Diaspora from inside
A look from the present at three Israeli-Palestinian cases

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Abstract

Questions of Diaspora are at the heart of present day Israeli existence. This is due to the fact that Israel, or Palestine, is both a Jewish immigration state and the homeland of thousands of hundreds of Palestinian uprooted in 1948. Diaspora therefore has in Israel both a physical, geographic aspect to it and a historical one.

In our lecture we will look at three cases involving Palestinian and Israeli culture as mirror-images of one another, from the point of view of the present, raising questions of identity, memory, conservation and change.

Tamar Berger will present the history of one plot of land in Tel Aviv, originally a vineyard belonging to an Arab land owner from Jaffa, then leased by him to poor Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe to build a barracks neighborhood and eventually sold to an entrepreneur who built a shopping mall there. This raises questions of historical justice and ways of dealing with a past that seemingly left no traces.

Ayala Ronel will present one single architectural project that encapsulates a whole history. She will describe the planning of a culture club in Jerusalem, initiated and led by the uprooted Palestinian community of the Lifta village. The site of the planned club is in a Palestinian enclave at the heart of a post-1967 Jewish neighborhood, on its former agricultural land most of which was confiscated a few kilometers east of the remains of the original village which still stands at the entrance to Jerusalem, the main question here is of the architectural and programmatic ways of linking the planned club to the old village and its memory.

Shmuel Groag will examine the site of Jerusalem Boulevard in Jaffa and through it ask about the left-behind heritage of the diasporic Palestinian community. Jerusalem Boulevard used to be the cultural center of Palestine in the 1940’s until the deportation of the Arab population of the city in 1948, thus creating a "traumatic urban event" that turned it into a contested heritage site.

Criticizing existing conservation charters which emphasise the importance of all past communities, the new suggested conservation model will integrate physical, cultural and social aspects into a dynamic and open-ended conservation archive.