

The Home as a Contact Zone: Performative Strategies and Practices in Promoting Israeli-Palestinian Recognition

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This article explores the usefulness of performative strategies and practices of engagement with painful pasts and the impact these strategies have upon the public. It focuses on a performance we have created in May 2015 as a result of a long standing research on the 'archaeology' of 218 Yefet Street in Jaffa which was the home of Tovi Fenster's mother and grandparents after coming to Israel in 1948 as refugees from Europe. This address was also the home of the Palestinians who lived there until 1948 when they were deported. This specific address-research is part of a greater research project looking at various addresses in Jaffa and West Jerusalem with the aim to expose the identities of the owners of pre-1948 Palestinian homes and to create contacts between them and the current Jewish Israeli owners in order to promote recognition. Following this idea we have conducted an audio-visual walk in the house and the yard where the two narratives—the Jewish (as told by Tovi's mother) and the Palestinian (as told by the nephew of the original Palestinian owners)—are presented as equal, not one against the other. This personal, intimate experience of listening to the two narratives while walking, standing, climbing and gazing inside the house and its surrounding created a performative and embodied experience among the visitors and transformed 'the old ruined building' into a 'house' and a 'home'. At the end of the 17-minutes-walk, some of the visitors were interviewed by us to discuss their experience, emotions, and interpretations in order to find out whether such performances do lead to greater Israeli–Palestinian recognition.



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Look at all the olives on the ground, there's nobody to gather them...I walk past the house every day. Once I tried to glance in... but the tenants had a dog, it barked at me. When I pass by the house, I want to have a future here. (Mahmud's story)

I was only 16, but I knew one thing: I had to take care of us, my mother and myself, and make sure we manage...Walk around the house and go to the last window, where I set up my first sewing machine. (Frida's story)

The above quotes are taken from the audio guide walking tour *A Home as a Contact Zone — 218 Yefet Street, Jaffa*, which we created in May 2015 in Jaffa, in a marginal neighborhood whose residents are both Jews and Palestinians. The neighborhood is currently undergoing an urban regeneration process, involving old (Arab) houses being demolished and new high-rise buildings being built instead. The house of the audio walk is located at the end of Yefet Street in an area less known to visitors in Jaffa. It is vacant and is a part of the regeneration processes taking place in the area and will be demolished soon.

The performers of the tour were the visitors themselves. Each visitor received a mini player and a set of headphones and was free to start the tour at his or her own pace (Fig 1). The sound from the headphones revealed the story of Mahmud Daka, the son of late Fatum El Masri who has been the original owner of the house together with her two brothers who had fled Jaffa in 1948 when the State of Israel has been established. And he was the son of Fatum, who married a member of the Daka family, and stayed in Jaffa. The other story is of Frida Fenster, the former Jewish tenant of the house. It was Mahmud's and Frida's stories which instructed the visitors through the audio guide, telling them where to walk and what to look at by sharing their personal memories.

The audio walk has been one of the outcomes of a longer research project on the 'archaeology of the address' in 218 Yefet Street in Jaffa that focuses on the tragic Israeli-Palestinian conflict prior to 1948 when the house was rented by Mahmud's uncle to Palestinian workers up until they escaped in 1948. Also Mahmud's family escaped: Mahmud and his wife to the Gaza Strip and his uncles, the original owners of the house, to Nablus. Mahmud and his family returned to Jaffa after two years but lost contact with his uncles. After the 1948 war, the house has been confiscated by the State of Israel and was given to one of the author's mother and grandparents who came as refugees after World War II, and shared the house with another Jewish refugee family. Frida left the house in 1950 when she got married and moved to a suburb with her husband. Her parents left the house in 1964 as they wanted to live closer to their daughter (Frida) who at that time lived with her family in Givataim, a town near by Tel Aviv. Today an Israeli entrepreneur owns the empty, neglected house with the aim to destruct it and build a 5-6 stories new building as part of the urban regeneration process in the area. Ironically, the fact that the house is abandoned and will soon be

demolished enabled us to use the space as a venue for initiating our walking tour performance.¹

The point of departure for the performance is the conviction that only “when the story of the other becomes intertwined with the listener’s story can the listener perceive and redefine herself or himself.” (Walter Benjamin quoted in Yona and Shenhav 2005: 164). The stories of Mahmud and Frida were told in a chronological order. The visitors could choose the language of the audio tour; Hebrew or Arabic. The voices of Frida and Mahmud were recorded in first person testimonials by actors in both Arabic and Hebrew. The visitors were able to listen to the ‘other’s’ story translated to their own language. The recorded voices guided the visitors around the house and revealed the complicated Palestinian-Israeli conflict through the private and personal memories of Mahmud and Frida. While walking around the house, the audio guide highlighted special spots that Mahmud and Frida mentioned in their story. In some of the spots we planted objects or used video projectors to signify Mahmud’s and Frida’s presence.

The audio walk in this particular space has been formulated to ask whether such a private, personal spatial performance, which became public during the event, can help to promote the Lefebvrian notion of the right to the city (Lefebvre 1996: 150), in the sense of ‘the right to be remembered’ and ‘the right to be memorialized’, especially regarding ethno-national minorities. In other words, we asked whether the audio walking tour can be helpful to contribute to a better understanding of Israelis of the Palestinian painful past that this particular space holds. This house represents not only the former home of once a Palestinian and then an Israeli Jew, furthermore, it simultaneously contains the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a nutshell. Moreover, we asked ourselves whether we could create a ‘temporary inclusion’ of Palestinian identities that are usually excluded from official collective memories and memorialization projects in Israel. Thus, the design of the audio walk based on insights into the private space—of the ‘Palestinian house’ of the past, is followed by its ‘Jewish presence’ in its present emptiness. In addition, we have carried out interviews with the visitors in order to analyze how these memories were perceived by those who experienced the audio walking tour. As will be shown, the walk we designed created, in fact, a temporary space where different identities, memories and narratives could be memorialized side by side, instead of excluding or dominating each other.

Mahmud and Frida were not present with their physical bodies at the performance venue. Nevertheless, the technological device made up for their absence. It was the moving body of the visitor—standing, watching, walking, smelling, sitting, which became the performing body of the event. The technological means were used as physical extensions of Mahmud’s and Frida’s presence, instructing the visitors to move around, in what has been for

¹ We term the walking tour as a performance in order to stress the visitor’s role as an agent in the event and its multiple layers of sound, surrounding, objects, and photographs as will be explained later on.

them an unfamiliar space, listening to Mahmud's and Frida's narratives which revealed the complex life experiences that this space holds. The technical device allowed encounters between the agents—the narrators and the participant, and this encounter created a layered experience where different identities from different times were sensed through the participant's body. Following the writer Rebecca Solnit's assertion of walking as sharing "that crucial element of engagement of the body and the mind with the world, of knowing the world through the body and the body through the world" (2002: 19), we regard walking as a potential transformative experience with the ability to change visitors' perceptions and attitudes towards the 'other', as described in this case.



Fig. 1: Participants glancing inside the house, Jaffa, 16 May 2015.
Photograph by Maayan Blech.

In the following, we present the audio walk and analyze the visitors' responses to it, thereby focusing on how the experience of the audio walk increased their awareness of the 'other's' suffering and the recognition of their right to be remembered, memorialized and to belong to the collective memory of the city. Consequently, in our analysis of the visitors' reactions, we were foremost interested in whether such an art performance change inclusionary/exclusionary perceptions and helps to demand the right to belong, the right to remember, the right to make the past visible for its past and present citizens, especially in neo-liberal processes of 'urban regeneration' that in fact erase the past. As mentioned before, this process of 'urban regeneration' which includes the destruction of the house in 218 Yefet Street, together with other 'Arab' houses, is about to commence. Thus, this article

provides an opportunity to engage with audio walk methodology as another dimension of our wider research, and at the same time to critically interrogate the usefulness of such alternative methodologies, especially in urban regeneration situations. We aim to emphasize the innovative aspects of this project as a whole as it transforms academic research, which uses theoretical concepts and citations into a performance, and furthermore debates whether performing the written helps to promote recognition of the painful past and ongoing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.

The Home as a Contact Zone

By examining the micro-geography of the home from such perspectives, we assume that the Palestinian houses in Jaffa that are still inhabited today by Jewish residents can be perceived as a contact zone between past and present, between Palestinians and Jews, private and public space, and inclusionary respectively exclusionary practices. In doing so, we follow Linguistics and Literature Professor Mary Louise Pratt's definition of contact zone as: "Social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths." (Pratt 1991: 34). Could the house in 218 Yefet Street become—even for the short time of the performance—a contact zone that could generate Israeli-Palestinian recognition, understanding and the realization of the right of its past and present citizens to be remembered, memorialized and included in the collective memory of the city?

As mentioned, the research on this specific address is part of a larger research project funded by the Israel Science Foundation which investigates not only 218 Yefet Street, but some 20 addresses in Jaffa and West Jerusalem with the aim to expose the identities of the owners of pre-1948 Palestinian homes and to create contacts between them and the current Jewish Israeli owners in order to promote what we initially called 'recognition'. This term, as we realized later, turned out to be rather unfitting as recognition is a complicated process.² Thus, we re-formulated the objective of the research to analyze the complexities of 'recognition' or what the obstacles to recognition are, as expressed by the visitors in the audio walking tour performance.

With Benjamin's idea quoted above as our guideline, we designed and installed the performance at the 218 Yefet Street abandoned house. In this audio-visual walk around the locked house the two narratives of the Pales-

² The project funded by the Israel Science Foundation entitled: 'The Archaeology of the Address in Urban Planning (AAUP): Towards an Israeli – Palestinian Recognition' (2014-2017) (ISF no. 855/14). The performance and research this article convey was initiated in response to a prior research which was published in a paper written by Tovi Fenster (2014). That research attempted to engage a meeting between the Jewish residents of the house and the decadence of the original Palestinian owner. That attempt encountered a lot of resistance and lacked understanding and listening. The performance we created following this prior attempt was created in order to bridge those obstacles by using the negotiating power of art.

tinian and the Jew were presented as equal, not one against the other. This personal, intimate experience of listening to the two narratives while walking, pausing, and gazing into the house and its surrounding yard, touching the window frame or the olive tree, smelling and feeling the atmosphere of this particular place, created an embodied experience among the visitors and transformed the old ruined building into a 'home' that represented the story not of the 'other', but of two former residents.



Fig. 2: A picture of Mahmud with his wife and children, Jaffa, 16 May 2015.
Photograph by Maayan Blech.

When creating the audio guide, our goal was to formulate a strong sense of identification to the stories of Mahmud and Frida. In order to achieve that, we collected their life stories up to the most mundane daily life details. Then, we edited their stories to fit to a basic dramatic structure which is based on an experience of a strong protagonist facing an obstacle and overcoming it (McKee, 1997: 247-254). To the protagonist narrator voice we added outside ambient to enhance the experience of the space, a soundtrack that complimented the time, culture and atmosphere of the story, follies, human voices and step sounds which unites the narrator's steps and the participants' own steps.

The performance event at the house was held for three days, in May 2015, as part of the "Open House Tel Aviv", with around 600 people taking part. It was predominantly due to advertisement of the "Open House Tel Aviv" events in the Israeli media that people learned about our walking tour. Each of the visitors received headphones and a sound player and begun the 17-minute-walk. Throughout the three days we and six researchers of the Planning for the Environment with Communities Lab (PECLAB) at the Department of Geography, Tel Aviv University, conducted observations and short, in-depth interviews taken just after the visitors ended the tour with about 10 % of the visitors. We discussed with the interviewees their experiences, emotions and interpretations of the tour in order to find out whether such an experience leads to a greater Israeli-Palestinian sense of recognition.

218 Yefet Street in Jaffa: One House – Different Stories

Sand and seashells,
this is what these walls are made of,
look, you can touch them.

This is the opening phrase of the audio-visual walk. Mahmud's low voice invites the participant to a deeper observation of the house; to feel its spirit, to touch its walls, to take in its atmosphere. The visitors walk through the trail Mahmud describes for them. They stop in different 'stations', each conveys Mahmud's life story. After Mahmud's guided tour of the house and the yard surrounding it, in which the visitors understand his sense of belonging to the house, they walk out to the street and realize that this house has become a home for somebody else. A place Mahmud wasn't allowed to enter anymore. The house has been confiscated after the war in 1948 by the State of Israel and has been rented to Jewish refugees from Europe. After having listened to Mahmud's story, Frida's voice appears and the visitor re-enters the house with Frida as his or her guide. She leads them to the house where she lived between 1948 and 1952. Frida narrates her life story inside the house so that on her tour the participant glances through the windows of the current empty and deserted house, inspecting the interior where images of Frida and her family are projected on the inner run-down walls.



Fig. 3: Visitors listening to Frida's story and looking at pictures of Frida that are projected on the bedroom wall, Jaffa, 16 May 2015. Photograph by Maayan Blech.



Fig. 4: Frida's wedding photo projected on the living room wall, Jaffa, 16 May 2015. Photograph by Maayan Blech.

This external-internal or private-public tour and the fast transition between the courtyard area—the street—and back to the courtyard, echoes affirmative asymmetric power relations in that Mahmud's tour revolves around the external space of the house and his stations evolve tangible objects such as a framed family picture, a wagon wheel and a closet which bears witness to Mahmud's presence and ownership, while Frida's story consists of many photos of her time lived inside the house. This is executed in a way that emphasizes that this performance presents different stories than the official historical Israeli narrative that marginalizes the Palestinian narrative. This is due to the fact that history is written by the victorious and thus the Palestinian narrative is marginalized. Thus, the aesthetic differences between the two memory stories become an attempt to emphasize Mahmud story as a historical fact and to differentiate Frida's story from the pathos of the historical narrative, thus giving it an attractive sense of memory through the projected images. In what follows, we analyze in detail the event and the visitors' responses to it, focusing on in what way this experience of audio-visual walk increased their awareness to the 'enemy's' suffering, and to their increased recognition of the right to be remembered and memorialized and belong to the collective memory of the city.

The Visitors—The Researchers' Observations

From our observations, we can note that most visitors used the audio walk in its full length of 17 minutes; hardly no one stopped in the middle of the tour. Almost all listened attentively, watching, looking around, following the walking instructions, and therefore experiencing each station through their senses. This came as a surprise, due to the fact that some of the visitors had seemed restless when they entered the site, as if they were in a hurry to visit more houses as part of the open house day. However, as soon as they put on the earphones, it seemed as if they slowed down, and listened to the sounds which allowed them to experience what we then described as a 'parallel reality'. In this parallel reality the visitors walked at the pace of the past that the tour instructions set while experiencing the place at the present situation of an abandoned house. They listened to the story and were carefully watching the space around them. It seemed as if the earphones became an integral part of their bodies, imposing the content of the audio on the participant (Nedelkopoulou 2011: 122).

This kind of tour is completely different than a guided tour, in which the visitor can interchange with the guide. It is also different from other historical walking audio tours where the reader learns facts about a certain historical time. In the audio walk we have created an artistic walk based on the narratives of two former inhabitants, in a way that the visitors were compelled to devote themselves to the stories being told. It seems as if the presence of the stories mediated by the former inhabitants' honest voices sunk into the visitors' bodies. Our observations proved that the medium itself

evoked and stimulated the feeling of active listening which enabled identification with the narrator.

Many visitors stayed in the courtyard even after the tour ended; some 10 % participated in the interviews we have conducted (see analysis later in the text). The same small yard, which appeared deserted and neglected before and would certainly have prevented people from entering it, had become a familiar place (cp. Seamon & Sowers 2008: 45-46). Through their bodily experience of walking while listening, the place became more acquainted, comfortable and intimate. It evoked feelings of belonging among the visitors, as they later told us, and many said that the performative tour in fact ended too soon for them. This experience resonates De Certeau's definition of walking as a physical performative statement; a creative process in which the walker appropriates the city with his or her bodily experience (De Certeau 1984: 117). According to De Certeau, the walker's pace, route, breaks and shortcuts, are physical performative statements performed in a specific space. At this performance event, we, the designers of the performance, were the visitors' mediators of that specific space of 218 Yefet Street. Every participant's experience was certainly different and unique. One remained more passive, listening, while another walked around more, investigating the place at close range. However, there were also many similarities; but most important for us has been the insight that the tour has expressed high level of engagement which made it a ritual of sorts (cp. Bell 1990: 8-9).



Fig. 5: Participant taking an image of the hall while listening to Frida's story, Jaffa, 16 May 2015. Photograph by Maayan Blech.

Many visitors pulled out their cameras and took pictures probably because they realized that the house on Yefet Street would be the object of demolition in the near future. Photography is perceived here as an attempt to commemorate and preserve a moment, a period or maybe a fleeting moment in time. Thus, the medium offered the opportunity to capture it. Others may have wanted to put their own active layer of engagement to the performative experience that the audio walk provided, even as a way to break free from the instructions they heard, adding their own personal choice to it by selecting the scene which they were mostly associated with. Thus, by taking photos, they may have felt that they were in charge, active agents in this commemorative event. Furthermore, this may have allowed them to appropriate the two stories and made them their own. This form of active engagement allowed them to validate, affirming and reaffirming the memories of the two individual stories, and by that affirming Benjamin's mentioned idea of the story of the 'other' intertwining in our personal story as a precondition of acknowledging and even recognizing the other. Thus, taking photos was part of their personal performative participation, an interaction, a continuation. By taking pictures they made a statement: they were there, they listened, they saw, and they wanted to remember, take the story with them. The visit at this private address became similar to the function of a visit to a public memorial site on a special commemoration day where the performative walk or the laying of flowers establishes an individual memory but situates this individual within a collective public memory culture.

The Visitors' Experiences

After the walking tour, we asked some of the visitors to share their experiences, reflections, and opinions with us. Especially, we discussed their experiences and emotions during the tour, their sense of identity, their personal impressions and memories which the performance evoked, and their prior and after-the-tour awareness of and thoughts on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. The visitors were glad to take part in the interviews; some even stated that they felt as though the interview complemented their performative tour experience. After the intense confrontation with the site, the visitors were eager to get some empathy and attention to their own experiences and feelings.

The in-depth interviews were analyzed by using statistical and qualitative analysis, thereby the latter focused on the search for repetitive words the visitors chose to describe their experiences, as well as patterns of sentences in the respondents' answers (cp. Shkedi 2003: 71), as will be shown below. It is important to note that almost all visitors were Israeli Jews which, a fact that allows us to draw conclusions only regarding perceptions of the Jewish Israelis. However, the results of 60 interviews (10 % of the total number of visitors), show the outreach capacity of this audio walk.

In general, we were surprised by the visitors' acceptance and especially by their positive reflections of the stories they have just heard. We expected

that many visitors would express their opposition and objections to the equalization of the Palestinian and Jewish narratives. But in fact, only a small number of people (2 %) raised such criticism. Let us present some results of the interviews before presenting the most dominant key words mentioned in the interviews.

We asked the visitors to which of the stations they related the most. The one which was most frequently mentioned was the Mulberry tree (31 %), where the name of Mahmud's wife Jamila has been engraved, and Mahmud tells their love story.



Fig. 6: Mahmud's and his wife Jamila's names engraved on the strawberry tree in the courtyard, Jaffa, 16 May 2015. Photograph by Maayan Blech.

This station has been different than the others as it exhibited an indexical sign, a visible sign of a former action, the engraving of the name in Arabic on this strawberry tree. Even though we artificially engraved the name in order to emphasize Mahmud's story, this engraving is a visible and tangible evidence of past life which remained in place after the former inhabitants were forced to move and the new owners moved in. Our artificial manipulation on the tree exemplified the power of art. Through the help of this fiction expands the knowledge about our existence, as one interviewee noted:

The tree, the custom of planting a tree and the idea that the tree and the stones still exists...The tree has the right to stay in its own place, whereas people are thrown outside (interviewee's response, 16 May 2015).

This huge strawberry tree with its beautiful branches gives the garden a cool spot of shadow that is essential due to the hot and dry climate in Israel. Dur-

ing the three days event, the tree has been packed with strawberries, which spread their pleasant fruity scent in the yard. Full of fruit, this living organism became a testimony of life, of continuity beyond humans, ironically challenging the passing of time. In the interviews, many visitors mentioned the romantic aspect of the station. It is possible that the ultimate universal image of love, a timeless imagery, the performance of engraving the name of a loved one on the tree, touched the heart of the interviewees.



Fig. 7: The street and neighborhood surrounding the house, Jaffa, 16 May 2015.
Photograph by Maayan Blech.

The second most popular station, according to the interviewees (30 %), is the station just outside the house. This is the last station of Mahmud's tour, and the first station of Frida's. It represents the shift in the story between the two residents of the house, and also a shift between the private life in the house's garden, surrounded by a fence, and the house itself and the public appearance of it from the street. One participant described her impressions from this station in the following words:

The feeling of listening to an intimate story, and suddenly to be in a street and to come back into the space of the house, allowed me to break away from the story in the headphones, and to recall the experience and see it again from the outside. The re-entering to the house felt as an entering to a private house and less of an installation which is open to all (interviewee's response, 16 May 2015).

This sharp shift between private-public space and also between Mahmud's/Frida's stories reminds us of the power to hide or to silence the

Palestinian expulsion which took place in 1948, but also from the city's memories. After the first tour, based on Mahmud's memories of the house, the visitor goes outside the compound and experiences Frida's memories of the house as a new private space from which Mahmud is excluded. Then, after a minute the visitor enters the compound again with Frida's memories of her arrival to the house as a refugee from Europe after World War II. This sharp transition highlights the tragic events in which one memory overshadows the memories of the other, as expressions of power relations of what is remembered and what is forgotten. This shift provides a performative experience as it allows the visitor to become aware not only of the story of others, but also of his or her own role in relation to the stories told. This is achieved by stopping, re-entering and once again taking on the role of the listener but now with more awareness. Thus, the listener becomes more attentive to understanding how the right to the city of former residents was and still is violated, especially the right to remember, to claim and to be an integral part of the city's collective memory. This station was the only spot in the tour that the future of the building has been mentioned, namely its upcoming demolition. The last words of Mahmud revolve around the future 'regeneration' projects that were planned for the place, and his desire to be included as part of his right to the city.

The actual bodily walking outside the yard, the standing and pausing, enabled the visitor to observe other buildings in the neighborhood; some of them are newly built, as part of the urban regeneration process that this area has and still is undergoing in the past decade. Most of the new buildings replace the old 'Arab' houses formerly inhabited by Palestinians. This will also be the fate of Mahmud's and Frida's former home. As opposed to the inner courtyard, which enables to immerse in the private world of the narrators, the outside confronts the story with the troubled reality of gentrification, whereby neglect and dirt is part of the process. This station emphasizes the universality of the particular story of one house, a *pars pro toto* of a decennial long conflict.

History, Emotion and Empathy—Memory, Ruin and Refugee

These six key words were the most repeated words throughout the interviews. Only 22 % of the interviewees used the concept 'memory' when describing Mahmud's and Frida's stories, whereas the concept 'history' was used by 78 %, the key word mostly used. This figure is interesting since the audio performance displayed two private memory stories. It could be that the frequent use of the concept 'history' as opposed to the concept 'memory' demonstrates the way the event itself transformed the stories from personal memories, a *pars pro toto*, into stories of history, representing the decennial long conflict in the region. The experience of hearing these stories in the public sphere, and also the authoritative effect of the exterior recorded voice, might assist the transforming of individual memory stories into representatives of a wider history. The exterior voice which mediates the stories for the

visitor through technological means, neutralizes the possibility of the visitor to undermine the narrative. When the visitor listens to a live testimony, the story can be perceived as another personal memory story. The recorded voice as opposed to it, is eternal, it is being heard again and again, in a ritual around the visitor who is surrounded with people who are listening to the exact same content, and thus this voice is perceived as more factual and authoritative. The recording and the public ritual of the tour validates the stories, and thus the personal memory stories possibly become more of historical facts to the visitors.

This visitor's experience was both intimate and private but at the same time displayed in public, surrounded by other visitors who share, time-shifted, the exact same content provided by the audio-guide. The recorded narratives as the guiding voices through the unknown territory hold a strong authority. The recording and the many performers joining in this ritual validates the told stories; thus the personal memory narratives can be part of a collective memory culture, broadly understood as 'history'.

A majority (63.4 %) of the interviewees used various versions of the word 'emotional' when describing their tour experience and its influence on them. The appeal of the performance event to emotions allowed a listening and attentiveness to the narratives. However, we are aware that emotions can change quickly. On the one hand, an emotional experience can be significant and strong, sometimes even lasting, and thus undermining previous conventional beliefs. On the other hand, the danger of an emotional experience stands at the rapidness it provides; the emotional experience can be strong in the given moment but remain without lasting effects, and does not necessarily push towards a sustainable change of mind or action (Lada 1994: 107). The visitor, interviewed directly after the audio walk, may utter his or her satisfaction over the intense emotional experience. However, as we have not conducted interviews at a later stage, we obviously do not know if the walk had any long-term effects on visitors.

What enhances our argument that the bodily performative experience of the audio tour changes peoples' perceptions about the 'other's' is the fact that 67 % of the interviewees said that the performance changed their first impression of the house. This figure points to the transformation of the house, from a non-place to a place, a transition that happened through the tour. This is a very impressive figure since this part of Yefet Street is at the outskirts of the city, and is less familiar than the attractive and popular old city of Jaffa. Thus, the abandoned house itself, a building which most of the visitors declared that they would have passed by without stopping, gained a new meaning, it became "alive" and an active memory of the bitter Palestinian past. As one of the visitors said: "Outside it looks abandoned and desolated, and suddenly the stories put life in it and revive it" (interviewee's statement, 14 May 2015). Thus it seems that acquaintance with the house enabled intimacy and lowered the feeling of hostility or alienation and increased the awareness of the right to memory, remembrance and maybe even recognition.

Moreover, a familiarity with the story of the house reflects the feeling towards its conservation. The same house, which most of the interviewees verified that before the tour, they would have not stopped next to it, received 71 % support for its preservation. Only 6.3 % of the interviewees said that they don't think the house should be preserved. The willingness to preserve a building which is not fascinating architecturally, points out to familiarity and the feelings of belonging to the house and the history of it as part of a collective history of the society at large rather than its architectural quality or an historical epic event or known personalities that the house represents. However, despite of the supportive reaction of most of the interviewees for preservation, a conflict arises between the idea of preserving the house and its unique and shocking condition in its current form. In fact, the qualities of the empty, abandoned and ruined house, a house that time left its mark on, provoked the imagination of the visitors and helped them to imagine life in it. Ruined fragments signify time, character and atmosphere. They constitute a symbol to the time that has been frozen, to age, and evoke a longing to the past and nostalgia. It is difficult to imagine this past in a building that went through preservation and has a new use after it has been done.

The temporary 'contact zone' that we have created through this performance provoked the interviewees to support its transition to a permanent contact zone through the process of preservation. This means that preservation can make the home as a contact zone present in space in a physical and visual way. The interviewees wanted to preserve the hidden and perhaps repressed memories of the house and internalize them. Thus, the history of the micro geography succeeded to influence them, even though it doesn't necessarily fit with their political orientation. Here, a gendered difference becomes apparent, while most women (67 %) supported the preservation process, and even tended to support a strict one, most men (62 %) tended to support a minimal preservation or even opposed it. The reason for this gendered division might be that the house represents the private space with which women in patriarchal societies associate with more than men.

About 16 % of the interviewees used the word 'refugee'. This word is used to describe both Mahmud's and Frida's situation, and also to describe the personal stories of the interviewees. The experience of the refugee was depicted by the interviewees as a connecting link which enabled the identification with both sides, 'refugeeism' as a starting point to mutual understanding and even recognition. In Israeli politics, the definition of a refugee is being used many times in the on-going dispute between the two sides, either as a mechanism to pass the responsibility to the other party or as a mechanism of victimization of the Jewish Israeli and the Palestinian side. However, the experience of the refugee is a substantial part of the Israeli and the Palestinian identity. Not ignoring the importance of the refugee experience, assisted in generating recognition to the tragedy of the other. Especially, as this recognition does not force the visitor to give up or deny his or her own personal tragedy.

This data and especially the ranking in which the most popular word is 'history' followed by 'empathy' (64 %), shows that, to some extent, a crack appears in the Israeli Jewish hegemonic history which is based on education, culture, and Zionist heritage. Suddenly, there is an experience that cracks this rigid shell and visitors are exposed to the contra hegemonic narratives and personal histories.

A Walk in 218 Yefet Street – Catalyst of Repressed Memory

As this area is under urban regeneration which usually includes the destruction of old houses, we asked the visitors if they think the history of the house and its residents was important to be exhibited, given that the house will be eventually demolished. 97 % said that there was a need to mention the house's past. This high percentage is very interesting since this case represents a Palestinian past that is being silenced and repressed in the official collective memory culture in Israel (Fenster, 2014: 2437). Moreover, 71.4 % thought that this audio-performance event can serve as a basis for a mutual understanding and recognition process between Jews and Palestinians in Israel. That is to say, not only that the vast majority of Jewish visitors think that it is appropriate to mention the past, but most of them believe that this is the key to a mutual understanding and recognition between Jews and Palestinians. It is important to note that the Palestinian visitors (who were only few) thought the same, that is, that the audio performance could contribute to a mutual Jewish-Palestinian understanding.

We assume that the reason for this overwhelming support stems from the integration made between the two narratives in the audio tour. Following Benjamin, the presumption was that individuals can acknowledge the story of the 'other' when it is interwoven with their own story and when they undergo a bodily performative experience. If we would have presented only the story of Mahmud *or* the story of Frida, it is possible that many objections would have arisen to it, and the authenticity of the story would have been questioned by the visitors. Since the two stories are displayed together, and constitute one continuous timeline, they enable the taming of the anger and frustration into a willingness to understand.

Urban Planning Professor Jean Hillier (2013: 41-42) argues that the institutionalization of a disagreement stands at the heart of democracy. Space doesn't necessarily revolve around agreement. Thus, Hillier calls for taming antagonism into agonism instead of looking for consensus when planning a city. While planning the event, our goal was to create an agonistic space, that is, a competitive space, where different forces combat each other for recognition. Therefore, instead of concealing antagonism which is about anger, confrontation and conflict there can be a process of better understanding and accepting which leads, in general, to a more just society and perhaps to a fulfilment of the right to the city as the right to remember and to claim spaces for both Jews and Palestinians. Thus, instead of aiming for rational consensus, it becomes a performance of the conflict. In this way, the

house becomes a site—a contact zone—where the conflicting historical narratives live under the same roof and accelerate recognition and fulfilment of the ‘other’s’ rights instead of hostility.

Recognition of the ‘Other’

After the audio walk had ended, we started the interviews by asking with whom the visitors have identified the most; with Mahmud’s or Frida’s story. More than half of the interviewees stated that they equally identified with both Mahmud and Frida. 33 % of the interviewees said that they have identified more with Mahmud, and only about 11 % stated that they have identified more with Frida’s story; This is despite of the fact that most of the interviewees were Jewish women, which we assumed would have had an impact on greater identification with Frida. These results reinforce the assumption that the audio performance is a strong experience in that it enhances the identification of the visitor with the ‘other’s’ story and, as we assume, that the experience of embodiment challenges the binary division of gender and nationality.

The fact that the majority of the visitors identified with both Mahmud and Frida could be because the performance represents the experiences of two stories in one space chronologically). The deserted and ruined house became a fertile ground to stimulate the visitors’ imagination, precisely because of the performative walking nature of the tour. The stories of the two characters fill the void, and through them the visitor experiences the lively and vibrant house in its different temporal periods. The two narratives are part of the house’s continuous life history through different periods, and therefore the visitors identified with them both, as it is difficult to break them apart.

The link between Benjamin’s idea of the personal individual story intertwined in the other’s story as part of recognition, is emphasized in the fact that 44.4 % of the interviewees mentioned throughout the interview their family story, a fact which points out to a deep level of identification and expresses the desire to belong to a collective memory. It also exemplifies how in fact the personal story of a particular home has a universal impact. In other words, their association with their own personal story exemplify that they have interwoven their own stories with the stories of Frida and Mahmud, which became an integral part of their personal historic flow. The mentioning of their personal story, that they are sure of its validity, affirms the authenticity of the stories of Mahmud and Frida in their eyes, as they mention them in the same breath.

Conclusions

In this article, we have shown how a temporary audio walk performance can change visitors’ perceptions about space, identity and concepts of the ‘other’s’ rights to the city, the right to be remembered, memorialized and includ-

ed in the collective memory. The performance in the house at the 218 Yefet Street is a result of combining academic research and methodology with art performance. The event we have created consists of a bodily listening journey focused on two narratives: The Palestinian Mahmud and the Jewish Frida. Their narratives were experienced through the physical sphere of the house and its yard, and the bodily experience of the visitor's gazing inside it. Both were combined by the place, the former home, which acts as a contact zone between the two narratives. Reflecting on the narratives of this specific home as a private sphere allows an attentive listening and receptivity from the participant's side. The private house enables a disconnection from the pathos of the public collective narrative, and allows a small peek of identification with the narrative of a person who, by the standard narrative, is described as the 'other'. The outcome of this research and the practical experience which follows can lead to a new phenomenological methodology, which enables academic text to be experienced sensually and to create a change in values and perceptions towards the 'other'. Thus, this practice can be understood as a slight sense of 'recognition stimulating practice', a method where conflicting narratives are being experienced through the micro geography of the home as a contact zone. We have created a 'real time Lab' where visitors are an integral and active part of the experiment, and their reactions are being examined immediately.

"Artistic productions in urban environments produce new modes of engaging with public spaces and initiate a process in which a city's inhabitants and users make and remake the public" (Schipper 2014: 24). We have analyzed here how space—in this case the Palestinian house of the past—as a set of social and historical process is understood, constructed and perceived at present. And how an art performance, such as the one we present here, can change perception of space and demand the right to belong, the right to remember, the right to make the past visible for its past and present citizens. This is especially important in a neo-liberal period of 'urban regeneration' that in fact erases the past and the right to claim space, not only physically, but metaphorically and symbolically as well.

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