

Contentious and Communal Cultural Heritage: Excavating the Jewish-Arab City of Lod, Israel

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Zusammenfassung

Archäologie kann als ein in den Prozess der Identitätsbildung involviertes Werkzeug verstanden werden. Als solches trägt sie zur Schaffung von Zugehörigkeit und Einheit innerhalb einer vielfältigen Reihe von Gemeinden bei. Die Forschung wurde aufgrund des breiten Wahrnehmungsspektrums und Analysepotentials mit Absicht in der gemischten Stadt Lod in Israel durchgeführt. Die Autorin untersuchte die Auswirkungen des städtischen Kulturerbes auf die identitäre Entwicklung der jüdischen und arabischen Kinder vor Ort. Als jüngste aktive Mitglieder der Gesellschaft in der Stadt wurden sie ausgewählt, um an den Grabungen der Saison 2013 im Khan al-Hilu teilzunehmen. Israel ist für solche Forschungen aufgrund seiner Natur, dem gleichzeitig umfangreichen Schwerpunkt der Ausgrabungen und dem anhaltenden, scheinbar unlösbaren Nahostkonflikt der ideale Ort. Die generationenalte Bindung an das Land dient als Grundlage für die kollektive Identität von Arabern und Juden. Doch jede Gemeinschaft und jedes Individuum bezieht sich auf unterschiedliche archäologische Stätten, die durch ihre Bedeutung als kulturelles Erbe und ihren Wert für die jeweilige Gruppe geprägt sind.

Abstract

Archaeology can be understood as a tool used in the process of identity formation, contributing to a sense of belonging and unity within a diverse set of communities. Research was conducted with the intention of analyzing the wide range of perceptions regarding archaeological sites in the mixed city of Lod, Israel. I explored the impact of urban cultural heritage on shaping the identity of local Jewish and Arab children, who were chosen as the youngest active members of society living in the city, and who participated in the 2013 archaeological excavation season at the Khan al-Hilu. Israel is an ideal location for such research, due to its nature as simultaneously being the focus of extensive archaeological excavations as well as being the setting of an intractable

conflict. Ancestral attachment to the land serves as a foundation for the collective identity of both Jews and Arabs. Yet, each community and individual may relate differently to the surrounding archaeological sites, which is further shaped by their sense of societal hierarchy and cultural heritage.

1. Research Question

The objective of the study (conducted under the supervision of Dr. Yuval Gadot and Prof. Oded Lipschits at the Department of Archaeology and Ancient Near Eastern Cultures in Tel Aviv University) was to research the perceptions of archaeology held by children of different communities within a conflicted society by exploring their point of contact with the artefacts, heritage sites and archaeological research in the mixed Jewish-Arab city of Lod. A sense of shared past is significant to the formation of a collective identity. Archaeological finds, as material remains from the past, are a physical expression of the history of the current landscape, and are revealed by active and practical archaeology. Thus, the question arises, what can be learned from the variety of attitudes and emotions expressed toward the local heritage sites and archaeology by the young residents of Lod?

2. Sources

Research was focused on the mixed Jewish-Arab city of Lod, and in particular the Khan al-Hilu as a central landmark. Mixed cities in Israel are characterized by their cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, generally due to their pre-1948 Arab origins and subsequent Jewish immigration. These cities are often negatively portrayed in Israeli society, suffering from a reputation of poverty and illegal activity. The community archaeology project at the Khan al-Hilu in Lod is among the first in Israel, which offers Jewish and Arab residents an opportunity to excavate together. Dating back to the Ottoman era, the structure functioned as an inn located along an important trade route and was used primarily by merchants traveling through the city until 1948.

Since 1948, Lod has been predominately Jewish, including many residents of Middle Eastern and North African origin, with a significant and similarly diverse Arab minority, composed of both Muslim and Christian families. For the purposes of this comparative study, the children were categorized by the rather simplistic terms of either Arab or Jewish, according to their respective

enrolment in schools with Arabic or Hebrew as the primary language of instruction. This narrow, assumptive definition dictated by the segregated nature of the Israeli educational system, coupled by a lack of opportunity for the participants to self-declare their religious or ethnic affiliation, illuminates a wider societal failure to address the complexity, subtlety and fluidity of identity, and ignores the rich cultural mosaic evident in the urban dynamics of Lod in particular.

From April to June 2013, the researcher participated in community-based excavations at the Khan al-Hilu, primarily to observe the participants' experience. With consultation of Dr. Eitan Shahar of the Sapir College, two additional forms of sociological research tools, the distribution of questionnaires and a sketch map drawing exercise, were applied. The participants were children from schools, who were actively involved in the 2013 educational program as coordinated by the Karev Foundation, which included the archaeological excavation at the Khan al-Hilu. An emphasis was placed on how those who gained greater exposure and understanding of the excavation process then expressed their self-perception of individual and communal identity within the history and archaeology of their city.

3. Theoretical Background

Clarke (1968) describes archaeology as “an undisciplined empirical discipline”,¹ lacking concrete guidelines to define multifaceted processes. Traditionally, the focus of archaeology is to reconstruct past societies. Archaeologists tend to claim authority in the interpretation of material remains of past culture and their relationship to the present. Their institutionalized expertise is gained from a traditional, scientific conception of knowledge born out of the European Enlightenment (Bienkowski, 2013)². Developments within the discipline have increasingly realized the role of archaeologists in the creation and reinforcement of present norms. Archaeology provides an historical insight to social change and human behaviour that may also serve as a guide for modern society (Trigger, 1989)³. By examining material remains from the past,

¹ David L. Clarke: *Analytical Archaeology*, London 1968.

² Piotr Bienkowski: *Whose Past? Archaeological Knowledge, Community Knowledge, and the Embracing of Conflict*, in: Geoffrey Scarre/Robin Coningham (ed.), *Appropriating the Past: Philosophical Perspectives on the Practice of Archaeology*, Cambridge 2013, pp.42–62.

³ Bruce Trigger: *A History of Archaeological Thought*, Cambridge 1989.

archaeologists re-construct social practice from which present communal behaviour is derived (Díaz-Andreu and Lucy, 2005)⁴.

Greenberg and Keinan (2007) believe that “excavations create a cultural impact by establishing physical points of contact between the present and the past”⁵. In modern society, archaeology allows for the creation of a sense of heritage, supports the concept of a shared value system, and asserts the claims to both past and present political and social landscapes (Shackel and Chambers, 2004)⁶. Interpreting the past is fundamental to the creation and maintenance of ethnic affiliation. Archaeological remains serve as the physical justification of modern identity, appropriated by nationalists within the prevailing power structures, to legitimize the dominant political ideologies of shared origins within particular boundaries (Arnold, 2006)⁷.

Israeli archaeology is a vivid example of the deep relationship between the past and the present, reflected in issues of nationalism, identity and conflict. Particularly when referring to the biblical landscape, a complex region with passionately conflicting interpretations of the historical past, recognizing the intellectual terrain of archaeology can contribute to a sense of social justice (Baram, 2012)⁸. Specific archaeological sites are accompanied by a tense political discourse; for example, the City of David excavations generated fierce conflict between Zionist-religious settlers (The City of David and Ir David Foundation, 2013)⁹ and Arab residents of Silwan (Emek Shaveh, 2013)¹⁰. Archaeology is a metaphor for digging and depth, yet excavations do not always suit the national mythos. Archaeology, which was used in the early days of the formation of the Israeli state to strengthen the Jewish national narrative,

⁴ Margarita Díaz-Andreu / Sam Lucy: *Archaeology of Identity*, London 2005.

⁵ Raphael Greenberg / Adi Keinan: *The Present Past of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Israeli Archaeology in the West Bank and East Jerusalem since 1967*, S. Daniel Abraham Center for International and Regional Studies: Research Paper 1, Tel Aviv 2007.

⁶ Paul A. Shackel / Erve J. Chambers: *Places in Mind: Public Archaeology as Applied Anthropology*, New York 2004.

⁷ Bettina Arnold: *Pseudoarchaeology and Nationalism*, in: Garrett G. Fagan (ed.), *Archaeological Fantasies: How Pseudoarchaeology Misrepresents the Past and Misleads the Public*, London 2006, pp. 154–179.

⁸ Uzi Baram: *Out of Time: Erasing Modernity in an Antique City*, in: *Archaeologies. Journal of the World. Archaeological Congress*, 8 (2012), pp. 330–348.

⁹ *City of David and Ir David Foundation: City of David, Ancient Jerusalem*. www.cityofjuda.org.il. Accessed 14 March 2013.

¹⁰ *Emek Shaveh: Archaeology in the Shadow of the Conflict*. www.alt-arch.org. Accessed 14 March 2013.

may present alternative interpretations of the past, and thus alternative interpretations of the present (Feige, 2008)¹¹.

Archaeologists in Israel play a vital role in preventing the neglect of Arab architectural elements within urban landscapes in favour of modern Jewish development. Full membership in the Israeli collective is determined by an interpretation of history to construct modern identities and politics (Kimmerling, 2001)¹². Contemporary Jewish immigration is often presented as a linear, natural continuation of the distant past. In Lod, Jewish identity is a comparative composite of veteran residents of North African and Middle Eastern descent, accompanied by recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia. Arab residents may either claim historic roots in the city or are internally displaced migrants and thus represent a diverse range of Muslim, Christian and Bedouin identity. Geographical proximity between Jews and Arabs in mixed cities does not infer spatial, social and cultural integration, which typically remains limited due to the segregated nature of settlement patterns and educational systems (Kipnis and Schnell, 1978)¹³.

Some scholars claim that mixed cities act as an urban frontier for Jewish hegemony to be established in proximity to Arab neighbourhoods (Yiftachel and Yacobi, 2003)¹⁴. According to this view, urban planning of most mixed cities particularly emphasizes the idea of retaining the Jewish character of the city and thus opposes, at the same time, any possible increasing Arab demographics. It seems that while minority communities may share a municipality, they still remain segregated and peripheral due to the unequal allocation of resources (New Israel Fund, 2013)¹⁵. Arab citizens of Israel are trapped between the inherently contradictory interests of the state – to preserve democracy

¹¹ Michael Feige: *Archaeology, Religion and Nationalism in Israel*, in: Michael Feige / Zvi Shiloni (ed.), *Archaeology, Religion and Nationalism in Israel*, Ben Gurion Research Institute 2008, pp. 1–18 (Hebrew).

¹² Baruch Kimmerling: *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society and the Military*, Berkeley 2001.

¹³ Baruch A. Kipnis / Izhak Schnell: *Changes in the Distribution of Arabs in Mixed Jewish-Arab Cities in Israel*, in: *Economic Geography*, 54 (1978), pp. 168–180.

¹⁴ Oren Yiftachel / Haim Yacobi: *Urban Ethnocracy: Ethnicization and the Production of Space in an Israeli “Mixed City”*, in: *Environment and Planning, Society and Space*, 21 (2003), pp. 673–693.

¹⁵ New Israel Fund. *Shatil - Leading Social Change. Shared Society*. www.shatil.org.il. Accessed 23 March 2013.

as well as its Jewish nature (Keder and Yiftachel, 2006)¹⁶. This sentiment is striking in culturally heterogeneous environments such as Lod. Segregation between Jewish and Arab communities in the mixed cities of Israel is salient, with Arabs being spatially confined to certain deprived neighbourhoods reflective of the relationship between ethnicity and income inequality (Falah, 2000)¹⁷.

Particularly in the mixed cities of Israel, residents and authorities alike may be reluctant to confront the evidence from the events of 1948 for a variety of personal, political and intellectual reasons, yet, all are ideologically rooted in the Jewish-Arab conflict of identity and the struggle for authenticity as the legitimate inhabitants of the land. Israeli archaeology reinforces a dominant nationalist narrative supported by the mainstream Zionist public to prove a Jewish precedence (Feige, 2008)¹⁸ and suppresses the guilt of disenfranchising Arabs (Ilan and Gadot, 2010)¹⁹. Israel has the highest concentration of archaeological sites in the world; thus, the familiar phrase “archaeology thrives on ruins and war” rings true (Elon, 1997)²⁰. Until the last decade of the twentieth century, Israeli archaeologists naturally excavated Jewish remains to identify with their own heritage only (Abu el-Haj, 2001)²¹, while Arab history, space and memory were domesticated in order to assert Jewish dominance over the terrain (Yacobi, 2002)²². On the other hand, Joffe (2005) warned that “archaeology and politics, though forever joined, are fundamentally incompatible”²³,

¹⁶ Alexandre (Sandy) Keder/Oren Yiftachel: Land Regime and Social Relations in Israel, in: Henrando de Soto/Francis Cheneval (ed), *Realizing Property Rights: Swiss Human Rights Book*, Zurich 2006, pp. 129–146.

¹⁷ Ghazi Falah: Co-existence in Selected Mixed Arab-Jewish Cities in Israel: By Choice or by Default?, in: *Urban Studies*, 37 (2000), pp. 775–796.

¹⁸ Feige, *Religion and Nationalism in Israel*.

¹⁹ David Ilan/Yuval Gadot: Undermining the Edifice of Ethnocentric Historical Narrative in Israel with Community-based Archaeology, in: Ran Boytner/Lynn Swartz-Dodd/Bradley J. Parker (ed.), *Controlling the Past, Owning the Future: the Political Uses of Archaeology in the Middle East*, Tucson 2010, pp. 103–122.

²⁰ Amos Elon: *Politics and Archaeology*, in: N. A. Silberman/David Small. (ed.), *The Archaeology of Israel: Constructing the past, Interpreting the Present*, Sheffield 1997, pp. 34–47.

²¹ Nadia Abu El-Haj: *Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-fashioning in Israeli Society*, Chicago 2001.

²² Haim Yacobi: The Architecture of Ethnic Logic: Exploring the Meaning of the Built Environment in the ‘Mixed’ City of Lod, Israel, in: *Human Geography* 84, 2002, pp. 171–187.

²³ Alexander H. Joffe: Review of: Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-fashioning in Israeli Society, in: Nadia Abu El-Haj, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 64/4 (2005), pp. 297–304.

and that scholars must enforce a separation to prevent their own research from becoming invalid.

One of the most promising approaches for the resolution of conflict and community archaeology is believed to be through the involvement of the future generation. Children can learn about the ancient past by developing an archaeological skill set, including the physical handling of artefacts and the systematic use of methods of analysis, documentation and interpretation (Eiszele-Evans, 2012)²⁴. Key educational resources for examining the stories of people who once lived at a certain site are the artefacts and structural remnants left behind (Loe and de Jong, 2012)²⁵. By studying archaeology, it is claimed that children gain awareness of cultural diversity and an insight into ambiguous, complex processes of research (Little, 2009)²⁶. Children who participate in archaeological research may be their communities' future supporters of preservation and cultural heritage management initiatives (Faye, 2008)²⁷.

4. Discussion

In his theory of how humans interact with the world, Buber, an existential theologian, made the distinction between 'I-it', defined by detachment, causal relations and manipulated objects, and 'I-thou', or meaningful personal encounters between nature, man and spiritual beings (Buber, 1958)²⁸. Man physically experiences the world by collecting, analyzing and classifying objects, yet is ultimately fulfilled only by forming social and transcendent relationships. By their exposure to an archaeological excavation, the children involved in this research had the opportunity to develop relationships with elements of both 'I-it', physical artefacts revealed during the act of excavation, and 'I-thou', encounters with the history of man.

²⁴ Suzanne Eiszele-Evans: Symposium: Teaching Archaeology to Kids, In and Out of the Classroom. Teach Archaeology. www.teacharchaeology.com. Accessed 14 September 2013. 2012.

²⁵ Melinda Loe / Annerose de Jong: Symposium: Teaching Archaeology to Kids, In and Out of the Classroom. Teach Archaeology. www.teacharchaeology.com. 14 September 2013. 2012.

²⁶ Barbara J. Little: What can Archaeology do for Justice, Peace, Community and the Earth?, in: *Historical Archaeology*, 43 (2009), pp. 115–119.

²⁷ Faye Simpson: Community Archaeology under Scrutiny, in: *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites*, 10 (2008), pp. 3–16.

²⁸ Martin Buber: *I and Thou*, New York 1958.

It is this principle of how people assume all worldly interaction which serves as a significant theoretical source for the researcher's experience of participant observation at the excavation site. Upon the analysis of the collected data, it can be concluded that the children had meaningful personal relationships with the 'I-it' stream when encountering physical artefacts through the act of archaeological excavation. However, their 'I-thou' understanding of the historical processes was decidedly limited. The excavation allowed for a concrete encounter with the earth and its buried fragments of a historical narrative that seemed too abstract or distant for the children to relate to on a meaningful personal level. The results reflect a similar experience for both Jewish and Arab children, though this may be the result of separate cultural influences.

One of the central themes expressed in the data were perceptions of the historical narrative in Lod, shaped by the memory of the children. Foucault (1972) described memory as "no mere verbalization of conflicts and systems of dominance";²⁹ rather, it is attributed to the essence of human conflict itself. Thus, a single event may translate into different meanings and experiences for different people, shaped by their personal connection, place of residence, level of engagement, socio-economic status and access to information (Robinson, 2003)³⁰. By remembering, recovering and inventing statements about the past, history can be defined as a collective communal or national mentality with the ability to manipulate events, rendered suitable for a particular interest (Lewis, 1975)³¹. While war is often considered a traumatic experience for both the victor and the vanquished, this perception may morally equate the two enemies and avoid addressing the issues of victimhood and aggression (Amireh, 2005)³². As discussed at length above, memory plays a significant role in Israel – a society that is obsessed with the past (Meir-Glitzstein, 2002)³³.

²⁹ Michel Foucault: *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, New York 1972.

³⁰ Shira Robinson: *Local Struggle, National Struggle: Palestinian Responses to the Kafr Qasim Massacre and Its Aftermath, 1956–66*, in: *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 35 (2003), pp. 393–416.

³¹ Bernard Lewis: *History: Remembered, Recovered, Invented*, Princeton 1975.

³² Amal Amireh: *Review of: Inextricably Bonded: Israeli Arab and Jewish Writers Re-Visioning Culture*, in: *Rachel Feldhay Brenner, Journal of Palestine Studies*, 34 (2005), pp. 112–114.

³³ Esther Meir-Glitzstein: *Our Dowry: Identity and Memory among Iraqi Immigrants in Israel*, In: *Middle Eastern Studies*, 38 (2002), pp. 165–186.

Moreover, an intellectual understanding of history is aided by the universalized features of a given set of historical events (Bruyn, 1966: 123)³⁴. Both the Jewish and Arab children were well aware of the predominantly Arab character of the city's historical narrative. This may be expressed by the prevalence of Muslim and Christian sites as among the most important landmarks in Lod, as identified through the questionnaires: the central mosque (by 44% of the Arab children and 19% of the Jewish children) and the St. George church (by 24% of the Arab children and 44% of the Jewish children). At the heart of the ancient quarter, these structures may have been selected as symbolic reminders of pre-1948 traditions for Jewish children, while for Arab children they echoed their own cultural heritage. The Jewish children demonstrated an awareness of the non-Jewish character of Lod prior to 1948:

“A Jewish child informed her peers that ‘this was a Muslim building’”,
and

“Regarding who built Lod, the children had a variety of answers that they discussed amongst themselves: King Solomon or David, Meir Nitzan (a former acting mayor), or simply that ‘the Arabs were here before us’”.

The children overwhelmingly perceived the city and its origins as being many millennia old; thus, they reflected an underlying awareness that the archaeological excavation revealed remains from as early as the Neolithic era. Those who emphasized the Jewish origins of the city may have been exposed to a historical narrative that influenced the Jewish character of Lod, as it once flourished during the Roman period. Hence, the selective historical memory of the children may attest to their school curriculum's deliberate emphasis on certain periods.

Although the instructors discussed formally the historical legacy of the city, the fact that it was an Arab past was only expressed implicitly. Its abrupt end in 1948, when the State of Israel was established, was only alluded to by referring to the destruction of the homes that were excavated or the discovery of bullet canisters. Neither the Jewish nor the Arab children expressed any direct personal association to the provided historical narrative. As directly

³⁴ Sevryn Ten Haut Bruyn: *The Human Perspective in Sociology: the Methodology of Participant Observation*, Englewood Cliffs 1966.

observed by the Jewish children, even physical artefacts that testified to a violent and complex Jewish-Arab conflict did not seem to resonate:

“The second artefact was a bullet canister, and the instructor said that last year she found a sack of bullet casings and nearby an ammunition belt, probably from the 1948 war. The third artefact was a coin from the British mandate, with Palestina written in Hebrew on one side and in English on the other side”.

“Children from Noah Nariah (a religious Jewish school) were shown an aerial map of the old city of Lod to demonstrate that the Khan al-Hilu area was once densely populated and there are hardly any surface remains. Shani, their instructor, explained that we are excavating to find those buildings and streets”.

Similar observations were made among the Arab children:

“The children are made aware by their instructor Adham that they are excavating a house that was destroyed in 1948. They seem to absorb this fact with a degree of solemn, polite respect but no personal revelation of deeper emotion”.

Lod is a city deeply fractured by essentially contrary social groups, united only by their shared relatively low economic status, the reluctance to remain, the lack of a sense of urban pride, and the desire for prospectively living elsewhere. Commonly, most current Jewish and Arab families only recently settled in the city. Thus, they are devoid of any established sense of local ownership and may recognize symbolic landmarks of their environment without any personal attachment. Public institutions discriminate Arab residents and familiarities are formed only with active places of daily functional use. The local Arab cultural heritage lies largely in ruins, utterly neglected, and does not necessarily resonate with today’s Arab residents who mainly migrated from other regions. Except for a few Arab families, most residents of Lod do not have family roots in the city that extend beyond a generation or two. They lack a meaningful, personal sense of local identity. Neither ethnic group has experienced a sense of collectively or individually belonging to Lod, or perhaps even to the nation-state itself.

Thus, Jews and Arabs are essentially debating their respective sense of collective belonging on the grounds of being an authentic local (Yacobi, 2002)³⁵. When they tell anyone from other places within Israel that they are from Lod,

³⁵ Yacobi, *Architecture of Ethnic Logic*.

the reaction is overwhelmingly negative due to the stigma of crime, narcotics and poverty associated with the city. Otherwise, residents of Lod do not claim to have anything in common with neighbours of different ethnicities and remain segregated despite the close proximity. Wider political discourse shapes urban processes and spatial dynamics, as each community relates differently to symbolic, contested territory (Yacobi, 2009)³⁶. No single urban identity exists and no one necessarily boasts that they live in Lod by choice, except perhaps out of ideological nationalism by either pre-1948 Arab families or recent Jewish religious settlers. Despite this pessimistic evaluation, it can be argued that “most residents of Lod are good people who want to change the stereotypes about their city” (Zakai, 2010)³⁷.

The results of this research reflect a sense of exclusion shared by the Jewish and Arab children. The municipal space of Lod has failed to create a sense of belonging to the place. In Israeli society, the city suffers from a reputation of poverty and crime. The Jewish children who participated in the excavation have a distinct identity separate from the Arab-populated neighbourhoods of Lod. Many of their families recently immigrated from the former Soviet Union or Ethiopia. Their spatial identity of local isolation is considered divergent from the rest of the city. One response, though perhaps not representative of all the other children, was considered salient by the researcher:

“One boy who took the questionnaire said that he did not know what to write because ‘I am not from Lod, I am from Ganei Aviv’, a newly developed, separate neighbourhood”.

As for the Arab children, it is expected that the key event in preventing a relationship to the municipal space to emerge is derived from the unresolved trauma of the 1948 war. The results of this research may not have adequately explored the centrality of the 1948-experience to the formation of a local identity in Lod; especially not for Arab children, because it failed to account for internal social hierarchies within this community, between the urban intellectuals, the rural population and nomadic tribes. Several observations can relate to this issue:

³⁶ Haim Yacobi: *The Jewish-Arab City: Spatio-politics in a Mixed Community*, London 2009.

³⁷ Dubi Zakai: *Lod has Respect: What Can the City of Crime Offer Tourists?* www.nrg.co.il. Accessed 7 September 2013. 2010 (Hebrew).

“I asked Adham if the children see excavation of a 1948 structure within the greater context of the history of Lod as relevant to their own identities. He dismissed this idea: ‘these children do not have such ideas reinforced at home. Their parents have ten children, who has time for history lessons? Other children, such as those of Khalil (another instructor, who lives in the neighbourhood nearby) do learn about 1948 and everything at home. These children here, their parents are more concerned with earning money and putting food on the table’. Khalil reported that all of the children currently at the excavation did not have ancestral roots in Lod, and mainly came from displaced Bedouin communities in the Negev desert”.

“An Arab group was shown a pair of large old-fashioned rusted metal keys, a relatively common artefact. I found this to be poignant because the kids may have similar keys in their homes, and it potentially speaks so much to complex emotional issues of ownership and fleeing because of conflict, which may directly appeal to the identity of the children – though they did not react as expected”.

At first glance, the questionnaire data portrays an apparent centrality of the war of 1948 and its outcome for a startling 84% of the Arab children, while none of the Jewish children included this event in their questionnaire. However, it must be noted that the Arab children, when seeking adult direction to supply the ‘correct’ answer, were encouraged to record this answer by their instructor Adham while completing the questionnaire. They were observably anxious to produce the desired result, according to the perception of the researcher. As observed at the al-Rashidiya school: “Adham provided the answer to the last question (the timeline) as the most important historic event or main milestone in Lod: the 1948 war”. Thus, no definite conclusions about the role of ethnic identity in considering the most important historical events in Lod as reflecting a personal narrative of the participants can be drawn from the exercise. This being said, it is without doubt that the war of 1948 for many members of the Arab community resonates painfully until today.

5. Conclusions: Healing Communities through Archaeology

The combined results of my research at the Khan il-Hilu community excavation in Lod reveal that Israel can be interpreted through a theoretical framework, rooted in colonialism and Orientalism, to explain the Jewish perception of archaeology in Lod; while Arabs predominantly view the local landscape as an animated village. Similar to how early Islamic conquerors stripped Lod

of its stone to achieve their political objective of constructing a new Muslim capital city in neighbouring Ramla, the Jews who arrived during the twentieth century sought to establish their own dominant presence in Lod through a process of destruction and reconstruction. For the Jewish children, remnants of the past in Lod are seen as representatives of the historical narrative of the Oriental 'other' rather than their own personal and collective identity. Their perception of archaeology in the city is that of distant landmarks, symbolic of the city's ancient origins and separate from their modern Western routines. In contrast, Arab children expressed the perception of archaeological sites as ordinary and active landmarks of their own neighbourhood, incorporated as the backdrop of their daily life, with an emphasis on the proximity and vitality of these sites. They demonstrate a sense of belonging tied to the traditional clan, not the modern municipal collective.

A sociological interpretation of the research conducted leads to an examination of the identity issues as experienced by the children, in particular that of a shared sense of exclusion from mainstream Israeli society. Jews in Lod, as immigrants often of non-European descent, are typically on the secondary tier of hegemonic Zionism, while the Arabs of Lod (presumably at least those children who participated in this research) are largely not from local pre-1948 families. Both Jews and Arabs moved to Lod for nationalist purposes as maintained and disseminated by state-centric policies, and thus cannot be expected to claim any deep affinity to the city's local archaeology and history. Consequently, a general analysis shows that the interest expressed by the Jewish children lies in symbolic landmarks and the attachment demonstrated by the Arab children in personal landmarks.

Based on the results of this research, a suggested direction for an archaeological policy in Israel, particularly in mixed Jewish-Arab cities, can be formed. Primarily, the present and future needs of people in the region must be addressed (Ilan and Gadot, 2010)³⁸. The above finds lead to the revelation that a large gap exists between the perceptions of archaeologists in regards to community initiatives, the actual impact of such projects, and the perceptions of children or local residents who participated. Academics tend to speculate on abstract theories of cultural identity or prioritize scientific data, neither of which resonates with the general public. On the other hand, while children

³⁸ Ilan/Gadot: Community-based Archaeology.

do profess an appreciation of scientific archaeological excavation, they also value searching for physical artefacts as a simple act of fun. Communities involved in archaeological excavation seek to understand their own identity in relation to the natural world and the links to the past, not to gain factual knowledge.³⁹ Community archaeology is designed to involve local people in the investigation and interpretation of the past,⁴⁰ most effectively by maintaining a balanced cooperation between disparate interests.

³⁹ David E. Cooper: Should Ruins be Preserved?, in: Scarre/Coningham, *Appropriating the Past*, pp. 222–238.

⁴⁰ Stephanie Moser/Darren Glazier/James E. Phillips/Lamya Nasser el Nemr/Mohammed Saleh Mousa/Rascha Nasr Aiesh/Susan Richardson/Andrew Conner/Michael Seymour: Transforming Archaeology through Practice: Strategies for Collaborative Archaeology and the Community Archaeology Project at Quseir, Egypt, in: *World Archaeology*, 34 (2002), pp. 220–248.