects were inspired by the modern spirit and wanted to realize it architecturally in the newly established State. The new architectural style was intended to bridge the cultural differences among all Jews immigrants. The doctrine of modernism was to be that of the new country. While modernism seemed to be an appropriate response to these efforts in Tel Aviv, in Germany the modernist, so-called *Neues Bauen* movement was defamed by some voices as “too Jewish” or “oriental”, and even described as an “Arab village” (Golan 2019). The White City not only embodies architectural functionality and a new modern state, but also the Zionist idea. Jewish Zionism sought a new formal cultural expression in the 1940s, as architecturally, the immigrants did not want to adapt to Arab architecture (Golan 2021). At the same time, building in a traditional western style was no longer desired, as the settlers had just fled from Europe and sought a new beginning. The young architects in Tel Aviv wanted to express the vision of a new, modern, human within the framework of a modern society and a modern state. The modernist architecture in Tel Aviv can therefore be understood as a physical manifestation of Zionism (ibid). The so-called *Haavara Agreement* (Hebrew

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7 Author's interview with Sharon Golan, Program Director of the Liebling House – White City Center, Tel Aviv, February 22, 2021 (telephone conversation, transcript). Henceforth cited as Golan 2021.

8 For a compendium on all seven Bauhaus-related architects involved with the White City, and insights on the specific Bauhaus influences, see: Sharon (1976).

for Transfer), which German Zionists and the Jewish Agency for Palestine concluded with the Nazis in 1933, moreover caused the migration of numerous German goods, machinery and building materials to Palestine Eretz-Israel, to establish the White City and thus above all a Zionist infrastructure (Golan 2019).<sup>9</sup>

## **Biedermeier furniture and cultural identities: Diasporic rooms**

Modernist architecture can be read as a radical emancipation from ornamentation that represents a new stage of development in the history of Western architecture. In mandatory Palestine, the new architectures, with their modern, “foreign”, construction methods, as also expressed in the Kibbutz, overlapped with local architectural formations. Not only the spatial, but also the social realities were affected by the imported architectural style.

Academic research in the last 20 years, trying to trace connections between Zionism and modernism, has largely argued that modernist architecture was neutral enough to deal with the multicultural complexity on site (Nitzan-Shifan 1996). It became a kind of “container architecture” that incorporated and framed the diversity of the immigrated Jewish culture and also contributed to an architecture that corresponded with the Zionist blank check ideology (Golan 2021). In addition, there were practical and economic reasons for choosing modernist buildings, as it allowed for the construction of a modern state within a short time. The construction relied on industrial materials that were cheap to produce and quick to build and could often be procured through the Haavara Agreement. Overall, it was more economical than the eclectic style. However, compared to modernist architecture in Germany or the West in general, the buildings in Tel Aviv showed a highly individual adaptation to the specific cultural and climatic needs of the location. The local style of Tel Aviv was never a mere copy of European architectural traditions; rather, within the functional doctrine of modernism, it produced unique forms of expression that also took into account the needs of an emerging nation (*ibid*).

However, these ideas were not initially transported into the interiors. When considering the rapid spread of modernism in the mandate territory of Palestine, it should be noted that the majority of people took their personal cultural living and housing forms, their sense of “feeling at home”, into the new houses and wanted to preserve them there. As a result, for more than 20 years there was a discrepancy between the modernist facades and the interiors. The settlers of the 1930s imported their belongings and thus furnished diasporic spaces, filled with Biedermeier furniture and German floral porcelain (*ibid*), in stark contrast to the surrounding architecture. In some cases, the modernist structures had to respond to the pre-mod-

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9 For the Havaara Agreement, see: Miner (2016); Schubert (2018); Golan in this volume.

ern needs of their inhabitants. In response to oversized Biedermeier furniture, the spaces were paradoxically designed to accommodate certain furniture rather than remaining flexible, as the ideology of early Western modernism prescribed.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, it should be noted that the settlers had to be able to afford both the move and the properties in mandatory Palestine. Therefore, the interior-related decisions in the White City followed the taste and possessions of the upper class; often they were traditionally handcrafted pieces made of fine materials. Some settlers did import Bauhaus furniture and modern design, but this was not the aesthetic standard that dominated the interiors of the time, as Schubert claims, but rather an avant-garde phenomenon.<sup>11</sup> The Jewish diaspora wanted to preserve and maintain their culture, continued to read German newspapers and spoke German, and often felt foreign in their new environment. Therefore, the interiors of their houses were places where they could express their cultural identity; the Biedermeier style was more familiar to them than modernism (*ibid.*).

Additionally, it is worth noting that the infrastructure for design or furniture products did not yet exist in the emerging city of Tel Aviv – neither in terms of culture nor of economy. The dialectical reality of the architecture, oscillating between a modern exterior and imported pre-modern interiors, created a heterogeneous heritage that is still visible and palpable today. It took a long time for settlers to feel at home and to accept modernism as part of their own culture; in addition, local carpenters did not start producing high-quality modern furniture until the 1950s, when it gradually replaced the imported furniture (*ibid.*).

## Social and cultural impacts: Kitchens as relational interior spaces

Returning to the kitchen as a specific interior space: was it possible under the conditions presented above to transfer a modernist kitchen into the local, specific, cultural environment of the settlers? While many European architects attempted to design flexible spaces for a variety of uses and worked with industrial materials and serial production methods, in Tel Aviv there was not an infrastructure to rely on, and the local production of building materials was not nearly fast enough. As a result of the

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10 An example of this is the Liebling House, which was built in 1936 by Dov Karmi as a typical residential house in the heart of the White City and initially inhabited by doctors from Germany who moved in with their Goethe and Schiller library, traditional dishes, and Biedermeier furniture. Since their bed from the same period was quite large, the windows of the house were placed significantly higher than in a typical modernist layout, to accommodate the bed underneath (Golan 2021).

11 Autor's interview with Anna Luise Schubert, staff member at the Centre for Documentary Architecture (CDA), Berlin, March 2, 2021 (telephone conversation, transcript). Henceforth cited as Schubert 2021.

Haavara Agreement, some buildings, such as the Liebling House, have kitchens that closely resemble the design and materiality of Frankfurt kitchens (Romahn 2021). While the original Frankfurt kitchen model was designed in response to the growing housing shortage as a part of German mass housing construction, building activity in Tel Aviv was primarily characterized by bespoke work and bourgeois housing ideals. The common characteristics of modern kitchens in Germany and Tel Aviv can be attributed to functional reasons, not to similar political and economic conditions. Therefore, it is important not to interpret style references as simple transfers or translations (Schubert 2021).

Modern kitchens in Tel Aviv featured two sinks that reflected Jewish everyday life and rituals, and incorporated individually shaped balconies that served as a second skin of architecture, responding to local climatic conditions. The balconies also provided storage space for laundry and lockable, but air-permeable cabinets for produce such as onions. Airflow penetrating the floor plan was a fundamental structural element of the city's modernist development. In accordance with the climatic conditions of the Levant, water basins for humidifying the air were placed at stairway entrances, and the air was further distributed through numerous well-placed windows that let in natural light during the day and illuminated the street at night, serving as temperature regulators (Golan 2021).

However, the local modernist architecture was not only shaped by climatic conditions. Architects working in mandatory Palestine also aimed to find a site-specific cultural identity for architecture, in the name of consolidating Israeli culture (Dvir 2009). In this sense, it was also necessary to satisfy social needs. Generally, local modernism was socially oriented, with a focus on the relationship between buildings and the street: houses were in constant dialogue with their surroundings, promoting social interactions between their inhabitants and passersby. The balconies served as important communication platforms between neighbors and mainly fulfilled a relational function as an extension of the living room (Golan 2019).

While the Frankfurt kitchen in Germany was criticized for segregating women from the communal space as labor force, this criticism stands in stark contrast to the social and cultural ideals and relational architectural approach in mandatory Palestine. The interior architecture of the British mandate period and specifically the modernist idea of the fitted kitchen were primarily transferred by material factors into a different cultural context. They were exposed to specific social and relational needs while also taking into consideration climatic and religious contexts in Tel Aviv.<sup>12</sup>

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12 Sigal Davidi (2018) held a series of lectures about the kitchen in the past and present, investigating the development of kitchens in Tel Aviv specifically in the context of gender. Furthermore, Davidi researched the female implications of Israeli modernism at large, see: Davidi (2020).



## Musealization and functional change: The Frankfurt kitchen in Tel Aviv

Despite the fact that most Frankfurt kitchens, as well as those with strong similarities to the Frankfurt kitchen in the Weissenhof Estate (Vaupel 2017), have been destroyed over time through renovation work (Stuttgart Society for Art and Monument Conservation 2004), the documentation of their original installation and design allows for the examination of past, present, and future realities of interior architecture. Some of the remaining Frankfurt kitchens have been removed from their original locations and housed in large museums such as the *Museum of Modern Art* (MoMA) in New York, the *Victoria and Albert Museum* (V&A) in London, or the *Museum of Applied Arts* (MAK) in Vienna (McGaughey 2017). They thus exist far removed from their original functional context. However, is the reconstruction of such a kitchen in a different setting dependent on whether the kitchen is actively used as a functional unit and part of the interior architecture?

The nearly 4,000 houses of the White City can be viewed as a massive conglomerate of a shared cultural heritage. To truly grasp the significance of the White City, it is important to understand not only the facades but also the interiors as part of this heritage. In comparison to the Weissenhof Estate, differences in the treatment of this heritage can be observed. While the Le Corbusier House in the Weissenhof Estate has been converted into a museum in order to reconstruct the original intent of the architect, including restored interiors and furniture, other buildings in the settlement are still occupied by private owners. These must adhere to explicit preservation regulations and face high maintenance costs since the first restoration efforts in the 1980s aimed to restore the original designs (Reichwald 2008). Generally, there is a desire to maintain the settlement in its original function and aesthetic, as it is located outside of the city center and presents itself as a closed unit (Gebeßler 2008). In the case of the Le Corbusier House, it becomes clear that a complete restoration and preservation of the original modernist interior is not only a costly but also a time-consuming undertaking that is not compatible with contemporary usage (Mohn 2008).<sup>13</sup>

In contrast, the city of Tel Aviv adopts a different approach – its architectural monuments constantly change with their usage. Here as well, the history of the World Heritage is presented in a historical building, the Liebling House – White City Center. Since 2019, it has functioned as a cultural center and museum space, where the history of the White City is conveyed and explored. In 2021, the center

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13 The *New Frankfurt settlement* similarly restored an apartment from the 1920s with a Frankfurt kitchen that is now used as a museum. In addition, since 2020 the city of Frankfurt operates a warehouse that is dedicated exclusively to the collection and restoration of remnants of Frankfurt kitchens; with the focus on Frankfurt kitchens that have been collected over the years by the *Stuttgart Association for Art and Heritage Preservation* (Frankfurt and Culture 2021).

received a complete original Frankfurt kitchen as a gift, due to a city partnership that exists with Frankfurt since 1980. The city of Frankfurt selected a kitchen whose age matched the year of construction of the Liebling House (1936) and fully restored it, including its original pale blue color (designed to deter flies from landing on the surface, as they mistook it for the sky and therefore thought it not solid), before it was shipped to Tel Aviv (Frankfurt and Culture 2021).

When considering the binary meaning of the Frankfurt kitchen, as described earlier, that is, first, to be a specific design object intended for the context of social housing in the settlement of New Frankfurt, with a reasonably flexible floor plan, and second, to represent an idea that refers to an industrial approach both in its materiality and its spatial organization of work processes, the question of evaluating the transfer of a Frankfurt kitchen to Tel Aviv arises. “Transfer” also means re-location, and in the case of the Frankfurt kitchen, such a transfer goes beyond the mere installation of the kitchen in Tel Aviv and examination of its old and new functionality. It evokes questions about the idea of a shared heritage and the historical significance of the gift.

In the case of the original built-in kitchen in the Liebling House, which has structural similarities to the Frankfurt kitchen and which will be referred to here as the Tel Aviv kitchen, it could be argued that it primarily transferred an idea to the Tel Aviv architectural context. Some structural elements such as cabinets and small compartments were copied, but it is mainly the idea of a kitchen adaptable to the architectural context that was transferred. The analysis has shown that the Frankfurt kitchen is not only an example of modern kitchens per se, but that sophisticated considerations for the organization of kitchen work in general were part of interior design in the 1920s and 30s. The Frankfurt kitchen represented a fully equipped kitchen model, on which the so-called Tel Aviv kitchen in the Liebling House was based, while being designed functionally for the climatic, social, and religious conditions of Tel Aviv. In this case, the implementation concerned the idea of a contextually adaptable Frankfurt kitchen. In Tel Aviv, there are only traces of analogies to the Frankfurt kitchen, as its industrial approach was reflected in the materiality of the modern kitchens in Tel Aviv, but it was not functional for the bourgeois settlers in terms of the spatial organization of work processes, which in the case of the Frankfurt kitchen were oriented towards the working class. The socio-cultural and religious context of Tel Aviv required the shared use of the kitchen space – a requirement that was far removed from German social housing. In addition, the climatic conditions also required changes.

Even though the Tel Aviv kitchen underwent a certain process of musealization due to its accommodation in the Liebling House and its transformation into a White City Center, its site-specific adaptation to the context of usability in the Levant is still visible. On the other hand, if we turn to the original Frankfurt kitchen transferred to the Liebling House in 2021, a different picture emerges: the kitchen remains a

specific design object intended for the context of social housing in the settlement of New Frankfurt, representing the ideas of a specific designer at a certain point in time. In Tel Aviv, the Frankfurt kitchen was installed distinctly as a museum space in the Liebling House – White City Center, as a design object for documentation and educational purposes, and as an illustration of cultural-political German-Israeli cooperation. It illustrates the shared heritage of Europe and mandatory Palestine as a representative museum piece. Unlike the Tel Aviv kitchen, the lately-imported Frankfurt kitchen is not characterized by site-specific adaptation processes, which is why the idea of its functional and site-specific adaptability remains purely illustrative.

In summary, it can be stated that the Liebling House today features, on the one hand, a modernist kitchen that is oriented towards the central quality of the Frankfurt kitchen – its adaptability – and has undergone a transformation to adapt to regional circumstances. This so-called Tel Aviv kitchen embodies a culturally and site-specifically differentiated, yet originally shared material and architectural heritage. On the other hand, the recently transferred Frankfurt kitchen represents a museum-like representation of this shared architectural heritage; it is therefore primarily a sign of a retrospective cultural-political understanding of shared cultural heritage and German-Israeli cooperation.

### **Conclusion: Interior architecture as a witness of shared heritage?**

The investigation has shown that the interior architecture of modernism was shaped by distinct site-specific conditions that blended with complementary time-specific social and cultural ideas. In these transfer processes, indicators of a shared cultural heritage can be found, which must, however, be traced back to heritage's original context in order to understand its character. The heritage of modernist interior architecture thus also encompasses complex historical-political aspects. The interiors that hide behind the iconic, white-washed facades offer a unique opportunity to reflect on the cultural positioning of their inhabitants, their diverse environments, and their political, religious, class- and gender-specific implications. The investigation of the communicative interior space of the kitchen shows the continuing connection of architectural design, cultural identity, and political considerations. In this sense, the kitchen represents an exemplary room whose modifications can be read as traces of cultural transfer:

Spaces are negotiated and disputed constructs (such as 'home'), but they are also material 'facts' that can enforce – and not just suggest – certain reactions. They can act as an index for another research variable such as class, gender, sociabil-

ity, or work, but in their material form, they can also claim to be a socially (and historically) structuring element in their own right (Jerram 2006, p. 539).

Modernist interior design should not only be treated according to museum standards of conservation, but should also be understood as offering an opportunity to learn from the dynamics of its appropriation and transformation and to examine the common heritage in a targeted manner. Even if this contribution was focused on the architectural heritage and in particular on that of the Weissenhof Estate and the White City, the results can be generalized in a certain way. Common heritage arises where dynamics are at work, often triggered by complex site- and time-specific migration processes, which require a new reception and interpretation of cultural habits and achievements. The UNESCO World Heritage label awarded to both the Le Corbusier House in Stuttgart's Weissenhof Estate and the White City of Tel Aviv indicates such an understanding. At the same time, the concept of common or shared cultural heritage draws attention to the fact that it can only serve as a heuristic for broad reference lines, while on closer inspection the complex cultural variations remain visible. In this context, the Frankfurt and Tel Aviv kitchens in Israel merely represent a telling example of an appropriation and transfer process that, on closer inspection, reveals its value in the context of a common European-Jewish heritage.

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# Colonial monuments and the treatment of history

## The example of the toppled Colston monument in Bristol

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Jana Weyer

### Introduction

Following the murder of U.S. citizen George Floyd by a police officer in May 2020, numerous demonstrations took place in the U.S. and Europe to draw attention to the unequal treatment and violence against black people. In the wake of the *Black Lives Matter* movement, evidence of a hegemonic culture of remembrance was also attacked. In the United States, statues commemorating Confederate racism were toppled. In Europe, demonstrators focused on the legacy of colonialism and slavery in public spaces. Street names and monuments from the colonial era were publicly denounced. In the English city of Bristol, demonstrators lifted the bronze statue of slave trader and philanthropist Edward Colston (1636–1721) from its pedestal and threw it into the harbor during a demonstration on June 7, 2020.

Against the backdrop of this event, the question of how current debates about colonial monuments influence the colonial history and memory in the European discourse set in motion a change in the construction of heritage. Is an intervention, such as the toppling of the Colston monument an attempt to erase historical events from public memory, or is it an overdue correction of the European remembrance culture, which can be seen as a prerequisite for the concept of a shared cultural heritage? To explore this question, the case study briefly examines European colonialism and the model of cultural memory, then it outlines the role of the monument in the construction of collective memory. It goes to analyze the commentaries in the English newspapers *The Guardian* and *The Telegraph* that reflect the public reaction to the monument collapse in Bristol. The findings show that the comments evaluate not only the concrete action and the treatment of colonial history, but also the monument as a medium of public mediation. In its conclusion, the case study discusses how the concept of shared cultural heritage deconstructs European memory.



## European imperialism and colonialism

In recent years, the study of European colonial and imperial history has gained importance and attention. As colonialism was an international phenomenon, the research aims to examine transnational dynamics and interactions. A particular focus is on the British Empire and the memory of it (Conrad 2019). Distinguished from the concept of colonialism, imperialism is characterized as a relationship “in which one power exerts influence on others beyond its own borders” (Metzler 2018a, p. 5).<sup>1</sup> Imperialist ambitions go beyond colonialism. They pursue “world politics” with the aim of building a transcolonial Empire. An example of this is the British Empire from the end of the 18th century (Osterhammel 2009). Neither the long-term traces of imperialism nor European colonialism, however, have been eliminated with the political decolonization heralded in the 1950s as the “formal legal end[s] of colonial rule” (Metzler 2018a, p. 5). Rather, decolonization represents a longer historical process of replacement that, according to Metzler, “includes political as well as economic, social as well as cultural dimensions” (ibid).

The current preoccupation with colonialism mostly refers to the phase of high imperialism from the 19th century to the end of World War I in 1918. Although the British Empire as one of the longest and largest colonial projects lasted around 500 years, its reappraisal is also still in its infancy (Darwin 2015). When it comes to British imperialism, Darwin identifies three narratives in remembrance culture. Between 1945 and 1960, for example, the Empire was primarily told as a success story. In the 1960s, a turning point occurred, as uprisings in the colonies could no longer be covered up. In the 1970s, with a few exceptions (Hong Kong), the Empire seemed to have ended. Therefore, no one wanted to actively remember it (ibid). Since then, “the British public [...] has been encouraged and reinforced to regard Britain’s imperial career as a mission relatively successfully completed, but of little relevance to its present and future” (ibid). Throughout all three phases, however, two recurring remembrance narratives emerge: “a liberal narrative and a narrative of horror” (Ertl 2015, p. 27), which were difficult to reconcile in public discourse.

Since the 1980s, when postcolonialism formed a new theoretical position that critically examines the West’s view of the colonized world, the European “system of science and its asymmetries of power” (Schaper 2019, p. 11) has also been up for debate. Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) is considered a key text in this regard. Orientalism, which Said identifies in Western literature since the 18th century, designs the Orient and the people living there as fundamentally different from Europeans (Do Mar Castro Varela and Dhawan 2020). Through foreign attribution (Othering), the Orient is established along with the “European positive counter-image” (Metzler

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1 For better readability, quotations from German literature have been translated into English. German sources are marked as such in the bibliography.

2018b). According to Schaper (2019), postcolonial theory goes beyond the geographical location in the territory of the former colonies. It makes clear that colonialism has shaped not only the colonial inhabitants, but also the colonial powers. Accordingly, “colonial power relations, categories, discourses, and ideas are not tied to formal colonial rule” (2019, p. 12), but to hegemonic behavior. Thus, structural racism extends into the present and still exerts influence. Examining cultural attributions used to underpin the colonial system is an important aspect of postcolonial theory. The “agency and perspectives of colonized population” (Schaper 2019, p. 14) considered with nuance, exploring complex power dynamics and sources. The goal is to critically examine and move beyond eurocentrism in all aspects. A postcolonial perspective on European colonial history involves taking a critical, deconstructive look at European history.

## History, culture of remembrance and cultural memory

History as a “concept of meaning” (Rüsen 2013, p. 101) has two forms. On the one hand, it serves as a teleological explanation to “assert one’s own cultural identity against others with strong arguments” (Rüsen 2013, p. 104), and to refer to a long cultural tradition. On the other hand, history can be seen as a “reconstruction” of the past. “Reconstruction means thinking of the past as a temporal chain of conditions of the possibilities of human world-making and connecting future expectations to this chain” (Rüsen 2013, p. 105). This orientation toward history is called historical consciousness. It arises when people relate to their past and “underpin their present self-understanding” (Wolfrum 2010, p. 16). The “social dimension [...] of time processing” (Wolfrum 2010, p. 17), on the other hand, has been referred to as historical culture since the 1970s (Rüsen 2013). A term that has increasingly been replaced by that of culture of remembrance since the 1990s. In contrast to the politics of history, which refers to a strategic field of action “in which various actors freight history with their specific interests and seek to use it politically” (Wolfrum 1999, p. 25), the culture of remembrance refers to “history in the public sphere” (Wolfrum 2010, p. 17). Accordingly, Wolfrum defines remembrance culture “as a formal generic term for all conceivable forms of conscious remembrance of historical events, personalities, and processes [...], be they aesthetic, political, or cognitive in nature” (2010, p. 19).

The term remembrance culture contains that of memory. In general, Erll defines “remembering as a process, memory as its result, and memory as a capacity or changeable structure” (2017, p. 6). A memory that selectively and subjectively stores memories is possessed by every human being. At the same time, it is socially shaped:

What this memory [...] takes up in terms of content, how it organizes these contents, how long it is able to retain what, is largely a question not of internal ca-

capacity and control, but of external, i.e., social and cultural framework conditions (ErlI 2017, p. 10).

Consequently, memory is not a purely internal phenomenon (Assmann 2005a) but reflects a collective socialization that relates to a common cultural framework. The idea of a collective memory, developed in the 1920s by Maurice Halbwachs has been taken up by Jan and Aleida Assmann. They divide collective memory into two dimensions, communicative and cultural memory. Communicative memory is shaped by everyday communication and connects three to four generations. Cultural memory exists not only in memories, “but also in things such as texts, symbols, images, and actions” (Assmann 2005b, p. 19). It is “not possible without institutions, media, and specialists [...]” (Assmann 2005b, p. 21) and serves as a “resource or source for group identity that relies on memories externalized in various archival media, symbolic forms, and practices, and thus becomes itself objectified forms of culture” (Levy 2010, p. 93). It is through a shared culture of remembrance and a shared cultural memory that a group’s identity is permanently shaped. Rites (as immaterial heritage) keep memories and beliefs alive; storage media, which include monuments, transmit them in material form (Assmann 2008).

Whereas in Europe until the 1980s, successful events in national history were remembered primarily with the aim of “constructing a heroic self-image of the group” (Assmann 2008, p. 7), the nature of remembering has changed in the past 30 years. Remembering now also includes critical events that are fraught with pain or consequences and that presuppose dialogical remembering (Schober 2019). Leggewie and Lang (2011) have enumerated seven aspects of such a European remembering, with the memory of colonial crimes in fifth place. It results in an obligation to deal with and reappraise the colonial period (ibid). However, the memory of colonialism cannot be addressed solely within national borders, rather, “intersecting spaces of communication” (ErlI 2017, p. 124) of global scope are the prerequisite. Levy also warns in this context that “what is remembered, how, and by whom is a matter of negotiation” (2010, p. 100). The contents of cultural remembrance emphasized by the majority society are not always understood or accepted without criticism by the population. “Cultural memory [...] can certainly also represent a critical, even subversive and revolutionary instance” (Assmann 2005b, p. 25), stimulate discussions or reveal the constructional character of history (Budasz 2020).

## **Colonial monuments in the public culture of remembrance**

In a narrower sense, “any architectural or sculptural monument” is a memorial “erected for the purpose of commemorating events or personalities” (Riese 2009, p. 72). Zeller additionally emphasizes the “memorial function”, the “setting in public

space and the monument's own claim to eternity, which results not least from the use of durable materials such as stone and bronze and steel" (2000, p. 20). In terms of content, "monuments often serve a public commemorative *agenda setting*" (Siebeck 2010, p. 177, emphasis in original) or "nation building" (Siebeck 2010, p. 178) to visualize political authorities, collective values, or power. Monuments postulate an "educational claim [...] as well as – depending on the political climate – an attempt to influence or even indoctrinate recipients" (Zeller 2000, p. 20).

Their visibility in public space and general accessibility also lead to the fact that "monuments often [become] the object of disputes, not infrequently they are 'desecrated' or overthrown" (Siebeck 2010, p. 180). As artifacts handed down from past times, they are signs of a cultural or ideological self-interpretation that can run counter to the collective self-image at the time of reception: "People [make] here not only cognitive, but also emotional and physical experiences" (Siebeck 2010, p. 182). Consequently, meanings inscribed in the monument still have an unconscious effect on the population in the present.

This also applies to colonial monuments in the present. The memory of the colonial era not only influences the understanding of one's own past, but also the self-image of the former colonial societies in the present, which are working on their decolonization. Colonial monuments have been erected both in Europe and in the former colonies. Those erected during the active colonial period usually served to celebrate and legitimize colonialist ambitions – which they continue to express today. Those monuments that emerged after the loss of the colonies, on the other hand, "had the function of keeping alive the memory of the overseas 'world empire'" (Bechhaus-Gerst 2019, p. 40). But are these narratives still tenable today – or do they not rather run diametrically counter to collective remembering in the 21st century, as Darwin's and Leggewie's research on the dynamics of memory processes suggests? Budasz even explicitly points out that despite an expanded remembrance of colonialism in Europe, the media of cultural memory in the public sphere are often not adapted to the changing needs and messages of collective memory:

The fact is that public space in Europe has not been decolonised, and nor have European minds. [...] The absence of racial minorities among symbols of commemoration raises the question whether it is possible to be non-White *and* European (2020, n.d., emphasis in original).

Not only in Great Britain, but throughout Europe and the USA, monuments with colonial references were increasingly brought into focus in the course of the *Black Lives Matter* demonstrations. Lists such as the *Top 10 colonial landmarks in the sights of Europe's BLM protesters* (Paton and Dutton 2020) emerged, which sought to highlight colonialism as a structural mindset in Europe. However, a transnational and

academically edited compilation of colonial monuments does not yet exist (Budasz 2020).

## The Edward Colston monument in Bristol

The monument by Irish sculptor John Cassidy (1860–1939) commemorating Edward Colston in Bristol was erected in 1895 and stood on a Portland stone pedestal until its fall on June 8, 2020. (Fig. 1) On the sides of the pedestal are plaques showing and describing Colston in various situations: “On the west face, Colston dispenses charity to poor children; on the north he is shown at the harbor; on the east is a scene with marine horses, mermaids, and anchors” (see Other Sources: No. 1). The plaque on the south side bears the inscription: “Erected by / citizens of Bristol / as a memorial / of one of the most / virtuous and wise sons of / their city / AD 1895” (ibid). Other streets and buildings in Bristol are named after Colston, who is honored as an important figure in his native city. He invested his fortune gained from the slave trade in charitable causes back home. However, his involvement in the slave trade is not mentioned on the pedestal. It was not until the 1990s that Colston’s membership in the *Royal African Company* became public, bringing his role as an active slave trader into focus for the first time (see Other Sources: No. 1).

Nevertheless, it took some time before this aspect of his life became a reason to question the monument and to this day, citizens in Bristol seem to be divided about it. When the *Bristol Post* surveyed some 1100 participants about the Colston statue in 2014, 44% were in favor of removal, while 56% were opposed (Gallagher 2015). Since then, there have been constant efforts to address Colston’s role as a slave trader in the public sphere and to deconstruct a one-sided memory. In 2017, for example, an unofficial plaque reading “BRISTOL Capital of the Atlantic Slave Trade 1730–1745 / This commemorates the 12,000,000 enslaved of whom 6,000,000 died as captives” was placed at the base of the monument, which the city removed after two months (Davis 2017). That same year, protesters painted the statue’s face white (Wood 2017). It was not until 2018 that the Bristol City Council decided to add an official plaque to the monument that would address both Colston’s philanthropic activities and his involvement in the slave trade (Cork 2018a). However, various attempts at wording the plaque were rejected after protests from the public and a veto by the mayor (Cork 2018b; see Other Sources: No. 2).

Shortly before the statue’s fall in 2020, nearly 10,000 people signed a petition to Bristol City Council for its removal. The petition, which had been launched several years earlier, had received new attention in early June from the *Black Lives Matter* movement (Coward 2020). On June 7, a demonstration resulted in its unauthorized removal. The statue was lifted from its pedestal with ropes, rolled to the harbor, and sunk. In remembrance of George Floyd’s death at the hands of police violence,

a demonstrator knelt on the neck of the recumbent statue (Siddique and Skopeliti 2020).

The two British daily newspapers *The Guardian* and *The Telegraph* reacted to the activist correction of public commemoration with numerous reports and commentaries published from June 7 to 11, 2020. In the following, the discussion about the toppled statue of Edward Colston in these two dailies will be used to trace how English-European colonial history and its monuments are dealt with in the British public.

## Methods

The study is based on a document content analysis (Mayring and Fenzl 2019). A total of ten articles were researched via the online archive of the newspapers. The basis for the document analysis is formed by five comments made by writers of these newspapers, which show how rather progressive positions (*The Guardian*) and conservative ones (*The Telegraph*) wrestled in the public debate around the British people's own colonial past and its commemoration in public space. However, as newspaper publications, they should also be understood as proxies for the media's respective stances. All of the commentaries relate to Colston, but also go beyond the case and deal with colonial monuments in general. In the content analysis, therefore, broader and related arguments on the topic were also taken up and examined.

For the case analysis, a total of nine inductively formed categories were formed according to Mayring: RQ1-1: Approval (= arguments for monument overthrow and removal of colonial monuments); RQ1-2: Disapproval (= arguments against monument overthrow and removal of colonial monuments); RQ1-3: History, historiography, and politics of history; RQ1-4: Monument; RQ1-5: Black urban population/descendants & Black Lives Matter; RQ1-6: Politics: reactions and context; RQ1-7: Further Examples; RQ1-8: Solutions and Responses; RQ1-9: Identity and Memory and Engaging with Empire. Their evaluation and summary groups the following compilation into four categories: a) evaluation of the monument's fall, b) dealing with (colonial) history in public space, c) the monument as a medium of colonial history, and d) approaches to solutions in dealing with colonial monuments.

## The public discourse: Contradictory commemoration?

a) *Evaluation of the monument's fall*: All commentaries offered both approving and disapproving arguments about the monument's fall. The authors of the more left-leaning *Guardian* were generally more in agreement with it, while those of the *Telegraph* were more opposed to it. The *Guardian* journalists were positive about the act of top-

pling: “The right way to do it” (Moore 2020), and “a revelation” (Muir 2020). Colston’s influence over the city, the argument went, was diminished after the statue’s removal, bringing Bristol’s role in the slave trade back to mind (Moore 2020). Likewise, civil society learned to question its attitude toward its own history: “Every time a statue comes down, we learn a little more” (Riley 2020). The perspective of victims of the slave trade and their descendants was also raised. However, some commentators who were sympathetic to the toppling of the statue also qualified their agreement. Muir (*Guardian*), for example, declared on the one hand: “Finally, Colston has fallen,” but added on the other hand: “Would I have tugged the rope? I don’t think so. As attractive as it seems, as right as is the cause, that route seems ultimately problematic” (Muir 2020). The *Telegraph* writers argued more rigorously than their *Guardian* colleagues. No one, it was noted, should assume the right to simply alter public space. The monument toppling was declared a crime, the behavior of the police was objected to (Webb 2020). Habib (2020) referred to the protesters as “violent anarchists” and stated that “British heritage and values must be protected”. Even if monuments refer to a negative past, they should not simply be removed, but should be remembered through encounters in public space: “It must be a part of our future, too” (Evans 2020). For most monuments, a reason for removal could be found, “but where would it end?” (Imam 2020). Therefore, their retention is right: “These statues remind us of who we were but also who we have the potential to be. In many ways, they symbolise a triumph over the kind of thinking that birthed people such as Rhodes [and Colston], since we now live in a radically different, more tolerant society” (Imam 2020). It is clear that some of the *Telegraph*’s commentary takes a contrary view to the *Black Lives Matter* movement, which claims that colonial continuities still persist today and promote racism.

b) *Dealing with (colonial) history in the public sphere*: Most commentators address the question of the mediation and politics of history and reveal their understanding of history. For the most part, the *Guardian* writers reveal a concept of history that relates the mediation of history in the public sphere to the collective culture of memory, and thinks of both dynamically (Moore 2020; Olusoga 2020; Riley 2020). “The past may be dead, but history is alive, and it is constructed in the present” (Riley 2020). In their argumentation they denounce the lack of visibility of the dark sides of English colonial history in the public space: “The fact that a man who died 299 years ago is today on the front pages of most of Britain’s newspapers suggests that Bristol has not been brilliant at coming to terms with its history” (Olusoga 2020). Thomas-Johnson (*Guardian*) generalizes the argument and sees Bristol’s monument collapse as a call to all of Britain to come to terms with its imperial past. Most Britons, he argues, still know too little about the imperialism of the Empire (Thomas-Johnson 2020). Olusoga and Moore (2020) interpret the moment of the fall itself as history. It is as much a part of it as the moment that once led to the erection of the monument (Moore 2020; Olusoga 2020). In contrast to the *Guardian*’s voices, most *Tele-*

*graph* writers were overwhelmingly negative about the impact of a changing culture of remembrance on the representation of (national) history in the public sphere, calling the protesters “historical revisionists” whose goal was “[a] distortion of our historical perspective” (Webb 2020). Instead of eliminating it, they claimed, it is more important to show more history in the public space and to leave people the freedom to form their own opinion (Webb 2020). Condemned is the assumption “that if we only removed, censored or reinterpreted parts of our past, that the problems of the present might be forgotten” (Imam 2020). It is not enough to simply remove a monument; rather, a deeper engagement with the time and the society of the time that had erected these colonial monuments is necessary (ibid). Thus, the voices in the *Telegraph* predominantly reveal an understanding that is oriented toward history as a concatenation of facts, whose relations are not to be corrected or judged in retrospect, but are to be accepted as the results of their time. The question of who was entitled to select events of history and their visualization in public space and whether this space is immutable is not addressed.

c) *The monument as a medium of colonial history*: On the role of monuments and works of art as instruments of representation and mediation, a less clear opinion can be identified. Olusoga (2020) argues, from the perspective of a heterogeneous citizenry which includes a black urban population, that a monument placed in the center of town, like that of Colston, was a “daily insult”. The extent to which monuments are perceived by the population as instruments of a hegemonic interpretation of history, however, was not agreed upon by the writers of the newspapers. Sooke (2020) (*Telegraph*) put this argument into perspective by referring to the long history of monument overthrows and explaining that despite their location, public monuments are often invisible to the population because they are commonplace in the cityscape. In this, Riley (2020) from the *Guardian* agreed with him: “Statues do not do a particularly effective job of documenting the past or educating people about it”. Moore, also from the *Guardian*, points out that the lack of political reckoning with Britain’s imperialist past has led to a shift of the politically necessary discussion into the field of art and culture: “In this country, the reckoning with the days of the empire happens mostly on a cultural level” (Moore 2020). Habib (2020) from the *Telegraph* also takes up this aspect, but argues in a recognizably more militant way: the removal of the monument represents an attack on British heritage and its values. Historical statues, he argued, are part of the identity of a country and a population proud of its ancestors. The activists questioned this: “They are telling us that our forefathers were evil and that the values we derive from them are wrong, they should be rejected” (Habib 2020).

On the whole, the writers show disagreement regarding the evaluation of the effect of monuments for educational purposes. Their ambivalence results from the attitude of considering monuments not only as testimonies of history, but also of art. As such, they are part not only of a discourse of history, but also of a discourse of art,



which both follows a collective history of ideas and is an expression of an individual artistic achievement, whose significance should be judged separately – sometimes independently of its content.

d) *Approaches to dealing with colonial monuments*: Almost all of the comments deal with approaches to dealing with colonial monuments or respond to suggestions for dealing with them. Here, too, no uniform line separating the two newspapers can be identified. Rather, three approaches are individually advocated (or rejected) by the writers. First, the erection of “subject-specific monuments”, such as a central monument to the victims of slavery; second, public discourse about historical monuments and their (possibly racist) ideological content; and third, the reflective mediation of monuments, such as through professional heritage agencies like museums.

The first approach is found in the *Guardian*, which proposes a “national memorial to the victims of the slave trade” and a “museum of empire” (Riley 2020).<sup>2</sup> The second approach is addressed by *Telegraph* writers, who refer to the work of the *Commission for Diversity in the Public Realm*, which was established by the London mayor Sadiq Khan in the aftermath of the monument’s collapse (to examine London monuments for racist backgrounds). Three of the five *Telegraph* writers are skeptical of the *commission* (Evans 2020, Webb 2020). Habib (2020) even describes the project as “entirely wrong”. He shares a similar opinion with Evans (2020) about the *Topple the Racists* campaign. The initiative provides a map of those statues and monuments in Great Britain that are said to have a racist context.<sup>3</sup>

Iman (2020) (*Telegraph*) advocates the third approach. For a reflective communication of history, even more monuments should be erected to subject historical figures to intellectual scrutiny: “I encourage the erection of more statues, museums, increasing the number of debate forums to place these historical figures under intellectual scrutiny”. Olusoga (2020) discusses *Pero’s Bridge* in Bristol, named after the slave Pero Jones,<sup>4</sup> and uses this example to demonstrate the solution of consciously marking European history in public space as colonial history. Sooke (2020) of the *Telegraph* goes a step further by wanting to move the dispute over the statue’s colonial background and its fall into the reflective space of a heritage agency, the museum: “Moreover, to me, it feels right that, once dredged from the harbour floor, Colston’s effigy should be resurrected not on its original stone plinth but inside a museum – where it can be properly contextualised, its toxicity assuaged”. This shows that the

2 An *International Slavery Museum* already exists in Liverpool (see Other Sources: No. 3).

3 The interactive map, created with the help of crowdsourcing, was initiated around the *Black Lives Matter* movement and calls for adding more critical monuments in the UK (see Other Sources: No. 4).

4 Pero Jones had been purchased in 1765 at the age of 12 by wealthy slaveholder, plantation owner, and sugar trader John Pinney to work on his Mountravers plantation in Nevis. In 1784, he accompanied the Pinney family when they moved to Bristol. Pero was John Pinney’s personal servant and served him for 32 years (see Other Sources: No. 5).

question of remembering is ignited by the image of history or the possibility of mediating blind spots in one's own culture of remembrance. The proposed solutions cannot be clearly assigned to any political direction, but oscillate between a positivist and a reflexive attitude.

The comments in the *Guardian* and the *Telegraph* illustrate the disagreement in Britain about how to deal with its own imperial past. The narratives elaborated by Darwin, viewing colonial rule as both terrible and a fact, can be seen in these reactions. The different viewpoints illustrate that Britain is still struggling to interpret its history and legacy of the colonial period. At the same time, they make clear how important the term and the respective concept of history are for the collective identity not only of Bristol's urban population, but also of all Britons.

### **Final notes: Shared heritage as a correction of European remembrance culture?**

The Colston statue was recovered from the water after it sank and was restored. (Fig. 2) The City of Bristol displayed the statue at the Bristol Museum from June 2021 to January 2022 (see Other Sources: No. 6). The graffiti marks left on the bronze sculpture on the day the monument fell were not removed, but remained on the statue (Adams 2020). At the former location of the monument, its reinterpretation has already begun. In July 2020, a bronze statue of demonstrator Jen Reid, her right hand clenched into a fist and stretched upward, was erected on the pedestal left behind. Reid had stood on the pedestal during the protests and had been photographed doing so. Based on this model, the artist Marc Quinn had realized the bronze sculpture together with Reid. One day after its installation, however, it was removed by the city of Bristol. In the meantime, the pedestal is empty again (see Other Sources: No. 7). A petition to replace the Colston statue with a black person was also launched the same day the monument was toppled (Grimshaw 2020). Suggested examples included Bristol's first black ward sister, Princess Campbell (1939), and Jimmy Peters (1879–1954), England's first black rugby player. By January 2021, some 76,000 people had signed the petition (Beeston 2020). Four activists who had been charged with involvement in the toppling of the monument and damage to property were acquitted by a Bristol jury in January 2022 (Thomas 2022).

Monuments shape the cityscape, convey attitudes, and can include or exclude people in their culture of remembrance. Even if monuments originate from the past, they enter into a dialogue with the present and must be considered against this background. Should colonial monuments therefore still be in cities? The presence of such monuments obviously has the potential to instigate a "culture war" (Mitchell 2000, p. 5), because public space is not a vacuum, on the contrary. In the case of the Colston statue in Bristol, this had been evident for years, but debate over extending the

inscription was unsuccessful. The toppling and reinterpretation of a monument finally expanded the (continued) writing of history in that a debate was initiated that called for new perspectives and approaches in dealing with the collective memory of the colonial period.

The removal of a monument from public space is thus only fruitful if it also gives rise to a critical discussion. The action in Bristol had this potential, and even had an impact beyond the borders of Great Britain. The debate surrounding the toppling of the Colston monument was representative of many other disputes conducted around colonial remains, and highlighted both European interconnections and their blind spots in the culture of remembrance. At the same time, this reveals a discourse about a delicate European heritage to which the term and concept of a shared heritage of humanity cannot be applied easily or harmoniously. The reason for this is the former hegemonic context, which to this day leads to exclusion mechanisms in the culture of remembrance – this becomes visible in the highly migrant urban societies of Europe, which require heterogeneous concepts of remembrance and revised self-interpretations.

Here it becomes apparent that in hegemonically shaped contexts and cultures of memory, the idea of a shared cultural heritage cannot function without conflict from the outset. Cultural heritage should not exclude people from the discourse of memory, otherwise it cannot have an identity-forming effect. The Empire, however, is part of English-European colonial history, which is remembered in Europe just as much as by the former colonies. That hegemonic behavior is still alive today was brought to awareness by the *Black Lives Matter* movement in 2020. Not least against such experiences of lived racism, the European narrative of colonial history should be reviewed in cultural memory and addressed in a multiperspectival way. An openness to active reassessment of the past would be essential here in order to expand the current culture of memory accordingly. In the reconciliation of contrasting cultures of memory lies a challenge also for the agencies of material heritage – which include monuments as well as museums – and their narratives. For example, the Colston monument could be not simply eliminated, but presented lying down or upside down. It could be embedded in an ensemble that recounts colonial crimes and racism, thus co-telling the darker side of European prosperity through expansion. Such a culture of remembrance could also provide educational outreach, for example, when it comes to combating racism (Zimmerer 2020). This critique of a historical self-understanding that hides hegemonic aspects, illustrated by the example of Colston, basically concerns all of Europe. Even if each European country has written its own colonial history, the practice of colonial exploitation was similar.

*Fig. 1: The statue of Sir Edward Colston in Bristol, erected in 1895, photo from March 25, 2018 (Photo: Redsquirrel and Wikimedia)*



*Fig. 2: The blemished Colston statue in the M Shed Museum, Bristol, photo from June 8, 2021 (Photo: Adrian Boliston and Wikimedia)*



Taking up this route, a united Europe could use its common colonial heritage to confront the rest of the world and its contrasting culture of remembrance, to come to terms with trauma, and to work on a narrative that understands colonial history as a heritage of humanity.

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# The Story of a monument, Land Day in Sakhnin, 1976–1978

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Tal Ben Zvi

## Introduction

Monuments serve an important role in the formation of the modern nation (Gillis 1994; Anderson 1999). Their presence in the public space echoes the struggle for sovereignty and the nation's success in this struggle, as can also be seen in Muslim states in the Middle East (Gershoni and Jankowski 1986). Therefore, monuments comprise an important part of the totality of material and visual elements that constitute the nation's cultural heritage and the ways in which it remembers and re-remembers its past (Winter and Sivan 1999). Gellner (1983) even claims that the national heritage is created in a process of exo-socialization, which starts within a privileged social stratum that includes artists and cultural figures who produce different cultural artifacts such as the monument. The monument serves an especially important role since it echoes the memory of shared suffering and willingness to make further sacrifices for the nation in the future (Mosse 1990). These are perceived as more powerful unifying and consolidating emotional elements than shared cultural heritages based on the memory of a shared happiness (Renan [1882] 2018). Commemoration is therefore seen as a central concept for understanding the ways in which the shared cultural heritage crystallizes. The repetitive element of the commemoration ceremonies and of the other, formal or informal commemorative activities, yields “commemorative” texts that in their turn create defined “commemorative narratives” (Zerubavel 1994).

How can we therefore understand the supposed role of a monument that echoes the national struggle of an ethno-national group that has no sovereignty, whose members are citizen of another nation state with which they have a complex relationship that intersects struggle and co-existence? The story of the *Land Day monument* (The Monument) in Sakhnin seeks to shed light on this question.

The Land Day (*Yom Al-Ard* in Arabic) monument in Sakhnin (1976–1978) by Abed Abdi and Gershon Knispel commemorates the death of six Arab citizens who were shot by the Israeli police during the violent demonstrations held in 1976 against the

government's confiscation of Palestinian land (Sorek 2015). Since the tragic event, this day has been known as Land Day and has been marked by an annual ceremony on March 30 (Sorek 2008). The monument is identified as one of the turning points in the Palestinian presence in the public arena in the state of Israel. It is thus perceived as a particularly significant and influential factor in the formation of the national visual memory of the Palestinian minority in Israel. Since the state of Israel denied its Arab citizens their national identity and tried to create a local Arab identity that is loyal to the state of Israel, most of the Palestinians' shared heritage has had to be transmitted orally in the realm of the private sphere (Lustick 1980; Rabinowitz 1993; Ghanem 2001). Being positioned in the public sphere, the monument stands out in the way it remembers the past and in the way it wishes to redefine the future heritage of the Palestinians living in Israel.

Through a visual analysis of the monument commemorating the Land Day fallen created by Abdi and Knispel, and a series of in-depth interviews with the artists, I will examine the relations between the representations of the national memory embedded in the monument, and the unique political and cultural circumstances in which the Palestinian minority is trying to carve its shared heritage within the state of Israel.

## **Palestinian art in the diaspora, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip**

The Arab society in Palestine during the British Mandate was mostly rural, and therefore had less exposure to plastic art than more urban societies. Moreover, and although Kamal Boullata (2009) dates and analyzes the roots of Palestinian art as early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century, modern Palestinian culture was in its vast majority verbal, and before '48 produced mainly literary and poetic masterpieces. After the various fields of cultural creation by the Arab population in mandatory Palestine suffered a bad blow as a result of the expulsion or departure of most of the Palestinian intelligentsia, literature and poetry, rather than plastic art, were the first to recover from the shock and muteness of the *Nakba* (Arabic for the catastrophe) (Balas 1970). Palestinian plastic art after '48 started as an act of ongoing creation that wished to capture and comprehend the catastrophe of the *Nakba* and the memory of mandatory Palestine, and turn them into the central national cultural heritage unifying the Palestinian diaspora as a whole (Boullata 2000; Ankory 2006). A major importance was ascribed in this process to monuments and commemoration sites, which function as realms of memory with a material reality and a dominant visibility in the public space (Nora 1989).

Despite that, Palestinian art took its first steps in creating the platform for the Palestinian cultural heritage mainly by using the art of print. Print played an important role in disseminating the national narrative that the artists wanted to advance,

in political circumstances that did not allow for a more material representation of the Palestinian nationality. Ismail Shammout (1930–2006) was one of the first Palestinian artists who used the art of print to convey a national narrative that would lead to the construction of the Palestinian national heritage after the Nakba (Ben Zvi and Farah 2008). Shammout often used figurative language, which allowed him to speak to the heart of “the people”. He used his talent as an artist didactically in order to document the development of the Palestinian saga and arouse support for the national struggle (Boullata 2001).

Thus, many of Shammout’s works were reproduced and widely disseminated in posters, postcards, and calendars. After Shammout fled from Lod in 1948, and after a long and arduous journey through Jordan and a Gaza refugee camp, he moved in 1956 to Beirut. He left Beirut for Kuwait after the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, spent several years in Germany, and died in Amman in 2006. Shammout’s life story embodies the ordeal of the Palestinian odyssey that was reflected in his work, which laid the foundations for the narrative of the Palestinian art and the Palestinian national heritage in the years to come.

Shammout took on the mission of a witness, whose role was to tell the world and its future generations the story of his people through art. He served as the first head of the PLO’s art education department immediately after the organization was founded in 1964, and his book *Art in Palestine* (1989) was the first publication on Palestinian art and its history. For these and other reasons, the role he played was of particular importance for both the establishment of the field of Palestinian art and the formulation of modes of representation of the Nakba, which were also disseminated in the works of other artists in the Palestinian diaspora, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip.

Shammout’s influence on the work of Abdi is of particular importance in regards to the images that represent the Palestinian heritage after the Nakba.

Abdi attests to the mutual influence and reciprocal artistic relations he maintained in the 1970s and 80s with Palestinian artists of his own generation from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, who acquired their education at art schools in the Arab world (mainly in Cairo, Alexandria, and Baghdad), including Nabil Anani (b. 1943, Latroun), Taysir Barakat (b. 1959, in a Gaza refugee camp), Ibrahim Saba (b. 1941, Ramla), Issam Bader (b. 1948, Hebron), Vera Tamari (b. 1945, Jerusalem), Tahani Skeik (b. 1955, Gaza), Taleb Dweik (b. 1952, Jerusalem), Kamal Moghanni (b. 1944, Gaza), Fathi Ghanem (b. 1947, Gaza), and others. The most notable is Suleiman Mansour (b. 1947, Bir Zeit) who, in contrast with the above mentioned group, studied at the *Bezalel Academy of Art and Design* in Jerusalem for one year (1969–1970).

Abdi also became very familiar with the work of artists active in the Palestinian diaspora who engaged in the pure symbolism of “Palestinian suffering”. Among the notable refugee camp artists are Naji al-Ali (b. 1936 in the Galilee and grew up in a Lebanese refugee camp) who worked in Lebanon, Kuwait, and London; Ibrahim

Hazima (b. 1933 in Acre and grew up in Ladhqiya, Syria) and who won an art scholarship in East Germany and later continued to work in Europe; Tamam al-Akhal (b. 1935, Jaffa) who studied art in Alexandria and Cairo, married Ismail Shammout and worked in Beirut from where she moved to Jordan; and Kamal Boullata (b. 1942, Jerusalem) who studied art in Rome and Washington and on completing his studies in 1968 remained in the United States, where he wrote the history of Palestinian art (1989; 2000; 2009).

In the context of Palestinian art in Israel, it is notable that as a result of the Palestinian Nakba and life under military rule, Palestinian artists became active within Israel's borders only at a relatively late stage, some 25 years after the establishment of the State of Israel. The military rule period (1948–1966) imposed harsh isolation on those artists who remained within Israel's borders. The imposition of military rule on the majority of Arab residential areas by virtue of British Mandate emergency laws was intended to restrict, as it indeed did, the freedom of expression, movement, and organization of the Arab citizens. It was therefore only after military rule was revoked in 1966 that young Palestinians began to study art in Israel and abroad and widen the visual expressions of the Palestinian heritage.

Only following the Oslo accords and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, did the 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s see the opening of exhibition spaces. See for example the Al Wasiti Art Center (1994), Al-Ma'mal Foundation for Contemporary Art (1997), Al Hoash (2005) in East Jerusalem; the Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center (1996), Zariab gallery (1998) and the AM Qattan Foundation (1998) in Ramallah; Al-Kahf Gallery at the International Center (1995) in Bethlehem.

## **Palestinian art in Haifa, Israel**

Many Palestinian artists in Israel who worked in the 1950s and 1960s identified as part of the social realism that came together in "Red Haifa". The ethnically and nationally mixed city with its large workers population became a hub of radical political narratives that included those of the Palestinians, which was an uncommon phenomenon in Israel at that time (Balas 1989). The artists that belonged to the group engaged in every facet of the Israeli reality out of a profound identification with its deprived and discriminated-against sections. They sought to create art with social messages that would be understood by and be accessible to "the masses", and thus they created artistic prints that were both affordable and conveyed their message. The artist Gershon Knispel was the driving force behind the Haifa social realism artists' circle, whose ranks included Alex Levi and Shmuel Hilsberg, and maintained contact with artists who created in this style and resided in other locations in Israel, such as Avraham Ofek, Ruth Schluss, Shimon Zabar, and Naftali Bezem.

Another member of the group was Abed Abdi. Abdi was born in 1942 in the Church quarter in downtown Haifa.<sup>1</sup> In April 1948, he, his mother, his brothers and his sisters were displaced from their home, while his father stayed in Haifa. From Haifa the mother and her children left for Acre and from there a fortnight later they sailed on a rickety ship to Lebanon. In Lebanon they were first put into the Quarantina transit camp in Beirut port, later moved to the Mieh Mieh refugee camp near Saida, and from there continued to Damascus. After three years of moving between refugee camps, in 1951 the mother and her children were allowed to return to within Israel's borders as part of family reunification. In his youth Abdi joined the Haifa branch of *Banki* (the Israeli Communist Youth Federation), where he also started his artistic path. In this environment he became acquainted with social realism and with Israeli artists who adopted this style and who were close at the time to the Israeli socialist and communist left (Balas 1989). In 1962 Abdi was accepted into the *Haifa Association of Painters and Sculptors*, becoming the first Arab artist among its members. That year he also exhibited his first show in Tel Aviv. In 1964 he was sent by the Haifa branch of *The Israeli Communist Party – Maki* to study graphic design, murals, environmental sculpture and art in Dresden, East Germany. Abdi spent seven years in Germany. In the print and etching department he met the person who would be his teacher and an important source of inspiration: the Jewish artist Leah Grundig,<sup>2</sup> who made her name through her protest drawings against Fascism and Nazism.

Abdi's commitment to this global idea and worldview was also clearly evident in words he said at a panel discussion<sup>3</sup> held in 1973 by the *Haifa Association of Painters and Sculptors* at Chagall House, under the title *Artists in the Wake of Events*:

In the same way that an artist lives the events of the past, present, and future, he also lives the conflict between man and the forces of evil and destruction. And when society and humankind are in crisis, the artist is required to express himself harmoniously by means of the artistic vehicle at his disposal [...] and so [...] the role of the artist in his work, thoughts and worldview is to reinforce the perpetual connection between himself and the society in which he lives. I was brought up

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- 1 The list of artists which I discuss in this paper includes only male artists, since in this preliminary period in the history of local Palestinian art there were almost no active female artists. The few women who studied fine art in the 1980s at the Haifa University, such as the sisters Suhad and Therese Nasser and Amira Dick, later turned to different paths – the first two studied architecture at the *Technion*, and the latter focused on education (Ben Zvi 2004).
  - 2 In one of my conversations with him, Abdi pointed out that his affinity with Leah Grundig was based on her sensitivity to the subjects of war and social injustice, not least because of her belonging to the Jewish minority that suffered greatly during the Nazi period.
  - 3 In addition to Abdi, this panel also included the artists Avshalom Okashi and Gershon Knispel, the art critic Zvi Raphael and the architect Haim Tibon.

according to this approach and thus I understand the connection between my artistic work and the role defined by Kokoschka,<sup>4</sup> who sought to remove the mask for all those who want to see reality as it is. The role of fine art is to show them the truth (Niv 1974).

Speaking about his art and the 1973 War, Abdi said:

Out of my worldview and my loathing of war, and also out of my profound concern for the future of relations between the two peoples, Arab and Jewish, I have shown my two works here in the exhibition (entitled *Echoes of the Times*, which featured artists from Haifa and the north of Israel). When the cannons thundered on the Golan Heights) and the banks of the (Suez) Canal, and when the future of the region was at risk, I recalled the words of Pablo Picasso. I said 'no to war' in accordance with my artistic beliefs; art must be committed and play a role (ibid).

In this way, Abdi expresses his commitment as an artist to the Palestinian society in Israel, as well as the unique role played by art in raising the social and political consciousness of this society. After several decade of activity in the field of Israeli art, Abdi became one of the prominent Arab artists in this scene.<sup>5</sup>

## Description of the monument

The first Land Day took place on 30 March 1976 in protest over the Israeli government's decision to expropriate 20,000 dunams in the Sakhnin area for the purpose of "the Judaization of the Galilee". The leaders of *The New Communist Party – Rakah* and the heads of Arab local councils in the Galilee called for a day of general strike and protest demonstrations on the 30th of March. The demonstration took place mainly in the villages of Sakhnin, Arabeh, and Deir Hanna. During the demonstrations IDF forces confronted the demonstrators; many were injured and six people were killed. It's important to note that the connection to the land is a major part of the lives and identity of the Palestinian citizens of Israel. Since the Palestinians turned overnight from landowners into foreigners in their own homeland, and in

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4 Oscar Kokoschka was an Austrian artist and poet known for his expressionist portraits and landscapes. During World War II Kokoschka fled the Nazi regime and painted various anti-Fascist works.

5 In 2008 Abdi became the first Arab artist living in Israel to win the Minister of Science, Culture and Sport Award, together with six other artists, all of whom were Jewish and younger than him. In other words, he was the first Arab artist to gain recognition by mainstream Israeli culture. Replying to an interviewer's question regarding the excitement generated by the event in the Israeli media, Abdi said: "if I really am the first Arab artist, it is neither a compliment to me nor to 60 years of the State of Israel" (Zohar 2008).

light of the demographic turnover caused by the war, the Palestinians' rooted link to the land was undermined and replaced with a feeling of insecurity. In this reality the main object of identification of the Palestinians in Israel was the place. The emotional connection to the land became a central ingredient that in the course of time was considered exalted and sacred (Jamal 2004). In light of this, in 1977, one year after the Land Day events, the *Secretariat of the Committee for the Defense of Arab Lands* decided to erect a monument to commemorate the day and its victims. They decided to approach Abed Abdi and ask him to take on the task. Abdi in turn invited his old friend Gershon Knispel, who had considerable experience in designing monuments, to take part in working on the project.<sup>6</sup> The two worked out the conceptual-visual framework of the monument together and proceeded to work on the preparatory sketches, four of which were included in the monument's catalogue that was published in 1978, after it was built, each sketch carrying a separate credit. In the last week of March 1978 the building of the monument began at the Muslim cemetery in Sakhnin, under the assumption that its location would protect it from damage, since the Israeli defense forces would refrain from going in there. First they cast the concrete base. Many construction workers from Sakhnin took part in casting the base, which took several hours. During the construction the police arrested the head of Sakhnin council, Jamal Tarabei, for giving permission for illegal construction, but released him after a few hours.

The monument is designed as a kind of four-sided sarcophagus (the Roman coffin) (90X60X30 cm) covered with aluminum reliefs. The aluminum reliefs were fashioned in a way that gives them the appearance of clay. The first panel shows a woman bending and clutching a large jug, while two other women are stooping, one harvesting with a sickle and the other sowing seeds. Below their arms, in the bottom right-hand corner, there is an inscription in English, Arabic and Hebrew: "designed by A. Abdi and G. Knispel to deepen understanding between the two peoples." The second panel shows a sculpted woman bending, holding seeds in her left hand, and scattering them with her right. It continues with a separate panel in which, between the woman and the edge of the image that begins on the side, the following words are inscribed in Hebrew and English: "30.3.1976, In Memory of Those Who Fell on Land Day." The third panel shows two grieving women sculpted successively in profile, kneeling, and covering their faces with their hands. Between the two women

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6 Gershon Knispel was born in Cologne, Germany in 1932 and grew up in Haifa. In 1954 he completed his studies at the *Bezalel Academy of Art* in Jerusalem. In the early 1960s he lived in Brazil, but returned to Israel following the military coup that took place there in 1964. In the '60s and '70s he served as artistic consultant to the Haifa mayor. In 1994 Knispel moved to Sao Paulo, Brazil, where he lived until his death. His ability and rich artistic experience, together with his extensive contacts, enabled the artists to cast the Land Day monument in a Haifa Municipality workshop, and made his contribution to building the monument highly significant.



there is an inscription in Arabic: “they fell so we could live. They live. The fallen of the day of defense of the land, 30 March 1976,” and below it are inscribed the names of those killed and their villages: Khair Muhammad Yassin of Arabeh, Raja Hassin Abu-Ria, Khader Abed Khaleileh, and Khadija Shawhana of Sakhnin, Muhammad Yusuf Taha of Kafr Kana, and Rif’at Zuheiri of Nur Shams, who was shot in Taibe. On the left edge of this panel, towards which the women are facing, an abstract embryonic figure seemingly bursts out of the panel, stretching its hand forward in a gesture of either grasping or pleading for help. The fourth panel completes the sarcophagus image by presenting two figures that look like corpses lying one on top of the other in a lateral, serene composition. Finally, separate from this part of the monument, a free sculpture of a plow stands on its own pedestal: when the tillers of the soil are murdered, the plow remains abandoned and broken. The plow’s handles and axle are sculpted at a 45° angle, and from a certain viewpoint appear to be hands raised in supplication to the heavens. In this sculpture there is special emphasis on the sense of molded clay, which endows it with an organic appearance of patina and antiquity.

On 30 March 1978, the second anniversary of the original Land Day, the monument’s unveiling ceremony took place. In a packed assembly the two artists presented the monument’s model to the *Committee of the Arab Local Councils* in the Galilee (Amit 2008). Since then, every 30 March the monument becomes the focus of the memorial ceremonies for the Land Day events in the Galilee. These ceremonies reflect the formative role Land Day plays in the Palestinian national culture, and also serve as the stage for the different political, social, and cultural struggles summoned by each era. In fact, Land Day became the first public event in which the conditions ripened to create a permanent mark in the public space in the form of a place of gathering, mourning, commemoration and memory, and this place has become a central “site of memory” (Nora 1989) in the Palestinian society in Israel. It is a site that is meant to remind the public and individuals of the events of the past, to mark out meaning for them and provide them with a dynamic source of legitimation. As a “site of memory” it also continues to live in the ceremonies that take place every year and in the press photographs and reports that document them, and thus continues to feed the cultural heritage of the Palestinians in Israel (Sorek 2008). Thus, for example, the reports and photographs of the monument’s inauguration show thousands of people standing at the assembly, listening to the speeches and wishing to touch the monument for the first time. Moreover, the photos of the ceremonies that were published in the Arab press focused mainly on the older population, whose presence there expressed the ongoing and continuous presence of a historical Palestinian memory, since the Nakba and up until 1978. In recent years the monument in the Sakhnin cemetery has also been visited every October at the

end of the March in Memory of the Shaheeds, those killed in October 2000.<sup>7</sup> Thus over the years, the monument's status as a central place of memory and mourning that constitutes part of the shared cultural heritage of the Palestinian minority in Israel has steadily grown.

## Methods

This study used a qualitative research method. It included a methodological visual analysis of the monument as a site of memory and cultural heritage. In addition to the visual analysis, I conducted in-depth interviews with Abed Abdi and Gershon Knispel. The interviews with Abdi were done from 2006 to 2010 and with Knispel in 2006 and 2007. The interviews sought to reveal the world of meanings that guided the visual language used in the monument, as well as the role the artists ascribed to the monument both in the Arab and the Jewish society in Israel.

The interviews were part of an ongoing collaboration during which I curated the exhibition *The Story of a Monument: Land Day Sakhnin 1976–2006, Abed Abdi and Gershon Knispel*. The exhibition showed the preparatory sketches for the monument, a model of the monument, and documentary photography by the photographers Nikola Abdo, Rafik Bachri, Amin Bashir, Yaron Kaminski, Gidon Gitai, Salam Murnir Diab, Al-Ittihad Archive and others.

The exhibition was first shown in Jaffa in 2006, and since then has traveled to different exhibition spaces in the Arab society in Israel. During work on the exhibition Abdi and Knispel expressed complete trust in the curatorial work and in the interpretive apparatus that reflected their work. Beyond the in-depth interviews and working on the show, the two also came to the exhibition's opening and spoke at the event.<sup>8</sup>

The interviews were conducted by me in Hebrew, recorded and transcribed. Analyzing the interviews was done in the method of extracting categories. The interview

7 The October 2000 events were a wave of violent riots and demonstrations by the Palestinian citizens of Israel, which started with demonstrations in solidarity with Palestinians in the West Bank after the start of the Second *Intifada*. The demonstrations included road blocking, attempts to assault Jewish drivers and Jewish settlements, arson attacks and violent clashes with police forces. During the events the demonstrators were shot with rubber bullets and live ammunition. The Israeli government established a national commission of inquiry to investigate the events, which severely criticized government ministers, police officers, and leaders of the Arab public in Israel.

8 For more on this see the exhibition's website <http://www.hagar-gallery.com/landay/home.html> as well as the video documentation in which they speak together at the exhibition's opening event in Jaffa: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ST3a9GWnhsg&t=710s> and a video clip in which Abdi speaks in Haifa: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eef7tBnACxY&t=389s>

wees' words were analyzed along two main axes: (1) the visual elements that represent the national cultural heritage; (2) the ideological characteristics of these visual elements.

## Analysis

### Land as a particular element in constructing the cultural heritage

The monument that Abdi and Knispel designed simulates a sarcophagus with four panels which are covered with aluminum reliefs. The subject uniting the reliefs on the panels is the link between man and his land. To highlight the land motif, the aluminum reliefs were processed in a way that gives them the appearance of clay. The man-land connection is conveyed through a series of interactions that appear on the reliefs and include contact between man and land and land and man. These circular interactions signify a permanent, inextricable relationship between the two. A relationship in which man breathes life into the land and thus into himself, and vice versa. Thus, for example, the sarcophagus' first panel shows a bent woman embracing a large urn and two other women hunched next to her. One of the women is holding a sickle and harvesting, and the other is scattering seeds. In contrast to Knispel's preparatory sketch, the sower appears in the relief in profile, while the two other figures recall in their appearance the two hunched peasants in the painting *The Gleaners* (1857) by one of the forefathers of social realism who often painted peasants, Jean-Francois Millet (1814–1875). Millet's realistic and empathic portrayals of peasants fitted the monument's creators' conception of the man-land relationship (Sensier 1881). The sarcophagus's second panel shows a sculpted hunched woman who is holding seeds in her left hand and scattering them in her right. (Fig. 1) This woman's broad face and heavy body bring to mind the women figures in the monumental murals of the Mexican artists Diego Rivera (1886–1957) and David Alfaro Siqueiros (1896–1974), two major Latin social realist artists. The rhythmic repetition of the two almost identical figures, which are portrayed in economic and schematic profile, recalls visual patterns that appear on papyruses and pharaonic murals.

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In addition, since then the monument's creators have come several times on 30 March, Land Day, to the exhibition's openings in the different exhibition spaces, including: Kalansowa, Taibe, Arrabe, Tamra, Yafia, Haifa.

Knispel came to the exhibitions' openings until 2015. Abdi came to the exhibition's opening every year, including the last exhibition which opened on 30 March 2022 in Deir Hanna. The personal relationship between Abdi and me reached its climax in our collaboration on the retrospective I curated for him at the Umm el-Fahem Gallery (Ben Zvi 2010) in 2010: *Abed Abdi, 50 Years of Creativity (Retrospective)*.

This visual tie echoes monumental burial art and emphasizes the motif of perpetuating the memory of the dead person for whom the monument was erected. The fourth panel completes the image of the sarcophagus by presenting two figures that look like corpses lying one on top of the other in a horizontal and peaceful composition. The bare and eyes-shut face of the lower figure is reminiscent in its features of representations of Roman legionnaires (mediated by representations of Soviet soldiers),<sup>9</sup> and its head covering looks almost like a helmet. These images further emphasize the motif of the sarcophagus used in the monument. Finally, separate from this part of the monument, the free sculpture of a plow stands on its own pedestal. The forlorn and broken plow tells the story of the peasant's murder. The plow's handles and axle are pointed upwards at a 45° angle. From a certain perspective they look like hand stumps stretching up to the sky in cry and protest. This sculpture particularly highlights the sense of sculpting in clay, which gives the sculpture the organic appearance of patina and antiquity.

The attachment to the land, and especially to a particular piece of land, is evident in Abdi's words when he seeks to strengthen the Palestinians' connection to their land:

I feel the wounds of the non-distant past, and its suffering: the rocky surfaces of brown stone are lying in front of the bulldozers of 'progress', and I have tasted its saltiness, which resembles the one that streams down a swarthy forehead. The same sweat that bitterness-filled history turned into heavy tears that flow on tombstones that have turned into monuments in the villages of Sakhnin, Kafr Qasim, Tantura, and Deir Yassin. The monument we erected in the village of Sakhnin will be a testimony and a pledge to our eternal belonging to this land and to its prayer, and to its sons who rush to defend their motherland (unnumbered 1978).

Along with the national aspiration to the specific piece of land that the Palestinians see as their national home, the human representations connected to the land and engraved on the sarcophagus' sides turn out to be mainly women. The presence of women in the national narrative is surprising. Women appear as peasants and as signifiers of grieving and lamentation. (Fig. 2) This choice was the result of a joint decision by the monument's two creators. The two also accorded central place to figures of women in their other works. In any event, this choice stands in stark contrast to the focus of the period's newspapers on the figure of the *Fellah*, the man. The male figure serves as a key axis in the construction of many national cultural heritages.

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9 See for example the Soviet Memorial in Treptower Park in Berlin, which includes sixteen monumental sarcophaguses, each made of square panels that together create reliefs of battle scenes.

*Fig. 1: Abed Abdi and Gershon Knispel, Land Day monument, Sakhnin (Photo: Tal Ben Zvi)*



*Fig. 2: Abed Abdi and Gershon Knispel, Land Day monument, Sakhnin (Photo: Tal Ben Zvi)*



Fig. 3: Abed Abdi and Gershon Knispel, Land Day monument, Sakhnin (Photo: Tal Ben Zvi)



The man is mostly presented as a hero carrying the project of nation building on his shoulders, as a real physical act (Anderson and Wendt 2015). Accordingly, the men are presented as warriors, peasants, and construction workers. These roles require a strong and healthy body, willingness to sacrifice and courage. Since war plays a central role in the cultural heritages of modern nations, the monumental figure of the warrior and the active model of masculinity embedded in it take center stage in national heritages, while women are excluded from the narrative and field of the national struggle (Almog 2000).

However, the women featured in Abdi's and Knispel's monument do not adhere to this tendency. Not only is their gender presence unusual in relation to the militant images common to monuments that are dedicated to national memory and to constructing a national cultural heritage, but it is precisely they who serve to make visible and strengthen the man-land connection. Moreover, Abdi's and Knispel's female peasants are completely different from the images of village women that appear in the works of Ismail Shammout. The representation of the figures in the monument highlights their being "proletarians", that is, working, diligent and dedicated women who take active part in the nation building project, in contrast to Shammout's ideal, allegorical images, in which women stand against the background of orchards, fields, and agricultural land, but are not practically engaged in the work. A typical example of this tendency and one of the most famous, which has been printed on numerous posters, postcards, and calendars, is Shammout's painting *The Spring That Was* (1960).<sup>10</sup> At the front of the painting we can see three women: in the center, a woman wearing a dark-colored embroidered Palestinian dress and a long white headscarf. The woman is holding an olive branch and two girls are dancing beside her, one dressed in white and the other in yellow. The picture's second plane shows agricultural scenes that present the dynamics of harmonious rural cooperation in fruit-picking and harvesting.<sup>11</sup> The conception of the woman as "mother earth" is present in both Arab literature (Balas 1970) and canonical Palestinian literature (Tamari and Johnson 1995), but in these cases the woman is not presented as a realistic figure but as an idyllic, metaphorical figure that represents an imaginary utopian rural realm.<sup>12</sup>

Shammout creates and leads this tendency, when as part of the Palestinian nationality he greatly emphasizes the figure of the fellah as a symbol for the people's

10 For the picture see: <https://ismail-shammout.com/portfolio/palestine-spring/>

11 Manar Hassan (2018) claims that as a result of the erasure of the Palestinian cities in 1948 and 1949, the Palestinian society was imagined mainly as a rural society that never underwent advanced urbanization processes. She suggests that the existence of the city was forgotten from the Palestinian historiography and the Palestinian collective national memory, and therefore the Palestinian past was constructed as a rural past in different arenas of memory, such as poetry, novels, artworks, autobiographies, and national ceremonies.

12 For more on this see: Ben Zvi (2014).

resilience in the face of the occupation of its land by the state of Israel. But instead of the concrete fellah (who over the years and in many cases turned into a day laborer), he prefers to emphasize the ideal figure of the rural woman who symbolizes a “natural” and utopian agricultural community free of modern influences, class differences, and poverty (Hassan 2018). In offering an imaginary utopian space, this idyllic and ideal approach blurred the profound social and cultural gaps that prevailed in the Palestinian society before 1948. As part of this utopian construction, Shammout created a myriad of lyrical images showing women figures alongside the Palestinian landscape surrounding the village: the olive tree, the orange tree, the lemon tree, the hyssop and so on. These systems reinvented historical Palestine as an allegory lacking concrete time and space. These cultural practices blurred the reference to specific villages and replaced it with characteristic details of village life that together made-up what Foucault (1984) called heterotopia, that is, the virtual reflection of a real place, a reflection that has a utopian and mythical dimension. For the most part, these details comprise representations of agricultural work, spring landscapes in full bloom, traditional houses, and women in traditional Palestinian dress. The village is stereotypically represented as a utopian harmonious place embedded in the heart of a nature that is at once metaphorical and material. This stereotypicality, which is represented through economical identifying features, is an inextricable part of the essence of mythical representation. In contrast to history’s claim to reflect an objective truth, myth represents an interpretation and the coherent point of view of a selective and reductive spiritual topography (Ohana and Wistrich 1996). Thus, myth affords an event, a person or an institution a timeless and placeless meaning (Sweedenberg 1990).<sup>13</sup>

As already mentioned, the woman motif that appears in the monument’s catalogue represents a different figure of the woman and of Palestine. Thus, a Gideon Gitai photograph that appears in the catalogue shows a mother wearing head covering and a flowery rural dress holding a baby while the rest of her children surround her among the ruins of their demolished home. Abdi would use this photograph in one of his Land Day posters and in the calendar he designed. The visual context linking the woman’s figure and her destroyed house with pictures of house demolitions in refugee camps connects the fate of the 1948 Arabs to that of their brothers outside the state of Israel.

In one of my conversations with Gershon Knispel, the latter mentioned the influences of German art on the choice to represent mourning through women figures. Knispel noted the influence of the tradition of mourning representations in

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13 This stereotype, however, is not perceived by the Palestinian cultural communities as a post-modern text; for them the art and literary works are a faithful copy of an endangered tradition.



the drawing and sculpture of Käthe Kollwitz,<sup>14</sup> for instance in the *Grieving Parents* monument.<sup>15</sup> Abdi and Knispel thus sought to undermine the hegemonic construction of the Palestinian cultural heritage that puts the metaphoric woman in its center, and create a different unifying narrative that gives central place to the woman figure not as a fantasmatic, bigger-than-life figure, but as a realistic popular heroine who represents the concrete man-land link in the Palestinian cultural heritage that crystallized after '48. Furthermore, The Monument wishes to constitute one station on the continuum of “memorials that have become monuments in the villages of Sakhnin, Kafr Qasim, Tantura, and Dier Yassin” (Abdi 1978), a continuum that reflects the land as a real and specific territory that has been lost and is now an object of memory.

### Solidarity as the universal element in constructing cultural heritage

Along with the particular motif of the land, the monument's portrayal of the man-land relations displays the influence of the tradition of socialist-realist commemoration and grieving, which bears a universal character. The socialist-realist movement, and in its local version – social realism – put more stress on the utopian, aspired-to reality, than on the real, existing one. The utopia was borne on the shoulders of the “simple man”: the worker, the soldier, and the peasant who were presented as the ideal types of the harmonious reality that would benefit the collective. This universal-total vision was based on the deliberate blurring of the boundaries between high and low, and on a syntax that combined abstract elements with concrete human representations. The Israeli artists who worked in this genre saw themselves as a vanguard and as social leaders who aspired to use their art to advance a social revolution and its utopian realization (Ofrat 2015). The socialist or social-realist tradition<sup>16</sup> lives side by side with the heroic-monumental representation that char-

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14 Käthe Kollwitz was a German printmaker, painter, and sculptor. Her work expressed the suffering experienced by downtrodden workers during the second Reich and between the two World Wars. Her affinity with socialism and pacifism led to her persecution by the Nazis.

15 The monument was created to commemorate Peter, Käthe Kollwitz's youngest son, who was killed in the First World War in October 1914. Kollwitz created a monument that carried no artist's signature and no mention of place or time, in an attempt to create a timeless memorial that opposed the existence of war. The monument shows a mother, father, and their son engaged in an embrace, a posture that is both intimate and universal.

16 A distinction should be made between social realism and socialist realism. While the first dealt with social issues in a realistic style, the latter is marked by the socialist and Marxist-communist teleology and propaganda. Thus, we can find social realist artists as early as the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, whereas socialist-realist art, which started to appear after the Soviet revolution of 1917, became the official art of the Soviet Union under Stalin in 1932 and reached its summit in the 1950s under the reign of Zhdanov. On the two terms and the distinction between them, see: Cullerne and Taylor (1993).

acterizes many of the memorials in Israel. The characteristics of the socialist tradition are present mainly in monuments that were erected after the 1967 war (Levinger 1993; Shamir 1996),<sup>17</sup> and in whose design Knispel took part.<sup>18</sup> The socialist or social-realist tradition found expression in the monuments in the formal language of geometrical shapes, and in the direct character of the figures. It is further typified by using stone reliefs next to a plaque naming the fallen. The visual echoes of this tendency can be found in *The Monument* in the way the figures are represented, in their social roles, and in the stone, reliefs listing the names of those killed.

The notion of the land as a universal dimension is also evident in the narrative that was written especially for the monument's catalogue by Samih el-Qasim and Joshua Sobol, and in the texts written by the artists themselves. Samih el-Qasim writes (1978, unnumbered):

'Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.' For hundreds of years man has recited these wise words. For the fellah, who is umbilically tied to his land, this verse has a different meaning, which brings together matter and spirit. When his land is in danger, the peasant is crushed under the weight of the feeling that he is about to lose his entire world. To protect the fruits of his labor the peasant is willing to sacrifice the essence of his blood. This reveals the identity between blood and land [...]. We are not living on another planet, and our history is not detached from the global history: we are an inextricable part of it. The racism and hatred will pass, the national oppression will disappear, the killing will stop, while man will triumph, and love will overcome. Left will be man, the land, and the lesson.

This text puts human solidarity in its center, though el-Qasim also emphasizes "the identity between blood and land" and the fact that the Palestinians are not "living on another planet," an allusion to the writer and holocaust survivor Yehiel De-Nur's

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17 In Israel we can find expressions of both movements, sometimes in mixed fashion. Despite the common tendency to label the art of Israeli artists who at one stage or another were close to the leftist parties as socialist realism, I believe that the term social realism is more apt in this context. In fact, Socialist Realism at its best or worst can more readily be identified in state commemoration projects, such as the monument at Kibbutz Yad Mordechai, or in election posters of parties such as *Mapai*, *Mapam* and of course *Maki* from the period leading to the late 1960s. This is especially manifested in foregrounding the achievements of the young state in the fields of agriculture and economy, and in idealizing and monumentalizing the subject – "The New Man" or "New Jew", and elevating the revolutionary subject, the working man.

18 Apart from *The Monument*, Knispel designed several other monuments for the fallen IDF soldiers in the 1970s: the monument at the Galim Youth Village (1970); the monument at the Ahuza neighborhood in Haifa (1974); the monument at the Memorial Garden in Haifa (1975) (Shamir 1996).

definition of the life of European Jews during the holocaust.<sup>19</sup> In addition, the monument cites a paraphrase on the immortal line: “in their death they willed us life” taken from the poem “Should You Wish to Know the Source” written by Israel’s national poet, H. N. Bialik. The combination of the Hebrew text and the text written in Arabic echoes the universal message that the monument seeks to convey. Transcribing the messages from one language to another, and from one society to another, seems to wish to say that memory is not history and objects of memory are raw material that acquires interpretation in light of the contexts in which it appears (Ohaha and Wistrich 1996). Creating the narrative and visual link that intercrosses the Jewish culture and the Arab one locates the monument outside the zero-sum game that makes one side redundant for the sake of the other, while highlighting the universal dimension of grieving and bereavement and emphasizing the aspiration for them to no longer recur. (Fig. 3) Moreover, on the back of the monument there is a sentence in three languages Hebrew, Arabic, and English reading: “created by A. Abdi and G. Knispel for deepening the understanding between the two peoples.” This sentence reflects the ideology of the then-dominant communist party (Sorek 2008). Even though this sentence has never reappeared on any Palestinian monument, and even though a sentence like this could never appear on a monument dedicated to the fallen IDF soldiers, the request for coexistence further reflects the universal wish for peace embedded in the monument.

## Afterword

Studies from the last years that engage with the issue of collective memory point to the existence of a multiple memory, the product of negotiations and haggling between different memories that strive to represent the nation (Confino 1997). As a “multiple entity”, the collective memory and the cultural heritage that maintains this memory is a dynamic process that attests to the situation of the collective in the present, its attitude towards the past, and its affinity for the future. Moreover, the role of the monument among the Palestinian minority in Israel carries additional meanings, since the monument and the ceremonial events that take place alongside it serve to distinguish the Palestinian group from the Jewish group in Israel, as well as to distinguish the Palestinian group from the Palestinians in the diaspora (Sorek 2015).

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19 In his testimony in the Eichmann trial, De-Nur defined life in Auschwitz as life on “another planet”, where time was not the same as on earth, where the inhabitants had no names, parents or children, and mainly, where they did not live or die as on earth. In time De-Nur retracted this definition and explained that the Jews were not murdered on “another planet” but here on earth (Segev 2001).

What can we learn, then, from the ways in which the monument represents the Land Day events and the cultural heritage of Palestinians in Israel? The general impression fostered by the monument with its two parts is of mixing the local and specific with the placeless and universal. Processing the memory of the past from both a particular and a universal point of view intercrosses the longing for the lost Palestine with the dimension of a Jewish-Arab partnership. This intercrossing, which ostensibly seems like an unresolvable tension or a contradiction, represents a social-realist approach. It is a simultaneous call to strengthen the link to the land and to the shared heritage, and to establish a coexistence. Social-cultural fields that feature majority-minority relations and ethnic-national tensions are characterized by this twofold nature. In the troubled space between “Belonging” and “Otherness”, the need arises to preserve particular characteristics as well as to strive to normalize the group’s positioning within the national majority group. The monument to commemorate the Land Day events therefore represents a turning point. The monument represents the wish to make visible the particular identity and cultural heritage, while at the same time trying to make visible the positioning of the minority group within the dominant national majority. By presenting the memory of the past and the aspirations for the future, the monument serves as a bridge between groups and between different historical times. Instead of seeing it as a field of struggle between contrasting social and political forces, it can be seen as a visual and material opportunity to create something shared that derives precisely from the pain and the grief. This attempt is no longer present in the Israeli and Palestinian field of commemoration in Israel.

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# Musical (world) heritage?

## The West-Eastern Divan Orchestra

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*Kai Erdlenbruch, Kinneret Suissa*

### Introduction

The *West-Eastern Divan Workshop & Orchestra* (The Divan Orchestra) owes its name to a late collection of poems by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the *West-Eastern Divan* (1819), which, together with the entire literary estate of the Weimar poet, has been a UNESCO World Documentary Heritage Site since 2001. The orchestra's founders, pianist, and conductor Daniel Barenboim (b. 1942), literary scholar Edward Said (1935–2003) and cultural manager Bernd Kauffmann (b. 1944), named the orchestra after the external circumstances of its founding, Goethe's 250th birthday in the European Capital of Culture year. At the same time, with the name of the orchestra, they invoke a line of reception that reads Goethe's *Divan*<sup>1</sup> as a testimony to a cosmopolitan world literature (Gutjahr 2000).

With the founding of the Divan Orchestra in Weimar, the capital of German classical music, and with the reference to Goethe's late work, Barenboim, Said, and Kauffmann had deliberately placed the orchestra in an intercultural frame of reference and reception. What began as an experiment soon became established and today, after more than 20 years, presents itself as a professional orchestra that fills concert halls all over the world and has made a name for itself through CD and DVD recordings. The orchestra consists of musicians who travel from Israel and Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Iran, the Maghreb countries, Turkey, and Europe to play together in the Andalusian town of Pílas near Seville, where the orchestra has been based since 2002. Both the multinational and multicultural composition and the collaboration with a world-class conductor make the Divan workshops a unique experience for many participants. Furthermore, Barenboim has developed a special mission for his orchestra: He is concerned with a musical education that pursues a basic humanistic approach (Barenboim and Mann 2018, p. 14). Barenboim understands music as a holistic endeavour: "Music is everything and everything is music" (Barenboim 2015,

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1 The term "divan" means assembly in Oriental literature (Kiermeier-Debre 2011).



p. 22). From his point of view, music as an art form offers human beings very specific insights into the *condition humaine* – and thus also into themselves. At the same time, the realization of great orchestral works is only possible in the social act, in the interaction between the orchestra members. From this fact Barenboim derives his conviction that musicians should not only master their instrument, but also assume concrete responsibility for society (Barenboim 2006; 2008; 2010; 2015). Music, understood as a universal language, thereby enables a dialogue between people regardless of their mother tongue and culture, and can also serve as a platform for peace. In its social manifestation, music has an educational function that invokes values such as freedom, justice, and humanity.

Against this background, the Divan Orchestra understands music as a universal cultural heritage, whose political frame is “musical diplomacy” (Karamy and Baines 2020). The study examines the extent to which the orchestra’s founders understand Western classical music as a common heritage of humanity that conveys universal values such as freedom, justice, and humanity to its listeners, regardless of their origins. It further asks whether this view of music is also shared by the members of the orchestra, and leads them to a new understanding of music as an aesthetically cosmopolitan or postnational identity. The discussion of the opportunities and limitations of the Divan Orchestra’s concept, as an example of musical diplomacy that is located beyond national heritage and structures, will contribute to our understanding of the possibility to construct heritage as a platform of acknowledgment and recognition in societies that suffer from a conflict.

## **Togetherhness of the “peoples”? The West-Eastern Divan Orchestra**

In their conversation with Ara Guzelimian, printed in the volume *Parallels and Paradoxes* (2002; 2004), Daniel Barenboim and Edward Said recall the founding of the Divan Orchestra in 1999. Actually, Bernd Kauffmann, the manager of the Capital of Culture Year, wanted to get Barenboim to give a few concerts in Weimar. But then the latter said:

[H]e would love to create something with young people from the Middle East. I asked more specifically what he would think about bringing young people from many Middle Eastern countries and Israel together to make music? (Blech 2019).<sup>2</sup>

No sooner said than done: Kauffmann procured the funds, and Barenboim developed the concept together with Said. In the orchestra, musicians from Middle East-

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2 For better readability, quotations from German literature have been translated into English. German sources and literature are marked as such in the bibliography.

ern countries aged 14–25 were to meet and make music together in a summer workshop (Barenboim and Mann 2018). The essential processes and structures for the workshops were already worked out in Weimar. The application was followed by an audition in the home country, selection, and invitation. The orchestra then met in the summer for a six-week workshop followed by a tour. On site, the players received lessons from professional musicians and in their free time had the opportunity to listen to lectures on the social and political situation in the Middle East. The founders wanted to attract speakers of the same caliber as for the lessons on the instrument.

While in the beginning it was primarily schoolchildren and music students who were invited to the annual workshops, over the years the ensemble has shown greater heterogeneity. Although young, newly discovered musicians continued to form the actual target group, professional players or students from the *Barenboim-Said Academy*, founded in Berlin in 2016, also took part in the workshops and concert tours when needed (Naumann and Barenboim 2018). Those among the participants who repeatedly came to the workshops mostly aspired to a professional career as musicians and hoped for support for this from Barenboim and the network he had established around the orchestra over the years.<sup>3</sup> The founders of the orchestra themselves, however, did not only have the musical training of top musicians in mind, but also a social function that was to be achieved along with the training: musicians from hostile countries were to come into contact and break down barriers by playing together. To this end, the orchestra offered three levels of encounter. First, personal contact with one another; second, the aesthetic experience of playing together; and third, music, which as a “universal” language could open up a form of postnational communication (Robson 2014).

On all three levels, the orchestra had the task of working not only towards musical perfection, but also towards the realization of values such as justice, freedom or “brotherhood”. This is how its own website describes the Divan Orchestra:

Through its work and existence, the orchestra demonstrates that bridges can be built to encourage people to listen to the Other’s narrative. While music alone cannot resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict, it grants the individual the right and obligation to express herself or himself fully while listening to his or her neighbor.

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3 In Andalusia, the *Junta de Andalucía* has supported the summer workshops since 2002 by providing funding for the orchestra and the Pilas rehearsal venue (Beckles Willson 2009a); in New York, the *Barenboim-Said Foundation* (2004) is active; in Berlin, the *Daniel Barenboim Foundation* (2008) and the *Barenboim-Said Academy* (2015) promote the training of musicians from the Middle East and North Africa (see Other Sources: No. 1). The *Berlin Musik Kindergarten* (2005) provides for the musical development of children and young people; in Ramallah, the *Barenboim-Said Center for Music* has existed since 2012 (see Other Sources: No. 2). Like the orchestra, the networks aim to realize encounters and intercultural dialogue through classical music.

Based on this notion of equality, cooperation, and justice for all, the orchestra represents an alternative model to the current situation in the Middle East (Other Sources: No. 3).

At the same time, the founders repeatedly emphasized that the orchestra and its work were “apolitical”: “The West-Eastern Divan Orchestra cannot and will not formulate any political statements; it sees itself as apolitical in the highest degree” (Kauffmann 2000, p. 23). To make this statement plausible, they resorted to the term “people” instead of “state”. Accordingly, for them, the Middle East conflict did not represent a dispute between the states of Israel and Palestine (especially since officially there was no state of Palestine at all), but “between two peoples” (Barenboim 2018, p. 19). With the frame of reference of the “people”, they distinguished civil societies from their governments and followed a humanistic view of the conflict. In doing so, they marked the Middle East conflict in a similarly postnational way as the UN did: via the people’s right, they connected it to the frame of reference of human rights and interpreted “brotherhood” as a form of fundamental solidarity. It is obvious that this view was built on terminological subtleties that could hardly be sustained in political practice, especially since civil societies were repeatedly threatened by tangible wars. Through them, the orchestra was repeatedly confronted with the politics of the states. Nor could it be ignored that the founders, namely Barenboim, became increasingly politicized. Today he can be described as critical of Israel.<sup>4</sup>

## Methods

The research applies methods of content analysis and interviews. Various documentary sources were analysed, including: published conversations, essays, autobiographical writings by the orchestra’s founders Said and Barenboim, Elena Cheah’s collection of interviews with orchestra members, and the documentary *Knowledge is the beginning* by Paul Smaczny (2005) that follows the orchestra’s early years (1999–2005). In order to compare these statements, some of which are older, with a current voice from the orchestra, an interview with one of the Divan members was also conducted in 2021.<sup>5</sup> The orchestra member, a Jewish bassoonist from

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4 Well-known examples of this are Barenboim’s 2004 speech in the *Knesset* on the occasion of the awarding of the Wolf Prize for Peace and International Understanding, and the anti-war declarations in 2006 on the Lebanon War and in 2009 on the Gaza War (Smaczny 2005, track 10; Beckles Willson 2009b). This stance is also represented by the institutions and foundations that Barenboim established (see Other Sources: No. 2).

5 Interview with a young Israeli musician of the Divan Orchestra, conducted by Kai Erdlenbruch and Kinnereth Suissa on January 2, 2021 (recorded video conversation).

Israel, was interviewed while he was studying at the Barenboim-Said Academy in Berlin, after joining the Divan Orchestra in 2019 and touring with the orchestra in Europe and South America.<sup>6</sup> The interview was conducted online in English and lasted about half an hour. The transcription was made from the recording by the conference software Zoom.

## Daniel Barenboim: Music as a universal language

British musicologist Kate Wakeling has pointed out that Barenboim, who made his name as a pianist with the *London Symphony Orchestra* (1968), as chief conductor of the *Orchestre du Paris* (1975–1991) and the *Chicago Symphony Orchestra* (1991–2006), and as the lifetime conductor of the *Staatskapelle Berlin* (since 2000), as general music director of the *Staatsoper Unter den Linden* (1992–2023) and as music director of the opera house of *La Scala* in Milan (since 2011), has made a name for himself as an interpreter of classical music, and with the Divan Orchestra has mainly performed works of European classical and romantic music – in particular Beethoven, the “poster boy for the German nationalist Romantics” (Wakeling 2010). Beethoven does indeed play an important role in the repertoire of the Divan Orchestra and its founder. His *Ninth Symphony* (1822–24), however, is not only popular with the Divan Orchestra, but is considered one of the most frequently performed works in the world, which is how the German UNESCO Commission justifies “its importance for international cultural dialogue” (see Other Sources: No. 4). Since 2001, the symphony’s autograph has also been part of the World Documentary Heritage. For the European Union, the fourth movement of the symphony, which sets Friedrich Schiller’s *Ode to Joy* (1785/1803) to music, serves as a unifying, postnational anthem. With this choice, Beethoven’s music takes on a political dimension, justified by the tie-in to Europe: “The anthem symbolizes not only the European Union, but also Europe more broadly. With his ‘Ode to Joy’, Schiller expressed his idealistic vision of all men becoming brothers – a vision that Beethoven shared” (see Other Sources: No. 5).

Beethoven’s special place in the Orchestra’s work may be down to personal preferences (Guzelimian 2004), but it also suggests music philosophical positions. In a conversation with Ara Guzelimian and Edward W. Said (2004), Barenboim elaborates on his idea of music; it actually follows the Romantic idea of music as a universal language. For Barenboim, a work that invites self-reflection through content and form is universal. In this sense, Beethoven is for him an absolute musician who speaks through music:

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6 To avoid being recognized, the interviewee asked that his statements only be used anonymously.

AG (Ara Guzelimian): Doesn't this ideal of a common language, of mutual exchange, appear in Beethoven – to take up your expression again and to accentuate it a little differently – as one of the most powerful driving forces?

DB (Daniel Barenboim): Yes, of course. 'All men become brothers' (Guzelimian 2004, p. 202).

Barenboim's reference to a line from Schiller's *Ode to Joy* reinforces his notion of music as a repository of ideas such as humanity, justice, and freedom. He is interested in the ethical potential of music. Great works not only give a picture of musical traditions and personal skill, but also tell of the conditions of human existence (Guzelimian 2004). The value of music is expressed on the one hand in its aesthetic form, and on the other in the actualization of these ideas and messages. In Beethoven, as in Wagner, Barenboim sees a revolutionary of his time, since he "rethought and remade everything that existed, he dismantled it in order to create it anew" (Guzelimian 2004, p. 130). As Wakeling points out, this reading of music, which he represents as an intellectual and an artist, is also important to Barenboim in his orchestral work. Here, the performers listening and responding to the content of the works is central: "The first impulse must come from the person who produces the sound, from each individual musician" (Guzelimian 2004, p. 102). Music consists of tempo and sound. Both are central elements in Barenboim's musical argumentation, according to which a symphony is realized through listening, interacting, and the state of interdependence (Wakeling 2010). Characteristics of the classical symphony that the orchestra has to elaborate are its dramatic density, its motifs, and its intense contrast; recognizing and deciphering these characteristics is the responsibility of the listener (Whale 2015). Transferring Barenboim's considerations to orchestral work, it becomes obvious that the realization of a symphony concerns the aesthetic and the human togetherness in the orchestra, with the rehearsal process intertwining the dynamics. This implies a mutual growth in playing. In its performance, finally, the symphony is realized; the respective specific interpretation reveals its aesthetic, but also its emotional content. Against this background, Barenboim combines his idea of music as a universal language with an understanding of performance that focuses on listening and responding. Music is communication, which is why it has a content side and a relationship side. Barenboim also applies this idea to the Divan Orchestra:

In the West-Eastern Divan the universal metaphysical language of music becomes the link, it is the language of the continuous dialogue that these young people have with each other. Music is the common framework, their abstract language of harmony (Barenboim 2006).

Wakeling criticized Barenboim's conception of music as essentialist and questioned his idea of music as a universal language. Although it superficially presents itself as purposeless and timeless, it is precisely because of this that it invites alternative messages and meanings to be accommodated within it – for example, ethical readings. Furthermore, she critically notes that Arabic classical music is never on the program: “I suggest it is an intriguing omission that an ensemble based on Goethe's West-Eastern Divan – a work devoted to the exploration of Middle Eastern culture – makes no connection to any kind of Middle Eastern music” (Wakeling 2018 p. 8).<sup>7</sup>

It may be due to Barenboim's training as a Western-style artist that he has not included any classical Arabic music in his repertoire. However, his musical philosophy also assumes that he can achieve his goal of creating an encounter through music with Western classical music – thanks to its universality (Mann and Barenboim 2018). In the ideal of universality, moreover, classical music meets with ethical values such as human rights – a view that Barenboim shares with Edward Said.<sup>8</sup> In light of these thought processes, it is not a contradiction for Barenboim to assume that an orchestra that works out musical harmonies and gains intercultural experience at the music stand can also transfer these to other (life) contexts. For him, there is no question that the musical principles described are equally suitable for negotiating conflicts beyond the concert hall. What is relevant for Barenboim is not that there are differences, but whether the participants move toward each other – in the symphony as in life.

## Edward W. Said: Counterpoint discourses

Edward Said stood for the Divan Orchestra's examination of history, geography, and identity constructions. The literary scholar was the inventor of the workshop lectures that accompanied the rehearsals and were intended to invite reflection on the Middle East conflict. Said died of cancer in 2003, so his active involvement with the Divan Orchestra was limited to a few years; however, his influence on his friend Daniel Barenboim and on the project's philosophy cannot be underestimated. Said's lectures included the idea of reflecting on the Middle East conflict from a postnational perspective, in order to stimulate a change of perspective that was not possible from a national position. Lectures, film screenings, and discussions with experts

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7 In Paul Smaczny's documentary *Knowledge is the beginning*, as well as in the interviews conducted by Elena Cheah and by the authors of this article, it sounds as if Arabic music is very present in the orchestra; it is used for relaxation, dance, and entertainment (Smaczny 2005, track 3).

8 Like Barenboim, Said loved Western classical music and made no secret of his rejection of Arab classical music (Robson 2014).

were intended to invite participants to learn more about the Middle East conflict and the Other and to reflect on their own constructions of identity – a task that many orchestra members found confusing, painful, or ambivalent. Moreover, two worlds collided in the lectures (Smaczny 2005; Riiser 2010). Whereas the founders of the orchestra embodied a fluid, aesthetic identity with their cosmopolitan views, the musicians saw themselves as committed to the identities of their home countries, to which they usually returned after the workshops (Cheah 2015).

Barenboim and Said shared a cosmopolitan identity, even if their cosmopolitanism was fed by different sources. Barenboim, born in Argentina in 1942 to Jewish Ashkenazi immigrants, gave public concerts as a child and toured worldwide. He experienced his youth in Israel, but frequently spent time in Europe and the U.S. for his education and artistic activities; today he lives in Berlin. Born in Jerusalem, Palestine, in 1935, Said lived mostly in Cairo and returned a few times to visit Palestine after the establishment of the State of Israel. As a well-known literary scholar, postcolonialism thinker and university lecturer in the U.S., he traveled the world, but analyzed his old homeland only from a distance. Not least because of this, he was said to have a U.S.-European socialization, which Barenboim also hints at in his conversations with Ara Guzelimian: “A large part of your interests could be characterized as European” (Guzelimian 2004, p. 21).

Laura Robson has contradicted this assessment to the extent that she emphasizes the role of Arab cosmopolitanism in Said’s thought. Cosmopolitan Cairo, where Said grew up as a Palestinian Christian, was still shaped by English colonialism and offered the mobile, transnational, multi-religious (predominantly Christian) middle and upper classes, to which Said’s parents also belonged, many educational opportunities along Western lines. Said also owes his preference for Western classical music to this. The cosmopolitan climate, which was also conveyed by numerous institutions such as music schools, opera houses, and theaters, disappeared under the renationalization of Egypt by Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918–1970) in the 1950s and thus at the same time that Said left Cairo to continue his education in the United States (Robson 2014). However, the disappearance of Arab cosmopolitanism, after the loss of his geographical home, meant for Said also the loss of his intellectual home (Said 2000c). What remained for him from this early socialization was his love of literature and music. While still in the U.S., they furnished him with that autonomous, de-geographized “space” in which the idea of a Western-style cosmopolitan Arab identity could be preserved.

Outwardly Said, who was a well-known advocate of Palestinian rights and a pioneer of postcolonialism – his books *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) have become classics – perceived himself as an exile (Said 2000a; 2000b). Inwardly, based on art, he defined himself as a cosmopolitan with universal values. From this self-image, Said acted both as a critic of colonialism and as an enlightener of European character. As a thinker of postcolonialism, he deconstructed Euro-

pean literature and its Eurocentrism; as a modern Enlightenment thinker and politician, he held fast to the idea of universal values – certainly with reference to post-national institutions such as human rights as the basis of world democracy (Said 2000c; 2004).

A central figure of thought for Said's thinking and writing, as has been pointed out several times, is the musical principle of counterpoint (Toch 2005). Said was interested in the principle of counterpoint because it offered the possibility of making visible and audible a second voice in texts, similar to music pieces, which, within the framework of harmony, is on an equal footing with the actual melody (Etherington 2007).<sup>9</sup> As a philosophical figure of thought, the counterpoint also determines Said's lectures to the Divan Orchestra. In the discourses with the musicians, he was concerned with exposing national and ethnic stereotypes, discussing (painful) differences, and thus creating the conditions for a change in individual attitudes (Beckles Willson 2009b). Counterpoint discourse could, at its best, lead to the willingness of participants to engage with the topic, hear the opposing voice(s), and subsequently match their own arguments with other, third-party arguments. Etherington (2007) has pointed out that in his lectures Said referred to another philosophical framework that he also took from music, that of musical autonomy. Musical autonomy offered the ability to understand music as an open form of communication and to discuss it without presuppositions, without immediately falling into old enmities: "The ideal of musical autonomy therefore plays a direct interventionary role as a 'late style' answer to Middle-Eastern politics" (Etherington 2007, p. 126). In this "thinking space" it was possible to acquire knowledge, to examine other perspectives, and to initiate processes of understanding.

If, on the one hand, the aim of the *Reith lectures* was to impart knowledge that might not otherwise have been available to the participants, on the other hand, they pursued the intention of forming the musicians' personalities. Like the rehearsals with Barenboim, the lectures with Said envisaged a "change of identity" (Guzelimian 2004). More precisely, detaching from a national or ethnic self-conception and turning to a postnational self-conception based on an aesthetic-ideal understanding:

There was an Israeli group and a Russian group, a Syrian group, and a Lebanese group, a Palestinian group, and a group of Palestinian Israelis. They all suddenly turned into violinists and cellists playing the same piece in the same orchestra and under the same conductor (Said, in: Guzelimian 2004, p. 26).

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9 Etherington also points to contradictions in Said's musical thought: he states that in the last chapter of his book *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Said attempted to combine the two – basically incompatible – musical principles of atonality and counterpoint: "There an atonal counterpoint is seen as an ideal way of renewing the universal framework of comparative literature" (2007, p. 125).



That such a construction of identity is called “apolitical” lies in the chosen frame of reference of the argumentation and its underlying postnational approach. That it is not apolitical, however, is shown by the fact that within this frame of reference, Said nevertheless makes proposals for a (political) solution to the Middle East conflict. He repeatedly spoke out in favor of the coexistence of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples in a binational state in which not national but human needs would be met (Said 2000c). It is legitimate to ask whether such a construction of identity is not ultimately utopian. For even if Said’s own cosmopolitanism and his exile experience were the inspiration for his identity construction, the question must be allowed whether this identity could also be lived by the young participants. His understanding of a postnational identity as an intellectual and a music lover takes shape from a geographical distance to the homeland and a broader philosophical bird’s-eye view of it.

### **Positions of the participants: Music and identity**

The political situation in the Middle East continues to thwart the programmatic intentions of the orchestra’s founders to this day – in a very real and political way. This also has consequences for the self-perception of the orchestra members (Cheah 2015). They face, on the one hand, the hopes and ideas of the workshop leaders and, on the other, the suspicions of their closest friends and relatives: “Watch out, they’re going to brainwash you” (Shapiro, in: Cheah 2015, p. 154). In addition, there are difficulties that primarily affect Arab musicians, insofar as they travel directly from their home countries. They usually need special permits from their governments to come to the workshop and perform with the orchestra.

The orchestra, which has now been following the political agenda of its founders for over 20 years, thus finds itself in a field of tension. On the one hand, as Barenboim repeatedly emphasizes, it is a “utopian republic” (Barenboim 2006), a musical-political model design for a region that has not been at rest for 75 years. As a utopia, this “republic” has the potential to become the perfect social order, but it presumably remains (this is also part of this utopia) a fiction. On the other hand, for 20 years now the orchestra has shared Said’s fate, being “an orchestra in exile” (Barenboim 2018, p. 18). “Exile, that means being in a foreign country – but also being exiled because the circumstances in one’s own homeland are unbearable” (Barenboim 2018, p. 18). On closer inspection, however, this exile is one turned on its head: Barenboim does not relate the metaphor of the “orchestra in exile” to the orchestra members (they are not exiled, they are removed from their regional contexts by the orchestra), but to the institution of the orchestra (Riiser 2010). It is in exile because there is no support for it in the region it targets. “The orchestra has many admirers worldwide, but the governments in question don’t want to know about our orchestra” (Barenboim

2018, p. 18). By anchoring the orchestra in Europe, a “homecoming” to this region becomes no less utopian than the very idea of a “utopian republic”. But what do the players have to say about this? The following account of their positions follows Robson’s three levels of encounter: (1) personal contact, which is meant to bring about a “breakdown of destructive stereotypes”; (2) music, as a universal language, which, like the lectures, is meant to offer alternatives to hostile political exchange; and (3) the musical/social experience of playing together “that replaced national/political identifications” (Robson 2014, p. 130).

(1) *The personal contact*: Face-to-face encounters have lost little of their appeal for Divan Orchestra members since its beginnings. In the 2021 interview, the young bassoonist mentions his curiosity about other fellow players: “When I joined the Divan, I noticed that everyone was really nice to each other and respected each other.” The differences between the musicians are minor, he says: “Playing together takes place as in any free orchestra with changing participants, which requires a certain professionalism.” What hasn’t changed, however, is the outside perception of the orchestra in his homeland: “If I said in Israel that I was playing next to a man from Syria, for example, that he was playing in the orchestra with me and we were having [...] fun, [...] some people would think [...] that I was crazy.” The conflict in the Middle East gives rise to distrust not only of the orchestra, but also of its players.

The orchestra is still often the first *contact zone* (Beckles Willson 2009a) for encounters between Israelis and Arabs – even for Arab and Jewish Israelis – and in many cases it leads to friendships (Cohen, in: Cheah 2015). Most of the musicians interviewed by Cheah (ibid) agree that getting to know each other in person changed their perspective and initiated a process of reflection. One violinist reports that today she views not only the political situation but also the Israeli educational curriculum differently: “What we learn in school in history is in many cases subjective or subject to a certain narrative” (Kadichevski, in: Cheah 2015, p. 212). The interviews reveal the players’ curiosity and willingness to question previous national or ethnic identity designs and associated cultural heritage. At the same time, they also draw attention to the fragility of the endeavor, as the workshop has little to do with their everyday lives and, for them, risks being caught in identity conflicts: “But that’s so far from reality” (Cohen, in: Cheah 2015, p. 40, emphasis in original). Not all players are therefore willing to engage with other nationalities and with the concept of lectures. One Arab violinist said goodbye after four years when he realized “that I am not very liberal” (Zaki, in: Cheah 2015, p. 274). He was critical not only of the lectures – “it’s not a good idea to gather people together and then say, ‘well, now let’s discuss the Middle East conflict in a difficult foreign language.’ That doesn’t do anything at all” (Zaki, in: Cheah 2015, p. 277), but also of the motivation of the Israeli players:

The first group is absolutely liberal-minded and has nothing to do with their government. The second group is a bunch of actors. As soon as Daniel Barenboim or

TV cameras are around, they say: 'But of course they're our friends.' They mostly keep to themselves. And the third group obviously doesn't even want to have anything to do with us (2015, p. 275).

The impression that participants group themselves by nationality as soon as they have the opportunity to do so is confirmed by Riiser (2010). The interviews reveal the willingness of many Israelis to be self-critical when it comes to Israel's position in Middle East policy (Kadichevski, in: Cheah 2015). This observation raises the question of whether the cognitive processes described stem from the beliefs of the interviewees or whether they can be explained by the response tendency of social desirability. For example, the orchestra members are also aware that Daniel Barenboim takes a critical stance towards Israeli politics. For some musicians, this creates a conflict of goals: as much as they appreciate Barenboim as a teacher and hope for his help in their careers, they cannot or do not automatically want to follow his political position.<sup>10</sup> The bassoonist also shows little interest in expressing himself politically: "But I'll leave politics aside now, because we don't talk about politics so much in the orchestra, I mean, [...] because politics always comes from two sides." The Arab co-performers are less self-critical in this regard; rather, they talk about their approach to classical music as a foreign cultural heritage, their often arduous educational processes in their home countries due to a lack of infrastructure, or their difficult overall situation unless they live abroad (Yammine, in: Cheah 2015; Ahmadié, in: Cheah 2015).

(2) *Classical music as a universal language*: Barenboim's commitment to music as a universal language poses no problem for the young musicians, and neither does the Romantic repertoire he has chosen. The majority of the interviewees rave about the conductor's aura and his ability to bring the orchestra together (Cohen, in: Cheah 2015). The criticism that Western classical music is a European (and hegemonic) heritage is not at the forefront of the players' minds. Those who have decided to learn an instrument have already answered this question for themselves. The interview with the bassoonist also shows that playing classical music today is no longer just a question of culture, but also of socialization. For example, the musician emphasizes that he didn't listen to classical music in his childhood home: "When I was born, my parents didn't really like classical music that much, and I wasn't one of those people

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10 Both Cheah (2015) and Riiser (2010) describe a young Israeli who defended Israel's policies. Both give different accounts of the consequences of this emotional expression of opinion. While Cheah reports that the musician backed off in the course of the workshop and said that he now understood the opposing position better, Riiser writes that after the incident, older members of the orchestra approached her to soften her (possibly bad) impression: "After a few days, I (Riiser) found that the newcomer (the young musician) had been rebuked by the Foundation, who also 'muzzled' him, as they felt that this kind of behavior was not appropriate to the Divan context" (Riiser 2010, p. 30).

who grew up listening to classical music as a child” (Cheah 2015, p. 111). This circumstance changed only when he learned to play an instrument – here the Israeli’s story resembles the narratives of some (not all) young Arabs. The assumption that (Ashkenazi) Jews, by virtue of their origin, have a closer relationship to classical music as their heritage, while for Arab players it represents a foreign heritage per se, must be negated as ethnicizing.

The question of whether classical music is a (universal) common cultural heritage draws attention to another observation: the orchestra’s increasing roots in Europe. On the production side, Riiser observed in 2010 that many Divan Orchestra players go to Europe to continue their musical education. They receive scholarships and subsequently find their jobs and audiences here. The young bassoonist also confirms this path: “I was accepted at the Barenboim-Said Academy in Berlin and moved here when I was 20.” On the reception side, the idea of music as a universal language proves intrinsically European. Classical music, as the remarks about Beethoven’s *Ninth Symphony* show, is understood as part of Western culture. This is indicated not only by the decisions of European institutions and the list of UNESCO World Documentary Heritage, but also by the demand in orchestras and concert halls. The Divan musicians, too, bring this cultural heritage to the forefront where it is actively received. It is this connection between production and reception that in the end also “europeanizes” the performers, since they come to Europe out of love for classical music, regardless of their origins, and as people of different cultures of origin they find themselves in a diasporic situation here – as did the orchestra founders before them. Over time, they acquire an outside view of their homeland and undergo a transformation of identity, almost as Edward W. Said envisioned the diasporic situation as a potential for peace discourse. However, these new identities turn out not to be postnational, but subcollectivist and European. They become visible in the union of friendly musicians forming a “Divan community” in Berlin: “In other words, they create a Divan diaspora, where the notion of national identity is replaced with a mixture of Divan identity [...], and a German national identity available to them through music” (Riiser 2010, p. 34). Riiser concludes that not only external factors such as the rejection of the countries in the Middle East, but also the internal structures contribute to an “orchestra in exile”. Training, support structures, and demand lead to the fact that it is not classical music that arrives in the countries of the Middle East, but musicians from the Middle East that arrive in Europe, where they assimilate.

(3) *The experience of musical interplay*: Barenboim’s metaphor of the orchestra as a “utopian republic” describes a body of sound in which universal values such as equality, justice, and fraternity are to be realized – regardless of the origin, orchestral experience or instrument of the members. Indeed, the musicians of the Divan Orchestra feel a sense of togetherness that allows them to experience their body of sound as a “corporate musical instrument” (Riiser 2010, p. 24). This is also confirmed by the Israeli bassoonist: “The main reason why we get along so well in the orchestra is that

we have this music. [...] I think that's something I can't explain in words." From the outside, the orchestra receives a lot of encouragement for its vision and values. For example, it is invited by organizations such as the United Nations, which are similarly postnational and placeless.<sup>11</sup>

How fragile this "utopian republic" is, however, when confronted with concrete realpolitik and its sanctions, was made visible by the 2005 concert in Ramallah. Smaczny's film reveals the discord and fear of the orchestra members when they hear that they are to play in a city that the Israeli players' own state has declared an enemy and that can only be reached via Israeli checkpoints. The decision-making process leading to participation takes a long time, because the players find it difficult to overcome their own personal fear, the fear of their families, and the regulations of their governments; this fear is still palpable on stage (Smaczny 2005, track 12). The question is therefore legitimate whether making music under such exceptional conditions further strengthens cohesion in the "utopian republic" or whether, on the contrary, the effort that has to be put into it only leads to disillusionment with one's own actions. The fact that political reality repeatedly challenges the orchestra is also demonstrated by the Lebanon War in 2006 and the Gaza War in 2009. Due to the war, some Arab players were not allowed to travel, and others, out of solidarity with Lebanon (Cheah 2015), did not come to the workshop for moral reasons: "I did not feel like going on a concert tour and playing Beethoven's Ninth Symphony – 'Joy, beautiful spark of the gods' – while at the same time one and a half million people were displaced in Lebanon and a hundred people died every day for a month," said Lebanese cellist Nassib Al Ahmadi (Cheah 2015, p. 135). That national solidarity and personal ethics are stronger than the values of the "utopian republic" in case of emergency is an experience of the past 20 years. It is also confirmed by the bassoonist when he refers to Barenboim, who "says that it is a kind of heaven, this orchestra, because in a way it is not really connected to reality."

## Opportunity and limits of shared heritage: Musical diplomacy?

Does an orchestra like the Divan Orchestra contribute to the idea of a (universal) common cultural heritage and international understanding? Can the orchestra take on tasks of musical diplomacy<sup>12</sup> for this purpose? These questions cannot be an-

11 In 2006 the Divan Orchestra played at the United Nations General Assembly in New York, and in 2015 at the UN Headquarters in Geneva. Barenboim was named a UN Messenger of Peace in 2007 and the orchestra was named a "UN Global Advocate for Cultural Understanding" in 2016 (see Other Sources: No. 3).

12 Cultural or musical diplomacy is defined as part of public diplomacy, culture used as soft power in political processes to achieve (foreign) policy orientation and common understanding (Karamy and Baines 2020).

swered unequivocally. Barenboim's metaphor of the Divan Orchestra as a "utopian republic" implies a state constitution of the orchestra that can use diplomacy as an instrument for foreign and domestic relations. As a postnational republic, the orchestra engages with the musical heritage of the Western world and makes its universal values, institutions, and cultural identities its points of reference. Against this background, Karamy and Baines attribute a musical diplomatic role to the orchestra: "Divan orchestra can be categorized as one of the non-state actors that have considerable influence in the world, even giving effect to the political situation in the world" (2020, p. 93).

This musical diplomacy expresses itself positively in the interpersonal encounters of the members. The orchestra's activities bring people, even if they come from hostile countries, closer together and into conversation with each other. On the level of a collective identity building, music is also a suitable means for cultural diplomacy, as it opens up spaces and pursues its goal of interweaving relationships even more. On the other hand, this musical diplomacy has a negative effect where the orchestra, in the name of humanistic or universal values, overrides political realities and state power. Here the concept of musical diplomacy is basically abandoned, as the concert in Ramallah demonstrated. The national passports of the orchestra members were replaced by diplomatic passports of the Spanish government in order to allow entry from various countries that did not have diplomatic relations with Palestine, thus enforcing postnational goals (Barenboim and Naumann 2018).

The question is whether such actions ultimately lead to goodwill and the desired goal. Fearlessness, which characterizes Barenboim, does change the world. However, the instruments of musical diplomacy – "to influence the audience and the music lovers to support the desired policy" (Karamy and Baines 2020, p. 90) – could be more sustainable. For all the criticism in detail, it is nevertheless worth emphasizing the tenacity with which Daniel Barenboim has positioned the Divan Orchestra as a "utopian place" over the years. His idea of turning a multinational and multicultural orchestra into a place of encounter and a world-class sounding body has also inspired national orchestras to reflect on their social function. When the Federal Republic nominated the German theater and orchestra landscape for the international UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2019, its reasoning was: "Theater ensembles and orchestras are important actors in the sociopolitical contemporary debate. In this way, they help shape our community and our future" (see Other Sources: No. 6). The statement echoes what also drives Barenboim – universal cultural heritage as soft power.

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## **IV. The postnational concept and the construction of shared heritage**



# Encoding the spatial DNA of Tel Aviv's White City

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Sharon Golan

## Introduction

The *Non stop city* is a slogan given to Tel Aviv by its municipality with the aspiration to create a sense of place and a local identity. Although this slogan does not describe a tangible aspect, the sense of constant movement and change is what describes the *genius loci* of this Mediterranean metropole, a city that is constantly making and re-making itself. Even nowadays, when the heart of the city has been declared as a historic world heritage monument by UNESCO, this part of the city is not resting at all and not freezing its development for the sake of the past, but rather using history as a tangible layer on which new development is growing, like a fertile soil for a new harvest. The old historic layer is actually supplying its roofs for new developments (unthinkable in Germany for intense). Indeed, the city is layering itself and adding floors right on top of historical buildings as a strategy of city development. The urban tissue is hence composed of multiple layers of time and stories, the built environment revealing the insights, hopes and challenges of the people/immigrants that inhabited these places in some moment of time. The architecture serves as a time capsule and reveals the identity and memory of the society which created it with an immense sense of speed and a movement towards change and renewal up to this day.

The term *genius loci* comes from the classical Roman religion. In the contemporary usage, *genius loci* usually refers to a location's distinctive atmosphere, or a "spirit of the place." In the case of Tel Aviv, the spirit of the space is a combination of both the historic UNESCO world heritage sites on the one hand, and the many newly added layers on the other. The constant battle between freezing and renewing, between conservationists and developers, currently shapes and brands the city, imbuing it with a healthy tension based on its polarities.

Against this background, the research aims to present both the historical development and the current challenges of the White City and, based on this, to find an answer to the question of whether the concept of shared cultural heritage is adequate for describing this transnational architectural heritage. For even though numerous influences of and parallels to modern building in Europe can be identified

through the transfer of European concepts and ideas to the Levant, the White City in Tel Aviv is something singular today. Likewise, the research takes into account the present-day heritage protection perspective of the city of Tel Aviv, which has to address the question of how to deal with a cultural heritage that, mostly in private hands and in a dynamic metropolis, is subject to intensive use. Finally, the research offers a preliminary conclusion of this discussion with regard to the concept of shared cultural heritage. For this, the author draws on her years of research as an art and architectural historian, as well as on her expertise as founder and research director of the *Max Liebling House – White City Center in Tel Aviv*.

### **The import of German material: The transfer agreement (1933–1938)**

From its inauguration, the city of Tel Aviv and the White City in particular was established by immigrants from German speaking countries flocking to its shores with a dream to create for themselves a new life in a better world; their vision was to create a futuristic modern city of tomorrow. They brought with them not only their hopes and dreams, but also shelves full of Goethe and Schiller, the latest bohemian fashion and also the Bauhaus' *Neue Sachlichkeit* (new objectivity), which is relevant to the heritage we are discussing.

The construction techniques were not the only commodity imported from Germany to Mandatory Palestine in the 1920s and 1930s. With the rise of the Nazi regime in 1933 German Jews were not eager to take their assets in cash out of the country, since a heavy tax was levied on such assets (*Reichsfluchtsteuer*). Furthermore, there was a growing boycott on German goods by the Americans. The Zionist Federation of Germany used this moment as an opportunity to sign an agreement with the Nazis: the Transfer Agreement (1933–1938). It allowed German-Jews to sell property and real estate, with revenues invested in buying goods and building materials. These were then exported from Germany to Palestine, where they were purchased and their worth was returned to those owners who immigrated to the new land. 50,000 German-Jews immigrated thanks to the agreement. The cumulative wealth – amounting to 150 million Reichsmark – was transferred to the country via the Anglo-Palestine Bank and the Tel Aviv-based *Haavara* (Hebrew for transfer) firm. The Nazi regime, in turn, encouraged the emigration of Jews from Germany and secured the export of goods contrary to the anti-Nazi boycott initiated by the American Jewish community (Mußgnug 1993). A lot of these materials, such as tiles, glass windows, handles, fixtures, metal, and concrete were used in the buildings of the modern movement in the White City and all over country.

The tiles of the French-German company *Villeroy & Boch*, which were installed in the former home of the Liebling family and today's White City Center, are also a telling testimony to this trade in goods. The origin of the tiles came to light when,

during the restoration of the building in 2017, some tiles fell off the wall in the stairwell and the company's name stamped on the back became visible (Golan 2019). Likewise, the fittings and handles on the original windows and doors of the residential building came from Germany: lockable door peepholes, block frames, door leaves and nickel-plated handle sets were supplied by *Wehag* (Wilhelm Engstfeld AG) with license from S.A. Loevy, a Jewish company from Berlin. Today, the experience and exhibition at Liebling House deliberately exhibits the tiles as a testimony to a material heritage resulting from the involuntary movement of goods. (Fig. 1) In order to display this fact, the back of the tiles with the V&B logo was printed and inserted in place of the missing tile of the house's staircase (Golan 2019).

All in all, it can be said that this was a controversial episode in the relationship between Israel and Germany, which remained obscure despite the fundamental impact it had on the Jewish settlement in Palestine. Longing for the European lifestyle they associated with their roots, immigrants desired to use their goods to try and maintain their identity, while demonstrating the wish to connect to the latest trends of architectural design.

### **The first Hebrew city and its architects: The local *Neue Sachlichkeit***

Tel Aviv has no outstanding icons, no recognized stand-alone Bauhaus architectural masterpieces that could by themselves define its style. Rather, what gives the White City an outstanding cultural significance is the fusion of the buildings with their urban context, the historical urban landscape, which extends far beyond the boundaries of the UNESCO zone declared in 2003 and its numerous listed buildings. It is a living, evolving urban tissue that rose from sandy dunes by the sea at the dawn of the 20th century, and continues to develop, and should be read as such. By choosing the International Style (often locally referred to as the Bauhaus Style) as the physical manifestation of this dream, the city strived for a *carte blanche*, for the seemingly blank page in the next chapter in the book telling the history of Jewry amidst the suffering of antisemitism. Argued here is that the outstanding value of the White City reaches far beyond its whitewashed façade, or the regionalist version of modernism found in the over 4000 buildings of the International Style which the city is famous for. The term "International Style" for modern architecture, such as the architecture implemented in Tel Aviv, was created at the MoMA in New York in 1932 by the historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock and the architect Philip Johnson to describe this new modern style, displaying new trends of architecture built of steel, reinforced concrete, and glass (Hitchcock and Johnson 1985). The International Style transformed the skylines of many major cities around the world, and can be connected to the international wish for peace after World War I, where neutral architecture was a

means to describe globalism, removing borders, and abandoning a nationalist way of life.

Although the building style of Tel Aviv is often referred to as the Bauhaus Style, only six architects have actually studied at the Bauhaus school and then built in Tel Aviv; many others were mainly German and European architects who came from other schools and places. One of the original Bauhaus students however was Shmuel Mestechkin (1908–2004), also known for his statement: “A house that has finished its job – should disappear.” In her obituary in the *Haaretz* Newspaper, Israeli architecture critic Esther Zandberg praised Mestechkin: “The public esteem he received in his life is much less than the architectural legacy he left. He remained a believing modernist – a socialist and a humble man in every sense” (Zandberg 2004). From conversations with Mestechkin it was possible to learn that he did not give much importance to the conservation of buildings, including his own works. “Old buildings,” he said decisively, “should be demolished and new and better buildings should be built instead of them for the common good” (ibid). The construction phase of modernism in the first modern Hebrew city lasted only about six years, from 1931 to 1937. It was the heyday of the International Style and the Bauhaus doctrine. The influence of European interwar architecture and the creation of a new local architectural language led to a polycentric articulation of modernism, reflecting the needs of the society and culture by adjusting the International Style to the local constraints of climatic conditions. The harsh sunlight and the existing building material that could be found locally and easily in the region at that time, for example the silicate crucibles, the basic building brick, laid as a filing of the construction frame.

The most predominant group shaping Tel Aviv were young architects who had left Palestine earlier to train as architects and engineers abroad. They had studied in Germany, France, Belgium, Italy, and Russia in the workshops of the most famous architects of the avant-garde. Arie Sharon, Shmuel Mestechkin, Shlomo Bernstein, Munio Gitai Weinraub, and Chanan Frenkel studied at the Bauhaus. Josef Neufeld studied in Rome, Bruno Taut in Moscow, Zeev Rechter with Erich Mendelsohn in Berlin, Shmuel Barkai with Le Corbusier in Paris. Dov Karmi, Benjamin Ankstein, Genia Averbuch, as well as many others, studied in Rome, Gent, Venice or Naples, later also in Vienna and Paris. Many of them were to become important architects in the future state of Israel. They were driven by the modernistic ideologies of the current *Zeitgeist*, and their wish was to cast their beliefs into concrete in the newly established state (Efrat 2018).

The paradigm shift from the eclectic way of building to the modern style happened through this group of young visionaries who created a vibrant “urban think-tank”. This circle of architects, called the *Chug* (Hebrew translation of the name of the Berlin architect association *Der Ring*), met in the evenings in the bohemian Tel Aviv Cafe on the beachfront promenade for discussions about the *Chug's* journal (Claus 2001).

By 1930, modernism was the answer for all built structures. The first modernist building, however, was planned by Erich Mendelsohn as an electric power station already in 1923. Modern architecture was repurposed to fulfill ideological and stylistic criteria to remedy the problems of the Zionist enterprise. As agents of a proactive, pragmatic Zionism, the Chug supported socialist aspects of Theodor Herzl's Political Zionism. While modernism thus got a new push in Palestine, the so called *Neues Bauen* movement in Germany was banned and rejected as "Jewish-Bolshevist", "semitic oriental", as in the case of the Weissenhof Estate in Stuttgart.

In order to influence public opinion, to "educate" the public about the benefits of the modern movement, and to conduct a platform for architectural competitions, the Chug published a magazine called *Habinyan Bamizrach Hakarov* (Hebrew for the Building in the Near East). It promoted innovative ideas such as building on *Piloti* (columns), to allow the breeze to circulate through the streets and to subtly connect the buildings to the street using garden passageways under the buildings. Pedestrians were guided to the lobby of the building through semi-public, shaded green entrances often adorned with fountains, pergolas, benches, and landscape designs. In this way, the Chug succeeded in changing the aesthetics of the *Yishuv*, the community of Zionist Jews that had begun to settle in Palestine since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Its modernist language was appropriated by the Zionist movement and became the architectural expression, the manifestation of its desire to create a new national identity. Modernism came to symbolize the birth of the new Hebrew nation (Efrat 2018).

This intimate connection between the ideals of the Chug and the socialist leadership of the city helped institutionalize Modern architecture, which goes a long way to explaining Tel Aviv center's almost homogenous appearance. It did not hurt that the uniform and relatively sober style of Modernism facilitated putting roofs over the heads of hundreds of thousands of refugees flocking to Palestine in the 1930s. Erecting houses with concrete steel frames was less time consuming and far less expensive than the former eclectic style, with its bearing walls and lush ornaments. The solutions and building concepts developed by the architects of the avant-garde in Europe proved suitable for the social needs in Palestine and were therefore willingly adopted.

The main building material, silicate building bricks made of sand and limestone, was easy to produce locally and did not require any special crafting skills. The modern construction method allowed greater wall openings, counter levered balconies, and flexible interior spaces. *Terrazzo* was cast on site with local and imported stones. The plaster was made with the newest imported German building technologies implemented in situ using various techniques. Imitating stone effects by mixing minerals such as lime and white cement with different small stones and grain gradations lent the façades a three dimensional appearance and proved to be resistant against wear and tear.



A German engineer named Emanuel Teiner even came to Palestine to train Jewish construction workers, teaching them how to create various plaster types common in Germany at that time: washing plaster, *Kratzputz*, and stone plaster. The best proof for the strong influence of the German building techniques on the country is that the German names of these techniques are still being used by Israeli workers in Hebrew to the present day, along with other words like *Sockel*, *Oberkant* and *Unterkant*, *Stecker* or *Unterputz*.

### ***Volksbedarf statt Luxusbedarf: A masterplan for the whole country***

Although only six architects actually studied at the Bauhaus and later built in Tel Aviv, the influence of this small group on the architectural discourse was immense. An example can be seen in the *Hod* cooperative housing estate on Frishman street, completed in 1935. The influence of Hannes Meyer, the second and lesser known Bauhaus director, can be discerned here, both in the simple and modest design form and in the social structure of the building, where residents were allocated only small apartments but shared huge communal facilities like a large garden in the center of the estate, a common kindergarten, laundry, shops, and a dining hall. In keeping with the socialist worldview of the ruling elite, this communal public space served as an extension of the relatively small living units, with the task of welding the new Hebrew society together into one homogenous whole. This directly corresponded with Meyer's teaching. Meyer was the "socialist" director of the Bauhaus, coining slogans like *Volksbedarf statt Luxusbedarf* (People's needs instead of luxury) and directing his students to focus on social aspects of design as their main agenda.

Meyer's student Arie Sharon (1900–1984), who held Diploma No. 6 of the Bauhaus, was to become Israel's most dominant Bauhaus architect. Coming to study at the Bauhaus from Kibbutz Gan Shmuel, where he had already worked in planning and construction, one can imagine the immediate connection he managed to form with his master Meyer, trying together to translate socialism's ideals into architectural forms. It can even be argued that the student may have influenced his teacher, for example in the *School of the General Federation of German Trade Unions* (ADGB) in Bernau. The ADGB, a masterpiece recognized as a UNESCO world heritage site in 2017, embodies many formal attributes of space representing direct parallels to Sharon's kibbutz settlement in both form and function. In both, the space was arranged to guide the communal behavior of its inhabitants, ranging from small residential rooms through semi-public spaces of a unit, all the way to the large communal gathering spaces such as the dining hall – all to help shape the identity of the individual as part of the group.

Sharon's most important work, however, was accomplished a decade later, after the heyday of early modernism in Palestine. In 1949, he was commissioned by the

first Prime Minister of Israel David Ben Gurion to lead the national team in charge of the first masterplan for the newly established state of Israel. This plan was published in 1951 under the title *Physical planning in Israel* (Sharon 1976; Dursthoff 2010), determining the location for new towns and laying down the principles of regional planning in order to distribute the large influx of immigrants. It regulated the location of industrial and agriculture zones as well as the general infrastructure system. At the same time, it created national parks and nature reserves. Therefore, it would not be an exaggeration to state that a Bauhaus student not only designed residential buildings in Tel Aviv, but actually laid out the strategic masterplan for the whole country of Israel, which did not stay only on paper but has actually shaped the country's landscape until the present moment.

In retrospect, Sharon's design has been much criticized. The idea of erecting development towns in the periphery, where they used to house poor immigrants and quickly turned into social hotspots perpetuating the differences between Israel upper and lower classes, was however not Sharon's own invention. Rather, Sharon applied in his masterplan some well-known and accepted planning practices of his time, which were inspired by a model developed by the German geographer and economist Walter Kristaller. After World War II, in which the urban areas (such as in London, Berlin, and Hiroshima) were mostly affected, the population was dispersed in areas not crowded with settlement. In Israel, this idea was also imbued with a security dimension.

In the last decades of his life, Sharon was involved in the city of Ife in Nigeria, which won independence from Britain in 1957. Here, he integrated quotations from the vernacular visual culture of the local tribes, perhaps allowing himself to connect to the postmodern vibe already influencing the architectural spirit of the time.

## **The 'Israeli style': Garden city plan and outdoor balconies in Tel Aviv**

Fleeing from the anti-Semitism and the National Socialist regime in Germany, following the prohibition on Jews to work as architects in 1933, between 1933 and 1934, some 60 architects came to Palestine, among them such illustrious names as Erich Mendelsohn, Adolf Rading, who followed his Jewish wife to Palestine, Julius Posener, Leo Adler, Oskar Kaufmann, and many others. Most of these architects who chose to immigrate to Palestine did not do so because of a deep ideological Zionist conviction, but rather because they found a professional incentive in the underdeveloped country and saw a chance to work there. Many of these architects, who were already established architects in their homeland, were forced by Tel Aviv's municipal city engineer Yaakov Shifman to adopt the International Style. This led to the development of individual forms of modernism and expressive forms of *Sachlichkeit*, twisting concepts such as "form follows function" (Louis Sullivan's principle of design associated

with late 19th and early 20th century architecture and industrial design) to “function follows form”, and sometimes even violating the principle stating that “ornament” equates to “crime” (Loos 1908), as in the common phrase used to describe modern architecture.

The development of Israel’s local style was never a simple copy of European knowhow. Rather, it represents the evolution of a unique local language within the functional doctrine of modernism, reflecting the needs of a nation in the process of being born. Its clear architectural language reflects both the values of the Zionist movement on the one hand, and the objective needs of construction of a new state absorbing more than a million immigrants constantly flocking to the country on the other. All the while, it also took the climatic and geographic conditions of the land into consideration.

Perhaps the most predominant feature of the local adaptation is the relation of the buildings to the street, resulting from the modernist building imposed on the Garden City plan. The buildings are singular detached monoliths on their respective plots, allowing the growing of vegetation on all four sides, leaving space for the realization of the Garden City plan. The buildings stand in constant dialogue with their surroundings, creating perpetual social interactions of their occupants and passers-by. The raised *Pilotis* houses (an idea adopted from Le Corbusier) offer a gradual passage from the public sphere through lush gardens and their semi-public domain, while creating pleasant micro climatic conditions in hot summer days.

The various types of balconies are another dominant feature of Tel Aviv’s urban fabric, although the element of the balcony is purely functional. One could argue that in the case of Tel Aviv, it also serves as a decorative element, letting the local buildings appear completely different from modernist edifices in central Europe, with their small or “introverted” balconies in the rear façade. In Israel, the balcony quickly served a third, social function. Tel Aviv’s inhabitants interacted from their balconies, creating a vibrant street atmosphere by connecting the dwellers to the passers-by on the street, and the balconies served as the main means of communication between neighbors. Usually acting as an outdoor extension to the living room, the balconies are shaded and aired. The only vertical window element, the so called *Thermometer* window, was often used, and also contributed to the street dialogue, as it lit up the stairway with natural light during the day, but lit up the street at night.

## **Conservatism 2.0: The local conservation 2650B’**

In 2003, Tel Aviv was declared a UNESCO world heritage site due to its outstanding cultural significance within the various trends of the Modern Movement in architecture and town planning in the early part of the 20th century. It is considered the largest urban concentration of the early International Style (UNESCO 2003). All in

all, 3,700 International Style buildings stand in Tel Aviv, 1,000 of which were selected for preservation. 190 buildings are under a high level of protection. (UNESCO 2003).

The UNESCO declaration also led to the implantation of a Conservation Plan created in order to rehabilitate the built fabric of the city. The starting point for the plan's creation was the need of the city to grow while keeping in mind the desire to conserve its historical heart. As most of the city's buildings are privately owned, the conservation regulations are designed to enable residents to afford the relatively high price of the conservation process. By granting additional building rights on the rooftops of listed buildings, revenues from the additional areas cover the cost of renovation. Together with UNESCO in 2003, a system of "building transfer right" (TDR) was authorized, permitting, to secure the conservation of the historical building (altogether 190 buildings).

In practice, building rights can add up to three floors, depending on criteria specific to each site. In addition to the obligations of the owners to renovate the building according to strict conservation regulations, they are also obliged to reinforce it against earthquakes and add a shelter room. As Tel Aviv is located on the African-Syrian rift, it could face massive earthquakes that threaten to destroy many of its buildings. The granting of additional construction rights is conditioned on the reinforcement of existing structures, preparing, and protecting them from this danger. Another reason for the reinforcement is the constant threat of missile attacks. To protect civilians, each individual apartment receives an additional reinforced shelter room preferably added in the form of a shaft in the back of the building that cannot be seen from the front. The two predominant conservation challenges are: natural disasters, and ways to promote positive heritage mentalities. Some conservation purists are surely raising their eyebrows at this "topping up" process of the Tel Aviv apartment buildings, yet the Tel Aviv municipality is bravely resisting enormous pressure from real estate giants by relegating high rises to areas outside the listed zones. It is paying a high price for trying to conserve its historical center. Investors are suing the municipality for over 2 billion US-Dollars in compensation for real estate value loss, arguing that the approval of the conservation plan resulted in an immense loss of the property's value.

When planning the building additions, the task of the architect is anything but easy. He or she has to keep in mind that modernist architecture attached immense importance to the proportions of buildings. Some of the buildings get up to three more floors, sometimes doubling their height. If the addition is built in the same style as the original building, the delicate horizontal proportions are in danger of being lost. Imitating the original style would also make it impossible to distinguish between the original building and its new addition. On the other hand, if all new additions are created in a different architectural style, this novel "upper city" would soon dominate and overwhelm the historical buildings on the lower floors. Since every building in Tel Aviv has its unique character, the original proportions of the

building, as well as its particular position on the plot, must be carefully analyzed before understanding its essence – this is key to designing its extension.

Tel Aviv needs to respond to the needs of modern-day Israel, which has the fastest growing population in the OECD. While there are numerous problems with the new urban masterplan, it does provide the carefully calibrated answers to today's pressures and necessities. Israel is a very young country, still fighting for its very survival. To many, preserving its heritage, especially that of modernism (which not necessarily everyone finds aesthetically pleasing), seems like a luxury, especially in light of the existential threats facing the state. Nonetheless, the conservation plan upholds the unique ideas of the Scottish planner and anthropologist Sir Patrick Geddes (1854–1934) on urbanism and the proportions of the modern city, while allowing for renewal and new development. The heart of the city does not have the privilege of becoming a museum of architecture, but has to continue to serve as the living tissue of Israel's most important metropolis, which keeps on growing and adapting to the needs of contemporary society.

Since the approval of the local municipal conservation plan 2650B' in 2008, which followed the UNESCO nomination of the White City as a World Heritage site, an immense wave of conservation of historic buildings has swept the city. This usually includes the construction of a new layer in the form of up to three floors on top of the historic buildings, as permitted by the conservation plan. After this first intense wave of what the municipality itself refers to as "city regeneration", the time has come to critically reflect upon the construction mass resulting from the conservation plan. This should be done both in a tangible sense – assessing the built mass added to the historic city aesthetically and examining its effect on the city's skyline, and in the sense of the intangible social structure of the city – assessing the plan's influence on the acceleration of gentrification processes and the change of the community character.

The aesthetic result of building additions on top of modernist buildings, which can add up to 2.5 stories on top of the original 3, is sometimes very confusing, as by nature the vernacular modernist buildings were planned to suit local social and climatic conditions. They were proportioned mainly by the refined distribution of the building's mass on the plot in order to best perform climatically, while reducing unnecessary building elements to serve the ideology of "Less is more" which the modernist style is constructed upon. Perhaps the most dominant element of the local Levantine buildings are the long strips of balconies sometimes acting as a second skin or an exterior envelope in order to adjust the heat resulting from direct sun penetration from the exterior facade. The resulting horizontal emphasis created by the prolonged external balconies influences the general appearance of the city.

What is then the result when a carefully proportioned horizontal building is prolonged vertically? Not forgetting also the original garden city plan which the city was constructed on, which originally carefully calculated the amount of light that can en-

ter the street considering the width of the city and its relation to the height of the buildings. What happens then when this balance is replanned both in terms of a particular building and in terms of its broader influence on the urban tissue at large? The Spatial attributes of the city as a living space and its built fabric often reflect on the physical monument alone. In the process of conserving the building and the many details of refurbishment during the years and readaptation to the living standards of our century, no doubt one can dedicate endless resources on to making the most perfect building (subjectively of course in the eyes of the architect involved in the process of refurbishment). While the current global agenda is urging planners to address these matters in a much broader perspective, the city is first and foremost the sum of all of its individual elements.

It might be that the urban environment, including its built mass, should be analyzed according to the pattern of the natural selection that species exert on one another, rather than according to the standard top-down processes of municipal decision making regarding plans, which then produce capital-driven blockchains of stakeholders, investors, banks, architects, and the tenant. The latter oftentimes comes from a different socio-economic group and is not necessarily part of the existing community. Conservation efforts, therefore, should prioritize inclusion, taking into consideration the community living in the buildings and their intangible impact on the built heritage, in order to tell an accurate and comprehensive story and to remain relevant.

Another rather positive impact that the local conservation plan 2650B' has had on the city, by conserving the great mass of the original building fabric, is linked to the international debate around Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the Anthropocene Epoch we are facing, conservation must be made sustainable. Existing buildings are inherently "greener" when compared to demolishing old buildings and constructing new ones, as green as they might be. The impact of demolishing an old building by tearing it down, trashing the debris, clearing the site, crafting new materials, and putting up a replacement from scratch is worse than simply retrofitting an existing building. It was also proven that the historic fabric of a city creates economically vital, socially equitable, and strong, resilient neighborhoods, as the affiliation of the community to its urban landscape is an anchor point of social identity. The case of the White City of Tel Aviv as a lively urban tissue represents a modern approach to conservation, balancing between, on the one hand, the need to develop and adapt, and on the other, respecting the values of the city's outstanding historical significance and using it as a leverage.

## German-Israeli cooperation: The Liebling-House – White City Center

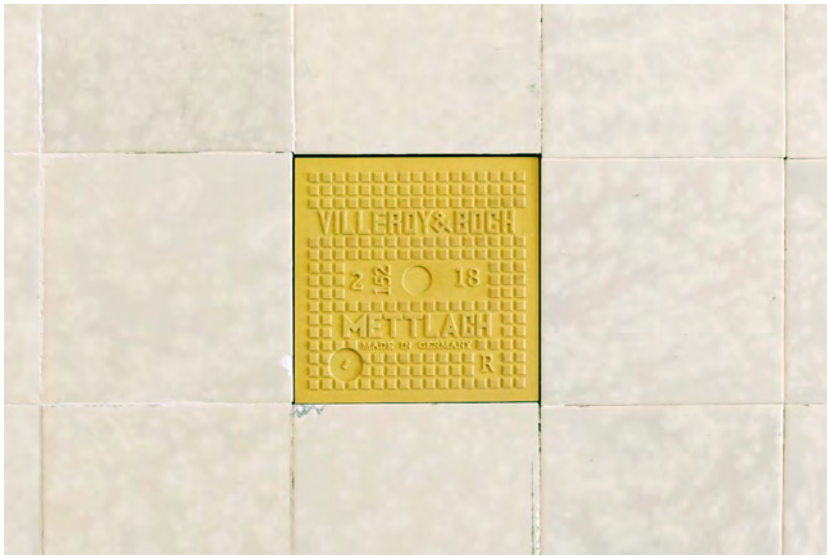
In 2015, in cooperation with the federal German government, the city of Tel Aviv-Yafo created the White City Center, to implement the historic urban landscape approach.<sup>1</sup> This holistic approach is the local answer to the management plan of the declared UNESCO heritage site of Tel Aviv, viewing the ensemble as connected to all layers of the city, while taking into account the socio-economic aspects of the growing metropolis. The center is situated in the Max-Liebling-House, a listed typical modernist residential building in the heart of the city, built by Architect Dov Karmi in 1936 for Max and Tony Liebling (Federal Institute for Research 2015). The center that opened in 2019 is a one stop shop for all aspects connected to the heritage of the UNESCO declared heritage zone. (Fig. 2) It houses an information space for visitors with a small cafe and shop, a community garden, a research hub, a space for workshops, a residency program, and a space for changing contemporary exhibitions dealing with aspects of conservation within a wider range. Even during its renovation, the Max-Liebling-House, the future White City Center, became the site for a live performance, a showcase and a lab, exposing the layers of the building, its conservation process and traditional craftsmanship to the public, with the aim of promoting a better understanding of the values of modernist architecture. The Liebling-House was open during the whole time of renovation and invited the public to visit its rooms in a series of lectures, tours, and art shows that offered a new perspective. Each month offered a public program which was devoted to the different sections of the house. In this context, a real time *Bauhütte* (German for working site) put into effect a professional exchange in the field of conservation. As a special proof of the validity of a transnational heritage, the 2018 project *Open for Renovation* brought together craftsmen from both Israel and Germany to work together on the building site and perform a best practice, using knowledge from Germany by bringing traditional masters of crafts with their apprentices to work on site together with Israeli workers. The encounter made it clear that the exchange went both ways, as Tel Aviv has plenty of original untouched traditional modernistic material to work on, which oftentimes is not so accessible in Germany (Sto Foundation 2019).

An important element of the White City Center for visitors today is the permanent exhibition on the ground floor of the building. It leads chronologically through the history of the White City, also hinting at the site's former use as a residential building and discussing the future of cultural heritage. This floor also houses a coffee shop and a workshop for children. On the first floor, the front four-room apartment serves as a research lab in the original room layout.

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1 The German government is supporting the city of Tel Aviv-Yafo and the White City Center with a total of 2.8 million euros until 2025 (Brandes 2015).

*Fig. 1: Villeroy & Boch tile in the restored staircase of the Liebling Haus in Tel Aviv (Copyright: Yael Schmidt/Liebling Haus – White City Center Tel Aviv)*



*Fig. 2: Contact point for world heritage: The White City Center in the restored Liebling Haus (Copyright: Yael Schmidt/Liebling Haus – White City Center Tel Aviv)*





On the second floor the space is used for a residency and a gallery space for contemporary art projects related to the city; this floor is also a showcase for the original room layout where some original remains can be viewed. A kitchen based on a European model was preserved. A second, original Frankfurt kitchen from the collection of the *Ernst May Society* in Frankfurt on the Main reached the White City Center in 2021 as a gift, as part of the 40-year partnership between the two cities (Janovic' 2021).

Three years after its opening, the center has become a focal point for the urban scene of culture enthusiasts in Tel Aviv. They use the café, imbued with the atmosphere of the *Liebling-House*, as a place to hang out and a modern workplace. The café also cultivates intangible heritage: it offers *Strudel* baked according to the recipe from the preserved house cookbook of the Scheuer family, who once lived here (Schönwetter 2019).

### Shared heritage? Some preliminary conclusions

The heart of Tel Aviv's city was in fact built mainly by German speaking immigrants fleeing Europe, using German knowhow, and implementing German building material. One can hence obviously argue that the heritage is a shared German Israeli one. Moreover, like in many other cities of modern times, where this kind of "new objectivity" as an architectural style was colonial, here as well it was built prior to the establishment of the state of Israel, and can even be considered British in a sense. One example of British influence among many is the garden city plan designed by Sir Patrick Geddes, on which the historic city's masterplan is based.

However, one could also argue the opposite, separating the local tradition from the immigrants' cultural influences. In building a new home for themselves in the Levant, choosing the *Neue Sachlichkeit* as a style helped the immigrants differentiate themselves from the common traditional vernacular Arab building style on the one hand, and from the traditional German *Heimat Style* common in their homeland on the other. The Bauhaus Style among other progressive modern art doctrines was considered in Germany *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerate Art) and was banned by the Nazi regime on the grounds that such art was an "insult to German feeling", un-German, Jewish, or Communist in nature. Hence, the Jewish migrants fleeing the Nazi regime could easily connect to this modernistic world view, and use it in order to differentiate themselves from the German *Heimat* according to the *Zeitgeist* of this time.

Although many of the migrants without a doubt felt more connected to their German identity than to their Jewish roots, the harsh reality demanded a eurocentric Zionist hegemony and the invention of a "New Jew" (as described by Theodor Herzl in his novel *Altneuland* of 1902) inhabiting a new land and wishing to create a new

utopic Zionist reality also through a different built environment contributing to the formation of a new self-identity.

Moreover, the local Bauhaus Style cannot be referred to as purely German, as it adapted itself to the local and cultural conditions of the Levant, adapting to the surroundings of a different socio-geographic setting, and was also influenced by many other modern architects and modern styles from all over the world (for example the Dynamic Functionalism of Erich Mendelsohn or Le Corbusier's definition of modernism, to name just a few). Professionally one should refer to the style as the International Style, it represents an evolution of the modernist building language, creating a unique vernacular, functional doctrine of modernism that reflects the needs of a nation in the process of being born.

Heritage is unfortunately oftentimes caught between multiple interests of stakeholders. Sometimes it serves as a political tool in the hands of the government in order to narrate the nationalist agendas and implement them in the construction of the collective memories of the past. Here in Tel Aviv it is the tale of a group of migrants brutally torn away from their roots and deprived of their human rights. The story has a happy ending which is the creation of a vibrant metropole, worldly renowned for its quality of life. If the heritage is a shared one, what is the narrative from the German perspective? Is it the survival of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, or perhaps the seeds of exalted ethical codes and the exploration of the liberal spirit which the Bauhaus school stood for – creating a better world for humanity through the implementation of mass production, and combining aesthetics with functional design – which have managed to flourish against all odds? Or is it an attempt to declare that the Nazi regime did not totally succeed in its nationalist agenda, as some seeds of a different German culture were transmitted through this dark chapter of history, to form an outstanding contemporary urban metropolis?

In conclusion, the historic urban landscape of Tel Aviv is a physical manifestation of a transnational, shared heritage. It stands for diverse international influences creating a new language of modernism suited to the Levant. Heritage should be first and foremost considered as a cultural common denominator, a public domain beyond boundaries and nationalities, a sign of a unique historical project reflecting the evolution of society in a given geographical area. Just as the Bauhaus school cultivated a pioneering spirit creating avant-garde solutions for contemporary problems, their legacy today is a sign for our civilization to collectively engage in the most profound challenge of our contemporary society: dealing with social injustice and with the exploitation of our planet's resources leading to a climate disaster.

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# German remembrance? Jewish museums in Germany

## The example of the Jewish Museum Göppingen

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Sarai Hannah-Marie Schulz

### Introduction

The *Jewish Museum Göppingen* in the Göppingen district of Jebenhausen exhibits the history of the local Jewish community in a former church, which is a surprising location for a Jewish museum. Today's city museum presents a lovingly assembled collection that illustrates both the history of the Jewish community in the region until 1945 and their coexistence with their Christian neighbors. The Jewish Museum Göppingen is, at least thematically, the type of Jewish museum that wants to contribute to interreligious understanding and has an exposed position in Germany – not least against the background of the *Shoa* (Hebrew for Holocaust).

Like many Jewish museums that have been established in Germany since the 1970s, the Jewish Museum Göppingen has been designed by regional town historians with the aim of conveying historical knowledge about the region and keeping alive the memory of the local Jewish heritage. Based on this observation, the study takes a closer look at the narrative that the Jewish Museum Göppingen chose to adopt and to the accompanying museum educational measures and goals. Delving into the museum's ideological narrative will expose the ways the common cultural heritage of Christians and Jews is combined, the ways the museum deals with the remaining mobile heritage, and the ways the museum acts as an agent and a mediator of historical narratives of the interwoven local history. The extent in which the exhibition in Jebenhausen can make the idea of a shared heritage fruitful can contribute to the expanding knowledge regarding the mediation and presentation of narratives that work against racism and antisemitism.

### Museums as cultural heritage agencies

As Cole and Knowles note, human experiences and knowledge are mostly shaped by “institutional, structural expressions of community and society” (2001, p. 22), which

are mediated through primary and secondary educational institutions. Museums are such secondary educational institutions that house mobile cultural heritage and make it accessible in their exhibits. The exhibits on display are interpreted as witnesses of a meaningful past, which is still relevant for the present of the visitors as well as, possibly, for their future, and therefore should be known by them.

As secondary educational institutions, museums can be seen as places of teaching and learning that convey factual knowledge but also collective values. The museums make the past visible as history (Rüsen 2013), initiate processes of reflection, and invite dialogue (Sternfeld 2018). As semiotic media, exhibitions also possess the possibility to reinforce or weaken social narratives, to hand down hegemonic conventions, or to counter historical self-images. Critical museology in particular emphasizes the latter (Groschwitz 2017). Hochreiter even defines museums in this context as “centers of definitional power” (Hochreiter 2015, p. 54).<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, museum work is characterized by scientific narratives. Insights are gained with the help of empirical methods by viewing contextualized artifacts (Hochreiter 2015). The credibility of the institution is thereby based both on the scientific working methods of the experts, and on the authoritative position of the museum itself, which is an educational institution. However, Peter Van Mensch points out that the knowledge conveyed here is also a product of institutional logic:

[E]very cultural institution puts a well-defined, dominant meaning on objects by its way of selecting and presenting. [They] can be considered factories in which authorized meanings, without much discussion or reflection, are constantly produced (2019, p. 200).

For a long time, museums did not openly state this connection between methodology and authority in their generation and production of meaning in knowledge (Groschwitz 2017). Only with the “reflexive turn” in the early 2000s did this come into view. Museums as agencies of knowledge were now perceived in relation to the respective prevailing social system (Sternfeld 2018). The consequences of this “reflexive turn” were, on the one hand, more transparency in museum work (by disclosing institutional methods and attitudes). On the other hand, there has been an increased integration of the visitor’s interpretation processes (with different cultural experiences) and an intensification of the dialogue structure. To this end, museums increasingly employed pedagogical practices designed to enable active participation in constructions of meaning (Offe 2000). This turn in the educational and mediation work of museums is of particular importance for Jewish museums in the Diaspora.

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1 For better readability, quotations from German literature have been translated into English. German sources and literature are marked as such in the bibliography.

## The museumization of German Jewish culture

The first collections of Judaica in Germany emerged at the beginning of the 19th century in the course of the revaluation of (religious) traditions and their redefinition as cultural Jewish heritage in the Diaspora (Loewy 2017). Towards the end of the 19th century, some of these collections were put on public display. Jewish departments already existed in larger German museums (Offe 2000). The first independent Jewish museum was founded in Vienna in 1895, followed by the *Museum of Jewish Antiquities* in Frankfurt on the Main in 1922, the first museum of its kind in Germany. Housed in the former banking house of the Rothschild family, it presented mainly Jewish cult objects. Only a few days before the *Machtergreifung* (German for Seizure of power) in January 1933, a Jewish museum was opened in Berlin next to the New Synagogue, which exhibited Jewish modern art as well as arts and crafts and historical testimonies.

In the course of the November pogroms, SA and SS men destroyed the Museum of Jewish Antiquities in Frankfurt, as well as a large part of its collection of some 18,000 objects (Wiesner 2022). The Gestapo closed the Berlin Museum on November 10, 1938, and confiscated its inventory. The art collection is now partly in Los Angeles and in Jerusalem (see Other Sources: No. 5). With National Socialism, all attempts in the German Reich to make Jewish heritage visible with the help of the institution of the museum came to a brutal and widespread end. Only in the late 1970s was a new attempt made to actively integrate Jewish culture into the German cultural memory. Most of the museums founded in the course of this new culture of remembrance functioned as places of remembrance for non-Jews after the *Shoa* and were located in places where Jewish life no longer existed. Former synagogues also fulfilled the task of remembrance without active descendants. Some of them were rehabilitated and used as historical witnesses, memorials or places of remembrance and encounter (Pellengahr 2017).

In the course of this revitalizing culture of remembrance of German Jewry, not only were the large Jewish museums of the prewar period reestablished (such as the ones in Frankfurt and Berlin), but new museums were also founded, sometimes with the active participation of the Jewish community, such as in Munich. In addition, many small museums sprang up in the German provinces where Jews had previously lived. They focused on the local history of Jewish life in their community and attempted to illustrate it with ethnographic artifacts relating to economic and social history. Typical objects of these museums were (and still are) Judaica and Hebraica, but sometimes also works of art by artists of Jewish origin (Offe 2000).

Another feature of these new museums and places of remembrance was that Jewish history was told by curators who were usually not of Jewish origin or faith, but German historians. They usually presented the history of a Jewish minority to a non-Jewish majority. This constellation implied that experts “from the outside” told

a story that included cultural and religious dimensions that were not part of their own socialization; this trend could generate ambivalences (Loewy 2017). What can be seen as equally problematic today is that these curators were supposed to make Jewish life visible primarily to people who had little or no prior knowledge of Jewish customs, culture, and history. This circumstance, described by Sabine Offe as “paradoxical” (2000, p. 95), held the danger of an “exoticization” of Jews and of Jewish life in Germany, as well as that of an unconscious (re)production of old stereotypes (2000, p. 101).<sup>2</sup>

For this reason, Offe pleads for a sensitization and for a reorientation of Jewish museums as “places of engagement with present, real Jewish life, not only as places of commemoration of the dead” (2000, p. 97). In her analysis of Jewish museums and their exhibitions, she notes that the “memory relationship” (Offe 2000, p. 39) is often in the foreground. Based on this observation she suggests that Jewish collections should fulfill two central goals: first, to create a broader picture and deeper understanding of Jewish history and identity, and, second, to deconstruct a false and often even antisemitic image of Jews and Jewish history that is embedded in the minds of visitors (Offe 2000). Jewish museums that understand themselves and perform their task in this way can function as intellectual and transnational centers (Loewy 2017) and make an active contribution to combating racism and antisemitism (Offe 2000).

## The Jewish Museum Göppingen

The Jewish Museum Göppingen is one of those regional museums that were established as places of remembrance and commemoration of a Jewish community. Jews lived in Jebenhausen from the 16th to the 20th century, but not during the *Shoa*. At that time, the community had already moved to Göppingen as a nearby trade and transport hub.

Today, the museum is administered by the city of Göppingen, together with three other museums and the city archives (see Other Sources: No. 2). It employs a few staff members; however, most tours are conducted by local volunteers who participate in the *Lauchheimer House Association – Preservation and promotion of the Jewish cultural heritage of Jebenhausen e.V.* Founded in 1985 as the Jewish Museum Göppingen, the permanent exhibition which opened in 1992 and was revised in 2017 now displays local Jewish heritage in a former Lutheran church.

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2 The *Central Council of Jews in Germany* has also recognized this problem. In order to get to know current Jewish life in Germany at first hand, it has initiated the *Meet a Jew* project, an encounter project in which Jewish volunteers are placed in institutions interested in an exchange. In this way, many authentic voices have their say (see Other Sources: No. 4).

Information about the history of the Jews in Jebenhausen and Göppingen can be found in an accompanying publication of the Göppingen Municipal Archives. According to this, the barons of Liebenstein<sup>3</sup> and representatives of the Jewish community signed a letter of protection on July 7, 1777, which sealed the foundation of a Jewish community in Jebenhausen (Göppingen Municipal Archives 1992, p. 18). The Jewish settlement was established next to the Christian village, where it coexisted peacefully for more than 130 years. The fact that the two populations did not mix was due to legal regulations as well as religion and different value systems. For example, the Jewish merchants and peddlers had a different, more urban, and cosmopolitan lifestyle than the Christian farmers and craftsmen (Göppingen Municipal Archives 1992, p. 22). However, the Jewish community dwindled in the course of the 19th century and especially in its second half, when emigration to North America or settling as textile manufacturers in the nearby larger Göppingen offered Jews better options for their lifestyle (Göppingen Municipal Archives 1992, p. 30). Thus, it came about that the Jebenhausen community moved in its entirety to Göppingen and dissolved in 1899. Their departure led to a memorable gift in 1905: when the local Jewish community had its synagogue demolished, it donated its ceiling chandelier and pews to the Lutheran parish. There, both served well until the church was abandoned in 1966 in favor of a new building for the Lutheran congregation. Today, the former church (as a symbol of Christian religion) and the interior of the synagogue (as a symbol of Jewish religion) are united in the museum's narrative of Christian-Jewish coexistence and the two communities' shared heritage.

This narrative finds its beginning when looking at the exterior façade. Several loose metal bars are attached to it, which from a certain angle give the impression of representing a destroyed Star of David.<sup>4</sup> This impression is artistically intentional and supports the conception of the museum. When the museum was first established, it was a goal of the curatorial team around city archivist Karlheinz Rueß<sup>5</sup> to emphasize and convey the factor of the peaceful coexistence of a Christian-Jewish heritage in Jebenhausen (Göppingen Municipal Archives 1992). In this way, the narrative of a shared cultural heritage was to be underlined. Consequently, the exhibition aimed to present Jewish life as an integral part of Jebenhausen's town history rather than simply an epochal period.

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3 The Barons of Liebenstein belong to the oldest noble families in Swabia. For more information, see: the Ludwigsburg State Archives (see Other Sources: No. 1).

4 According to curator Dr. Karlheinz Rueß, the artwork, a battered Star of David, is meant to symbolize how Judaism and Christianity are connected – “for better or for worse” (2020).

5 Dr. Karl-Heinz Rueß, a historian, is the initiator and founder of the museum. He headed the City Archives and Museums of the City of Göppingen from 1983 to 2020. His successor Dr. Dominik Sieber took office in May 2020.



## Methods

The following analyses of the conception behind the permanent exhibition and the mediation concerns of the Jewish Museum Göppingen was carried out with the help of a methodological triangle: document analysis, three expert interviews, and an accompanied tour of the exhibition (participant observation) were conducted.

For the document analysis, the author drew on publications that the museum itself had published, namely catalogs on the permanent exhibition. In the selection of experts, the focus was placed on the curators and the designer. The aim was to obtain various differentiated perspectives on the part of the exhibition's authors. The first interview was conducted with former museum director Dr. Karl-Heinz Rueß. The historian is not only the founder of the museum, but also its idea man. He has intensively researched the local history of the Jewish community and built from scratch the collection that can be seen in the museum today.<sup>6</sup> The second interview was conducted with Dr. Dominik Gerd Sieber, Dr. Rueß's successor and current museum director. The questions he was asked were related to aspects of outreach and organization.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the museum's designer, Kurt Ranger of Ranger Design, was chosen for an interview.<sup>8</sup> He has accompanied the development of the museum since 1992 and designed both permanent exhibitions together with the curators. Design is important to the research question from an educational-strategy perspective, so the goals of the aesthetic design were the focus here. The length of the guided interviews ranged from 55 to 100 minutes. All three interviews were conducted as semi-structured interviews and recorded in German. Particularly relevant aspects were transcribed by the author. Subsequently, the given information was compared and supplemented by the method of participant observation, in which the author took an accompanied tour of the exhibition on site and thus slipped into the role of the visitor.

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6 Interview with Karl-Heinz Rueß, former director of the Jewish Museum Göppingen, December 11, 2020 (telephone conversation/tape). Henceforth cited as Rueß 2020.

7 Interview with Dominik Gert Sieber, Director of the Jewish Museum Göppingen December 2, 2020, (in person/tape). Henceforth cited as Sieber 2020.

8 Interview with Kurt Ranger, owner of Kurt Ranger Design Stuttgart, December 15, 2020 (telephone conversation/tape). Henceforth cited as Ranger 2020.

## The permanent exhibition: Exhibits, conception, and design

In the following, the central elements of the exhibition at the Jewish Museum Göppingen will be outlined: collection, narrative, and exhibition design. On the basis of this information, it will then be examined whether the curatorial idea of a shared cultural heritage is accessible to visitors on site.

*a) Exhibits:* Like many of the Jewish museums founded after 1945, Jebenhausen does not have its own collection on Jewish town history. When it was founded, the museum possessed exactly five exhibits: two rare inn signs from Jewish inns, including that of the oldest Jewish inn *König David* (around 1800), the two ceiling chandeliers and a table from the former Jebenhausen synagogue (Rueß 2020). In addition, there were various gravestones for the Liebenstein family already present in the church. In order to be able to exhibit Jewish life, objects from other areas were consequently needed. The curatorial team found what they were looking for in a *genizah*<sup>9</sup> of the former Freudental synagogue, which had been discovered during the synagogue's renovation; they came to Jebenhausen on loan. A few objects were acquired in the art market. In addition, there were donations from the descendants of the former Jewish community, who personally agreed to support the museum project (*ibid.*)<sup>10</sup> In this way, mainly photos and documents on the town's history came into the possession of the museum.

*b) Conception:* The curators proceeded in a similar way in the development of the museum narrative (*ibid.*). On the one hand, it was a matter of researching the history of Jebenhausen, but on the other hand, it was also a matter of relating personal fates and biographies to this history. An indispensable source for the former turned out to be the book *Geschichte der Juden in Jebenhausen und Göppingen* (History of the Jews in Jebenhausen and Göppingen) (1927) by the local rabbi Dr. Aron Tänzer (1871–1937) who had researched the community at the turn of the century (Tänzer [1927] 1988).

Although almost all copies of his book had been destroyed during the Nazi era, some were saved and thus knowledge about the Jewish neighborhoods and communities was preserved; today the book contributes significantly to research on local heritage (Rueß 2020). The source was supplemented by scientific research in the archives and personal access in the sense of an oral history. The cooperation at eye level with the descendants of former Jewish citizens promoted the willingness to share family memories and personal possessions and to contribute to a historical

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9 The word *geniza* comes from Hebrew and refers to a storage room in Jewish synagogues. Since worn-out religious items, such as language books or papers, may not be thrown away for religious reasons, they must be kept or buried in cemeteries (*gniza*). Since *gnizas* are often found in hidden places, some survived the Nazi era and serve as important testimonies.

10 The museum publication of 1992 refers to them in its acknowledgement (Göppingen Municipal Archive 1992, p. 6).

narrative “from below”. In addition to contemporary witnesses and their descendants, the narratives of the Württemberg state rabbi Joel Berger (b. 1937) were an important source for conveying Jewish life in Württemberg (ibid).

c) *Design*: Together with a design office, basic guidelines were developed for the first exhibition, and six thematic areas were defined. The revised 2017 presentation introduced a visual motif (bright white and somber black) in addition to the thematic tour, in a color scheme intended to divide individual eras and direct the visitor’s gaze; the color contrasts finally break in the person of Dr. Aron Tänzer to symbolize that Jewish and German identities are not mutually exclusive; Tänzer was both Jewish and patriotic German (Ranger 2020). Apart from this, the design relies on various media of information, including explanatory texts, quotations, original objects and documents, large-scale images, models, films, and interactive stations. As an example, there is a touch-screen installation that makes it possible to locate the homes of Jews in Göppingen. In this way, the integration of Jewish life into a Christian environment is to be made directly tangible, and the narrative of a shared heritage is to be supported (ibid).

### **Accompanied tour of the exhibition**

The museum has two floors, which allow organizing the presentation chronologically and thematically. (Fig.1) A timeline divides the Jewish life of the community into two main periods: before the Holocaust, and during and after the Holocaust. The exhibition tour focuses on six central themes. The first section deals with Jewish culture, the second with the history of the Jews in Jebenhausen, the third with the history of the Jews in Göppingen, the fourth with the biographies of outstanding personalities of the town, and the fifth with the atrocities committed during the National Socialist era. The last section focuses on coming to terms with the consequences of the Nazi era and on issues of racism and antisemitism.

When the visitor enters the museum, he/she is first led to a large altar with the Liebenstein coat of arms. This exhibit, set into the church wall, provides a special, perhaps even sublime moment. The visitor begins his/her tour on the left side of the church with an introduction to Jewish culture and religion, festivals, customs, and traditions. This aspect is illustrated by selected sample exhibits and pictures of the former community. This area is intended to give an impression of the religious life of Jews in the past and present. Other, non-religious interpretations of Judaism are not presented.

Fig. 1: View into the exhibition room. In the center the candelabra of the former Jebenhäusen synagogue (Photo: Rose Hajdu, Stuttgart)



Fig. 2: Model of the Göppingen synagogue inaugurated in 1881. It was destroyed during the pogrom night on November 10, 1938 (Photo: Rose Hajdu, Stuttgart).



In the second section, the visitor learns details about the founding of the Jewish community in Jebenhausen. From now on, the tour is structured chronologically: it shows the life of the community since the year 1777, the aforementioned signing of the letter of protection and the influx of the first Jewish families to the Jebenhausen estate. The first synagogue was built in 1803. It is also important to note that the communities were not assimilated, but maintained parallel lifestyles within the village. A short film summarizes the section with the exhibit of the *King David* inn sign from this period. The sign features a harp-playing king. In combination with the Star of David, it serves as a key visual for the Jewish Museum Göppingen today.

With the acceptance of citizenship by the Israelite Law of 1828, the Jews were given equal legal status with the rest of the German population, so that they were allowed to establish factories from that time on. This law was decisive for the community's move to the larger town of Göppingen, where the Jews were given the right to build their own synagogue, inaugurated in 1881. (Fig. 2) In the following third section, the exhibition focuses on the history of the Jewish community in Göppingen, describing Jewish-Christian coexistence and everyday life. Historical photos show Jewish residents of the town in their activities, in club life or in school. Visitors can also find in this section some brief references to the Jewish-born industrialists who drove the progress of the city.

On the second floor of the exhibition, the narrative changes. The fourth section, as a small subsection, focuses on the lives of German Jews from Jebenhausen. It highlights the work of Dr. Aron Tänzer, who was an important witness not only to the history of the town but also to German-Jewish relations. In Göppingen, Tänzer was a respected citizen who contributed much to the life of the town, for example by opening the first library. Out of patriotism, he changed his first name to "Arno" and volunteered for military service at the outbreak of World War I in order to "take an active part in the great struggle of the German people for existence and progress" (Diary 1915, exhibition plaque). Tänzer was "virtually the prototype of a German patriot with a Jewish background" (Ranger 2020). After the German defeat, he, like many other Jews, faced antisemitic slander; likewise, he was denied awards for outstanding service in the German military. Tänzer died unnoticed by the public in February 1937, and his children survived Nazi persecution. His biography shows the impact on the local Jewish community of the antisemitic propaganda that paved the way for National Socialism.

Tänzer's biography leads over into the fifth section, the history of National Socialism, whose ideology from its beginnings to the end of the Second World War in 1945 is explained on the basis of Göppingen's local history, such as the confrontation in the so-called *Walfischkeller*.<sup>11</sup> The increase in antisemitic attitudes is documented

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11 During the so-called "Battle of the Walfischkeller" between Communists and National Socialists, the NSDAP made its first appearance in Baden-Württemberg. It is a brutal, armed,

by the call to boycott Jewish stores in 1933 and the destruction of the local synagogue on *Reichspogromnacht* in 1938. The exhibition then tells of the deportation of Jews to a concentration camp in Riga. Since then, a Jewish community has never again settled in Göppingen. In this section, the exhibition works mainly with photographs and material testimonies of the time (such as the Yellow Star). Film recordings of the Auerbacher family show their everyday life in Göppingen and the family's later escape to the United States.

The sixth and last part of the exhibition deals with the legal and social reappraisal of National Socialism after 1945. In the context of Göppingen's town history, the case of the local pharmacist Viktor Capesius, who turned out to be a former SS lieutenant general, is highlighted. Capesius was charged in the first Auschwitz trial in 1965 as a war criminal for aiding and abetting murder in the Dachau and Auschwitz concentration camps. In addition, there is information on reparations and civic engagement that promoted Nazi ideology in the city. Songwriter Peter Rohland, known for his arrangements of Yiddish songs, is featured in this section of the exhibition. The exhibition concludes with a video sequence showing Inge Auerbacher, as a Holocaust survivor, in a discussion with a school class in which she points to antisemitism and racism as a current problem in society.

Overall, the exhibition offers a comprehensive overview of Jewish history on a local and national level. Through the approach of a "history from below", individual fates become transparent, enabling individual comprehension. In this way, the exhibition also avoids the danger of exoticization and "Othering" outlined above. Furthermore, it repeatedly emphasizes the commonalities of Judaism and Christianity, thus realizing its approach and its intention to illustrate a shared heritage. By pointing out current dangers in its outlook, it offers possibilities for a museum pedagogical discourse on racism and antisemitism.

## Place of dialogue? Museum, mediation and antisemitism

Half of the visitors in Jebenhausen are currently school-age children from the region.<sup>12</sup> This raises the question of didactic and educational intentions. At the same time, the museum sees itself not only as a place of remembrance and history, but also as a lively venue for panel discussions, lectures, talks, and educational events in the community (Sieber 2020).

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and violent group of thugs. Several people were injured during the planned clash with the labor movement. The day of the battle was later glorified and henceforth celebrated as the founding day of the Göppingen NSDAP (Haas 2012).

12 According to museum director Dr. Dominik Sieber, the museum had 2,800 visitors in 2019, compared to about 1,800 visitors in 2015 (Sieber 2020).

Museal mediation, it can be said, aims to establish connections between past, present and future and to consider learning from history with the help of material culture as a possibility for coping with the present. This form of extracurricular learning is also presented in the context model, where it is understood as a kind of dialogue between the individual and the environment (Falk and Dierking 2018). Such learning offers the opportunity to acquire and reflect on knowledge. Klare and Sturm also point out that this is a basic pedagogical prerequisite for questioning ideologies and historical myths (Klare and Sturm 2017). They emphasize the importance of offering visitors a space for free discussion, exposing them to critical pedagogy, and thus paving the way for a possible change of perspective on issues and attitudes. Furthermore, subject-oriented museum pedagogy can help memories become relevant, reflexive, and political (Scherr 2010; Giesecke and Welzer 2012). Thus, provoking contradiction and conflict in historical observation can also lead to critical reflection on past and present ideologies, such as those represented by antisemitism or racism (Meier and Werner 2020).

As a place of extracurricular education, the museum has an educational mission. As Kößler and Mende explain, this mission is primarily historical, but also includes aspects of cultural and political education (Kößler and Mende 2017). The question therefore arises whether the concept of the Jewish Museum Göppingen is also suitable as an extracurricular place of learning – for example, to combat current forms of antisemitism. The 2011 antisemitism report by the Federal Ministry of the Interior already pointed out the urgency of the issue. The report suggested developing pedagogical and didactic methods to show the connection between historical events and current antisemitic forms (BMI 2011).

*a) Education and factual knowledge:* In Jebenhausen, Karlheinz Rueß emphasizes the importance of factual knowledge in the fight against antisemitism. To counter it, the museum must present facts and invite reflection on racist ideas in history. In his view, exhibitions that convey knowledge also have the power to change attitudes (Rueß 2020). In Jebenhausen, this is to be done through the narrative of a shared heritage – from the presentation of the former conditions of coexistence in Jebenhausen to the integration of the Jews in Göppingen. In this way, ethnic “Othering”, which sees Jews and Germans as two mutually exclusive groups, is on the one hand historically classified, and on the other hand refuted as a fallacy.

*b) Substitution of personal experience:* Since many visitors lack everyday contact with Jewish people or communities, many Jewish museums to this day provide a substitute for this direct experience with Judaism in many places. In a Jewish museum, such personal experiences should be at least partially possible. Thus, the curator sees the museum as a place of active encounter that makes the narrative of a shared heritage (the Jewish citizens were primarily German) vivid and tangible. Here, oral history with contemporary witnesses in the exhibition makes just as great a contribution as the invitation of (Jewish) guests in the educational program.

c) *Political education*: In order to contribute to the active fight against anti-semitism, the invalidation of religious prejudices is just as relevant as that of ethnobiological and geopolitical stereotypes. According to Karlheinz Rueß, the Lebenhausen Museum can only make a small contribution to interreligious dialogue.<sup>13</sup> His successor, Dominik Sieber, notes the great responsibility of Jewish museums that have arisen in the course of a dialogic culture of remembrance as places of commemoration and enlightenment. However, he also sees that it is a difficult pedagogical undertaking to convey morals and ethics. It is not to be expected that visitors will be affected after the visit.

d) *Place of dialogue*: Through interactive offerings in the exhibition and its outreach program, the museum aims to promote dialogue. This function is underlined by exhibition designer Kurt Ranger, who sees the museum as an educational institution “where you can think about the future” (Ranger 2020). The extent to which the Jewish Museum Göppingen can stimulate discussion about the pitfalls of modern racism and antisemitism cannot be conclusively ascertained by the interviews. Cooperation with schools plays a major role here. However, it is questionable whether the museum can motivate those who position themselves ideologically in the field of antisemitism to engage in dialogue.

## Conclusion: Shared or difficult heritage?

The Jewish Museum Göppingen uses various curatorial practices to realize the concept of a shared cultural heritage. This seems to be an adequate way to sensitize visitors for the history, but also for the lived present. In doing so, the museum trusts in the possibility of using the concept of a shared cultural heritage to develop a multi-perspective approach and also to historically debunk racist prejudices.

Between 1985 and 1992, the Museum conducted intensive research and cooperation with the city’s former Jewish community and with their descendants. The main narrative of the exhibition is based on this collaboration; it takes into account the perspective of the victims as well as the socio-political impact on their overall life stories. Shared heritage will be expressed through individual biographies, objects, oral histories, written books, public lectures, and events that keep the heritage alive and vivid. Thus, the Jewish Museum Göppingen has become not only a place of German-Jewish history, but also of German-Jewish cooperation. On this level, shared

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13 “In the museum, we can rather ask questions or initiate a discussion; we cannot hand out recipes or attitudes that everyone has to develop for themselves. [...] It’s tedious, but there is no other way to approach prejudice and racist thinking. It’s not a quick way, but it could be a starting point” (Rueß 2020).



heritage is understood as a mission to learn from history for a more peaceful future. However, even if the shared Jewish-German heritage can be confirmed from a historical point of view, the future is uncertain, as there is no longer an active Jewish community locally.

The question of the extent to which the narrative of a shared heritage can also be used to prevent antisemitism cannot be answered conclusively. But the fact that the museum takes the non-negotiable position that Jews were just as much Germans as their Christian fellow citizens at every point in history until the fall of National Socialism can be used for educational work. In this way, visitors have the opportunity to learn about other perspectives and to broaden their own (Klare and Sturm 2017; Falk and Dierking 2018). In this way, the approach of a “history from below” also underlines the pedagogical intention of democratic learning from the past. All in all, it can be said that, in the case of the Jewish Museum Göppingen, the concept of a shared heritage seeks to invalidate polarizations and works toward the prevention of antisemitism.

So, is the concept of a shared heritage also suitable for conclusions that lead to political positioning? This initial question can be answered in the affirmative, albeit with the qualifications made above. Insights from historical catastrophes such as the Holocaust can help to address the current antisemitism and racism of the multicultural migration society. However, the role of the historical museum as an extracurricular place of learning should not be overestimated. Nevertheless, it can be stated that the reappraisal of the past provides knowledge that is important for democratic educational work. Thus, in 2011, the *Stolpersteine* (stumbling blocks) initiative, which luminously lays stones in front of houses where Jews used to live, was also started in Göppingen.<sup>14</sup> In addition, a memorial trail was established in Jebenhausen that leads through nine Jewish stations in the community (including the site of the former synagogue). These activities emanating from the museums have made Jewish life more visible to the public and keep the memory of the Jewish community alive. In this sense, the concept of a shared heritage certainly contributes to the peace work of the present.

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14 *Stolpersteine* is a European art project by the artist Gunter Demnig, who wants to commemorate the victims of National Socialism by laying golden paving stones at former Jewish places of residence (see Other Sources: No. 3).

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# Shared memories, shared heritage?

## Museal concepts of (im-)migration in Germany

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Christiane Dätsch

### Introduction

Those who remember, select, and interpret what they see as their own past. Such reconstruction processes have the goal of providing the past with meaning, stabilizing the present, and generating insights for the future; in this way, “historical consciousness” emerges (Rüsen 2001, p. 24). Associated with the selection and recording of memories are mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion that relate not only to events of the past, but also to (potential) recipients.<sup>1</sup> The fact that these mechanisms of memory and memorial culture also operate in museums as institutional agencies of mobile material heritage is no longer questioned today.

Museums are, as the 2007 ICOM definition states, “a non-profit, permanent institution, open to the public, at the service of society and its development, which, for the purposes of study, education and experience, acquires, preserves, researches, publicizes, and exhibits tangible and intangible evidence of people and their environment” (see Other Sources: No. 1). Once established as a *museion*, a “sanctuary of the muses” (Baur 2010a, p. 15) and important research institution in Alexandria, the museum developed over the centuries into a place for collecting, preserving, and communicating movable cultural heritage. From the Baroque idea of depicting the world with its curiosities in the collection cabinet (Collet 2012), through the Enlightenment idea of exploring it scientifically-systematically, to the 19th century bourgeois educational program according to which canonical works of art and testimonies of history were to be made publicly accessible, the museum has already experienced many functional attributions. In the process, the collected knowledge became a signum of self-reflexive and, time and again, national identity-building processes.

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1 For better readability, quotations from German literature have been translated into English, as well as the titles of German projects and exhibitions. German sources are marked as such in the bibliography.

Less attention was paid to the fact that the creation, interpretation, and presentation of cultural heritage by the museum were also the result of an often implicit, sometimes eurocentric self-understanding. Only critical museology deconstructed such institutional mechanisms (Sternfeld 2009). In the course of this, it also became visible that cultural history museums had often excluded testimonies of material culture if they did not represent an elite culture; this included the so-called guest worker culture.<sup>2</sup> The invisibility of the heritage of immigrants corresponded with a general neglect of everyday culture as material heritage in museums. At the same time, the circumstance reflected a specific culture of remembrance, that of the German majority society, that had not yet opened up to the heritage of minorities in its own country. To change this, a political turnaround was needed that revised societal strategies of inclusion and exclusion, which also affected the framework conditions of collecting in museums.

This research on the heritage of the so-called guest worker culture in German museums draws on these considerations when it attempts to show the laborious path of inclusion of the so-called guest worker heritage in the German culture of remembrance. To this end, it raises the question of the conditions for a shared culture of remembrance and its material testimonies. Delving into the case study of DOMiD – *Documentation Center and Museum of Migration in Germany* and the ways DOMiD wish to design the guest workers heritage will shed light on the conditions needed to construct shared cultural heritage and its potential material testimonies.<sup>3</sup> By analyzing documents related to DOMiD as well as secondary research on migration in Germany, the research exposes the possibilities and limitations of shared narratives. In his outlook, the research gives a preliminary summary and asks what possibilities today's narratives of migration offer to correct exclusion strategies, to integrate neglected heritage into collections and thus to achieve a more inclusive image of history and heritage.

## Emigrate, immigrate? Narratives of migration in Germany

In Germany, there is still no museum of immigration, but there are two central museums on the subject of emigration: the *German Emigration Center* in Bremerhaven and the *Ballinstadt Emigration Museum* in Hamburg. They were opened in 2005 and

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2 In this context, guest labor is understood as those activities that were performed by foreign workers between 1955 and 1990 due to the dynamic economic growth in Germany (Yano 2007).

3 Several interview requests made to DOMiD staff in 2020–2021, as part of the *Shared and/or Contradictory Heritage?* research project, were declined due to time constraints.

2007, i.e., both after the turn of the millennium, in order to tell the story of German emigrants who had set out for America due to political and religious persecution, hunger and need (Baur 2006). These emigrants, who left German soil en masse from the 18th century until shortly after the founding of the German Reich in 1871, were joined in the 19th century by emigrants who left Germany as settlers. Emigrants who left for German colonies as settlers, soldiers or civil servants, such as to German Southwest Africa (Namibia), German West Africa (Togo, Cameroon), and German East Africa (Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi), to Kiautschou (People's Republic of China), German New Guinea (Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands), German Samoa Islands (Samoa), and Micronesia (Conrad 2019). However, their history is not told by emigrant museums. It is left to historical and ethnological museums, which are opening up to German colonial history under the pressure of postcolonial criticism (Foundation German Historical Museum Berlin 2016).

Nevertheless, both forms of geographical settlement of Germans outside their own state borders in the 19th century meant that the state had to redefine who was to be considered "German": those who lived on German soil, or also those who adhered to German culture overseas? Since the principle of residence (*ius soli*) no longer applied to exiles, the principle of descent, *ius sanguinis*, seemed to the state to be an adequate solution. As Wolfgang Wippermann (1999) has shown, the change from the principle of domicile to the principle of descent can be traced back, among other things, to the ethnic concept of the nation, which also prevailed in nineteenth-century Germany.<sup>4</sup> The principle of descent as the basis for German citizenship was still adopted by the new Federal Republic and remained in place with regard to some main premises until the year 2000. It was not until the late 1990s that this circumstance triggered major debates about how the principle of descent could be reconciled with the reality of German society.

Closely related to the principle of origin was an ethnic cultural concept that linked the idea of the nation with that of a homogeneous collective identity qua "people's body". It also formed the basis for the content-related work of national museums and those museums that sought to trace and illustrate German emigration on the basis of historical factors. In the process, it was overlooked that the ethnic concept of culture abroad had often contributed to the reinforcement of mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion and strategies of transmission and preservation, since it offered suitable possibilities of demarcation. The preservation of language and culture, but also the handing down of narratives of a German homeland and origin, shaped the self-image of numerous emigrants, who regarded personal mementos as the heritage of their German cultural identity (see Other Sources:

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4 Prussia made a start with the principle of citizenship by descent in 1842, while the Reich and Nationality Act introduced direct Reich citizenship for the first time in 1913 (Wippermann 1999).

No. 2). The ethnic or holistic concept of culture is still evident in the narratives of museums that present the history of German settlers in Eastern Europe or German expellees after 1945, such as the *Sudeten German Museum* in Munich since 2020 or the *Berlin Documentation Centre for Displacement, Expulsion, Reconciliation* (SFVV) since 2021. These narratives refer to lost territories and to the lifeworlds of settlers in the diaspora, who passed on “Germanness” in their communities far from home. With the mass return to the German heartland after 1945, not only the land but also the specific culture of the diaspora was lost, which lived on, orally transmitted, in the family memory (Kossert 2020).

Today, the German culture of remembrance deals with emigration and expulsion in a largely enlightened manner. This may have to do with the increasing historical closure of both phenomena. Historians and museologists, on the other hand, continue to have more difficulty with the topic of immigration, which was actively pursued in the Federal Republic between 1955 and 1973 for economic reasons. Its reappraisal in museums also initially followed an ethnic (and thus homogenizing) point of view. Immigrants were regarded as “strangers” (in language, religion, and education), their stay was considered as episodic and therefore irrelevant for the collective (German) culture of remembrance.

The realization at the beginning of the 21st century that immigration to Germany, in contrast to German emigration, was not a temporary or even completed phenomenon led only slowly to changes in the public as well as the political discourse, toward the official acknowledgement that Germany was a country of immigration. Since then, various governments have largely advocated the “orderly immigration” of labor. In the course of this, the social consequences of immigration are also being addressed and the self-image as a migration society is being publicly discussed (see Other Sources: No. 3). The new political attitude also led to a new vocabulary: for example, after the reform of German citizenship law in 1999 and the ratification of the Immigration Act in 2005, a new terminology was introduced by the Federal Statistical Office that referred to anyone as a “person with a migration background” (see Other Sources: No. 4) who did not have German citizenship by birth or had at least one parent to whom this applied. As critical as this terminology may be on the one hand, it changed public perception on the other. According to this definition, around 20.8 million people with a migration background lived in Germany in 2018 (see Other Sources: No. 5), i.e., a quarter of the population. In view of such figures, immigration became an urgent topic for society as a whole, claiming its place in the culture of remembrance of a pluralistic German society.

The agencies of memory and heritage, among them museums, were also increasingly addressing the topic. Numerous museums of urban and cultural history tried to integrate the topic into their exhibitions. The German Emigration Center as well added a second part to its permanent exhibition in 2012, which focused on 330 years of immigration history to Germany based on 15 different migration groups

(see Other Sources: No. 6).<sup>5</sup> The *German Museums Association* (DMB) also endeavored to introduce the museum to this topic by founding a working group on migration in 2009 (see Other Sources: No. 8). In 2011, it realized the project *Cultural Diversity in the Museum: Collecting, Exhibiting and Mediating* to promote the intercultural opening of German museums, together with the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media. As part of this project, an initial stocktaking of the previous engagement with the topic of migration was also developed (Deuser 2012). In 2015, a handout on *Museum, Migration and Cultural Diversity* was published, in which the *German Museums Association* committed itself to a broad concept of migration (DMB 2015a). In parallel, from 2012 to 2015, museums and migrant self-organizations worked together in the program “All the world in the museum”. In this cooperation between museums and migrant self-organizations, which was also initiated by the German Museums Association, 14 cooperation projects addressed cultural participation, diversity of perspectives and intercultural dialogues in museums (DMB 2015b).

How and in what way immigration was dealt with as part of German memory culture, however, depended on which concept of culture and which concept of migration the museums based their work on (Deuser 2012). When examining this question retrospectively, it is noticeable that most museums adhered to an ethnic understanding of culture even in the case of immigration until well into the 2000s, which is why the immigrants’ narrative of origin stood in the foreground and became the criterion of difference. Thus, museums proved to be adherents of a narrow understanding of migration and its varieties of immigration, emigration, forced migration, labor migration, remigration or internal migration, influenced by theories of classical economics and by political concepts of the (ethnic) nation. The narrow concept of migration is based on the idea of crossing borders: representatives of homogeneous cultures leave their territory and live in an area where they act as minorities. As the narrow concept of migration was also adopted in the narratives of the so-called guest worker culture in the museum, there was a danger from the outset of adopting its mechanisms of difference, of inclusion and exclusion. While narrow, ethnicizing concepts of migration in exhibitions often lead to the representation of individual cultures, to the comparison of cultures or to normative narratives that present immigration as a success story of assimilation, broad, discursive or critical concepts of culture attempt to lay the foundation for new narratives of migration by placing an emphasis on the discursive negotiation of cultural encounter and hy-

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5 Since 2021, the mission to research and teach about emigration *and* immigration in Bremerhaven has been supported by a non-university research institution called the *Academy of Comparative Migration Studies* (ACOMIS), which draws on infrastructure provided by the institution (see Other Sources: No. 7).



bridization (Buden and Nowotny 2008). In doing so, they first create the preconditions for a new narrative and reception of minority heritage as shared heritage.

### **Forgotten heritage? Migration and guest work in cultural history museums**

Since the 2000s, interest in the topic of immigration has been growing in cultural and urban history museums (Osses 2012). However, many museums have reached their limits. Often, following the narrative of a culture of remembrance that excluded guest labor, they had not collected objects on the topic. To fill the gap, the museums took various approaches. They asked the migrant communities for loans or worked with the method of oral history. On the level of the collection, they tried to reinterrogate already collected objects with the help of migration advisory boards, to revive buried functional contexts, and in this way to generate new exhibition narratives. To convey the theme of guest work, many museums chose the format of the special exhibition, which allowed for experimentation and made it possible to work with loans. The semiotic triad of object, collection, and exhibition will be used to take a brief look at these efforts by museums to incorporate guest work into the culture of remembrance.

(1) *Objects*: Museums that did not have any objects of their own on the topic of guest work usually went the route of loans. The *Museum of Art and Cultural History Dortmund* also chose this route in 2008 when it prepared its special exhibition *Evet – Yes, I want! Wedding Culture and Fashion from 1800 to the Present a German-Turkish Encounter* (Allmanritter 2010). The exhibition wanted to show objects from Turkish communities in Germany in addition to exhibits from Turkish museums. Therefore, the curators asked both the German and the Turkish population for contributions through the press (Allmanritter and Siebenhaar 2010). However, this medium only activated German lenders, which is why it required the activation of intermediaries of Turkish origin to reach migrant circles as well. In contrast to the German lenders, the Turkish lenders usually demanded their objects back after the end of the exhibition, which is why the museum's hope of permanently increasing its collection through special exhibitions was not fulfilled. The reasons given for reclaiming the object were the emotional value of the memento and the fear that the object might end up in the museum's depot (Deuser 2012).

(2) *Oral history*: Working with eyewitness accounts appeared to be an adequate way out where either no objects were available or explicitly virtual museums on immigration were to be created. The *Museum Life Paths – Online Migration Museum Rhineland-Palatinate*, which was founded in 2009 on behalf of the state government of Rhineland-Palatinate, curated its permanent and special exhibitions on the basis of archival texts, memories, photographs, and eyewitness videos (see Other Sources:

No. 9).<sup>6</sup> In pictures and text, entrepreneurs, social workers or immigrants recall the first decades of guest work. The *Life Paths* section contains personal portraits in sound and vision of immigrants, such as that of the Turkish vocational school teacher Hüseyin Kaya. They make clear how great the hurdles were that the guest workers initially had to overcome in German society, starting with the language and food and ending with everyday life and work. With humor, Kaya relays these difficulties today in retrospect: “Although the milk bottle was labeled, we couldn’t understand it” (see Other Sources: No. 10). As impressive and authentic as these accounts are, the oral history approach does not solve the museum’s factual problem of having to fill gaps in its material heritage. The question of social desirability also comes into play in the format of the eyewitness account, as does the psychological problem of memory that is often subsequently turned into positive, traumas of the past are toned down, and the achievement of assimilation is emphasized, since such assimilation also fits better into one’s own culture of remembrance.

(3) *Questioning the collection*: Museums whose collections do not have the topic of guest labor or immigration explicitly inscribed in them, have the opportunity to question it with the help of a broad concept of migration. This was the approach taken by four Berlin museums in the research project *New Views of Collections: The Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg Museum*, the *City Museum Berlin*, the *Werkbund Archive – Museum of Things* and the *Museum for Islamic Art*. With the help of interdisciplinary sources and migrant advisory boards and in dialogue with visitors, they surveyed their collections in order to understand them from multiple perspectives. The results of this project, initiated by the German Museums Association, were presented in 2011 in the laboratory exhibition *New Entries* at the Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg Museum and published as a book in 2013 (Bluche et al. 2013). Two examples from this cooperation work are briefly presented as illustrations.

*Mosque-shaped alarm clock*: The Werkbund Archive – Museum of Things houses the collection of the *German Werkbund Association* (DWB), which was founded in Munich in 1907 with the idea of preserving the intellectual and material heritage of the artists’ association (see Other Sources: No. 11). This also determined the structure and further reception of the collection. As Fabian Ludovco writes, guidelines for “good taste” in the sense of the *Werkbund* ideology were formulated as early as 1912 on the basis of a “department of aberrations of taste”, established by Gustav Pazaurek in the *Stuttgart State Museum of Decorative Arts* (Ludovico 2013). Alluding to this systematic approach, the museum had developed an exhibition on *Bad Things – An Encyclopedia of Untaste* in 2009, for which a mosque alarm clock (Mosque-shaped alarm clock) in Berlin-Kreuzberg had been acquired. (Fig. 1)

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6 Other examples are the *Osnabrück Virtual Migration Museum* and the *Virtual Migration Museum*. The latter was opened by DOMiD in 2018.

Fig. 1: Alarm clock in the shape of a mosque, c. 2000, Collection Werkbund Archive – Museum of Things, Berlin, inv. no. O 14257 (Copyright: Armin Hermann)



Fig. 2: Hans Rudi Erdt, Problem cigarette tin for the “Moslem” brand, Berlin ca. 1912, Jewish Museum Berlin, inv. no. 2000/324/0 (Copyright: Jens Ziehe)



According to the aesthetics of the Werkbund ideology of 100 years ago, the alarm clock had been grouped as “devotional kitsch”. As a result, “other implications, such as its function for religious practice, initially went unnoticed” (Ludovico 2013, p. 115). In the course of reexamining the object with the assistance of migrant focus groups, the curators now learned that the alarm clock was not only to be seen as a product with religious symbolism, but could also generate in its recipients the “feeling of the sacred realm extended to the product” (Beinhauer-Köhler in: Ludovico 2013, p. 116). From a design perspective, the alarm clock is Far Eastern mass-produced goods, with no major design aspirations. By migrants, on the other hand, it is associated with Islamic culture, and thus their own. The new survey brought to light life-world contexts that were different from those of the museum. The museum can now tell both stories and make connections to other objects.

*Problem Moslem:* The second example is more complex, as it is historical. The Werkbund Archive – Museum of Things owns a tin cigarette box (1912) whose lid shows the inscription *Problem Moslem* and the figure of a smoking Oriental. The figure wears a fez and Western clothing, as was customary in the Ottoman Empire at the time. (Fig. 2) It was designed by Hans Rudi Erdt for the Jewish entrepreneur Szlama Rochmann, who founded the *Mahala* cigarette factory in Berlin in 1889. He later renamed his company Problem: “Moslem was the best-known brand of the Problem cigarette factory” (Ludovico 2013, p. 118). For the Werkbund Archive – Museum of Things, the can’s significance today lies primarily in its modern packaging design because, as Ludovico points out, Erdt was one of the best-known German poster designers of the early 20th century. The orientalized representation was primarily intended to emphasize the “escapist function of tobacco consumption” (Bignens, in: Ludovico 2013, p. 120). Such exoticism formed a popular advertising strategy around 1910. It ascribes to the cigarette box a strategic sales function that plays with reality (the increasing secularization of Turkey under Kemal Atatürk created such hybrid fashions) as well as with Western stereotypes of the Orient (Ludovico 2013). Without historical knowledge, however, this advertising strategy of the time seems strange. Thus, even in the migrant focus groups, the combination of company and brand names *Problem Moslem* “led to implications that certainly did not exist at the time the cigarette can was created” (Ludovico 2013, p. 122). At the same time, the dialogue brought to light different perspectives and levels of knowledge that showed that a museum object can open up “a whole horizon of topics” (ibid). It goes beyond what a *semiophor* (Pomian 2013), an object whose property as a specific sign carrier is created by the museum context, can do.

(4) (*Special*) *exhibitions:* Overall, exhibitions on migration show different approaches, but four dominant approaches can be identified: (1) migration as immigration history, (2) migration from an intercultural and global perspective, (3) migration as cultural comparison, and (4) migration as “migration main-streaming” (Deuser 2012). According to Deuser, the first form, the narrative of immigration,

is realized most frequently.<sup>7</sup> Exhibitions that tell migration as immigration history proceed thematically or chronologically. The arrival of the guest workers is contextualized with German postwar history, and often a German narrative voice leads through the overall concept, which can be detected in the room and exhibit texts. The illustrative motifs and metaphors such as border, journey, suitcase, or the “cornucopia” equally emphasize the narrative of immigration (Baur 2009). Quite a few of these narratives have a positive ending. The assimilation performance of the migrants is emphasized, the overcoming of the “foreigner” and his absorption into the majority society. Difficulties, conflicts, and ruptures are only hinted at or staged as part of the (mastered) past. Traumas are hardly mentioned in the narratives, nor are the causes of migration in the countries of origin (lack of democracy, economic recession, civil wars) or the living conditions of migrants in the host country (Baur 2009). Since the history of migration as immigration is mostly told in special exhibitions, their narratives do not so much promote an institutional change of perspective as the reappraisal of the content of excluded events with the aim of generating knowledge. This is then to be included in “national’ metanarratives” (Kolb and Fuchs 2017, p. 293). This is a first step towards an expanded concept of migration, but not towards a permanent inclusion of alternative perspectives in German museum narratives. Exhibitions that understand immigration not as a periodic special case of history but as a regular case of modern immigration societies would have to change their perspective on migration. This is apparently only possible to a limited extent for German museums, which often lack migrant heritage in their collections and mostly operate with German staff. Therefore, the question must be asked whether a change in perspective can only be achieved through the participation of immigrants in the narrative of migration. DOMiD answers this question in the affirmative.

### Shared memories? DOMiD and the narrative of a culture of migration

At the same time as the work of the urban and cultural history museums, an alternative model for the museumization of migration “from the margins” emerged in North Rhine-Westphalia. In Essen and later in Cologne, migrants articulated the desire to preserve their heritage in Germany for their descendants and to tell their story themselves. This motivation gave rise to the establishment of DOMiD in 1990, the year of German reunification, which had initially been founded as *DOMiT – The*

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7 Deuser cites as examples: *For years you have not taken care of us* (2005, Kiel City Museum); *Merhaba Stuttgart. My city – my history* (2009, Linden-Museum); *Ice cold passion. Italian Ice-Makers in the Ruhr Area* (2009, LWL Industrial Museum Hannover Colliery) and others (Deuser 2012).

*Documentation Center and Museum of Migration from Turkey*. In the beginning, the association set up an archive in Essen to preserve material evidence of Turkish guest workers from disappearing.

The original plan was to establish a Europe-wide center for this purpose; later, Germany was to form the core of the concept. The goal was to build an organization that would preserve the historical heritage of immigrants for future generations and make it accessible to the public (Eryilmaz 2012b, p. 33).

In September 2003, the *Museum of Migration in Germany Association* was founded, in which representatives of various migrant communities and academics joined forces with the aim of establishing an immigration museum (Eryilmaz 2012b). Both associations merged in 2007 to form DOMiD, which since then has been concerned not only with the heritage of Turkish guest workers, but with the heritage of all immigrant cultures.

The merger also resulted in a change in the underlying self-image. Whereas DOMiT had still been committed to a more ethnic cultural and origin narrative, DOMiD saw itself as an “open forum for people with and without an immigrant background” (Eryilmaz 2012b, p. 33). It was no longer their origin that united the association members, but the experience of the common territory. Germany as a place to live became a point of reference, as it had been for the narratives on German emigration, but this time under different auspices. It was not their origin in Germany that connected the migrants, but their immigration to Germany. The common ground was of a geographical nature, but not according to the usual pattern of origin, but that of arriving. Since 2007 at the latest, the work of DOMiD has thus been based on a discursive concept of culture. The experience of migration to Germany became the metanarrative of a collective migrant culture of remembrance. With it, the association tried to distance itself from a migration understanding of origin, which it expresses in its mission statement:

All of our lives have been and will continue to be shaped by migration. People come and go – and they leave traces behind. As diverse as society is, so many stories are collected, preserved, and told by the museum. Through a trust that has grown over decades, a collection that is unique in Germany has emerged from the midst of society and forms the basis of our museum (see Other Sources: No. 12).

As founding member Aytac Eryilmaz makes clear, the initial focus was on ensuring the visibility of the material heritage of migration in Germany. DOMiD was able to realize this goal to a large extent through special exhibitions, traveling exhibitions

and projects with German partners.<sup>8</sup> Overall, DOMiD thus brought the topic of migration to greater public attention, especially in North Rhine-Westphalia. For many migrants, the exhibitions were also an incentive to deal with their heritage and to visit German institutions such as museums for the first time.

Can we thus speak of a shared heritage, even though the association itself prefers to call it “shared memories”? It seems that the idea of sharing found its limits where the question of ownership was concerned. Thus, one of the association’s first experiences in the mid-1990s was that a museum in Bonn did not offer to cooperate in exhibition and mediation work, but did offer to buy its collection (Eryılmaz 2012b). However, building up the collection had been an emancipatory act, which is why a sale was out of the question. Reactions like these encouraged the association not only to maintain sovereignty over the collection, but also to have a say in its mediation – ideally in its own museum. The independence that DOMiD had acquired as a civilian agent in the changing German culture of remembrance in the Federal Republic proved to be a good basis for this (Gogos 2021). In this museum, not only immigrants could rediscover their material heritage, but also German visitors could be told the common (postwar) history – from a migrant perspective. From the point of view of the association, such a museum (or *House of the Immigration Society*, as DOMiD calls it today) would fulfill a task for society as a whole and deconstruct old concepts of migration.

Questioning ethnic identity, tradition and homogeneity as social constructions and expanding them through concepts such as difference, change and hybridity, deconstructing social attributions and power relations, are the preconditions for the appropriation of history and the production of “shared” memory (Eryılmaz and Rapp 2009, p. 273).

With the call for a central migration museum as a place where memories and heritage could be experienced and shared from multiple perspectives, the association’s migrant metanarrative which uses poststructuralist notions of culture as a discursive space of negotiation also solidified. This narrative, which is referred to here as the “culture of migration”, is not only meant to be reflected in objects, memorabilia, and eyewitness accounts of different countries, but also to help create an “alternative view of history” (Fuchs and Kolb 2017, p. 295), in other words: a paradigm shift in perception. The narrative of the “culture of migration” will now also be examined

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8 As one of the most important projects, Aytac Eryılmaz mentions the exhibition *Foreign homeland – A history of immigration from Turkey* in 1998, which was created in cooperation with the Ruhrlandmuseum. Until that time, “it was not common for a ‘Kanaken-Association’ to cooperate with an established German social history museum on an equal footing” (2012a, p. 33).

in more detail using the heuristics of the semiotic triad of object, collection, and exhibition.

(1) *Loans*: Following the broad concept of migration, DOMiD sees itself as a collecting institution, but not as a selective gatekeeper. Therefore, the association keeps memorabilia from all migrants who want to hand over their heritage to a public institution – including furnishings, clothing, devotional objects or objects brought from home, written material, photographs and films. The fact that DOMiD openly communicates the option of loaning objects allows two conclusions to be drawn: even at DOMiD, object donors seem to find it difficult to part with their memorabilia altogether (this process is no different from German museums). However, the association shows a sensitivity to ownership and possession: it is not concerned with acquiring the exhibits for the collection, but rather with safeguarding and researching personal memories.

(2) *Collection*: The preservation of the material heritage of guest workers does not follow a targeted collection logic, except that of avoiding oblivion. It has led to an archive that includes some 150,000 writings, documents, and objects on the social, everyday, and cultural history of migration in Germany (Eryilmaz 2012b). To date, the narrative of this collection is simply the diversity of migrant experience.<sup>9</sup> By not undertaking the selection process of what goes into its repository itself, but leaving it to the object donors, DOMiD creates a multi-perspectival and participatory metanarrative that many have a say in the “culture of migration”. It is characterized by the decision of many, the heterogeneity of cultures and the experiences of individuals who hand over their heritage to the archive. Thus, the collection is not based on a static and homogenizing understanding, as is the case with narratives of origin, but on a dynamic one. It is based on the idea that it is not primarily a matter of preserving the representative memory of an era or time, but rather the personal memory of the object donors.

(3) *Exhibition*: The collection is joined by education. The most obvious interface of the association with a general social education work is its exhibitions. In the special exhibitions, but above all in the permanent exhibition of the new House of Immigration Society, which is being prepared, it is important for DOMiD to implement this change of perspective and to make it tangible: migration is to be viewed from the perspective of the immigrants. This is accompanied by the challenge of deconstructing classic concepts and terms of migration as immigration history – among them “nation”, “borders” or “integration” (Kolb and Fuchs 2017, p. 304) – and filling them anew. Old patterns of knowledge are to be made transparent, concepts are to be questioned, which is what the concept of the permanent exhibition in the House

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9 Thus, the website reads, “do you have treasures in your attic or basement? If you have materials on migration history and would like to preserve them permanently, we invite you to contact us” (see Other Sources: No.14).



of Immigration Society is supposed to stand for. Discursive “concept spaces” (Kolb and Fuchs 2017, p. 305) are planned, in which visitors can reflect on concepts such as identity, nation, change, memory, mobility, border, or foreignness, and enter into conversation (DOMiD 2013). In this way, according to DOMiD, previously excluded worlds of experience should become visible, as well as internalized stereotypes and monoperspectival positions of power.

This concept cannot yet be tested in reality, as the House of Immigration Society will not open until 2027. Initial indications of what its permanent exhibition might look like are provided by the association’s *Virtual Migration Museum*, which has been accessible since 2018. Here, an exhibition tour was designed on three time and space axes, which are connected by superordinate terms such as “value”, “home-land” or “perception” (see Other Sources: No. 13). The visitor can navigate through living rooms, schoolyards, and workplaces of migrants of three generations with the help of virtual reality glasses, where he/she finds digitized objects from the DOMiD collection and hears sounds and lively voices. The association has similar plans for the permanent exhibition, as can be seen in the brochure *New Ways* of 2020. Here it presents itself as a nationwide center for the research and mediation of migration (DOMiD 2020). In this way, DOMiD sets itself apart from previous exhibition approaches and explicates its own dynamic narrative of a “culture of migration”: migration is to be stripped of its exotic status, and experiences and heritage are to be discursively negotiated and shared.

To summarize, the narrative of the “culture of migration” represents the diverse origins of the migrated by appealing to anthropological and social commonalities. Migration, understood in this way, marks a discursive space in which testimonies of the past are interpreted before the experience of the recipient. In this logic, the moment of the common negotiation process comes to the fore; only it gives the “culture of migration” its meaning. It is defined together, as the discursive negotiated meaning of migration. This experience represents a common heritage of all migrants – they share it, as a shared heritage, with the German population by using their voice to create their own narrative (Dätsch 2022). This understanding of a shared heritage emphasizes less the process of assimilation than the transcultural potential of heritage. It opens up in the multi-perspective narrative and by means of objects of migration.

### **Common or shared heritage? Possibilities and limits**

What possibilities does a “culture of migration” offer for correcting strategies of exclusion, integrating forgotten heritage into discourses, and in this way, arriving at a more inclusive image of self and history? One aim of this paper was to shed light on how this question is dealt with both in German museums and by the migrant initia-

tive DOMiD e.V., which seeks to tell the story of guest work in Germany differently by means of its archive.

One quality of the approach is to make migration discourseable. It is possible to talk about causes, but also about problems of migration of people and objects. The intended multiperspectivization can lead to narratives of cultural heritage that not only use the polysemy of the objects, but also the polyphony of the observers. They allow for transnational and transcultural interpretations as well as different understandings and conceptions of what unites and what distinguishes. The readiness to (re)interpret and define the cultural heritage through a change of perspective and to make it available as an offer for dialogue confronts all museums in the 21st century with new tasks.

A world that is networked and on the move is increasingly making migration the normal rather than the exceptional situation for nations. For this reason, new narratives and changes of perspective, as well as structural concepts on migration, are necessary for agents of change. That such a perspective ultimately transcends the national as a point of reference for individual and collective identities is already indicated in the broad concept of migration. In the migration society, “despite current developments, ultimately the overcoming of the ‘national’” (Kolb and Fuchs 2017, p. 304) is already inherent. Only one concept of heritage seems to be able to adequately respond to such a dynamic development in postmodern societies – that of shared heritage. Even if, at the present time, it still has a certain utopian quality, as can be seen not least in the area of ownership and the interpretive sovereignty of the institution, the dialogue about different perspectives leads in the end again to common ground.

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# Own or foreign heritage? Young Muslims in Auschwitz (2012–2021)

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## Introduction

The *Young Muslims in Auschwitz* project (Young Muslims in Auschwitz), that was carried out in Duisburg from 2012 to 2021, deals with antisemitism among young male Muslims in Germany. For the investigation of this project, however, this study formulates a broader thesis: antisemitism is the common legacy of different groups in Germany. It also advocates the idea that antisemitism is a heritage that links, often unconsciously, German history with current identity constructions of Muslim immigrants who have a nationalistic or religious background.

Antisemitism, understood as a form of exclusion, disparagement, and demonization of the “Jewish” Other, is still very present throughout Germany (Messerschmidt 2007). The reasons for this phenomenon are as diverse as the forms of antisemitism itself. In addition to an antisemitism of European origin, an antisemitism among immigrant Muslims can be detected, partly due to religious and political reasons (Mansour 2022). Both forms of antisemitism have common roots, at least to a certain extent. Even if this research focuses on the antisemitism among Muslims, it does not neglect its links to other forms of Jew hatred in Germany.

The legacy of antisemitism is considered not a positive but a negative one, and it collides with the official German self-image of today. Ideally, this heritage (as an idea) should not be passed on. Places to become aware of the (negative) legacy of the Holocaust are the former concentration camps, the largest of which is Auschwitz. The question of the extent to which German Nazi memorials can also serve as places of anti-racist education for migrants to learn about German history has occupied the memorial education system for some time. On the one hand, there is an awareness that in a migration society the narratives for teaching the Holocaust have to be differentiated; on the other hand, educators experience that some migrants (or Germans with a migration background) are openly antisemitic. This is where *Young Muslims in Auschwitz* comes in: it was initiated by the Duisburg Germanist and educator Burak Yılmaz in 2011. Yılmaz conducted the memorial trips to Auschwitz with

young male Muslims between the ages of 16 and 20 from a youth center in his hometown and then worked through their experiences by using theatrical pedagogy. In 2018, Yılmaz received the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany for his commitment against antisemitism.

Based on the theoretical model of divergent “memory frames” (Assmann 2018, p. 157),<sup>1</sup> it will be shown how antisemitism is passed on in the memory of families. In this way, family memories actively contribute to identity constructions that reproduce various current forms of antisemitism. To examine this phenomenon in the Young Muslims in Auschwitz project, the research evaluates different sources, including Burak Yılmaz’ autobiography, media documentations, and an interview conducted with him. It attempts to answer the question of whether a visit to memorial sites can contribute to breaking down antisemitic narratives, create new paradigms and strengthen the perspective of a common heritage, even if it is a negative one that Germans share with some groups of Muslime migrants.

## Plural remembering? Forms of collective memory

There are numerous approaches to the study of memory and remembrance. This research will draw on the notions of Harald Welzer (Welzer et al. 2002; 2011) and Aleida Assmann (2007; 2008; 2016; 2018). Both are based on the theory of collective memory by Maurice Halbwachs and describe forms of memory in groups. The “frames of reference” (Halbwachs 1985, p. 143) that Halbwachs had identified for such collective commemoration can be social, religious, or societal in nature. In any case, they strive for an alignment of remembering and commemoration (Halbwachs 1985). This suggests that collective remembering does not take place freely, but “under the pressure of society” (Halbwachs 1985, p. 158).

Modern societies develop different forms of collective memory (Assmann 2016), which also span different ranges. National memory has a large scope. It refers to the form of collective memory through which the nation assures itself of its history (Assmann 2018). The social and political framings that construct a national memory are communicated through a public culture of memory and lay the foundation for the identity of an “imagined nation” (Anderson 2005). This national memory is represented by institutions and bodies responsible for processes of education and transmission, such as cultural heritage. In this sense, national memory is strategic in nature and “no longer has involuntary moments because it is deliberately and

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1 For better readability, quotations from German literature have been translated into English. Unless otherwise indicated, these are the author’s own translations. German sources are marked as such in the bibliography.

symbolically constructed. It is a memory of will and calculated choice” (Assmann 2008).<sup>2</sup>

Private memory is less strategic, but all the more dynamic. It is integrated into relationships with various groups in which the individual locates himself or herself. Welzer speaks of “milieus” or “we-groups” (Welzer 2011, p. 170), among which the family, religion, or social classes are the most prominent. With regard to family memory, the term already names the scope: it is constituted intergenerationally in that personal memories are repeated, often in fragmentary form, within the family. It is thus based on narratives that have been handed down, which contain subjective descriptions and toward which the listeners adopt an empathetic attitude.

Welzer has used German family memory to illustrate how narratives (for example of the family’s Nazi past) are modified and often given their own meaning through trading, listening, commenting, and retelling: “families celebrate their history as a community of interaction in ‘conversational remembering’, in talking together about the past, and this is about confirming the social identity of the we-group” (Welzer 2011, p. 165). Loyalty to stories is therefore an essential value in family memory, which results in each narrator “co-thematizing and perpetuating his family’s self-design in each of his memory narratives” (Welzer 2011, p. 171).

Assmann also sees in family memory “an important but still largely underestimated part of world history that enables new approaches to it” (2007, p. 90). The question of whether and to what extent the contents of family and national memories coincide or diverge is not easy to answer. Divergent memories usually indicate a lack of congruence between group memories and public memory culture. This is also true in migration societies, which include groups whose family memories are based on different narratives than the public memory culture. This will now be tested on the topic of antisemitism.

## Common heritage? Forms of antisemitism

Wolfgang Benz (2005) distinguishes between four categories of hatred against Jews, that occur in both historical and contemporary form: Christian anti-Judaism, racist antisemitism, secondary antisemitism,<sup>3</sup> and Israel-related antisemitism.

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2 The question to what extent history, i.e. historiography, should be seen as separate from collective memory is controversial. For Burke, history is a “social memory”, while Assmann argues for emphasizing the time and interest-related dependencies of historiography, but not for equating memory and historiography (Moller 2010).

3 Secondary antisemitism is closely related to the German culture of remembrance after 1945. It articulates itself as a defense strategy against responsibility for the Holocaust and practices a perpetrator-victim reversal, according to which the Jews “are themselves to blame [...] for not being liked” (Benz 2005, p. 59).



Currently, all four categories of antisemitism can be identified in Germany, often in hybridized form (Gruberová and Zeller 2021; Mansour 2022).

For the present study, forms of racist antisemitism and Israel-related antisemitism are of particular importance. Historically, racist antisemitism, which disqualifies “the Jew” as the Other, goes back to homogenization tendencies of European nations in the 19th century, and is based on culturalist and biologicistic arguments as well as on well-known stereotypes and conspiracy theories. In Germany, it comes in the varieties of classical right-wing radicalism and Islamist antisemitism. Since German right-wing radicalism is directed against both Jews and Muslims (most recently in the Halle and Hanau attacks), the phenomena of racism and antisemitism are sometimes equated in public debates. However, researchers of migration and antisemitism reject such a “victim-identified” perspective. Muslims as well as Jews have experienced discrimination, but under different circumstances. While racism manifests itself exterritorially as a consequence of imagined civilizational superiority or towards the outwardly “foreign”, hatred against Jews is triggered by a projected inferiority directed at people without differential characteristics in their own country (Messerschmidt 2007).<sup>4</sup>

In the Arab world, too, antisemitism has diffused religious, cultural, and political roots. As Georges Bensoussan (2019) has shown, it goes back to the Middle Ages, thus invalidating the myth of a peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Jews. However, it was only through European influence on the colonized Arab countries in the 19th century that a specific racist antisemitism developed there as well, following the European model in its characteristics and stereotypes (Grigat 2019). Becker also shows that Germany played a special role in the formation of “Islamist” antisemitism. For example, a program was broadcasted from Berlin to the Arab countries between 1939 and 1945 “whose content consisted largely of antisemitic propaganda. [...] In cooperation with Arab antisemites in German exile (such as the Mufti of Jerusalem), ‘a National Socialist reading of the Koran’ was produced [...]” (2020, p. 80). In view of such an export of European antisemitism with a racist tint, its assimilation by Arab nationalism, and finally its reimport by migration from Turkey and Arab states to Germany, it is fair to speak of a common heritage of racist antisemitism.

Israel-related antisemitism is more recent, has its origins in anti-Zionism and is directed against the Jewish state of Israel, which denies its right to exist by attempting to delegitimize it politically. This antisemitism is handed down not only

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4 The fact that this differentiation is possibly relativized by the flight and expulsion of Jewish fellow citizens from the countries of Europe and also from almost all Arab countries since the Second World War, as well as by the founding of the state of Israel, since the countries mentioned have deprived themselves “of the concrete projection surface within” (Grigat 2019, p. 25), may play into the hands of the recently frequent equation of racism and antisemitism.

by Arab states and currently by Turkey, but also by representatives of the German left who declare their solidarity with Palestine and demand a right of return for the displaced population (Schu 2017). While the legacy of antisemitism is seen as negative in the official European culture of remembrance, strategically deployed antisemitism in some Islamic countries creates positive self-images (Mansour 2022). Racist antisemitism of a nationalist character is often mixed with an antisemitism critical of Israel, which is an “ideal” projection surface for antisemitic conspiracy theories. In migrant households from Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, and Syria, it is supported by narratives that preserve experiences of flight, violence, and expulsion.

### **National remembrance? National Socialist memorials and the Holocaust**

For German memory culture, the Holocaust is one of the major, if not the major topic. In this function, it represents not only the “main reference point of all post-national German identity constructions” (Boldt 2019, p. 49), but also of European memory. Numerous Nazi memorials across Europe provide authentic testimony of the Holocaust; in this respect, they are materialized expressions of a collective memory and an institutionalized culture of remembrance of a negative legacy. The fact that access to the message of Nazi memorials can be different for individual visitor groups has been emphasized by Assmann (2021). For three of these groups she has named a paradigm, i.e., an approach of learning, which will be briefly outlined here. These paradigms will later be valuable as a frame of reference for the identity work of the adolescents in the Young Muslims in Auschwitz project.

According to Assmann (*ibid*), the paradigm of identification, that is victim-identified learning from history, is relevant for the victims of the Holocaust. For them, the camps represent sites of suffering and cemeteries. By visiting memorials such as Auschwitz, they “identify with the persecuted and dead of the Shoah and become part of their history through their memory” (Assmann 2021, p. 95). Thus, the paradigm of identification frames and actualizes the collective memory of the descendants: “with the Holocaust all Jews were hit, therefore the descendants are also part of this collective of victims; in their memory they take the dead with them into their future” (Assmann 2021, p. 95).

The paradigm of ethics, on the other hand, is relevant for the heirs of the perpetrators, who see the camps primarily as the “crime scenes” (Reemtsma 2010, p. 4) of their ancestors. The paradigm of ethics formulated by the Allies after the Second World War as a requirement consisted in the “condemnation of the deeds as well as in remorse and mourning in the face of this violent excess of one’s own history” (Assmann 2021, p. 96). It called Germans not only to confront their past, but also to reflect, remorse, and transform their collective identity: “The ethical paradigm culmi-

nates in an emphatic ‘Never again!’” (ibid).<sup>5</sup> Although the newly founded Federal Republic immediately joined this paradigm on the official level, it took decades before the majority of the civilian population was also ready to come to terms with the Holocaust (Assmann 2016; Werker 2016). This attitude slowly changed in the 1980s, when Nazi memorials were increasingly in demand as historical learning sites. Schools and the media perceived them as “places of historical-political, ethical education with a certain devotional character” (Knigge 2010, p. 11). However, it took a major historical event such as German reunification to anchor the commemoration of the Holocaust centrally in the collective memory and make it a “hallmark of political culture in Germany” (Messerschmidt 2009, p. 30). In the unique situation of bringing together two German states, the actors of reunification saw the opportunity to present Germany as a nation that was aware of its responsibility for the Holocaust and that formulated a new identity on this basis (Levy and Sznajder 2007). The all-German identity was thus based on the paradigm of ethics and a negative commemoration (Knigge 2010), which offered both the chance for an intense reappraisal of the past and the danger of a state-imposed memory imperative and of popularization: “Learning from negative pasts quickly reduces to moral appeals” (Knigge 2010, p. 14).

The third paradigm, the paradigm of empathy, stems from the fact that shortly after the final incorporation of the Holocaust into national memory, Germany acknowledged its status as a country of immigration. This was accompanied by a pluralization of memories and of official memory frames. Even as reunified Germans were forming themselves as “members of a memory community” (Werker 2016, p. 35) in commemorating the Holocaust, Germans with an immigrant background were asking themselves the question of their belonging to this historical memory frame – after all, they generally did not have Nazi perpetrators in their families and thus did not feel committed to the paradigm of ethics. The national memory frame of the unified Germany, as soon as it was formed, thus excluded those Germans who could not define their belonging through a Nazi past. In this context, the “ethnization” (Assmann 2016, p. 128) of the collective memory frame, or, in the words of Meseth, its “tendency toward the exclusive” (Meseth 2002, p. 16), became evident. With it, despite all immigration, the notion of belonging *qua* origin prevailed. The resulting moments of Othering were also evident in institutionalized educational work, for example in history classes. Thus, Jewish students reported that they were considered by their teachers to be predestined for a presentation on the Holocaust (Gruberová and Zeller 2021). Muslim students, on the other hand, were assumed to be disinterested in the topic (Völkel 2017).

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5 Reemtsma emphasize that this narrative did not apply to the GDR, “which cultivated an exclusively heroic memory of the heroes of the communist resistance and therefore saw no reason for a reversal or ethical turn” (2010, p. 5).

The new memory framework also affected the work of memorial sites for Nazi crimes, which in the migration society had to ask themselves what value a visit to a memorial site could have for people who were German, but as immigrants without a Nazi past (Thimm, Kößler and Ulrich 2010). As a new pedagogical approach, critical historical scholarship formulated the function of memorial sites for Nazi crimes as “contact zones” (Sternfeld 2016), or as places of “relational history” (Messerschmidt 2009), describing them as “social spaces where different social and cultural positions meet” (Sternfeld 2016, p. 82). In these “contact zones”, access via empathy should help. Empathy, understood as an “emotional and cognitive resource innate to all human beings” (Assmann 2021, p. 96), was meant to provide access to the subject beyond the developed victim-perpetrator discourse in which roles were already (ethnically) distributed. The paradigm of empathy seemed thus suitable for groups of visitors who “have no historical connection to the trauma” (ibid). These included people with a migration background (Georgi 2003; Gryglewski 2013; Georgi et al. 2022). However, they had to face a different challenge: they had to match their national memory frame with their family memory and negotiate their own belonging to German society (Werker 2016). How complex this process can be will now be shown.

## Methods

The following study primarily conducts secondary research by qualitatively evaluating various documents (books, articles, documentaries, interviews) on the project. Particularly relevant are Burak Yilmaz’s autobiography *Ehrensache. Kämpfen gegen Juden Hass* (A Question of Honor: Fighting against Jew Hatred) (2021) and a documentation of the project by the *Center for Civic Education of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia* (2016, 2021). In addition, there are contributions by and interviews with Yilmaz (Jewish Forum 2018; Yilmaz 2020a; 2020b). A 90-minute interview that the author conducted with Yilmaz in August 2020 was also used. The interview took place in English and was recorded as a video via Zoom. The interviewee was informed about the use of the interview as well as the nature of the study. The subsequent analysis follows the structure of the interview, in which Yilmaz was asked about the origins of the project and the situation of the young people before, during, and after the memorial visit, as well as Werker’s phase scheme of a memorial site visit (Werker 2016). Where it was considered relevant, the findings were compared with other studies (Gryglewski 2013, 2017; Schu 2017).

## Analysis

Young Muslims in Auschwitz was initiated by Burak Yılmaz in the context of his work as an educator in a Duisburg youth center. Yılmaz cites two personal experiences as responsible for its genesis: first, a Hitler salute made by young people at the Duisburg-Marxloh youth center (Yılmaz 2021); second, a few years later, the exclusion of students with an immigrant background from visiting a concentration camp memorial site because antisemitic behavior was feared on site (ibid). Both in the interview and in his autobiography, Yılmaz describes how the idea of traveling to Auschwitz with ten young people was initially conceived as a way to compensate for and complement this rejection at school. After the first memorial trip in 2012, which was also intensive for him, the desire arose to develop the project further and to make it permanent, with the support of the Antisemitism Commissioner of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia. The pedagogical concept designed for this purpose was linked to various questions and given the name *Young Muslims in Auschwitz* in 2014. It was intended to offer ten male youths per trip the opportunity to deal with their identity as Germans with a migration background and to reflect on the topic of antisemitism. Likewise, the project pursued the intention of providing the young people with individual access to the Holocaust as a central component of German remembrance culture. The analysis presents the person and motivation of the project leader, the pedagogical concept, the initial conditions of the participants, and their reactions after the memorial visit.

### The project initiator and manager

Firstly, there is the question of the project leader's motivation: what motivated Yılmaz to take up the topic of Jew hatred in this form and to work with it in his own community? In his autobiography *Ehrensache (A Question of Honor)*, he makes it clear that family memory was central for him too. However, the values he was taught, and his parental home differed from those of many of the young people he mentors. He owes it to this circumstance that he was able to critically reflect on structures in his community.

Yılmaz, born in 1987 in Duisburg-Marxloh, comes from a liberal family. From his mother's side, he learned about a modern, self-confident image of women; from his father's side, he got to know a liberal self-image. This parental home marked borders with German society not through isolation, but through fears – for example, that the son could lose his faith if he attends a Catholic high school: "I feel that my parents are afraid that I could move away from my religion" (Yılmaz 2021). However, the desire to provide the son with a good education prevails (ibid). Yılmaz's family also has another peculiarity: his father is of Turkish and his mother of Kurdish origin, which sensitizes him early on to the problems of minorities in Turkish nationalism (ibid).

In his parental home, patriarchal narratives are not taught (Yilmaz 2020b), nor is violence prevalent. Therefore, Yilmaz reacts in horror when he observes an acquaintance beating his sister in the street in the name of honor: “Ahmed’s violence does something to me. I never want to be like that, I swear to myself” (Yilmaz 2021, p. 22). He questions the narrative of “honor” that is common in conservative, strictly religious, or patriarchal circles early on, and later explicitly distances himself from it: for him, it is “cheap talk” (Yilmaz 2021, p. 95). He is also critical of the Imam’s exercise of violence in the *madrassa* (Arabic for place of study); Yilmaz sees this as violating the children’s human rights (Yilmaz 2021). He also finds the antisemitism he experiences in the Imam’s religious education classes and on Turkish television programs alienating. The conspiracy myths propagated by fellow students seem illogical to him. Overall, it becomes clear that Yilmaz owes his resilience primarily to his parental home (*ibid*). When he is briefly tempted to join an ideologized Islam during puberty after the attack on the World Trade Center in 2001, the protest of his parents, who deconstruct the conspiracy myths circulating in the Islamist community, and their open culture of conversation keep him from doing so (*ibid*).

In addition to his family, it is the German education system that makes Yilmaz think and distances him from certain values of his community. Admittedly, like many other Germans with an immigrant background, he is exposed to discrimination and racist insults and thus experiences how stereotypes are attributed to him. These apparently include the idea that as a Muslim he is an antisemite. He thus witnesses open German antisemitism on several occasions: his interlocutors open up to him because they expect his ideological solidarity due to his origin (*ibid*).

However, he experiences not only Germans who repress their past, but also those who represent the paradigm of ethics. In school, his interest in the Nazi era is piqued when he hears in Catholic religion class about Germans’ responsibility for their history and actions in the present – a thesis he likes and can identify with. “It’s as if this still foreign country becomes more familiar to me. The more I learn about the Nazi era, the better I understand the Germans” (Yilmaz 2020a, p. 94). In history class, he learns about an approach to the Nazi era that he later makes fruitful in his own pedagogical work. His teacher brings documents from his own family, showing that history affects every individual (Yilmaz 2021). This leads Yilmaz, after the paradigm of ethics, to the paradigm of empathy: biographical testimonies trigger compassion and help in envisioning and in taking responsibility.

The conclusion that emerges from Yilmaz’s biographical work is this: the young German with a migration background is caught in the middle, but the impulse of the parental home to be critical is encouraged and methodically shaped by education. Thus, the biography represents a commitment to education as a solution to social and cultural problems, and shows how participation in German memory culture, and self-description as a German, becomes possible through it. Turning to German

society thus presupposes two things: a de-ideologization of family memory, and a readiness of national memory to think history in terms of plural approaches.

### The concept of the memorial trip

Young Muslims in Auschwitz follows the three-step pedagogical process for memorial site trips: the preparation, the trip, and its follow-up (Werker 2016). In comparison with other memorial trips, for example by German youths, not only the variety of methods, but also the project's intensive six-month preparation phase is striking. It included biographical work by the participants, research into Jewish traces in their own neighborhood, and a meeting with a Jewish youth group. Better knowledge of one's own family history pursued the goal of learning more about one's own origins and being able to better classify the narratives of one's parents; Yılmaz had noticed that many young people hardly knew anything about this. Exploring the history of one's own neighborhood in cooperation with the *Duisburg Center for Remembrance Culture* was intended to create personal access to the topic and to a "first deeper understanding of the Nazi era" (Yılmaz 2020b, p. 281).<sup>6</sup> Researching Jewish victims' biographies in the city archives and comparing old photographs with contemporary views of the city were intended to make participants aware that the Holocaust had taken place on their own doorstep (Center for Civic Education 2021). The conversation with Jewish youth groups also conveyed to the participants what contemporary Jewish life in Germany was like and what parallels might have arisen to their own lives (Jewish Forum 2018; Yılmaz 2021, 2020b).

The one-week memorial trip included a three-day stay at the memorial site with guided tours of the individual camps. Here, too, the focus was on personal observation. During their stay, the participants kept a group diary in which they could record thoughts, feelings, and experiences (Jewish Forum 2018). After the visits, discussion groups took place to reflect on the day's experiences. In doing so, Yılmaz made sure that the meetings took place in a protected space so that the participants could articulate themselves freely (Yılmaz 2020b). The trip itself created a distance from everyday life, which helped the young people to reflect on the sources of their previous knowledge and where contradictions arose.

In the six- to nine-month follow-up phase, the young men then had the opportunity to process their experiences on the basis of their group diary with a theater pedagogue (Center for Civic Education 2016; Yılmaz 2020b). Role plays or entire plays were created. The participants were free in their choice of topics, as well as in taking

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6 See also the documentation *Ruhrgebietskinder* (Ruhr area children) by Wolf-Graaf and Presnück (Center for Civic Education 2021) on the explorations of their own neighborhood and of Jewish life in Duisburg.

on the individual roles. Slipping into a different skin was meant to provide the opportunity to playfully change perspectives and deal with views that in reality were rejected for ideological reasons (Yilmaz 2020b). The subsequent performances (some up to 30 times) dispensed with costumes and a stage set and took place in schools or theaters in front of an audience that, in turn, was composed of students with an immigrant background. The visibility on a stage and the reward of applause offered the performers a recognition that they often did not experience in their everyday lives (ibid). It was important to Yilmaz that the participants passed on the knowledge they had gained through the memorial trip to their families and peer groups, and thus became multipliers. Yilmaz speaks of “history ambassadors” (Yilmaz 2020b, p. 281). In this way, the project was intended to have an impact not only on individuals, but on the entire community.

### The participants of the project

Like Yilmaz, most of the project’s participants live in Duisburg-Marxloh – a district in which the proportion of migrants from Turkey and Arab countries is over 76 percent (Staff Office for Elections 2020). Their living environment is thus defined as a social hot spot. In Duisburg, where unemployment has been rising since the 1970s due to structural change caused by the steel crisis, the ghettoization of migrants is evident in entire neighborhoods, which are often characterized by poverty. Duisburg is also considered a “stronghold for Turkish right-wingers and right-wing extremists” (Yilmaz 2020b, p. 275). Nationalist and Islamist structures have been built up here since the 1980s and have power within the community. They are so well networked that even Turkish prime ministers come to Duisburg and meet with approval there (Yilmaz 2020b).

This nationalism is flanked by mosques in the region, where a theology of Islamist-nationalist character is taught. It falls on fertile ground in families where traditional and religious worldviews prevail. In these families, young people are usually exposed to patriarchal structures and ideas of masculinity that go hand in hand with concepts such as “respect” or “honor”. In this context, antisemitism also plays a role (ibid). Many young people in the district are also affected by discrimination at school, but also in the labor market. Their chances of participation, social advancement, and integration into networks of the so-called majority society are low overall; rather the “stigma of ‘Marxloh’ or ‘Upper Marxloh’ makes everyday life difficult for them” (Yilmaz 2020b, p. 276), and their job search. For their part, many young people respond to the “deficit-oriented view” (Yilmaz 2020b, p. 277) of them with a disinterest in German society. Instead, they orient themselves to their family structures, from which they do not break away and which give them support and identity. In this way, most young people have constructed an identity (Schu 2017) that compen-



sates for a lack of self-confidence and orientation by imitating patriarchal patterns. In this way, antisemitism is also “inherited” intergenerationally.

### Participation in the memorial trip

The following presentation of the participants’ reactions is oriented toward the three outlined phases of a memorial site trip and uses statements about the memorial site trips in 2012, 2014, and 2015 to examine how constructions of identity are negotiated against the background of family and national memory, and what role antisemitism plays in this process. The goal is to make visible both the initial conditions of the young people and the effect of the memorial on them and their thinking. This will yield insights about the function of memorial sites in the mediation of history.

(1) *The preparation phase:* Young people with Turkish, Iraqi, Palestinian, Lebanese, and Syrian roots took part in the workshops on biographical work. Not all of them came from nationalist or Islamist families; some came from liberal families. In view of their national, cultural, and political diversity, a lively discussion developed around the core topics of religion and masculinity (Yılmaz 2021). It was noted that there was a direct link between the construction of masculinity and the perpetration of violence: “they tell each other stories about how they are beaten by their fathers” (Yılmaz 2021, p. 110). In this context, the term “Jew” also came up as a swear word: it marked the position of the weak and feminine here, constructing it as the antithesis of the masculine: “the strong man and the feminine Jew” (Yılmaz 2021, p. 116). That this marking is antisemitic and has its roots in Islamic culture, is latently recognized by some young people; others merely use it to exhibit their masculinity. In this capacity, Islamic antisemitism mixes with both overt German radical right-wing attitudes and anti-Israel antisemitism: “We are antisemites. You can’t change that!” (Yılmaz 2021, p. 7). Anti-Israel antisemitism is especially the case with those boys who have a Palestinian background, such as Jamal: “He only knows the Jews as enemies, he says” (Yılmaz 2021, p. 135). The trauma of flight and expulsion from one’s homeland is reproduced in family memory and kept alive through images of the enemy – sometimes in extremist form. For example, there are young people “who learned about the Hamas charter when they were young and all the religious fanaticism that goes with it”. It is not uncommon for families with radicalized memories to also interpret Young Muslims in Auschwitz as a conspiracy: “They do not understand why their own child is concerned with the history of the Jews instead of the suffering of their own family. [...] In their logic, Auschwitz equals Jew, Jew equals Israel, and Israel is the enemy” (Yılmaz 2021, p. 135). Breaking down these antisemitic beliefs is difficult because they are tied to emotions and loyalties.

The workshops show just how overpowering family memory is for some young people; what parents and grandparents tell is considered “historical truth” (Yılmaz 2020b, p. 278). On the other hand, no connection is made to German national mem-

ory: “When we talk about being German, we very quickly end up with the topic of the Holocaust and then directly with the Middle East conflict” (Yılmaz 2021, p. 121). This is not only due to family memory, but also due to a lack of knowledge about the Holocaust: “[T]hey don’t understand any connections and the meaning of the Holocaust remains unclear to them” (Yılmaz 2021, p. 122). Both condition them to see themselves not as Germans but as victims of the majority society (Schu 2017). From this perspective, they even solidarize in a certain way with the role of “the Jews”: “There is never a word about how we Muslims are treated. It’s always about the Jews!” complains one [...]” (Yılmaz 2021, p. 121). This self-image equates racism, which all participants know, with antisemitism, but also blurs the distinctions between Jews and Muslims (Yılmaz 2021).

(2) *The memorial trip*: The visit to Auschwitz confronts the participants with the historical consequences of antisemitism at the authentic site. The young people react to what they see by becoming emotional. Yusuf (19) says: “I saw the pictures, I wonder how I’m going to sleep now [...]” And Samed admits (19): “I felt hatred, against the Nazis, I was angry, but I was also sad” (Center for Civic Education 2016). The approach that young people take to the topic of the concentration camp memorial and the Holocaust represents the paradigm of empathy. For those participants who are familiar with antisemitic stereotypes and conspiracy theories, the consternation goes so far that they are immediately ready to deconstruct these myths. Abdul (21) emphasizes that it is now “very, very difficult [...] to deny anything else,” and Mehmet (19) tells of the effect of what he saw had on him: “I wouldn’t have thought that it would shock me so much in that sense, because the fact that I am also – hm – German, I’ll say, and [...] my parents have an Arab migration background, I thought I could handle it better” (Center for Civic Education 2016).

For other young people, the visit arouses a desire to identify themselves. The Yazidi Hüseyin (19), however, connects this desire less with the German perspective than with the memory of the genocide of his own countrymen. He thus develops less of a “victim-centered” perspective, and more of a “victim-identified” perspective that follows the paradigm of identification:

With me it was like this: from the religious background I belong to Yazidism. And it is also like that, similar to the Jews now. There were 73 genocides perpetrated against Yazidism, and attempts were made to eradicate this race, this religion (Center for Civic Education 2016).

The genocides of the Yazidis, which are alive in his family memory, lead to solidarity with the Jewish victims in Auschwitz – a process that, as Assmann notes, is not uncommon in the migration society, but which is not unproblematic without further

differentiation (Assmann 2016).<sup>7</sup> At the same time, participants in the Auschwitz trip encounter Israelis for whom the paradigm of identification forms the adequate access. Recognizing and understanding this is not immediately possible for the participants. While project leader Yilmaz finds the encounter with the Israelis enriching from a remembrance culture perspective – he himself had so far focused primarily on the paradigm of ethics – some participants with Palestinian roots see their “enemy” in Auschwitz for the first time. Jamal (17), who does not yet link the Holocaust with Israel, does not understand the Israeli approach, and asks: “Why do Jews come here? To mourn? To process? Out of respect? Why do they visit this place where so many of them were killed?” (Yilmaz 2021, p. 139). The encounter triggers confusion about the motivation of the Others, anger at himself, and inner conflicts of loyalty. Like other Palestinians, Jamal fears betraying the “heritage” in the family memory with his “new” knowledge. Nevertheless, he tries to understand:

Yesterday I realized that there are many victims on the Israeli side as well. Israelis have also experienced a lot of suffering. Not only my parents. I somehow couldn't cope with it at all. It makes me sad that we will never have peace with them (Jamal, in: Yilmaz 2021, p. 144).

While most young people intuitively choose the paradigm of empathy for themselves as an approach, and in individual cases the paradigm of identification, the paradigm of ethics is foreign to them. In Auschwitz, they are confronted with it from the outside. Here they are seen as Germans – a perception they are otherwise unfamiliar with, and which disturbs them. Their “Germanness” is revealed in the memorial site of Auschwitz through the language they choose to use during their visit. However, German is also the language of the perpetrators, which is why Abdul (21) suddenly feels uncomfortable with it: “We speak German, walk through there, and I feel that, I see the looks and I totally perceive that.” Yusuf (19) shows empathy for the Israeli and comes close to taking responsibility, to identify with the paradigm of ethics – after all, he is German, even if he himself is not quite clear what that is: “That is understandable that the Jews, so to speak, do not feel comfortable when we come here as Germans [...]” (Center for Civic Education 2016). Overall, the participants approach the paradigm of ethics only hesitantly: “When I ask the boys if they noticed that we were seen and perceived as Germans today, there is silence for a moment. [...] Then we are Germans in Auschwitz and foreigners in Germany [...]” (Yilmaz 2021, p. 134). The quote shows that most young people have not developed a connection to their being German, nor do they have a culture of remembrance in Auschwitz that would

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7 Huseyin remains true to this “victim-identified” perspective in the follow-up, but emphasizes that he is concerned with eliminating hatred: “If I participate at all, I think I'm also doing it for my people” (Center for Civic Education 2016).

give them personal access to German history. Rather, this notion plunges them into “identity chaos” (ibid). Especially those participants who grew up with nationalist or Islamist narratives find it difficult to identify with a negative legacy such as the Holocaust and to accept this legacy for themselves. “In Auschwitz we experienced for the first time and understood why Germans are often so ashamed” (Yılmaz 2021, p. 150).

(3) *The follow-up*: In the conversations after the trip, the memorial trip shows two direct effects: first, the confrontation with family memory and second, the question of one’s own “Germanness”. Both lead to a deepened interest in an examination of German memory culture, but also to conflicts. Thus, after one of these lessons, a participant asks his seminar leader insecurely: “Am I still a Muslim if I don’t hate Israel anymore?” (Yılmaz 2021, p. 156). The follow-up to the memorial trip aims both to process emotions and to apply new knowledge. Both are to take place playfully in a theater play. It offers the young people the chance to fictionally test themselves. In this process, Samed (17) experiences a challenge being someone different on stage than in real life: “It’s such a weird feeling that I’m now in the role of the Nazi, because that’s so completely against my human attitude [...]” (Center for Civic Education 2016). Hüseyin (19), on the other hand, feels good about it, even if he “still needs to practice awakening this evil in me” (Center for Civic Education 2016). The preoccupation with the origin of stereotypes and their deconstruction forms the basis for the play in 2016. The approach to the Holocaust shifts the horizon – on the one hand towards the German national memory and, on the other hand, to the question of values of education. For example, Mehmet (19) reflects on his community’s propensity for violence against Jews. In his role as son, he tries to realize what meaning this violence has for himself:

[T]his readiness to use violence against [...] Jewish people, that was very close to me, I have to say, it affected me in the sense that I always thought about it and questioned: is what I was brought up with correct, are these prejudices correct that one has received [...]? (Center for Civic Education 2016).

This also applies to Abdul (21), who plays the patriarchal father: “My focus is simply to make clear that a lot of hate is transmitted, transmitted [...]” (ibid). The fact that this mental and emotional change does not take place without criticism from the families of the young people can be seen in several statements. Some of the participants get into a confrontation with their families. Al-Harit (17), who has Turkish-Iraqi roots, tells how critical his mother was “when I said, yes, I’ll play the Jew” (ibid). Mehmet (19) also reports: “When I came back from Auschwitz, the big discussion came up, why did you do that, what for, and, look at what they’re doing to us” (ibid). Since there is no historical knowledge in the family, the adolescent enlightens his parents: “And there was just a big silence at first, and that was just not an

embarrassing silence, as you might know it now, but that was just such a pause for thought" (ibid).

The participants are supported in this process by their families in different ways, and many are also criticized. The relatives feel that the trip changed the young people. Adnan, a participant in the 2018 memorial trip, sums up just how far this change can go: "This is Germany's history! This is our history too, man! Do you think I can go back to Germany now and pretend that none of this concerns me?" (Yılmaz 2021, p. 200). With this shift in perspective, the young people approach the paradigm of ethics. It completes the largest possible form of learning, the victim-centered view of German history in terms of public national memory. The young people's view, as the evaluation of the project shows, does not follow the paradigm of ethics in all facets, but it does so in one central respect: responsibility.

### **Shared history, common heritage? A preliminary conclusion**

Antisemitism is a common heritage of European and Arab states, especially in its racist manifestation. While German educational institutions are slowly becoming aware of this fact, Young Muslims in Auschwitz is attempting from the midst of the migrant community to build a bridge between family and national memory and to bridge the gap between the two forms of remembering. However, when it comes to recognizing and dealing with antisemitism as a common heritage, there are hurdles not only on the part of German educational institutions, but also in migrant civil society. The institutions of religion (through Imams with antisemitic attitudes), the media (through antisemitic reports by foreign broadcasters) and family memory are particularly resistant (Becker 2020). Young people who are exposed to these influences often do not have the chance to recognize and critically question the causes for their Jew hatred (Schu 2017). However, migration researcher Naika Fouroutan emphasizes that more and more people with a migration background want to belong to German culture (Foroutan 2019). It is articulated in particular by Muslims who feel they are transcultural Germans and who are visible as such (ibid).

Cultural heritage, like that of the Nazi's, is a negative legacy. It has the function of authentically conveying the historical facts, but also of appealing to a moral responsibility for the future. In view of its internationality, the *Auschwitz Concentration Camp Memorial* fulfills these functions in many ways. Not only are all three paradigms activated here as approaches to the Holocaust, but spaces are also created for current encounters. In this sense, the memorial functions as a "contact zone", according to the rules of history and of the present. From this perspective, the memorial becomes important for the deconstruction of images of enemies. It is a place of dialogue and thus, above the rubble of the past, of potential reconciliation in the present. On the basis of Young Muslims in Auschwitz it can be stated that the approaches to the

Holocaust as a central moment of German remembrance culture are pluralizing. In view of a resurgent antisemitism, which moreover knows many forms of hybridization, this is an important fact if memorial sites are to contribute to learning from history in the future as well. The paradigm of empathy offers possibilities to create first accesses to a “foreign” history (Gryglewski 2017). Finally, the paradigm of ethics invites young Germans with migration background to connect their personal experiences with the history of the country where they live today. Memorial work in this sense is integration work.

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# The use of digital space for equal shared cultural heritage for Jews and Arabs in Israel

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## Introduction

The development of digital spaces and digital culture since the late 1990s has revolutionized the diversity and accessibility of knowledge and cultural content. The technological advances, the global dissemination, and the widespread adoption of digital communication are ceaselessly increasing the public consuming this information (Kvan and Affleck 2008; Svensson 2010; Kalay; Benardou et al. 2018).

Until the digital revolution, the cultural heritage of excluded groups usually suffered from a lack of availability and accessibility, as a result of a deliberate policy. The hegemonic discourse and establishment tended to hinder the preservation of and exposure to knowledge that did not coincide with the cultural norm, and even impeded the excluded groups from mobilizing to independently act to preserve their cultural heritage (Ferguson et al. 1990). Thus, while the cultural heritage of the hegemonic groups was made accessible and disseminated through various venues: museums, memorial sites, culture centers, archives, and libraries, and through a variety of printed and electronic media channels, the cultural heritage of the excluded groups met with continuous exclusion (Eck 2014). In the absence of active engagement with differences, the stereotypes about the Other are liable to intensify (UNESCO 2001).

Using the digital revolution to make excluded cultural heritages accessible, however, requires extensive resources in order to collect, digitize, and disseminate cultural heritage contents by leading institutions and organizations (Sullivan 2016; Kidd 2018). In this reality, the Arab Palestinian group in the state of Israel, which differs from the Jewish group in its ethnicity, national affinity, and religious faith, has found it hard to raise the necessary resources to preserve its cultural heritage and gain the support of the established cultural institutions and museums (Sela 2007; Berger 2008). The lack of official sites and institutions dedicated to the Arab Palestinian heritage, and the total exclusion of this heritage from the Jewish educa-

tion system, have further contributed to the absence of any respectful exposure of the Arab minority and its heritage.

The ongoing national conflict between Arabs and Jews has also contributed to pushing aside the Arab Palestinian cultural heritage and limiting the (cultural) areas of encounter between the Arab Palestinian group and the Jewish group in Israel. Thus, while Arab Palestinians who are citizens of the state of Israel are exposed to the Jewish Israeli cultural heritage through the contents taught in schools and through visits to Jewish heritage sites, the Jewish population is almost never exposed to the cultural heritage of the Arab Palestinian minority (Haj-Yeia and Lev Tov 2017).

This pioneering study examines the possibilities and limitations of exposing the Arab Palestinian heritage in Israel to the Israeli society at large by using an open and non-institutional digital space called *Tarasa Digital Initiative* (Tarasa). More particularly, the study examines the modes of engagement that the digital tools make possible for both the Jewish participants and the Arab Palestinian minority in Israel, and the possible effects this engagement has on creating a more equal space of reference for the cultural heritages of the two groups, while focusing on highlighting the cultural heritage of the Arab Palestinian minority as an excluded social group.

The findings wish to shed light on the ways in which projects like Tarasa may contribute to developing policy that recognizes the cultural rights of excluded social groups. Translating the democratic digital space into a shared cultural heritage that represents the two peoples in a more egalitarian way may have a future effect on adopting a perception of cultural diversity that would promote understanding and co-existence.

## Cultural heritage in the digital era

The rapid development, the global dissemination, and the adoption of digital information and communication technologies have brought on a profound and unprecedented cultural and social revolution in human society and daily life. The digital space created by the internet and by smartphones does not replace the habitual reality, but rather complements and enriches it. As a result of significant advances in the area of artificial intelligence, digital technologies are becoming smarter and more personally tailored. Almost every human experience is mediated through a sophisticated surrounding envelope that is connected to big data and provides every person with context-oriented information made especially for them (Russell 2019; Levin and Mamlok 2021).

As part of this comprehensive digital revolution, profound global changes have also taken place in the field of preserving, making accessible, and disseminating cultural heritage (Robertson-von Trotha and Hauser 2010). Until this revolution, cultural heritage was preserved and made accessible to the public in a series of special

physical spaces: historic sites, museums, memorial sites, galleries, culture centers, archives, and libraries. Beyond these physical spaces, cultural heritage was also disseminated through a variety of media channels, mostly printed, and later on also broadcast on radio and television (Eck 2014).

In the last three decades, the field of preserving, making accessible, and disseminating cultural heritage has extended into the digital space. Many of the channels for collecting, preserving, presenting, and disseminating cultural heritage around the world are gradually moving to dedicated websites, content-sharing platforms, and a variety of social networks. This process relies on substantial resources that are invested in local, national, and international projects for collecting and digitizing cultural heritage content and making it accessible (Sullivan 2016; Kidd 2018). The process in which increasing parts of cultural heritage are moving into the digital spaces (or gaining further representation in them) multiplies the dissemination channels and makes them more effective than ever. Today, investment in digital dissemination channels is undertaken by all the institutions and organizations active in the heritage field.

It seems that investment in digital projects leads to a significant widening of the social circles that are exposed to various cultural and historical contents, and to a change in the visibility of the cultural heritages of the majority and minority groups (Hylland 2017). Moving into the digital spaces widens the dissemination of cultural heritage not only due to the effective dissemination channels, but also due to the upgrading of some of the content to up-to-date formats that capture the reader's attention more effectively. These formats include location-based audio and video guides, 360-degrees and 3-D films, VR – Virtual Reality worlds, and especially AR – layers of Augmented Reality (as well as all the varieties and combinations between them, XR – Extended Reality). Thanks to these advanced manifestations, today cultural heritage has become integrated as a significant central component of smart cities (Siountri and Vergados 2018; Kee, Poitras and Compeau 2019).

The digital revolution fundamentally changed not only the dissemination channels and the means of presenting cultural heritage, but also the ways heritage is collected and preserved. The digital space creates platforms and tools that remove many of the hindrances that used to prevent preservation. Mainly, digital space and tools reduce the high costs that were involved in the work of collection and preservation in the past, and restricted projects dedicated to collecting and preserving cultural heritage contents. The new possibilities for collection and preservation have gone hand in hand with a profound change in the basic perceptions and the accepted definitions around what contents are worthy of being included in the cultural heritage. These processes of change have led to the official decision taken by UNESCO to broaden the concept of “cultural heritage”. In particular, it was decided to stop focusing on tangible cultural and natural heritage, and to move instead to a broader perception that also includes intangible cultural heritage and digital heritage. Accord-

ing to this perception, the cultural heritage that merits collection and preservation also includes: practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts, and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage (UNESCO 2003; UNESCO 2004; UNESCO 2015).

This approach is characterized by greater openness towards more diverse manifestations of cultural heritages, as well by making more democratic decisions about what will be collected and what will be thrown to the dustbin of history. Consequently, today there is a more egalitarian attitude to the cultural heritages of minorities and of excluded social groups. Broadening the definition of cultural heritage and removing the obstacles and the costs attached to collection and preservation processes has led not only to enriching the cultural heritage with an abundance of new projects and collections related to diverse areas of living and creating, but also to widening the circles of those participating in these activities. Alongside the traditional dominance of cultural institutions, in recent years we have seen additional social groups participating more and more prominently in the activities of collection, documentation, and preservation. The social groups that join these activities usually focus on the overall contents and elements that are distinctly related to their historical and cultural identity. Joining these activities stems from the wish to deepen and strengthen the internal cohesion of different social groups and of their unique cultural heritage. Apart from cases where social groups suffer from severe social exclusion, joining the activity in the field of cultural heritage usually embodies the wish to strengthen and extend the imprint and status of the particular-unique heritage within the dominant national cultural heritage (Luz 2018). Sometimes the enlisting of new social groups in activities in the field of cultural heritage is encouraged and supported by the national institutions and bodies leading this field, out of the understanding that it contributes to the efforts to integrate particular cultural heritages into the national cultural heritage. However, there are also many countries in which the leading institutions and bodies in the field of cultural heritage are not committed to the effort to diversify and enrich their heritage, and even prevent the widening of the social circles that show interest in the heritage and identify with it. In such cases, not only do various institutional bodies discourage the new social group from joining the collection and preservation activities, but they even see such joining as a threat, undermining their ability to determine and set in place the cultural heritage that they consider appropriate. To a large extent, the depth of the democratization processes in the field of cultural heritage in the different countries can be inferred from the extent to which minority groups are enlisting in the activities of collecting, preserving, and disseminating the cultural contents and elements they consider significant. No less instructive is the attitude of social groups and leading institutional bodies towards the mobilization of the excluded groups,

and towards the unique cultural heritage that these excluded groups seek to add to the dominant national cultural heritage (Aigner 2016; Peace and Allen 2019).

As in many countries, in Israel as well resource-rich governmental programs have contributed decisively to the field of cultural heritage being extended into the digital space. In 2010, the government published and adopted the *Tamar Program* – a plan of action for revamping and reinforcing the foundations of the national heritage, which included unprecedented investment in the digitization of existing heritage collections and in creating new projects of digital heritage. The concluding document of the program, which was prepared by an especially broad committee that included representatives from different governmental ministries and leading institutions and organizations in the field of cultural heritage in Israel, clearly defined a focus on “foundations of national heritage, including tangible and intangible assets, that testify to the connection between the people of Israel and the land of Israel, and whose reinforcement contributes to strengthening national consciousness, pride, and vitality” (Hauser 2010 p. 7). This approach resulted in a wide variety of digital heritage projects led in the past decade by various bodies, including: the Heritage Ministry, the Social Equality Ministry, the *Council for the Conservation of Heritage Sites* in Israel, the *National Library*, *Yad Ben Zvi*, and the *ANU Museum*. All the projects were dedicated to various areas of Jewish heritage.<sup>1</sup> Due to the preference for the Jewish cultural heritage, even the extension of the cultural heritage field in Israel into the digital space has not rectified, as might have been expected, the conspicuous exclusion of the cultural heritage of the Arab Palestinians in Israel (Hemyan and Yogevev 2018).

## The Arab Palestinian minority and the search for equal cultural heritage in Israel

Societies are distinguished by their cultural heritages, which are composed of a complex web of values, beliefs, and points of view. Each heritage is interconnected to a particular lifestyle and mentality, expressed in the customs, traditions, language, practices, and formal and informal activities that characterize the group and divide it from the Other (Bennet 2013). Thus, the uniqueness of the cultural heritage can face constant pressures and be endangered when the group is positioned in the lower strands of society. This tendency can hinder the realization of the minority’s collective and individual rights (Oettingen 1995; Taylor 2002). Over time, the pressures of assimilation exerted by the dominant group can also lead to the erosion of the minority’s cultural heritage. To avoid cultural exclusion, minority groups may be given

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1 A notable exception is the “Arab Press” project conducted by the National Library (<https://www.nli.org.il/he/discover/newspapers/arabic-press>).

a collective protection in order to preserve their cultural characteristics and the national and religious identities that derive from it. But in cases where the dominant majority does not wish to protect the minority's collective rights, the cultural heritage is put in danger, as in the case of the Arab Palestinians living in Israel (Abu-Saad 2008; Agbaria 2015).

Even though Israel is a Jewish and democratic state, the Arab Palestinians are considered full citizens of the state of Israel (Gabison 1999). This duality has led to a discriminating civil discourse (Smootha 2010) that connects the recognition of the Arab Palestinian minority in Israel to its contribution to the nation (Yonah 2005). This tendency has been gaining power, although a multicultural discourse has been introduced in the educational and academic arenas in recent years (Paul-Binyamin and Reingold 2014). Without mutual legitimization, respect, and acknowledgment, the 1.6 million Arab Palestinian minority in Israel (constituting about 21% of Israel's population, excluding East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights) can lose the feeling of belonging to the Israeli society (Ghanem 2000; Ghanem and Mustafa 2009; Haj-Yehia 2022).

The main reasons for marginalizing the Arab Palestinian cultural heritage are anchored in the education system and in the lack of institutionalized cultural heritage centers. Since the Jewish majority determines the cultural content of the Arab school system in Israel, the Arab Palestinian cultural heritage is being neglected (Agbaria 2011). Over the years, the Arab Palestinian minority in Israel has attempted to strengthen its unique cultural heritage in schools, but with limited success (Agbaria 2015). Faced with an ethnocentric Israeli approach, the Arab Palestinian minority have not been given the opportunity to learn their history and their cultural heritage in public schools (Arar and Ibrahim 2016), since this heritage has been almost totally excluded from the curricula (Abu-Asbeh 2007; Arar 2012). While neglecting the Arab Palestinian cultural heritage, the study of the Hebrew language, Jewish national history, and the Jewish-Zionist narrative have a prominent place in the curricula of the Arab Palestinian public schools (Al-Haj 2012). Clearly, Israeli government policy towards Arab education aims to deepen the Arab student's sense of belonging to citizenship in the State of Israel, and the educational curriculum in the schools is an embodiment of this general vision (Abu-Saad 2005; 2006). Thus, teachers in the Arab education system have oscillated between the suppression of any sign of promoting the Arab Palestinian minority's cultural heritage, and a conservative recognition of its character (Haj-Yehia and Lev Tov 2017). The government's control over the formal education curricula has consigned to personal initiatives as well as projects and activities conducted in an alternative and non-formal fashion. Among them: Palestinian Arab cultural and heritage centers, small museums, festivals, and cultural days in schools and outside of school, personal collectors and cultural conservators (Haj-Yehia and Lev Tov 2015), and academic projects (Liberty-Shalev 2020).

Recent research has described the development of Arab Palestinian galleries and cultural and heritage centers, some of which are privately and independently run while others are funded and managed by recognized public associations, aiming to document, preserve, and pass on Arab Palestinian historical and cultural roots. These centers were established primarily to preserve the unique cultural heritage, but also to increase basic awareness of the important contribution of the process of culture building, and of the need to sustain private and collective memories. This is especially necessary because the Arab Palestinian minority have almost no official historical archives and museums. Although there are dozens of government-recognized and -supported public history and culture museums devoted to Jewish history and culture in Israel, there is still no government-supported public museum devoted to the cultural heritage of the Arab Palestinians in Israel (Shay 2011; Haj-Yehia and Lev Tov 2017).

Only in recent years has the Arab Palestinian society in Israel been able to exploit the possibilities offered by the internet, social networks, and virtual projects (Berger Gluck 2008; Haj-Yehia and Lev Tov 2017). The mobilization of intellectual Arab Palestinians and Jewish groups working together to create digital projects to preserve the Arab Palestinian cultural heritage has started to document and bequeath the past for the future generations. These initiatives are often described as a social framework that can enable the process of building an equal shared cultural heritage, which can lead to processes of acknowledgment and recognition (Kymlicka 1995). Such initiatives, mainly in the fields of oral history documentation, visual history, material history, and museum activity, take on special importance for national minority groups who wish to maintain their unique cultural heritage as well as to collaborate with the dominant national group.

## Methods

The digital initiative Tarasa, founded in 2019, documents oral historical memories of non-experts (people who are not professional researchers in the field of history, folklore, and cultural studies) from Arab Palestinian and Jewish origins living in Israel. Both authors, an Arab Palestinian and an Israeli Jew living in Israel, developed Tarasa as part of the *Time Tunnel program*<sup>2</sup> – a contemporary history program that gathers oral histories of everyday life that occurred in the last decades. The program is held in one of the biggest teacher training colleges in Israel, and addresses both

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2 The program has been active for over a decade in a variety of frameworks within the Israeli education system. Over the years, thousands of students, high school pupils, and teachers have taken part in it, guided by professional instructors in documenting the memories of their families (<https://www.iataskforce.org/entities/view/1036>).



Arab Palestinian and Jewish students. Tarasa offers a platform that provides space for the construction of different elements of virtual culture and heritage projects. The digital initiative invites Arab Palestinian and Jewish volunteers to visit the website and start reminiscing about their cultural heritage in order to widen the digital cultural heritage collections and deepen the public's engagement with each other's memories and heritage. The memories can be uploaded to the Tarasa Map platform in a simple technical procedure, on the basis of their attribution to places and times in which the memories occurred and that appear on the digital map. As part of the project, the general public is also able to preserve memories, books and long films, by uploading them to the Tarasa Archives.

The project assumes that by making cultural heritage accessible to the public in Israel, and all over the world, viewers and participants can equally explore and connect to their past and to the past of the Other.

In order to analyze the modes of engagement that the digital tools make possible for both the Jewish participants and the Arab Palestinian minority in Israel, and the possible effects of this engagement on creating a more equal reference space for the cultural heritages of both groups, a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the site's characteristics has been conducted (Creswell 1994).

First, the numbers of Arab Palestinian and Jews living in Israel who contributed to the shared digitized memories were examined and compared to their size in the Israeli population. Second, the ways the Arab Palestinian and Jewish participants uploaded their memories (texts, photos, audio, video), and the mode of engagement with these memories were examined.

This data, of this first study of the first digital initiative of cultural heritage in Israel, will be further analyzed in an upcoming study dealing with the content that is uploaded to the site.

## **Analysis**

### **Digital tools for preserving cultural heritage**

In the first two years of the project, the efforts invested in exposing it to the Arab public in Israel seemed to not manage to overcome this public's apprehension and lack of trust. Only about 4% (94 memories) of the first 2500 memories uploaded to the project were of Arab Palestinians living in Israel, with a considerable number of the participants asking to upload their memories without their names being publicized. A breakthrough and a significant change came about in this context only in the third year of the project's activity (2022), when Arab Palestinians uploaded 356 memories, constituting about 18% of the overall 2000 memories uploaded in that year, with the

overwhelming majority of participants agreeing to their names being publicized on the site.

These data suggest that the number of Jewish participants who uploaded memories to the project is still large in relation to their proportion in the population, and in relation to the number of Arab Palestinian participants. These data coincide with the inbuilt obstacles hindering the participation of Arab Palestinians in Israel's public social and cultural arena, and with the culture of silencing that prevents the exposure of information in public channels that are also directed at the Hebrew speaking public in Israel (Rouhana and Sabbagh-Khoury 2019). Nevertheless, there has been an increase in the number of Arab Palestinian memory-uploaders (mainly in the year 2022), with most of them being students. The increase in the number of Arab Palestinian participants attests to processes of change that have been taking place in recent years in the Arab society in Israel. These changes are mainly led by young people who are more assertive and active than their parents' generation, and who don't avoid dealing with various issues on the public agenda (Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker 2005). The changes are the product of an increase in the proportion of educated people, an improved standard of living, deepening democratization processes, and an increase in civil society activity in the Arab Palestinian society in Israel (Jamal 2008). This tendency joins the phenomenon of Palestinization that the Arab public sphere in Israel has undergone in the last decades, resulting in numerous changes driven from "the ground up" and calling for the foregrounding of the Palestinian cultural and national heritage. Thus, for example, it is widespread to name stores after villages that had been destroyed in 1948, to give streets new names commemorating Palestinian national heroes, and to decorate central walls in the Arab public space with graffiti drawings that include a distinctly national content (Milstein 2000).

Analyzing the media in which the participants from the two groups chose to share their memories shows that about 70% of the Arab Palestinians added an appropriate historical photograph to the texts they uploaded to the site. Only about 20% of them complemented the memories with additional photographs, and only a few percentages added clips or audio recordings. By contrast, some 90% of the Jewish participants added an appropriate historical photograph to the texts, about 40% of them complemented the memories with additional photographs, and roughly 10% also accompanied the written memories with historical clips and/or audio recordings.

The layered usage map matches and reflects the big difference in the quantity of historical photographs, clips, and recordings held by the Arab Palestinians in Israel in relation to those held by the Jewish public in Israel, both privately (by the family) and in various public-institutional contexts (archives and museums). These findings coincide with the concept of preserving history "from the ground up" and with the mobilized photography that were widespread among the Zionist Jewish settlers before the founding of the state of Israel, as opposed to the scant use of photography by

the Arab Palestinian society.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, a preference for oral preservation over using technological preservation media is common among the Arab Palestinians in Israel, as part of a tradition of oral storytelling passed from generation to generation. This tradition continues to exist, in light of the absence of public buildings that can house activities of collecting, preserving, and presenting the cultural heritage to the general public in the Arab Palestinian society in Israel (Kashti 2022).

This overall picture suggests that the preservation of cultural heritage in the two groups is continually on the rise. However, the preservation activities are umbilically tied to the traditions of conservation that have existed in the two groups in the past, as well as to the social-political conditions that affect the life of the two groups in the present.

### Digital tools for engaging with cultural heritage

The memories collected in Tarasa are available to watch both on the map shown on the site and in an additional display in the memory library. The memories in this display are arranged in continually diversifying thematic collections. The collections already built in the project include memories of childhood stories, family, education, pastime, love, migration, fashion, sport, economy, food, communal life, transit camps etc.

How do the tools used to display the memories create reciprocal relations between the different groups? The very engagement with a wide variety of subjects, by participants from both groups, already confirms Tarasa's basic assumption that every memory that is significant to a certain social group is worthy of being documented, commemorated, and made available for watching and engagement by members of other groups. Moreover, the variety of documented subjects suggests that Tarasa has managed to turn into a respectful digital platform, since each of the ethno-national groups uses it to present different subjects, issues, and events from their past. The multiplicity of subjects also points to a potential in Tarasa for mutual acquaintance and for forging connections across sectorial and national borders. The possibility of connecting the various subjects and memories on the platform with additional sources that can be found in the Tarasa archive deepens the mutual affinities between the groups. This technical option allows the visitors not only to follow memories that interest them, but also to intersect them with the memories of the other group, and thus see the similarity and difference between the two groups. These intersectorial encounters are unique in the landscape of contacts between Jews and Arab Palestinians in Israel. Although the two groups live side by side in one

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3 Most of the photographs produced by Palestinians before '48 were imbued with a biblical outlook and a wish to fulfil the visual expectations of the pilgrims and tourists, and therefore lacked any political consciousness (Sela 2005).

state, they maintain separate (and even hostile) cultural heritages, without knowing about the similarity and ties that existed between the two communities in the past. Thus, for example, research advances show that Arab Palestinians and Jews shared common behavioral patterns, outlooks, and experiences in the field of recreational activity at the end of the Ottoman rule and during the British rule in the country. This is one example of many of the similarity that exists between the two cultural heritages (Lev Tov 2011; Klen 2014).

Furthermore, the digital tools enable participants from both groups to engage with subjects that belong to social history and “history from the ground up”. Engaging with these subjects has enabled both the Arab Palestinians and the Jews in Israel to uncover significant layers of the daily routine of each of the groups, connected to the family’s and the community’s history, without straying into mutual political accusations (Haj-Yehia and Lev Tov 2017). In other words, the technical structure of the platform and the characteristics of the technology used enable the creation of direct interfaces between memories that existed in a specific period, and that deal with a specific subject or issue. Thus, for example, it is possible to intersect memories of Arabs and Jews who used to go hiking in the country at a specific period, or to go to the cinema, or to visit the cafes, without the interaction between the interested visitors being blocked by engaging with a volatile political issue. The ability to comfortably examine and juxtapose overlapping-parallel memories may create a space that brings people closer together without necessarily making the ongoing political conflict present. It does not mean that Tarasa is an apolitical space that doesn’t allow visibility to difficult memories connected to the conflict between the two peoples. Tarasa does not promote a depoliticization of the Jewish-Palestinian space in Israel, nor does it eliminate the political dimension from events and memories that are connected to the heritage and culture of everyday routine. It is the way the personal-collective memories, including the most conflictual ones, are juxtaposed, and their simultaneous presence on the same shared map, library, and archive that enable each of the sides to also study the history and heritage of the other people living between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River.

Moreover, Tarasa also enables projects and organizations in which Jews and Arab operate together to upload to the site memories that have been collected and documented as part of their work. These collections created to begin with shared Jewish-Arab memory spaces that reflect the common work done by the two groups. Thus, memories of Arab Palestinian and Jewish students from various academic institutions are kept together in collections dedicated to the projects and courses in which they were created. In a similar way, family memories of high school pupils from Jewish Ramat HaSharon and from Arab Tayibe, as well as from a regional school in the area of the Arab “Triangle” and from the Jewish Drom HaSharon regional council, are kept and presented together in special cross-languages and cross-cultures collections. The possibility of uncovering in Tarasa a shared heritage that existed around

various daily life events already encompasses and presents reciprocal affinities between the two groups.

It further seems that a large part of the settlements, communities, organizations, and families participating in the project are interested in taking part in it because of the possibility they are given to assemble their memories on a separate site devoted to their special stories and built and designed according to their needs. Hence, possibilities have been developed to build interactive community-memory sites, which have created a kind of rhizomatic network of different memory sites. These too are displayed on the map and in the archive, thus presenting entire communities' stories that can be shared and referred to while dismantling the hierarchical structuring that divides between the two groups. It is important to emphasize that most of the memories uploaded to the community-memory sites also appear on the project's central site, thus enriching the intercommunity and intersectorial encounter that takes place on it. As part of the project, 6 memory sites of Jewish communities and settlements have already been built, and 3 community-memory sites requested by local authorities of Arab settlements are in development stages.

Future development plans will enable the full automatic translation of all the memories into Hebrew and Arabic and any other language, in order to deepen the possibilities of intersectorial encounter. Users of the site will also be able to define their areas of interest according to subjects, regions, and periods in order to regularly get links to new memories referring to these areas. In the future it will also be possible to send comments and to contact the memory-uploaders, a move that could further deepen the interactions between the various remembering groups. A considerable extension of the exposure and dissemination of the memories and the cultural heritages they embody will be created with the future development of their manifestations through layers of Augmented Reality. This development, stemming naturally from the project's fundamental characterization as location-based, is expected to also extend its exposure and dissemination to the physical space, while preserving the marked advantages of its digital characteristics.

## Conclusions

The uniqueness of the Tarasa project lies in it being a free interactive space for documenting and preserving the cultural heritage of Arab Palestinians and Jews in Israel. In light of the ongoing conflict and its historical roots, Palestinian and Jewish-Israeli sites that document and present the cultural heritage and the social history of the different groups are usually built in complete separation. They thus deepen the feelings of exclusion and disconnection between the two groups, and increase the mutual fears of the history and the cultural heritage of the Other (Maoz and McCauley 2009). The number of people using Tarasa and the characteristics of the digital tools

that the site offers its users encourage not only the preservation and presentation of memory and a unique cultural heritage, but also the mutual exposure of memories and cultural heritages and the creation of spontaneous and multiple interface points between them. True, the space of the internet is also an arena of struggle, where different groups fight for representation and visibility, and it has even been claimed that communication technologies foster the expression of different viewpoints only to a limited extent, since the power relations that underpin cultural mediation are being reproduced by the digital tools (Aigner 2016). However, the technology is not inherently evil. The tools that Tarasa offers the participants afford them an agency that is able to curtail the reproduction of the social power relations on the site. Thus, precisely because of the decentralization that characterizes the site, the users are able to produce more independent mutual affinities than those made possible within centralized heritage institutions (museums, heritage centers and the like).

Accusing the project of circumventing the political dimension and of creating a postmodern false presentation that gives the memories of different groups an identical importance ignores the fact that in the state of Israel, the two peoples are inextricably bound with each other in their daily life (Lustick 2019). Tarasa wishes to reflect this reality, without embellishing it falsely and without creating a counter-hegemony, by creating a space accessible to all. Tarasa's activity, like that of other similar projects, is the initiative of individuals, non-governmental institutions, and non-profit grassroots organizations that operate voluntarily to create dialogue between Arab Palestinians and Jews (Reingold 2007).

The main question we are faced with, therefore, is whether this alternative model of grassroots action aimed at democratizing history, which is built and breaks down alternately and according to the will of its users, will succeed in creating spaces that are characterized by a shared cultural heritage in the future as well.

To what extent are private websites able to bypass the rules of the dominant discourse? Will the prevailing perspective of the dominant group allow a further articulation of the concept of "participatory culture" and shared heritage by the digital platforms? It seems that with the erosion of the peace process and of the very idea of peace, finding ways to formulate a shared cultural heritage and an integrated democracy that will produce a *de facto* coexistence is almost the only solution.

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# Shared heritage on the Hartmannswillerkopf

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## Introduction

Using the example of the Hartmannswillerkopf in Alsace, France, this chapter shows both the differences and the process of convergence of national discourses of remembrance in Germany and France, and thus moves towards an interpretation of European history as a common heritage. It is inspired by recent historical research that uses a transnational perspective on the 20th century (Krumeich 2018) as well as the peace work that Germany and France had initiated in the 1980s. Thus, at the latest after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the end of the Cold War, both countries had become pioneers of the idea of a peaceful Europe that was to redefine itself to a “community of memory” (Assmann 2018a, p. 250)<sup>1</sup> after years of division. Its most important task was to learn from its own history and, in the spirit of “Never again!” (Assmann 2018b, p. 63), to prevent military conflicts and crimes against humanity on its own soil.

While the idea of a politically united Europe found expression in the treaties and institutions of the EU, it was incumbent on the agencies of memory culture to actively work on a “modern European self-understanding” (Kaelble 2001, p. 254). The goal of the European self-understanding was a transnational culture of memory that would contextualize national memory sites and artifacts from multiple perspectives and mediate them dialogically (Winter and Prost 2004; Offenstadt 2010). Museums, monuments, and memorials were understood as places of a collective memory that no longer only transmits national myths, but should show connecting lines between individual national histories and take many perspectives into account in order to strengthen “European identity constructions” (Assmann 2018a, p. 251).

This approach can also be observed at the binational memorial site Hartmannswillerkopf. The 957-meter-high hilltop, which remains central to France and Germany’s national commemoration of World War I to this day, is located between Colmar and Mulhouse, France. It was here that a bitter war of position over land and

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1 For better readability, quotations from French and German literature have been translated into English. French and German sources are marked as such in the bibliography.

border took place from 1914 to 1918. The top of the mountain changed hands four times during the war. Today, the site, sometimes called the “mountain of death”, stands in the memory of the two former enemies for the senselessness of the war, and is visited as a memorial by both French and Germans. Thus, it has become an important symbol also of binational state and history politics. For example, then German President Joachim Gauck and French President François Hollande met at Hartmannswillerkopf on August 3, 2014, to lay the cornerstone for a joint Franco-German information center commemorating the battles (Michelberger 2015). On November 10, 2017, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier and French President Emmanuel Macron inaugurated this information center, as a *Historial*.<sup>2</sup> It embodies the idea and form of a place of commemoration and mediation of Franco-German history, located directly on the Franco-German border and also in an area that has been influenced by both cultures for centuries: Alsace.

Against this background, the analysis traces how a changed politics of history can lead to a new view of the common heritage of two countries, their acts of war and their remembrance of war, and why the Hartmannswillerkopf as a binational memorial and exemplary learning site is particularly suitable for this. The article draws on the author’s many years of research work as a military historian and co-chairman of the Scientific Advisory Board of *Historial*.

## Warrior or comrade? German monuments in the Weimar Republic

From 1919 to 1933, the German memory of the First World War was and remained deeply marked by the fact that the “legacy” of the world war was tremendously contentious. Why had the war been lost and the *Treaty of Versailles* signed? A common remembrance, a silence of political dispute over the graves of the fallen did not even begin to exist in the Weimar Republic (Wette 1990; Löffelbein 2013; Krumeich 2014b).

There were many reasons for this. First, a tremendous incoherence confusion of the decision-making authorities in charge of the monument construction. The Weimar Republic was a federal state, and the states certainly had their own and conflicting regulations and requirements, with clear political differences, for example between a Catholic “black” state like Bavaria and a “red” one like Thuringia. The individual states set up so-called state advisory offices for monument construction, whose competence lay primarily – as Lurz has ironically noted – in preventing initiatives (1986). Between rising police concerns and sales tax legal requirements, the harassment varied from country to country, but in most cases was extremely restrictive. There was a tremendous amount of regulation as to what motifs could be used, whether a standing warrior had to face west or east, for example, and many more.

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2 The name *Historial* is a combination of *Histoire* and *Mémoire*, of history and commemoration.

It is not necessary to go into detail here. What is important is that “the indirect call to continue the fight was regularly demanded as the actual statement of the monuments” (Lurz 1986, p. 158), a demand that was realized in many places. Thus, already in the early phase of monument designs, i.e., in the years 1919 to about 1924, fighter figures such as *Nackter Krieger* (naked warrior), *Trotziger Krieger* (defiant warrior), *Marschierende Einheit* (marching unit) were more common than pacifist monuments, for example with the motif *Trauernde Mutter* (grieving mother), *Trauernder Kamerad* (grieving comrade), or *Verwundeter Krieger* (wounded warrior). Jeismann and Westheider have drawn the following conclusion from this finding:

The vast majority of monuments are characterized by a dull heroism – often dressed up in Christian terms – in which defeat tends to be suppressed or even reinterpreted as victory. Monuments that convey pure messages of mourning are extremely rare. On the other hand, those that proclaim a blatant revanchism (“Undefeated in the field”) were erected in large numbers (1988, p. 12).

In principle, this quite common assessment is correct, but “Undefeated in the field” does not necessarily seem to indicate “revanchist” intentions frequently. This quasi-stereotypical assurance is not coupled with clearly bellicose forms of expression. Undefeated in the field seems rather to have been an extension or a specification of the assurance to the dead and the living that the soldiers had fallen “not in vain”. Reinhart Koselleck, in his seminal essay on war memorials, has even emphasized that the topos of the soldiers’ “meaningful death” was widespread in all political camps. Moreover, he formulated the thesis – probably going a bit too far – that there had been no monuments at all in Germany after 1918 that staged a “visible demand for revenge” (Koselleck 1979, p. 262). Such a demand did not go off without political confrontation, even struggle, including street fighting, as Saehrendt has shown (2004). In Berlin, for example, the impression arose that any war commemoration by the left (“Never again war”) or the erection of corresponding monuments in individual “red” districts immediately resulted in interventions by the nationalists, and vice versa (Friedrich 1924).

A famous example of this is also the dispute over the so-called *39th monument* in Düsseldorf. (Fig. 1) The 39th Lower Rhine Infantry Regiment had a special significance because it was Ludendorff’s parent regiment and therefore particularly prestigious. The Düsseldorf city councilors opted for a large monument of the “wounded warrior” type, which was erected at the Tonhalle in 1928. Two crawling soldiers were depicted, one wounded, taken by the hand of his comrade in a caring manner. For the nationalists of all shades, however, this very realistic – and also not particularly war-critical – topos was “unworthy”. It was also unacceptable to them because the two men somehow looked “foreign” or “semitic”, as contemporary opponents complained (Thanner 1997; Krumeich 2004; Krumeich 2010). The monument was reg-

ularly damaged and defaced, and in 1933, immediately after the National Socialists came to power, it was replaced by the “heroic” monument at Reeserplatz – which still exists today. This monument, inaugurated in 1936, shows a group of soldiers of the 1914 war descending into the tomb and a group of soldiers of the new Wehrmacht emerging from it. Engraved are the names of battles of the First and Second World War.

In summary, it can be said that the political situation in Germany during the Weimar Republic was so torn that in many places the planned monuments were not even realized. The examples of this provided by Lurz and more recently by Kaiser (2010) are innumerable. One among many, but particularly interesting, is the example of the town of Marbach am Neckar, the famous “Schiller town”. There, at the old town gate, still stands one of the most unusual and remarkable monuments of the First World War. Two soldiers, one from the First World War and one from the Wehrmacht, recognizable by their helmets, stand dressed in one and the same garment, namely the uniform of the Wehrmacht. This realization was the result of more than ten years of dispute about the monument (Alexander-Seitz-Geschichtswerkstatt Marbach 1985),<sup>3</sup> which was only ended by the *Machtübernahme* (seizure of power) and the “heroic” monuments enforced by the new rulers here, as in many other places in Germany, as early as March 1933 (Behrenbeck 1996). The seizure of power by National Socialism thus also includes its energetic and never slackening grip on the memorial culture of the First World War (ibid; Thamer 1997). It is no coincidence that the Tannenberg Memorial, which had originally been planned to provide a memorial to the “Unknown Soldier” for Germany as well, was only completed by the National Socialists, and designated a “Reich memorial of honor” (Fischer 1990). Hindenburg, who was revered by Germans across party lines, was buried there in 1934, a symbolic act in the National Socialists’ effort to restore Germany’s honor and greatness.

### “Ils ne passeront pas”: French memorials and monuments

In France, the First World War, which was ultimately won in 1918 despite all the great losses, was able to create a fundamentally shared memory of the suffering and heroism of the soldiers and the nation from the very beginning. The local mourning communities institutionalized by the Republic also created a bond of *memoria*, of com-

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3 The Marbach municipal archive has an, unsorted, bundle of files on this monument. Probably the only – unfortunately strongly polemical – publication on the subject to date is by Alexander-Seitz-Geschichtswerkstatt Marbach und Umgebung (Alexander-Seitz-Geschichtswerkstatt 1985).

mon remembrance, which could not be severed even by sharp domestic political controversies.<sup>4</sup>

From the very beginning, the French culture of remembrance focused less on the brave warrior, whose myth was used by the defeated German empire, than on the unknown soldier as a symbol of the male citizen who remained without a grave of his own and was missing in every family as a father, son or brother. It was not by chance that a soldier from the Verdun area had been transferred to the Arc de Triomphe in 1920 as a *Soldat inconnu* (unknown soldier). Verdun remains the greatest French memorial to the First World War. The battle, in which more than 350,000 French soldiers were killed or wounded in 1916, is the symbolic site of the unity of the fighting nation. Here, the German invader had been decisively stopped: “Ils ne passeront pas” (The Germans will not get through here), this slogan issued by Pétain in April 1916 had finally been fulfilled on *Onze Novembre* (eleventh november) 1918.

At the same time, the sites of the fighting were in victorious France after 1919. Verdun and the surrounding battlefields were, and in some cases still are, sacred ground for the French (Werth 1979). There are villages there that have not been rebuilt, such as Douaumont, but nevertheless have a mayor, as a sign that they have been erased from the map but not from the hearts. The Verdun cult went so far in the interwar period that clay pots in the shape of one of the kilometer stones of the *Voie Sacrée*, the sacred road between Bar-le-Duc and Verdun on which the soldiers and supplies had been transported, were filled with earth from the battle zone and kept all over France. For almost every French soldier had been deployed at least once “in front of Verdun”. The *Ossuaire*, the Douaumont Bone House, is still the most important French necropolis. Here, at the beginning of the 1920s, the bodies of dead soldiers found during the clearing of the battlefields were buried.

As for France’s commemorative activities by means of monuments, the law of November 23, 1919 stipulated that every French municipality must erect a war memorial. This law is still in force today, and there is probably no municipality in which the *poilu* (colloquially: French frontline soldier) is not commemorated (Prost 1987; Prost 1992; Ackermann 1994; Becker 1994; Behrenbeck 1996; Becker 1998).<sup>5</sup> In more than 38,000 municipalities in France there is a *Monument aux Morts*, be it in the immediate vicinity of the town hall and the school (these are the left-wing republican-oriented municipalities), or near the church, by which one immediately recognizes a traditionally more conservative Catholic community. (Fig. 2) All of these monuments were produced in a virtually “catalog-based” fashion, with

4 For an overview of the types of monuments erected in France, with many pictorial sources, see: Rive/ Morelle (1995); Franck (2013).

5 Unfortunately, Ackermann (1994) has twisted the Xenotaph inscription known to every Frenchman. It actually reads: “Ceux qui pieusement sont morts pour la France” (Those who piously died for France).



communities given a choice of different types of depiction of the soldier: the *poilu* charging forward with flag; the *poilu* dying; the mother weeping with her fallen son in her arms (the *Pietà* motif) – the choice did not come much wider. The most common, however, was a plain memorial column, with the inscription: “La Commune XY à ses enfants morts pour la France” (The XY Commune to its children who died for France). The soldiers who died in the war belonging to this very commune were listed by name on the monument.

Even today, the enormous blood toll paid by France during the First World War can be seen when, for example, in a community of 800 inhabitants, up to 80 names are engraved, very often several sons of one and the same family. In addition to these statues, more neutral and above all preserving the internal peace of the place, in a few cases there were also nationalist or chauvinist designs, such as the *poilu triumphant avec lauriers* (poilu triumphant with laurels), or the *poilu* kicking a piked helmet. However, they are much rarer.

The main reason why these monuments are still standing today (to the extent that they were not dismantled and melted down during the German occupation during World War II) is that consensus was sought from the outset. The monuments in France have not been planned and financed either purely by the commune or purely by the state. The mentioned law of 1919 prescribes state subsidies, proportional to the municipal financial expenses. The state therefore contributed up to 15 percent of the cost of presentation, and the choice of motifs catalogued and produced had its influence on the amount of the state’s financial contribution.

In contrast to Germany, there has been no significant dispute in France about the form of commemoration of the victims. This is due, among other things, to the fact that, with very few exceptions, all Frenchmen were convinced, and remain convinced to this day, that France fought a genuine defensive war from 1914 to 1918. Consequently, there was no trace of a “war of position over monuments” as in Germany. One certainty was unbreakable for the French and has remained so to this day: in the First World War, the *poilus* defended the “sacred soil of the fatherland” (so the *Mar-seillaise*) together against the German invader. Battles like the Marne and Verdun are therefore firmly anchored in the collective memory.

## Remembering together? Politics of history and places of remembrance

For many decades, there was no common mourning and commemoration of the World War dead between Germans and French people. In many cases, even the commemoration was not free of anger towards the enemy and feelings of revenge. The *Pietà monument* in Péronne, of the mother holding her dead son in her lap and swearing revenge with her fist, testifies to this, as do the many German monuments of the interwar period whose gestures and inscriptions clearly indicate that “another reck-

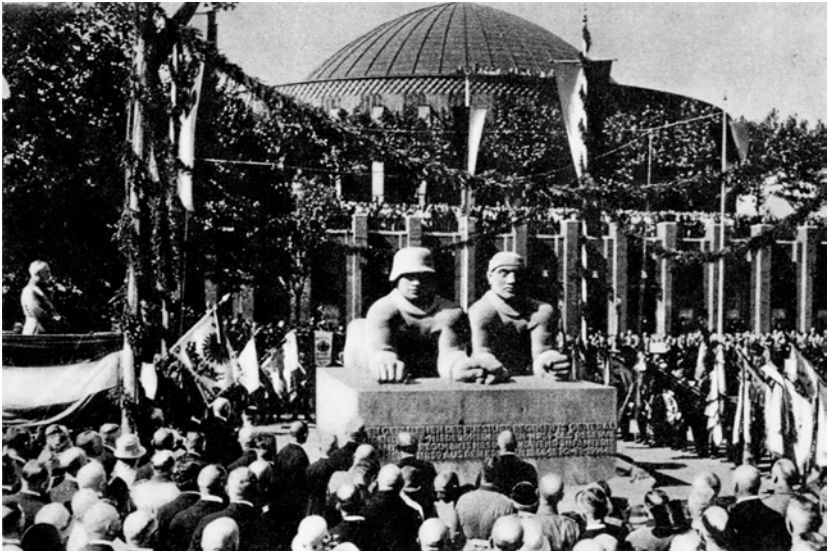
oning" is due. This behavior was and remained – for the most part until today – the standard of commemoration of the dead. At the same time, the need for joint remembrance and commemoration arose early on, as evidenced, for example, by the oath of peace taken by the German and French Verdun fighters in 1936, the initiative for which came from the Comité France-Allemagne, founded in 1935, and was joined by the most important soldiers' associations of both nations:

Because those who lie here and elsewhere entered into the peace of the dead only to establish the peace of the living, and because it would be unholy for us to allow in the future what the dead abhorred, therefore we swear to preserve and want the peace we owe to their sacrifice (Krumeich and Prost 2016, p. 198).

However, such calls remained the exception, not least due to the historical caesura of National Socialism and the Second World War. Their official continuation was delayed until well after 1945, although it is worth noting that from the 1960s onward, German former Front soldiers were also involved in the construction of the *Mémorial of Verdun* as a memorial to the First World War. The first politically decisive step in the direction of a common remembrance occurred only in 1984, when – also in Verdun – the French President Francois Mitterrand and the German Chancellor Helmut Kohl posed hand in hand in front of the Douaumont Ossuary. This unforgettable gesture became a political emblem and reflected the desire for a common culture of remembrance, which was to bear institutional fruit a little later, mainly on French territory: in the form of a reconsideration of cemeteries or a redesign of war museums, which as *Mémorial* (Verdun and Meaux) or *Historial* (Péronne and Hartmannswillerkopf) claim to combine factual information and objects of the war in a context of supranational remembrance.

If one looks at the military cemeteries, their once nation-state and thus separate commemoration can already be seen in the geography. The military cemeteries were set up separately in the former combat zone after 1919, for example in Verdun, where it was impossible to commemorate the German dead in the *Ossuaire* cemetery – they were buried in two cemeteries far away in Azannes. At Hartmannswillerkopf, the French soldiers were buried around the crypt, while the Germans were given a burial place at Etain, on the plain outside Mulhouse. This form of monoperspectival commemorative culture, rooted in the soil of World War I remembrance, changed only when the centenary celebrations of World War I approached in 2014, under the auspices of continuing European peace politics. Thus, on the occasion of the commemorations of the Battle of Verdun, it was established for the first time in memorialistic terms that in the aforementioned *Ossuaire*, with the utmost certainty, half of the bones collected were the remains of German soldiers.

*Fig. 1: Inauguration of the 39er monument by Jupp Rübsam in Düsseldorf, 1928 (Copyright: Duisburg Institute for Linguistic and Social Research/Wikimedia Commons)*



*Fig. 2: The war memorial to the fallen French soldiers of World War I in Péronne by Paul Auban, 1926 (Photo: Wikimedia/ Ybroc)*



*Fig. 3: Aerial view of the French military cemetery with crypt (Copyright: Comité du Monument National du Hartmannswillerkopf)*



*Fig. 4: View of the permanent exhibition of the Historial, which opened in 2017 (Copyright: Comité du Monument National du Hartmannswillerkopf)*



Since then, the dome of the *Ossuaire* has been engraved by a German and French inscription: “Here rest together the bones of 130,000 French and German soldiers who fell on the battlefield before Verdun. Let us never forget this horror” (see Other Sources: No. 1). The inscription, which would have been unthinkable just a few years earlier, was ceremoniously unveiled by Angela Merkel and François Hollande in May 2016. The *Anneau du Souvenir* (Ring of Remembrance) of Notre Dame de Lorette (2014) should also be mentioned in this context – it too is a sign of a deliberately modified culture of remembrance of the dead. Here, the names of nearly 600,000 soldiers of all nations killed in the fighting in the Pas de Calais are engraved in a circular wall, without any distinction.

Even if this view of the common history has by no means become the majority view until today, a very important continuation of the common remembrance theme was also the transformation of the *Mémorial* of Verdun, founded in 1960, which originally served solely the French war memory and the memory of the *poilus* fallen before Verdun. This was to become a museum *and* place of remembrance, which also wanted to include the fight, suffering, and death of the German soldiers (and has also achieved this in parts in an exemplary manner). For example, when in an information film shown in the entrance area, a German historian explains the battle and its consequences to the largely French audience. In this way, this traditionally very French place of remembrance is gradually becoming an institution for a comparative view of the First World War.

The name *Historial* is a combination of *Histoire* and *Mémoire*, of history and commemoration. This is the driving notion behind the idea of a (new) dialogical commemoration, which should also be actively pursued in the mediation work of the places of remembrance (Krumeich 2018). Already in 1992, in response to the political rapprochement of European nations, a new type of museum had been created and opened in Péronne with a clear international and comparative mission: the *Historial* of Péronne. It was particularly important here that the staging, which was still common at the time, was completely dispensed with: no more sound or light effects to make visitors understand the horror of the battlefield. Likewise, any heroization of the soldiers or morbid fascination with “beautiful” weapons and other implements of war was to be avoided. Museally revolutionary were the trenches strewn with bodies dressed in the uniforms of the nations involved in the war – but without heads, without individual expressions. Today, many museums around the world have adopted this concept. At the time, it was simply unbearable for many visitors, even well-intentioned ones. There were also museums that reclaimed the objects they had lent to the *Historial* out of indignation at the changed narrative and its staging. But the most important thing about the *Historial*'s concept is certainly its emphasized supranationality. The documents and objects of all nations involved in the war are exhibited with absolute parity. At the same time, this museum became the starting point for a *ircuit du souvenir*, a round trip to the most important sites of the

fighting on the Somme with its million wounded and dead, whereby the visitor has to walk through an area of about 400 square kilometers (Krumeich 2008).

The *Historial* of Péronne was thus the first museum demonstration of an internationally comparative and at the same time commemorative view, which from then on inspired the public culture of remembrance of the First World War and its reception today from a European perspective. This development has been rounded off since 2017 by the establishment of the Franco-German *Historial* on the battlefield of Hartmannswillerkopf in Alsace (HWK).

## **The Historial of the Hartmannswillerkopf - German-French commemoration**

The Hartmannswillerkopf (Fig. 3) is one of four national memorials of the First World War in France and therefore has a high significance for the country. On the Hartmannswillerkopf, which was a strategically important theater of war in 1914, an all-German-French battle took place that lasted until 1918. Here, at an altitude of 1000 meters, the war was fought under special conditions. Also, the fighters were not masses of common soldiers, “Feldgraue” or *poilus*, but elite troops of alpine hunters and *chasseurs alpins*. They waged a relentless close combat on impassable terrain, using all the technical advances of industrialized warfare, from gas as a combat agent and heavy mortars to electric pumps and even high altitude cable cars.

The theater of war in Alsace had the peculiarity that the fighters of both nations fought here, so to speak, “in the homeland” and “for the homeland”, since Alsace, annexed by the Germans since 1871, was for both the Germans and the French part of their own fatherland (see Other Sources: No. 2). This is probably also the reason for the particular tenacity of the fighting, even at a time when the Hartmannswillerkopf was only a sideshow of the war, because the front had, so to speak, “moved on to the west.” As early as 1921, the Hartmannswillerkopf was designated a place of French memorial culture, roads were laid out for mourners and tourists, and the trenches were made accessible to visitors. The same, however, was not true for the German positions; German visitors and commemorators were unwanted (see Other Sources: No. 2). It was not until almost 100 years later that the time was ripe for joint commemoration with Germany here in Alsace as well. Since 2003, a committee of French and German scientists, researchers, and archivists has been working to preserve the memorial, starting with the restoration of the summit cross. This was inaugurated with a Franco-German ceremony. Restoration of the entire site began in 2009 and was completed in 2013, funded in part by the European Union and the *German War Graves Commission* (VDK) (Comité du Monument National du Hartmannswillerkopf 2014). The inclusion of the German perspective was initially carried out gradually, by

naming the German regiments involved in the battles in the crypt for the first time, and culminated in 2017 with the opening of the *Historial* by the two heads of state.

The *Historial* HWK is the brainchild of Jean Klinkert, director of the *Historial* (and the “heart and soul” of the institution) and head of the Colmar Tourist Office. Klinkert was inspired to create the *Historial* by his grandfather, who was mayor of Colmar for 30 years (Klinkert 2020). He was also guided by the *Historial* in Péronne – a monoperspectival memory was to be similarly broken up at Hartmannswillerkopf. Today, a motivated team of on-site specialists works with Klinkert, of whom Florian Hensel as curator of permanent and special exhibitions and Thierry Ehret as book author deserve special mention (Ehret 2015). In addition, there is a Scientific Advisory Board with German and French members, among the latter several Alsatians. Thus, the awareness of the special historical situation between Germany and France is always maintained and flows into the design of the exhibitions.

The *Historial*, whose building blends inconspicuously into the natural surroundings thanks to its almond shape and use of wood, is intended to make the battlefield comprehensible. It is not conceived as a war museum, but as an information center and starting point for visiting the battlefield immediately adjacent to it, with its trenches and barracks, dugouts, machine gun emplacements and still rudimentary components of equipment used in the war, most of which are very well preserved. The exhibition spaces are mediated by contemporary documents and objects, but mainly by audiovisual presentations and interactive monitors. (Fig. 4) The *Historial* contains only a few uniforms as well as some models of the guns and shells typical of this battlefield, and a trench with examples of actual wartime archaeology. The center of the exhibition is a darkened circular hall in which a film plays on a wide screen, suggesting the battle amidst an abstractly depicted landscape, while off-screen voices quote from French and German soldiers’ diaries and letters of the time. One hears the despair of the situation, the physical suffering in sub-zero temperatures at 1000 meters, the constant attacks and counter-attacks, the shifts in position. But one also hears the strong awareness on both sides of making a necessary sacrifice for the fatherland here. At the same time, the course of the battle is shown on a topographical 3-D map with luminous signals. The whole thing is – this is confirmed by visitors again and again – a sensitive and direct presentation of the events of that time and the emotions of the soldiers. Furthermore, the names of all German and French soldiers who fell at Hartmannswillerkopf are listed alphabetically in an electronic file in the information center and can be looked up. The list can also be completed by visitors. Also on display is a precise model of a cable car at Hartmannswillerkopf at the time, as well as a 3D view made of wood of all the medical posts, field hospitals, etc. on the German and French sides.

The way a nation presents, processes, and interprets its war sites has a major influence on how historical events are anchored. On the *Historial* website and in the accompanying brochure, it is therefore pointed out that, in addition to commemora-



tion, the exhibition primarily aims at education, with the idea of dialogue and reconciliation already expressed in the German title: *Hartmannswillerkopf – Ihre Geschichte wird unsere Geschichte* (Hartmannswillerkopf – Your story becomes our story) (see Other Sources: No. 2). At the same time, the permanent exhibition does not try to harmonize, but to points out differences:

Beyond the local vision, the permanent exhibition constantly keeps in mind the duality and the Franco-German friendship, from the end of the war, when the combatants of both sides meet on the battlefield, to the international commemorations [...] (Other Sources: No. 3).

*The Historial's* special exhibitions are similarly positioned (see Other Sources: No. 4, 5). The *Historial's* target group consists primarily of middle and high school students from all over France and Germany, although it is striking that on the French side, children as young as eight or nine are expected to visit a war museum and battlefield. This is certainly due to the fact that the French are more deeply rooted in the history of their own nation than their German counterparts. Through didactic projects, the *Historial* wants to actively involve students and keep the memory of the war alive (Comité du Monument National du Hartmannswillerkopf 2020). However, it sees itself as an educational site not only for school-age children, but also for adults, for example through events and conferences. The *Historial* Museum also attracts many tourists who visit the Hartmannswillerkopf as part of excursions to Alsace. In all its offerings, the memorial and museum site aim to preserve the binational view of history (Comité du Monument National du Hartmannswillerkopf 2020). By aiming to be a place of dialogue, the *Historial* tries to create a common culture of remembrance (Comité du Monument National du Hartmannswillerkopf 2020). The multiperspective reappraisal of history in a memorial is intended to be groundbreaking for the shaping of the Franco-German culture of remembrance and for the European Union (Krumeich 2018).

With this concept, the *Historial* proved successful from the start. In 2019, it had a total of almost 40,000 visitors, 64% of whom were French, 25% German, and 6% from Switzerland (Comité du Monument National du Hartmannswillerkopf 2020). In the fall of 2021, despite being closed for a period due to the Corona pandemic, the *Historial* was already able to record its 100,000th visitor – she came from Austria. Whatever the individual motivation to explore the *Historial* and the battlefield, without a doubt this effort to make the war accessible in its terrible reality leaves a strong impression of. The *Historial* of Hartmannswillerkopf is and remains an important historical bridge between Germans and French people and other Europeans. And it sees itself quite explicitly as a stage on the way to a genuine common European memory of the First World War.



## Conclusions: War experience as a shared heritage?

In the end, the difficult question arises as to how far it is possible, in the commemoration of the First World War, to transcend national borders and perhaps even to arrive at a common European memory, as a historical underpinning and thus an essential building block of European unity. It is hardly conceivable that a truly unified remembrance can be achieved through dialogue alone. The ways in which the various nations experienced the First World War are far too different for that. And the long periods of remembrance and commemoration or non-memoration have also been too historically formative for that. Thus, while it is hardly possible to completely overcome national perspectives, traumas, and pains, it is good to have places like the *Historial* in which to enter into conversation, to see how the people of the other nations involved in the war fared, and to see what hopes arise from this, all the way to a European identity based on the idea of unbreakable peace in Europe that is common to all (Leggewie 2011; Assmann 2018b).

What is possible and desirable, however, is for each country to take its neighbors' commemorative traditions seriously as part of its shared history. For example, this would include France recognizing the fact that the German soldiers were not simply brutal aggressors either, but went out and fell in defense of their fatherland – just like the French *poilus*. The Germans should be aware that they fought this “defensive war” in France and in many other places, and that neighboring nations had to endure horrendous suffering as a result, until they finally defeated Germany. French people, Belgians, and British people, on the other hand, should take seriously the fact that German soldiers fought and fell at the Somme and before Verdun not because of a German “grab for world power” but in defense of their fatherland. Only in this way can war memory become a kind of “engine of Europe” (Leggewie 2011, p. 32) in the long run.

The new war in Europe, triggered by the Russian aggression on Ukraine in the spring of 2022, naturally shifts the perspectives on the wars of earlier times, and not least on the First World War. War is once again and quite unexpectedly becoming a terrible reality for all Europeans. While it has been the intention of the *Historial* and many other war museums to show the war of the past with a kind of apotheosis of a new international understanding, it will be necessary in the future to bring the pressing reality, the terrible images of immense destruction, the horror of violence and endless suffering, which is updated again and again by the media, into the presentation of historical wars in a new way. For those who are shown daily the devastation in the cities and villages of Ukraine might naturally feel less interested in, say, the trenches and shell craters on the HWK or before Verdun and on the Somme. A new museology will be needed to readjust the relationship between history and contemporary experience for visitors of all nations and ages.

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