

For a historical-sociological approach to the city of Haifa

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Premise: a historical profile

The birth and development of a city (Weber, 1968) depend on various contingencies and matters of expediency, beginning from the place chosen, provided it possesses certain characteristics: above all, the presence of water, indispensable for survival but also a formidable source of other vital necessities, as well as acting, as it has from remotest times, as a primary communications medium. Besides water, the lymph indispensable to the creation and continuation of life comes, undoubtedly, the community destined to inhabit the place. Generally speaking, history shows us that, during the early stages, most populations tend to share a rather homogeneous culture including language, religion, customs, habits and rites. But this is not always so.

Haifa in Israel is an anomalous case because of the unsettled historical picture it provides us with. It was first built, presumably, a little over two millennia or so ago (although there are traces of a far older human settlement, that of the so-called pre-historic Mount Carmel Man, found in the area of the mount itself and going back to the Mousterian period, that is, the era between 75.000 and 35.000 B.C.E.).

The local culture was originally Canaanite, Israelite (relative houses and other buildings have come to light that go back to the IX century B.C.E.) and Phoenician (the latter also with finds belonging to the IX century B.C.E. and a sunken Phoenician ship belonging to the VII century B.C.E. discovered under water by Folco Quilici and now housed at the Maritime National Museum (opened in 1954 and which also recalls clandestine Jewish immigration). The city underwent a series of dominations: the first was Assyrian (to which traces of urban buildings dating from around the VII century B.C.E. bear testimony) then came that of the Babylonians (from 586 B.C.E.), that of the Persians (from 539 B.C.E.) and that of Alexander the Great (from 333 B.C.E.). The city seems to have been a seaport as far back as the IV century B.C.E. when it was called Tel Abu Hawam, later probably Hof Yafé (that is, fair coast) and stood in the area today called Bat Gallim. Then came the dominations of the Ptolemaic Egyptian and the Syrian Seleucid sovereigns which preceded the independent Jewish period of the Maccabees (from 168 B.C.E. to the coming of the Romans in 63 B.C.E., under whose dominion Cesarea Marittima, south of Haifa, was founded).

Haifa was certainly inhabited (by farmers, as stated by the Talmud) around the fourth century before the so-called Christian Era. After the Byzantines (who supplanted the Romans in 476), the Arabs arrived in 637 (maybe destroying the town) to remain there under the Umayyad, Abbasid and Fatimid caliphs until the Turks arrived in the XI century, followed by the Crusaders (who undertook their wars - destined to last about two centuries - in 1097: the Norman, Tancred of Altavilla, took possession of the city in 1099, during the first crusade).

Referred to in ancient Greek as *"Hφα*, it was an important reference (under the name of Caiffa and/or Carmel) during the crusades and was the port city of the Tiberiade region. It was besieged and seized by the crusaders and became a feudal dependency of the archbishopric of Nazareth. It was destroyed in 1187, during the third crusade, by Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb (Saladin) – Sunni Sultan of Egypt and Syria, ethnically a Kurd, the founder of the Ayyubid dynasty. The city was later occupied by Richard the Lion Heart in 1191. Louis IX, King of France, fortified it in 1250-51. In 1265,

the Mamluks (Egyptian Muslim militia comprising slaves of Turkish origin and from areas where Indo-European languages were spoken) occupied it. A long period of non-belligerency followed. In 1517, the long Ottoman occupation began and lasted four centuries, with the odd brief interlude, until 1917. In 1761 Zāhir al-'Umar al-Zaydānī, governor of Galilee, destroyed and rebuilt it. Between 1775 and 1918 it remained almost always under the Ottomans, although, in 1799, it came under the sway of Napoleon Bonaparte; between 1831 and 1840, it was administered by an Egyptian (of Ottoman origin, however) Ibrahim Pasha, who, having taken Haifa in 1839, was obliged to surrender it to the Turks in 1840, also because he was pressed by European ships, English vessels in particular. A few decades later, it was the English, actually, who occupied Haifa, in 1918.

Waves of immigration

Before 1882 (the year of the first Aliyah, that is, of the first Zionist immigrant wave), there was a settlement of about 25,000 Jews known as “old Yishuv”, existed in Palestine. This enclave was rather orthodox in religious practice, dressed eastern style, spoke Arabic or Ladino (ancient Spanish) in the case of the Sephardim (originally from the Iberian peninsula and exiled in 1492), Yiddish in the case of the Ashkenazim (of German origin who had emigrated to Poland and the United States). The “new Yishuv”, who had been building houses outside of the walls of old Jerusalem since 1860 and had taken part in the immigration of 1892, came mostly from Russia from which they had fled due to the *pogrom*, that is, the Russian persecutions of 1881 and 1921 against the country's Jewish minorities. The Ottoman government was opposed to these settlements. The immigrants survived on the economic aid they received from the Jewish community of the Diaspora. A second wave, which continued between 1903 and 1914, saw the arrival of a further 35,000 Jews, again mostly from Russia. Some new problems regarding the practice of agriculture arose: the Zionists asked that work in their fields be entrusted to Jews only despite the fact that the local Arabic peasants possessed the necessary know-how and the skill to carry it out. It was objected that, in that way they were discriminating against the Arabs just as they had been discriminated against in Russia. The first flare-up with the Arabs occurred when the Jewish population sacked the Circassian soldiers who were Sunni Muslims, and replaced them with Jews, forbidden by law to bear arms in Islamic territory. In 1908, the Zionists set up a Palestinian Office and there were angry, violent disorders first in Jaffa, afterwards in other areas. The Hashomer, a Zionist self-defence organization was created to protect the immigrant settlements. During the First World War, a part of the Jewish community was expelled, another enrolled in the Ottoman army. At the same time, two British battalions of Jewish soldiers called the *Zion Mule Corps* were formed and used on the Palestinian front against the imperial Ottoman forces. After the war and the end of Ottoman dominion, the Jews had to deal with almost thirty years of British rule. Meanwhile, the old Yishuv had become a minority compared to the many new immigrants who continued to arrive. Following its founding congress, in Basle, 1897, the Zionist movement (so called after the old name of Jerusalem, Zion) began advocating the constitution of a Jewish State and obtained the support of Balfour, the British Foreign Minister who, in 1917, declared that the Jews were entitled to a territory of their own.

An Ottoman city until 1917, Haifa was first occupied by the British, then ruled by them as a mandate (between 1922 and 1948), becoming one of the main centres of the Arab-Jewish conflict. Between 1919 and 1924 the third wave of Jewish immigration took place. This led, in the two-year 1920-21 period, to riots, mostly on the part of the Arabs. This was a difficult time for a number of reasons: the Arabs refused to accept Balfour's declaration and objected to the institution of a single Palestinian Agency aimed at bringing the Jews, Arabs and British together; the Jewish settlements no longer received financial aid from the world of the Diaspora; the British did all they could to prevent the arrival of further waves of immigrant refugees.

In 1929 there was a further large-scale arrival of Jewish immigrants, the fourth Aliyah. During the Arab riots that ensued, 133 Jews were killed. A further wave occurred in the 1930's, the fifth Aliyah. The Jewish population of Palestine now numbered 400,000.

From 1935 to 1939 the Great Arab Revolt, including a general strike lasting seven months in 1936, took place; during this unrest, a Jewish bus was attacked by Arab rioters; this led to fighting, with both sides involved and led to the deaths of numerous Jews and Arabs. The Haganah, the paramilitary organisation set up in 1920 to defend the Jewish settlements, did all it could to protect the Yishuv. Members of the Irgun (a Zionist paramilitary organisation) attacked Arab-Palestinian camps. The British, on their part, deported many of the Arabs.

In Haifa, on the 18th April 1938, a bomb placed by Irgun on a train caused the deaths of 2 Arabs and 2 British policemen. On the 24th May 1938, members of Irgun shot 3 Arabs dead. On the 6th July 1938 Irgun had two bombs explode in the Haifa melon market killing 18 Arabs and 5 Jews, as well as injuring over 60 persons. On the 25th July 1938, 43 Arabs were killed by Irgun at the Haifa market. On the 27th February 1939 Irgun struck again causing the deaths of 24 Arabs at the Haifa Suk. Again, on the 19th June 1939, Irgun, using a donkey loaded with explosives, killed 20 more Arabs in the market in Haifa.

Meanwhile, with a White Paper dated the 23rd May 1939, the government of Westminster granted permission to 75,000 Jews to enter Palestine over a five-year period. A relative calm followed despite a conspicuous new wave of clandestine Jewish immigrations due to the spread of Nazism and Fascism in Europe. Among the ships that challenged these immigration laws were the *Patria*, the *Struma* and the *Bulgaria*.

Meanwhile, the Second World War broke out. Had Feld-Marschall Rommel not been defeated at el-Alamein, the area of Carmel near Haifa would have become the principal outpost against the advancing German army.

At the end of the War, as the need to provide for the Jews, especially for Shoah survivors, grew, increased pressure was brought to bear on the British government urging it to allow greater numbers of immigrants to enter the area. Although the United States did everything it could to favour this policy, the British feared the reaction of the Arabs and had to deal with the many problems they had with the Jews too. This gave rise to Jewish acts of militarised sabotage against the British and led to an increase in illegal immigration. Members of Haganah (a Jewish paramilitary group) were arrested. The movement retorted with an attack on 22nd July 1946 on the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, the headquarters of the British military and the British division of criminal investigation: among others, 28 British citizens and 17 Palestinian Jews died in the attack.

Eventually, the UNO decided that two separate States, one Arab, one Israeli, should be set up. At this point the Arab Higher Committee, which had been set up in the 1930's, began attacking the Jews. Jerusalem was besieged so that neither food, nor water, nor arms could enter the city. A road between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem was built and the siege ended eventually.

From the intensification of the conflict to the Holiday of Holidays

In December 1947, there was armed fighting in the streets of Haifa between Arabs and Jews. On the 24th December 1947 Arab snipers shot and killed 4 Jews; this led, by way of retaliation, to the killing of the same number of Arabs by the Jews. On the 30th December 1947, the slayings, known as the Haifa oil-refinery massacre, took place; the Arabs killed 39 and injured 49 Jews, following a previous killing of 6 Arabs by Irgun. On the 1st January 1948 members of the Jewish Palmach (Yishuv regulars) took the lives of 70 Arabs at Haifa (the Balad al-Shaykh massacre). On the 3rd January 1948, in Haifa, the Arabs eliminated 4 Jews. On the 14th January 1948, again in Haifa, 7 Jews and 2 British citizens were killed by the Arabs.

February 1948 was a "Black Month" for Haifa: on the 3rd, Arab militants took the lives of 6 Jews travelling on a bus; on the 7th, the Arabs killed 3 Jews and Jews the same number of Arabs. On the 19th, 4 Jews were killed on a bus at the hands of Arabs; retaliation was immediate and on the 21st February 4 Arabs were killed by militant Jews. On the 31st March 1948 a bomb on the Cairo-Haifa train killed 40 Arabs, wounding a further 60: the Jewish militarist movement Lehi acknowledged responsibility for the attack. On the 23rd April 1948 on the same train route another bombing by Lehi, caused the deaths of 8 British subjects while wounding a further 27 people.

In more recent times, a first attack, claimed by Hamas, occurred in Haifa at the bus station on the 5th September 1993, though no injury was caused to people. A second attack, this time a suicide bombing claimed again by Hamas, targeted the number 16 bus on the 2nd December 2001, killing 15 Jews. A few days later, on the 9th December, near the Check Post Junction of the Haifa district in the Tel Hanan direction, 39 people were wounded by a bomb: the Palestinian Islamic Jihad group claimed responsibility. The fourth episode, again a suicide attack claimed by Hamas, took place on the 31st March 2002 at the Matza restaurant, Haifa, resulted in 15 Jewish casualties. On the 5th March 2003 an attack, again a suicide bomber, struck bus 37 in Haifa killing 17 and wounding 53 Jews. The youngest victim was a 12-year-old, the oldest was 54; the bomber was a twenty-year-old Arab from Hebron. The Palestinian organization Hamas claimed responsibility once again. The Maxim restaurant in Haifa was targeted on the 4th October 2003 by a further suicide bomber and resulted in 21 Jewish victims. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad group claimed responsibility. The total tally for victims in Haifa, before and after the birth of the State of Israel, is 237 Arabs and 143 Jews (including the three victims caused by the boarding of the *Exodus* in 1947), plus 12 British casualties. In 2011 three presumed organizers of the tragic 5th March 2003 episode were released from prison during an exchange of prisoners.

It was actually during a moment of extreme crisis, in the early 2000's, that a keener sensitivity aimed at seeking solutions capable of overcoming the conflict began to spread: the idea of fostering peaceful coexistence, an idea which first emerged in 1914 under Mayor Hassan Bey Shuri, grew stronger. Hassan Bey Shukri, in office from 1914 to 1920 and from 1927 to 1940, an Islamic Arab who considered the Jews his brethren, was forced, following the umpteenth attack on

his life, to flee Haifa and take refuge in Beirut (Cohen 2009: 15-17). The idea was taken up again in 1994 by the present mayor Yona Yahav (in office since 2003, once a Labour-Party member of the Knesset between 1996 and 1999, later a member of the liberal, secular Zionist party Shinui – which means change – and a member of Kadima since 2009), whose *Holiday of Holidays* (in Hebrew *Hachag shel hachagim*) takes place, every December, organized by the Arab-Jewish Beit Hagefen cultural centre, directed by a board of seven Jews and seven Arabs.

This event takes place thanks also to the city's rather solid commercial structure based on a number of resources: the port (opened in 1933) which is not only commercial and industrial but also touristic; the grand manufacturing area; a considerable wealth of cultural and artistic meeting places and centres. As to social status, there is a varied layering of classes, easily discernable on the basis of homes, languages spoken, language-styles adopted, educational qualifications and means of transport employed. There are no great signs of an agricultural presence but the relations between the various quarters of the city are rather evident: Wadi Nisnas was not chosen at random to house the Holiday but because it is a district known for its firmly consolidated tradition of sociability. The very pace of life in the various urbanized areas of Haifa is clearly differentiated: it is more or less hectic depending on job types, on the number of daily tasks carried out, on degrees of personalization of inter-subjective relations, on rates of social alienation, levels of community solidarity, frequency of conflicting attitudes, degrees of willingness to adhere to forms of cohesion, intra-familial and extra-familial standards of living, the nature of the places frequented daily, ethno-cultural contexts (the hilly Jewish Quarter, Hadar HaCarmel, dates back to 1920). The University of Haifa (founded in 1964) and the Technion (University Institute of Technology founded in 1908 and opened in 1924), both set in vast areas, deserve a special mention.

As urban sociologists have often emphasized, industrialization and urbanization have acted as the principal thrusts to immigration processes. Not only does Haifa belong fully to this ambit of phenomenology, but it also remains a peak example and a place charged with symbolic power, recollective of the return of the Jews to their homeland after the dramatic events of the Second World War.

The contribution of cinema and literature

Otto Preminger's film *Exodus* of 1960, based on the novel of the same title by Leon Uris, tells the story of the attempt made, on the 17th July 1947, by a ship named *Exodus 1947*, to disembark 4,554 people in Israel. For some time, back then, the idea of an Israeli State according to the political-diplomatic approach of the Yishuv, the Jewish Agency for Palestine (founded in 1932), was supported by some Jews while others favoured the more militant attitude of the organization known as Irgun Zvai Leumi, which opposed British occupation by recurring to violence (it was in fact members of Irgun, masquerading as Arabs who attacked the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, causing about one hundred deaths).

Ships belonging to the British fleet chased the *Exodus 1947* as far as the Palestinian coast and boarded it, in Haifa, the port which the ship reached on the 18th July 1947. The British General Staff sent 4,399 Jews back on three British ships to the French Port de Bouc (from which they had

set sail on the 10th July 1947 and where they returned on the 29th July and where only 130 disembarked voluntarily) as well as to Hamburg in Germany. Something similar had occurred in 1940, again involving Haifa, when the ship *Patria*, with two thousand Jewish refugees fleeing from Europe and from Nazi-Fascist anti-Semitism, was blocked by the British who tried to send it to the Mauritius Islands.

On the 29th November 1947 the UNO approved the plan for the partition of Palestine. The State of Israel was inaugurated on the 14th May 1948.

In the cemetery of Haifa three Jewish victims of the British boarding of the *Exodus 1947* are buried, while the ship, having remained in the dock, was destined to become a museum in 1951. But this plan was postponed because of hostilities between Jews and Palestinians. In the summer of 1952 the ship caught fire and had to be tugged into deeper offshore waters, where it eventually sunk.

Haifa also plays an important role in the sociological imagination of the Arab community. Emblematic, in this sense, is the contribution made by a Palestinian writer, the bard of the two Diasporas (Palestinian and Jewish), born in 1939 in Acre, north of Haifa, and killed in Beirut along with his grandson, following an attack by Israelis in 1972. Ghassan Kanafani is the author of *Returning to Haifa*, a novel that deals with the problem of the *Nakba*, the catastrophe, that is, another exodus, this time involving the Palestinian Arabs beginning from May 15th 1948, as a result of the aforementioned Plan of Partition and birth of the State of Israel. It is estimated that in 1951, 711,000 people left the territory assigned to the Jews. Since 2010 an Israeli law forbids the public celebration of the May 15th, the anniversary of the *Nakba*.

Kanafani's novel emphasizes the complex contradictions and dynamics deriving from the inextricable interweave of suffering and identity, change and denial, cultural transformation and change of side, all according to a pattern of close, direct and almost specular correspondence, as in the case of the comparison between an elderly lady who survived the European concentration camps and a Palestinian couple forced to abandon their home and forsake their infant son. All the characters in the book suffer considerably as a result of intercultural conflict and are, therefore, the victims of the absolute lack of communication and dialogue. Particularly emblematic is the behaviour of the son educated according to the Jewish cultural model who refuses to recognize his natural Arab parents (who return to Haifa after a 20-year exile) in that he considers himself a Jew, having totally embraced the cause of the State of Israel. He does not understand the reasons that made his parents leave him and therefore he supports the Israeli point of view.

Another unexpected effect due to the settlement of the 14th May 1948 was that sectors of the Palestinian population, at least those who no longer supported the cause of the Arabs, renounced claiming an identity of their own, as emerges clearly from another novel by Kanafani, called *Men under the Sun*.

The episode presented in the film *Lemon Tree* by Eran Riklis, released in 2008, ends positively. The story tells of a widowed Palestinian woman whose children have become estranged from her. She defends the lemon grove she owns against attempts by a neighbour of hers, an Israeli minister, who wishes cut it down to better guarantee his own safety. Strangely it is the minister's wife who comes to the Palestinian widow's rescue.

Another film, *Private*, by director Saverio Costanzo, released in 2004, where the central theme is again a space contended between Israelis and Palestinians, ends again in a non-violent, peaceful way: Mohamed's Palestinian family, whose home is sequestered by the Israelis for military reasons, decides to go on living in the rooms on the ground floor and undergo the profound discomfort of having their private environment invaded. Yet, this proximity between the two groups turns out to be an occasion for encounter and contact between them, and, instead of arousing hostility, on the contrary, it gives rise to greater mutual understanding.

It was at the Haifa International Film Holiday that a film by two European directors, entitled *Shout*, was presented; it tells about two young Palestinians who, living in a militarized Israeli border zone, decide to emigrate to Syria, to the Golan Heights. Once across the border, it becomes impossible for them to re-enter Israel. The two friends, however, want to remain in contact with their families, relatives and classmates. Although they consider themselves Syrians, their home remains that on the other side of the frontier. They decide to resume contact with those they have left behind by shouting (literally) from the top of a hill, to their acquaintances in Israel, who respond with the aid of a megaphone. The voices and calls, questions and answers act as the metaphor of that almost umbilical link people seek to keep intact at all costs.

Three exemplary cases: Kashua, Yehoshua and Michael

Even more intriguing is the work of the writer Sayed Kashua, an Arab Israeli who lives with his family in a Jewish quarter of Jerusalem and writes in Hebrew. He addresses the Arab-Jewish issue availing of humour and through the periodical press and television. His most recent novel has been translated into Italian as *Due in uno* (Two in One, Neri Pozza, 2013) while its English title is *Second Person Singular* (2010). The *fil rouge* of Kashua's work consists in the difficulties associated with intercultural integration and assimilation; he holds that the troubles, misinterpretations and conflict between the two communities are really the outcome of a mutual lack of knowledge and understanding, leading to prejudice and resistance to change.

In *Second Person Singular* the protagonists have to deal with the complicated issue of the membership and identity to which they cling, at times strenuously, although, later they realize that the reality is capable of disavowing fears and suspicions and of helping to change customary inclinations, basic prejudices, prevailing cultural references. Something similar is found in the book published in Italy by Guanda, in 2002 as *Arabi danzanti* (*Dancing Arabs*).

"I want to be like one of them" is the artistic-cultural *Leitmotiv* of Kashua's production and highlights the burning desire of his Arab protagonists to become like the Jews, so as not to be discriminated against. But, in actual fact, this same feeling often regards the Jews who have known marginalization down through the centuries. The word "discriminated" often implies putting things rather mildly, when compared to an even more tragic reality. Moreover, reversal may often turn out to be more detrimental to the Arabs, in the course of a more or less recent, uninterrupted period of history. To deal with issues like compulsory presentation of documents, searches, controls, can spell ambivalence. Both groups have undergone these experiences. Meanwhile, neither has sufficient knowledge of the culture, the literature, the language, the songs, the history, the actors of the other. On the other hand, the blue card held by Arabs with Israeli citizenship does not guarantee full acceptance. It would take far more: a sharing of

experiences, custom, life styles, ceremonies and patterns of behaviour. It is no coincidence that the main character in *Second person singular* is never named: he is simply referred to as the “lawyer”, which is tantamount to saying that here the situation being addressed is generalizable because it is shared by most.

This Arab wants to belong to the Jews, be like them in everything: at ease with women, endowed with a substantial culture, the owner of visibly prestigious goods, a gourmet, refined in his taste. The novel’s secondary character entertains almost identical ambitions; because he is of humble socio-economic origins, he accepts caring for a young Jew in a coma.

The outcome is not as might be hoped: the Arab lawyer imitates the Jewish traits he dislikes most, while the other character makes a most unexpected decision.

Kashua tells the story of his first bus journey: he was beaten immediately as an Arab, a youth leaving his village for the very first time, dressed in Arab garb, wearing an Arab-style moustache, and, above all, displaying the timorous attitude of the average Arab. Today, he is Israel’s most eminent Arab writer. He writes in Hebrew in an artful, suggestive, subtly sly manner. Although he does not name his protagonist, it is evident that the character is based considerably on his own experiences. He manages this well because, after all, he is really referring to himself. He is speaking about himself. With a certain degree of nonchalance, he treats his themes in a detached fashion. His principal character is always an anti-hero, anonymous though pretty representative, as well as being autobiographical. He is accepted by those that count, but is obliged to act out his double Arab and Jewish identity. His maturation into adulthood does not solve the dilemma of being the one and/or the other. He chooses to steer a middle course between a lifeless kind of Arab national identity and a tedious life in a world that does not suit him and where there is no divinity in which to believe. There is no threat, not even violence; however, he remains true to himself, even if he has to masquerade, changing his clothes, role and appearance continually. It is a peculiar kind of truth, useful to survival but deeply disturbing. Kashua is many things all in one, he is other than himself, as Ricoeur would put it; he is, in fact, “you” to himself, that is, he is a “second person singular” or “two in one”. Meanwhile, in his second novel issued in 2006 *Let it Be Morning*, which sounds like a rather clear reference to the creative power of the divinity as recorded in *Genesis*, the protagonist decides to bring his family back to live in his native Arab village. A contradiction? Certainly not. Only another existential modality, the outcome of a troubled dynamic, situated between two entities and two identities.

Thanks to his TV series called *Avoda Aravit* (Arab work) the Arab language has become a feature of Israeli television transmissions since 2007, despite reactions and resistance. This novelty has undoubtedly produced a certain impact, because it presents audiences with an Arab no longer seen as a dangerous enemy but as an ordinary human being with all his weaknesses as well as all his positive potential. The people represented on television are members of a normal family: the husband is a journalist who works for a Hebrew-language daily newspaper, his wife is an Israeli-Arabic social assistant, their children attend a Jewish school. But the author does not fail to highlight the hypocrisy, the conservatism involved. He often jokes about this with his cultural-literary accomplice, the Israeli Shai Capon who shares his office with him. Availing of his characters, Kashua also jokes about himself and the world that surrounds him. And so he manages to belong and not to belong at the same time to Israeli culture. Analogously, his characters are

both antagonists and protagonists. Exactly like what happens in *Second personal singular*: while the lawyer protagonist is never known by name, the duplicity of the novel's secondary hero /anti-hero is revealed through his name, Amir, used by Arabs and Jews alike. Furthermore, Amir is carer to a Jew in a coma, Yoanatan, who has tried to cancel his own identity by attempting suicide. The inclusion-exclusion dynamic continues endlessly. And Kashua expresses himself with the utmost ease on matters of freedom, race, religion, culture, identity, language, belonging, peace, violence and conflict. Meanwhile, everything grows increasingly more problematic (Bar-Tal 2013). But this intellectual also avails of the *shout* stratagem mentioned above when referring to the film of that name: he shouts to be heard, he shouts in his own way, but he acts as spokesman for a large group of people whether Jewish or Arab Israelis.

On a similar cultural wavelength but with considerably significant differences, we find another well-known intellectual, who lives in Haifa: *Abraham Yehoshua*. Of Sephardi origin, he now teaches literature at the local university, having previously taught in Paris. Originally a playwright, he now devotes himself to novel writing. His wife is a psychoanalyst. The main theme of his work is diversity, at all levels, both cultural and religious. Keenly aware of the difficulties involved in inter-subjective relations, he underlines the negative consequences of intolerance and prejudice (see. *Ebreo, israeliano, sionista: concetti da precisare* [Jew, Israeli, Zionist concepts to be clarified], 1996). In a book published in 1997, *A Journey to the End of the Millennium*, he discusses relations between Jews, Arabs and Europeans. He applies the same approach to another book called *Mr Mani*, published in 1990. These issues are interlaced with family situations, which Yehoshua examines in depth according to their phenomenologies, Jewishly further complicated (as one might put it) by misconstruction, scarce dialogue, reticence, misunderstandings, stemming from the affective, religious, cultural, ideological, political, behavioural attitudes typical of that peculiar framework containing Israel and its world, as pointed out in his *Friendly Fire*, 2007 and his *Labirinto di identità* [Maze of Identities] 2009.

One cannot but mention another extraordinary witness and great intellectual at this stage, the Iraqi-Israeli Sami Michael, he too resident in Haifa, having lived in Iraq under a different name (Salâh Menashe) and fleeing first to Iran, then to Israel, to avoid threats against him by the Iraqis. He began writing in Arabic for Communist newspapers published in Israel, later he started to learn Hebrew. His writings always contain reflections concerning identity, peace, war, coexistence, generational and class conflict. He has favoured collaboration between Arabs, Jews and Christians. His first important work, written in 1948, is *All men are equal - But some are more*.

His work is distributed all over the world, including Iraq and Egypt. Besides novels, like Yehoshua, he has also written for theatre. His novel entitled *A trumpet in the Wadi*, 2006, is set in the Arab neighbourhood of Wadi Nisnas, Haifa, and tells the tragic story of two lovers, he a Jew, she an Arab. The final scene is set in Haifa cemetery with the woman crying for her loved one killed in military action. More recent is his *Storm among the Palms*, 2009. He has received numerous awards and honours (he has also been spoken of as a possible Nobel-prize candidate).

The contribution made by the authors mentioned here so far is by no means negligible. Thanks to them, a different notion of what is meant by Arab, Arabian culture, language and religion is making some headway in Israel. It is no coincidence that in 2013, the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial Museum in Jerusalem, for the very first time, added an Arab to the list of its Righteous

Among the Nations: this was the Egyptian doctor, Mohamed Helmy, who hid and saved four Jews in Berlin. Before him, other Muslims received the same recognition but they were not natives of an Arab country

Urban, inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflict

The sociological peculiarities of Haifa need to be gone into more deeply. The city has never maintained total autonomy, a sole identity of its own, for long. Due to a continuous series of historical events associated with the exercise of power, it has undergone a variety of experiences, without anyone of them prevailing or enduring to act as its exclusive reference culture.

Geographically, it is situated on a large gulf, well suited to mooring sailing vessels and, as such, the only one on the Palestinian shore. Not only that, but Haifa avails of an important waterway, once known as Cison and now called Nahr el-Muqatta ' , which flows through the valley of Esdraelon and reaches the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan Valley and Syria, thus creating a direct link between the Mediterranean Sea and the interior. The area facing the port (which acts as a distribution hub for oil and fruit as well as for minerals coming by train from Beersheba) is probably the oldest modern-era settlement, with the Arabs living in the Wadi Nisnas area, the Jews, for the most part (since the 1920's), in the Esdraelon district and around Mount Carmel, which overlooks the entire city and was the site of the victory of Elijah over the prophets of Baal, as narrated in the *First Book of Kings*, chapter 18, verses 20-46, as well as being the residence of Elijah's disciple, Elisha. In ancient times the wines of the Mount Carmel area were renowned. In the XII century a Carmelite Monastery was built on the mountain. The same area also contains two villages of Druze, Muslim dissidents.

Towards south-east stands the city's industrial area with its oil refineries, built between 1936 and 1939, at the point of arrival of the pipeline from Kirkuk in Iraq (closed down in 1948), its thermic plant, cement works, foundries, glass factories and other industries (in particular chemicals and high technology) all along the roads leading to Acre and Nazareth and comprising four villages. The work force is employed mostly in the services industry, far fewer in manufacturing.

The present-day urban area is largely a development of the potential that Haifa already enjoyed in the past although then rather small compared to the size of its present municipal area. "Haifa was a small-sized settlement of Jewish culture established at the beginning of the Current Era. It grew up, like many other similar housing agglomerates, as an answer to various kinds of needs that could not be met by the surrounding area where many prime necessities, to be found in an urban context only, were wanting. Today, naturally, the presence of the above-mentioned structures is greater and answers new needs that have arisen following the macro-processes of industrialization which invested Europe and the Mediterranean areas at the time when Haifa was reborn, in the XVIII century. Undoubtedly, the most significant phase of this development took place in the XIX century, to continue even more massively in the XX century when the city's population reached one hundred thousand (mostly Arab Muslims, a lesser number of Arab Christians and even fewer Jews). The Jewish population in Haifa began to grow slowly but surely, until, after the Second World War, it broke even with that of the Arabs. On the 23rd April 1948 Israeli soldiers evacuated about eighty thousand Arabs from the city.

The proclamation of the State of Israel took place on the 15th May 1948.

From that day on, Haifa became the arrival point for Jews entering the land of their ancestors. Most of those who arrived came by sea and therefore passed through Haifa, Israel's maritime port. Hundreds of thousands of refugees and immigrants disembarked at the city's port, when the political situation was as yet anything but stable and serene following the refusal of the neighbouring Arab States to accept the new setup decreed by the United Nations Organization in 1947.

The ensuing conflict led to the Arab-Israeli war of 1948-49, which saw Haifa at the centre of many battles due to the presence of its port and industries. The Arabs of Haifa surrendered on 22nd April 1948. Many of them left and the city's Arab population dropped to 3,000.

In 1949 the Armistice of Rhodes agreements were stipulated to define relations between Israel and, respectively, the Lebanon, Syria, Transjordan and Egypt and to design the boundaries between the different States in question, which remained the same until 1967, when the so-called Six-Day War broke out. The agreement with Lebanon was signed on 23rd March 1949 when the "Blue Line" between the two States was drawn. That with the West Bank was signed on 3rd April 1949 and the agreement with Syria on 20th July 1949. The latter established that the Syrians withdraw from the occupied areas to the west, which were demilitarized. Almost 80% of the territories formerly under British mandate were thus assigned to the State of Israel. But these provisional military arrangements (except those concerning the Lebanon), await authentic peace treaties.

In 1967, after the Six-Day War, which saw Israel fighting against Syria, Jordan and Egypt, the Israelis wanted to consider the boundaries then in place as definitive. Various violations of the agreements by both sides followed, with raids into areas of the opposite camp. Haifa was involved in several military actions, with attacks from Syria and in particular from the Golan Heights.

In 1973, Syria and Egypt violated the truce requested by the UN and war broke out again on the feast of Yom Kippur (the Jewish celebration of fasting and repentance, on the tenth day of the month of Tishrî - September/October -). While Israel reached an agreement with Egypt at Camp David in 1978 and the Peace of Washington in 1979, the situation in the north, especially in the region surrounding Haifa, proved more problematic and led to guerrilla activity and artillery fire. Later Israeli troops invaded southern Lebanon between 1982 and 1985. In 1987 the Palestinian uprising (Intifada), known for its stone-throwing, began.

The electoral victory of the Labour Party in Israel in 1992 saw the beginning of work by Prime Minister Rabin which gave rise to a period of relative peace; it also led to the recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and to a peace treaty with Jordan as well as to agreements with Syria. Haifa too benefitted from the new socio-political climate and witnessed an easing of previous tensions. But the assassination of Rabin brought the pacification process to a halt.

Subsequent events were conditioned by the government policies implemented first by conservative Netanyahu (1996 to 1999), then by labour premier Barak (1999 to 2000) who tried to resume agreements with the Palestinians and recalled the Israeli army from southern Lebanon, afterwards by Sharon (2001 to 2006) and his centre-right Likud coalition. This period saw a resurgence of Intifada and terrorist attacks, which repeatedly struck Haifa in a tragic way and caused hundreds of deaths on both sides, until 2003.

When Palestinian leader Arafat died in 2004, he was replaced by Abu Mazen, a more moderate member of al-Fatah (founded by Arafat). In November 2005, Sharon created a new centre party called Kadima, meaning “forward”; in 2006, when Sharon fell ill, he was replaced by Olmert (until 2009) as party leader.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian Islamic fundamentalist movement Hamas (“ardour”) obtained the majority in the Palestinian parliament defeating al-Fatah (“youth”), the party that sought less violent solutions to the issues at hand. The outcome of this change became immediately evident; Israeli soldiers were captured by the militia of Hezbollah (“party of Allah”, a Lebanese Shiite fundamentalist group) and Israel retaliated by striking the Lebanon. In this case too, as every time critical situations arose near the Syrian border, the Haifa region fibrillated.

In 2009 Netanyahu, head of Likud, was returned as Prime Minister of Israel and confirmed in 2013 as the leader of the coalition which excluded ultra-Orthodox Jews while including parties like the centre Yesh Atid (“there’s a future”) and Hatnuah (“the movement”), the conservative HaBayit HaYehudi (“the Jewish home”) and the right-wing secular Zionist Israel Beitenu (“Israel, our home”).

Netanyahu’s new government began a four-phase liberation of 104 Palestinians imprisoned for crimes involving bloodshed. The first 26 were released on the 14th August 2013, amid strong protests. Nevertheless, these releases were conditional to resumption of Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. But the killings of two Israeli sergeants, towards the end of September, by Palestinians, led to a petition to the Israeli ministers and MPs, to suspend further releases of prisoners. Once again, the peace process has come to a halt.

The German colony and the city’s development

Today, the city of Haifa, divided topographically into lower, midway and upper areas, has more than 270,000 inhabitants (they numbered only 24, 634 in 1922 and 229,000 in 1979), a majority of Jews (of whom approximately 25% of Russian origin), as well as three minority groups, respectively, in the order of size, Arab Christians (for a total of 20,000, of whom about 6,000 Greek-Orthodox), Muslim Arabs (just under 10,000) and Druze (who, however, when one takes into account the entire metropolitan area, total around 40,000 Shia Ismaili Muslims of agro-pastoral, patriarchal culture) living in the vicinity of Haifa, especially in Daliyat el-Carmel, Isfiya and Shfar 'am.

Haifa has universities and culture centres, theatres and cinemas (it is important to mention Haifa’s annual International Film Festival), and is home to various other religious groups like the Baha’is, the Melkites, Maronites (about 2,000), the Arab-Christians, the Ahmadiyya (Sunni Muslims who came from Pakistan in 1925, have a large mosque and are 2,000 members strong), Protestants (one thousand). It is important to refer also to the Hashemites (of Jordanian origin) who claim direct descent from Muhammad, whose great-grandfather was called Hāshim.

While tracing the city of Haifa’s urban development, it is interesting to refer to the history of the so-called German colony, a very peculiar settlement of a religious and economic nature, which established itself here in 1869, in an area of Haifa overlooking the beach. Its members were German Protestants known as Templars (nothing to do, of course, with the famous Knights

Templar of the Crusades founded in 1119 to protect the sacred shrines of Palestine). When the German Protestants arrived (over a century and a half ago), the plain above the coast, where today the tourist and commercial port of Haifa (completed in 1934) is located, was almost completely unpopulated: it contained only a small fishing village. The homes of these *Deutsche Kolonie* formed, therefore, the nucleus of an urban settlement, destined, little by little, to expand, confirming once again that seaside places are particularly suited to urbanization if other conditions favourable to a relatively comfortable community life, also exist.

Urban sociologists have repeatedly stressed the fact that the presence of a railroad and a railway junction (as in the case of Chicago, Illinois) can foster a significant increase in housing and in relative employment possibilities. From this point of view, the lesson of the so-called Chicago School (Short 1971) remains exemplary and enlightening: the city grew up around a nucleus originally built around the train station, which is still a focal point of this American metropolis.

In the case of the Haifa, the railway was built between 1900 and 1905 and completed in 1919 (forty years before the subway, which connects the upper and the lower areas of the city, was opened in 1959); the railway line which follows the coast from Tel Aviv to the port of Haifa to continue on up to Acre, has undoubtedly helped to promote the city's development and its import-export trade.

Haifa Central HaShmona, Haifa Bat Gallim, Haifa Hof HaKarmel (Razi'el) are the three contemporary stations, which, in order, stand along the line linking Acre and Tel Aviv. The central station is actually in the harbour, connecting the area of the port and the residential hinterland. It is important to point out that there is also a pipeline bringing crude oil to Haifa, across the Red Sea to be refined on the spot.

Even today, in Haifa, along both sides of the Ben Gurion avenue, which begins half way between the old Haifa cemetery and the Haifa Centre HaShmona station, it is possible to recognize the houses that once belonged to the above-mentioned German colony, which, thanks to its little more than family-run small enterprises, favoured the development of the transport system, not only that from the sea inland (Nazareth, in particular) but also that along the coast from Acre in the north to Jaffa in the south, beyond Tel Aviv.

A classical example of the Protestant spirit, characterized by a strong commitment to one's work and profession, according to Max Weber's theoretical and sociological perspective (1965), the Templars, over the few decades that followed their arrival, witnessed an improvement in their productive and purchasing power. Complications arose within the community itself in 1874, when a group of dissenters decided to leave this congregation and join the Prussian Protestant church. The Prussian church helped these new members from Haifa considerably, which fact permitted the breakaway faction to grow stronger than their one-time co-religionists, that is, those who had remained faithful to the original position, now defined by the splinter group as sectarian and religiously antagonist. This friction led to growing mutual distrust, with constant friction and clashes. So, in 1886, in Haifa, a German Protestant congregation known as *Kirchler*, with over 50 members, was set up in an attempt to put an end to this strife.

Furthermore, in 1891, the members of the Prussian congregation received considerable support from an organization called *Jerusalemverein* (Jerusalem association) set up to help Palestinian Christians. Other German colonies settled elsewhere in the Holy Land and received support;

although they prospered, their aggregate numbers for the whole country never exceeded 2,500. For this reason, their political and economic power diminished, although, in 1890, a teacher was sent to Palestine to open a German school.

Of little or no avail the efforts of Otto Fischer, an evangelical Protestant from Haifa, to provide the German community with a place of worship: this patron donated a piece of land upon which a church was built in one year (between 1892 and 1893), when a Protestant pastor was sent over by the *Jerusalemverein*.

Haifa's German community did not increase and reached a maximum of about 400 (more or less) permanent members between the end of the XIX and the beginning of the XX centuries. Over the years, a consolidation of the community (due both to the regularisation of religious matters, and to its considerable economic solidity) helped smooth out the intra-confessional differences that had created division in previous years. In 1907, the German Evangelical *Kirchler* community of Haifa created a new settlement called *Waldheim* (Allonei Abba).

Despite this, the German colony was doomed to failure, due to the First World War and to the consequences this brought in its wake, as well as to the occupation of the area by the British, who became the new masters of Palestine immediately after the war. In 1937 a new pastor of Haifa, Christian Berg, was nominated by the *Jerusalemverein* to replace Detwig von Oertzen who retired. But that same year, the British discovered that about one third of the German community were members of the German Nazi party, whereby the Protestant Templars were contested more than ever before and eventually deported to internment camps. After a century, the German colonial experience in Haifa had come to an inexorable end.

Haifa between community and society

The city of Haifa presents a number of significant traits that may help us test Tönnies's idea (1963) of a dichotomy between community (*Gemeinschaft*) and society (*Gesellschaft*). In different moments of city life, we find features typical of community, in certain others, characteristics typical of society. At residential level, some houses are built in such a way as not to favour interaction between social actors, while others favour it so much as it appears to be something taken, practically, for granted.

It is one thing to live in large, multi-storey condominiums, another to reside in one/two-storey houses that favour a continuous, even specular, encounter of glances, voices, modes of behaviour. But there are also situations where given contextual conditions are nullified by the will of individuals who gather for mutually shared moments of convivium, celebration, ritual, entertainment, leisure. This is true of Jews, Arabs, Melkites, Maronites, Ahmadyya, Baha'i, Catholics and Protestants alike. In this sense, it is quite clear what strategic a role an occasion like the *Holiday of Holidays*, held in Haifa every year in December, can play.

The everyday life of Haifa undergoes a series of interactions involving people, one might say completely, and impacting on every sphere of their lives. This can be seen at neighbourhood, condominium, district and city level, depending on the contingencies of the moment, on local, regional, national, foreign or domestic socio-political events and on whether open or surreptitious conflict is taking place.

On the basis of different existing rates of intra-family and intra-ethnic-religious integration, the tendency towards the community dimension, that is, towards serene face-to-face relationships, is more or less pronounced.

One needs to ask, however, whether it is possible to apply this twofold category of traditional and modern to the specific case of the city of Haifa. First of all, one needs to ask to what extent it is possible to speak of tradition. If it is true that during its long history it has known many different vicissitudes, we might deduce that the city lacks, substantially speaking, the kind of continuity required to favour the construction of a strong cultural system, capable of resisting in the long period and overcoming obstacles and attacks of all kinds. Compared to the city of Jerusalem for example, the history Haifa is highly discontinuous: inhabited and deserted, destroyed and rebuilt, reduced to the dimensions of a mere village, then expanded exponentially in recent years. One notices, therefore, the lack of a constant uninterrupted settlement in time. From a historical-sociological point of view this means that Haifa seems to lack an identity of its own, which, facilitates, therefore the easy imbedding of many other cultural, national, linguistic and religious identities. In brief, what might appear as a weakness becomes a strength, which opens the city up to further grafting, without opposing resistance.

Certainly, there is no dearth of problems. It is sufficient to recall the arrival in Haifa of conspicuous numbers of immigrants from the ex-Soviet Union: they are sufficiently well received and where possible given jobs in the city. The Arab community, in particular, objects that these new arrivals are an evident source of competition within the far from florid and not easily accessible labour market, especially during the present grave international employment crisis.

It must be added, however, that the socio-economic cohesion of some areas of the city makes it easy to deal with the impact of these new arrivals, who are often encouraged to seek work elsewhere, within the urban area itself or outside of it. To this avail, a certain sense of belonging peculiar to the notion of community, “whose members share a territorial area as a basis for everyday activities” (Parsons 1965: 97) prevails. Hadra HaCarmel, the Jewish quarter *par excellence*, and Wadi Nisnas, its Arab equivalent, are, each in its own way, a more or less cohesive, more or less integrated, more or less welcoming community. First of all, we cannot speak of total homogeneity within them. In other words, they are neither exclusive nor excluding realities. This seems to indicate the existence within the urban framework of what Talcott Parsons might call a societal community, that is, a condition marked by two subsystems (the one Jewish, the other Arab) demanding, at least as a tendency, “obligations of *loyalty* towards the society’s collectivity, as both all its members and as all the various categories, diversified according to *status* and role, that the society comprises” (Parsons 1973: 28). This kind of loyalty is not always necessarily clear, visible and perceivable. It persists as a basic trait. It appears as implied. But as in the case of von Neumann and Morgenstern’s theory of games (1944) or, better still, the famous prisoner’s dilemma (Poundstone 1992), it is the outcome of an initial intention to collaborate, to have trust, until the opposite is proven, at least. One might also speak of a kind of well-placed mistrust (Mutti 1998; 2006). In situations of conflict, marked by bitter clashes, tough action, those who opt for milder, less violent, non-vindictive, non-absolutist solutions, even compromise, may be accused of being disloyal. It is compromise, actually, that is often considered ineffective, transient, defeatist. And yet, in many cases, it is the only sure way out of an unresolvable *impasse*, from a dead end

whose lack of escape routes obliges opponents to confront each other within a very confined space, providing no alternative except direct conflict and injury on both sides. Compromise is a form of mediation, difficult to achieve and based on hopes of finding a formula capable of overcoming the crisis. When two interlocutors, individual or collective, seek to solve a problem, reach a decision, their respective points of view tend, generally, to be univocal, interested and rather ideological in perspective. It is only during discussion and through dialogue that the needs and expectations of the other emerge, though not always and immediately perceptible, due to different, even contrary, stances. So it becomes mandatory to find a way of paying attention to the other in order to grasp his/her intentions and his/her need to be truly acknowledged. Therefore, it is indispensable to become available, to open up to mutual understanding and shared participation. An attitude of expectation, of suspension of judgement and prejudice, is the proper response to a well-grounded operative choice: to know in order to understand, to understand before acting, to proceed with caution, avoiding direct, head-on, declaredly hostile attack. Obviously, an attitude of unconditioned surrender to the proposals of the other is unacceptable because unproductive: it would be of no use to those on the other side either, it would simply strengthen their conviction of being right always and under all circumstances. This would not be a just and correct attitude to assume towards those who, having made themselves available to ideological colonization by another, have foregone their original matrix. In other words, permissive or excessively tolerant (a rather ambiguous term) attitudes of which there is much talk when referring to people of a religious or other kind of inspirational bent, should not lead so much to the annihilation of one's own identity as to a conscious and as opportune as possible way of interacting, hypothesising that, in principle, one's interlocutor should also be prepared to strive towards consensual convergence. What is usually required is simply that well-placed mistrust, referred to above. In other words, what is required is *epoché*, a suspension of judgment, which is, simultaneously, an expression of faith but also of well-placed mistrust, that is, of prudence and wisdom, all at once. One offers one's right but tries to avoid being struck. One should offer the other cheek, but – as one might put it – there is no third one giving the other the right to go on offending endlessly, to his/her own detriment (as well as that of others). An inclination towards intercultural and interreligious dialogue does not appear, when all comes to all, a losers' formula, if carried out with caution and without significant surrender of the values that produce and sustain it. Once more, the metaphor of the dilemma of the prisoner who cannot decide whether to collaborate or not, comes in handy here. In general, the starting point is trust and respect. But, in the long run, if all this fails, one is obliged to assume an attitude whereby the other understands that one is no unmindful victim of the coercion of others, but only a messenger sent to announce the will to engage in two-way, dialogic communication, that is, in a circular process, where no-one prevails over the other.

The Holiday of Holidays as spontaneous solidarity

The experience which the citizens of Haifa enact each year with their *Holiday of Holidays* assumes the characteristics of spontaneous solidarity that the festive atmosphere arouses, the municipal authorities promote, the inhabitants themselves share to a considerable degree, though not totally. On the other hand, it is the holiday occasion itself that generates a feeling of shared

identity in the inhabitants, regardless of their various ethnic-linguistic-religious backgrounds. There is an important mingling of art and entertainment, music and theatre, of adults and adolescents, of children and the elderly. Then, as Tönnies put it, it happens that “all confidential, intimate, exclusive cohabitation [...] is seen as community life; society is, on the contrary, the public space, the world. A person belong to his/her people’s community from birth, is bound to it for better and for worse, while he/she enters society as if it were a foreign land” (Tönnies 1963: 45-46).

These December activities highlight the period as an annual watershed: the various communities of Haifa meet, spend time together, discover that peaceful coexistence is achievable. The difference between the *Holiday* and the rest of the year is evident, but, at least as far as intentions are concerned, it appears yearly less and less so, therefore more nuanced, despite the multi-century, in some cases multi-millennial, barriers that have separated the communities and prevented them from enjoying shared, long-lasting customs, a joint destiny.

In actual fact, going from Wadi Nisnas to Hadar HaCarmel or vice versa, is almost like going abroad. Yet the municipal area is a spatial continuum and both quarters are reciprocally visible at a glance. The one/two storey houses of Wadi Nisnas facilitate interpersonal relations of a horizontal rather than a vertical nature, the opposite is true of the area inhabited prevalently by Jews, where interpersonal contact takes place most frequently within a sole multi-storey building. On the one hand, it is easier to develop interpersonal relationships "as real and organic life" (Tönnies, 1963: 47), on the other, solidarity is presented as an integral "aggregate". But in both cases intra-family experience follows certain common dynamics: men-women, parents-children, brothers-sisters, big-small. Sharing a living-place for long periods cannot but generate a sense of affiliation, a feeling of mutual participation. Passing through a series of concentric circles, one might say, that Simmel’s sociability (Simmel 1997) spreads out from family to relatives, to the neighbourhood and later to networks of friendship, nowadays based more and more on electronic intermediation (*twitter, Facebook, Skype, etc.*) extending beyond the boundaries of districts and cities, nations and continents.

The most significant and frequent bonds, beyond the family circle, are those found among friends, that is, individuals who do not meet by *default* for reasons of geography (as in the case of a neighbourhood) or blood connections (as in the case of relations); they are chosen because of affinity, suitability or aptness on the basis of emotional thrusts. Friendship like *Erlebnis*, like life experience, has much in common with the character of community, insofar as it contains “a mode of common, reciprocal, associative feeling” (Tönnies 1963: 62), close to that of community. Anyhow, the forms of participation and responsibility characterizing the organization and realization of the *Holiday of Holidays* may also be explained as a sensitive response to its aims and the spontaneity of the collaboration it generates, neither of them subject to economic and contractual formulae.

Obviously there is the question of the venue itself and the huge financial commitment (amounting to about one million Euro per annum) it involves and which is met mainly by the municipal administration. This expenditure in itself does not suffice to guarantee the success of the various events held in December in Haifa. There are many other forces at work, as well as the willpower required to implement initiatives of all kinds and duration.

Therefore, only particularly favourable conditions of collaboration are capable of guaranteeing that, for a whole month, every particular of the venue is well planned and prepared for, that no accidents occur, that every exhibition and event goes off very well.

In Haifa, especially in the area where the *Holiday* is held, with all its various cultural venues, an almost tangible aura, an atmosphere of intense cooperation and conscientious understanding is practically palpable. Every effort is made to avoid all and every obstacle to the smooth running of the *Holiday* programme. A wise and skilful direction, that of Asaf Ron, prepares and implements all the events included in the *Holiday of Holidays*, a series covering a 360-degree range of forms, languages and expressions.

People from all the city's different generations, languages and religions take part (and many more arrive from outside the city), without any marked distinctions, almost a kind of metaphor of the continuity between community and society, between the local dimension and a global perspective. To this regard what Tönnies wrote (1963: 83) is enlightening: "the theory of society starts with the creation of a circle of men who, like those in a community, live and dwell peacefully side by side, though not bound but essentially separate despite bonds, while in a community people remain bound despite separation. Therefore, here, activities are not carried out because they stem from a necessarily pre-existing unit, and as such express the will and spirit of the unit through the individual, who, by acting according to it, acts in representation of all the members as well as on his/her own behalf. Rather, in this case each performs on his/her own account and in a state of tension with all other."

Applying Tönnies suggested interpretation of the relationship between community and society to Haifa and its *Holiday*, an overall picture emerges whereby the entire city seems to possess the characteristics of a society while the single districts, with their diverse socio-cultural matrices, appear as communities which, by coming together for the *Holiday*, create a mix that is simultaneously community and society, a mix that represents the peculiarity of Haifa as an exemplary response to potentially conflicting tendencies.

Furthermore, those who reside in Haifa "live and dwell peacefully side by side" but remain separate for historical-sociological reasons of various kinds. The fact is, however, that this mingling into a practically indistinct crowd in order to participate in the holiday celebrations, seems to cause an actual transition between town society and town community, thanks to the neighbourhoods that comprise the city of Haifa itself.

In other words, the strength of the communities, separate from each other, when virtuously joined during the *Holiday*, produces effects superior to those one might expect from a simple sum of invention, contributions, consensus. One may speak, therefore, of a (disproportionate) flywheel, an enhancer (to the nth power) and a diffuser (in all directions) that produce evident results in the immediate wake of the Holiday but also, during the rest of the year, more latent and less visible outcomes.

In the end, this city, for the very fact of insisting on a territory that is, in any case, contiguous, while separating the various "blocks", nonetheless unites them in a collective citizenry. On the other hand, the communities of the various districts tend to maintain their residential links, despite diversities within the various families, their ancestral religions, and mother tongues. Then, when all of these converge upon *The Holiday of Holidays* it becomes difficult to distinguish

between the ones and the others, the Jews and the Arabs, the Druze and Maronites, and so on. So, a transition from a purely individual and family to an enlarged perspective, less regardful of difference, more willing to mix with others (known or unknown), more open to novelty or the little known, is achieved. One passes, thus, from intercommunity tensions to the normality of the more aggregating and aggregated societal dimension, like that found in the *Holiday* crowd. But one may also find that corporate experiences can generate opposition, outbreaks of hostility, breach. It is not as if similar contrasts did not reside within community realities. Indeed, partial membership can mitigate some of the harshness that may, otherwise, surface in a social ambit.

Membership of a community brings with it a whole series of conditioning factors which influence the attitudes and behaviour of those belonging to it. Weber (Weber 1961: 38) states, however, that a typical community based on social relations exists "if and so far as, the inclination to act socially is based [...] on a shared membership, subjectively felt (due to emotion or tradition) by individuals belonging to it ". And also that (Weber 1961: 39) "a community can rest on any kind of affective or emotional, even traditional, foundation - for example, an inspired brotherhood, an erotic relationship, a rapport founded on reverence, a 'national' community, an army held together by bonds of camaraderie."

Community is indeed a double-edged, ambiguous form of society; it influences and inspires, encourages and compels, in short, it does the one and the other all at once. Having said this, it is evident that communities present problematic issues that do not make it easy to see what may follow.

Therefore, if the *Holiday of Holidays* relies on the Arab community of Wadi Nisnas and the Arab-Jewish Beit HaGefen cultural centre, this choice appears a grounded and reasonable one, in view of the modernization of cultural proposals that make a treasure of the potential of the reference territory itself. Obstacles are not wanting, because many roots are of deep, remote origin and cannot be easily removed. The resistant survival of former cultural forms is a constant that emerges at every innovative attempt aimed at changing its original profile.

Recourse to forms of organic solidarity (Durkheim 1962), during the *Holiday*, proves particularly efficacious (also in order to achieve greater social cohesion), in that the various functions (organization, management, performance) are all based on first-class professional criteria, thus avoiding entrusting the success of the events included in the programme to chance. A simple way of proceeding also becomes a reference parameter to convey in clear and strong terms that even most complex, intricate and contradictory situations can be coped with thanks to proper intentions and appropriate precautionary measures. The prevention measures adopted to safeguard the public and the performers are an eloquent example of this: a security surveillance service controls, discreetly and accurately, all the entrances to the venue area.

Presumably other precautions are foreseen and a centralized service coordinates all those involved in the task of preventing accidents or incidents. These might well defeat, once and for all, the efforts carried out to date to maintain what is known as "Haifa's Answer," the title of the film shot in December 2011 and presented in December 2012 at the Beit HaGefen centre.

It is evident that the challenge is based on a substantial trust toward others, in hopes that they, in turn, may respond consistently and adequately to the credit offered them. The requirement of essential identity needs, in fact, to be met. The principle of reciprocity is also called upon.

However, identity continues to act as a lifeline in situations of a very problematic and controversial nature. In the face of uncertainty there is a need for a secure basis upon which to found one's view of life, to which to cling firmly in the face of possible loss of fundamental orientation. The issue, however, goes beyond simple, personal points of view and touches on issues of integration, of relationships within communities, of ways of being public, of guiding symbols, of definitions of the situations (Thomas, Thomas 1928: 571 - 572) that arise from time to time.

Reciprocity also plays an important strategic role both in community and social circles. Usually within more restricted ambits it is practiced quite freely and almost without limitations, whereby the *do ut des* rule does not apply: generally speaking, nobody attributes great consideration to give-and-take, while, on the contrary, this attitude is quite common within broader social contexts where minute calculation, used to establish what we are due in exchange for what we have done, is the norm.

In other words, the challenge which the *Holiday of Holidays* promoters have undertaken is based on the belief that long-term investment (and not only in economic terms) may produce concrete results spelling re-pacification, understanding, solidarity, tending towards the common public good, that is, to the advantage of all the citizens.

When all comes to all, the December *Holiday* model seems to be turning into a constant given for the city of Haifa, thanks to solutions of friendship and loyalty opposed to those of conflict and destabilization.

Conclusion

Processes of urbanization and industrialization have made Haifa a particularly attractive destination for migration both from abroad and from within. It is not simply a matter of seeking work in a city potentially richer than others. Another of Haifa's distinguishing factors is that it, more and better than other cities, is putting to the test formulae of a less confrontational nature, with a view to tranquillizing a citizenry that, until not too long ago, was obliged to come to terms with some very difficult issues due to continuous successions of attacks against defenceless people from various backgrounds.

The municipality is devising new ways of obtaining consensus, ones that go beyond the traditional political-party mode. The choice of political and administrative coalitions involving different parties has also become an example for the citizens and impacted on the way they lead their everyday lives.

The presence of so many different religious denominations of various origin shows that, in Haifa, people are free to practice any of the many different creeds found there, without any problem. Indeed, there are numerous occasions during which exponents of the city's leading religious denominations come together. The *Holiday of Holidays* is one such special occasion.

Unlike the past, present-day Haifa does not appear to run many risks. Its social-economic situation appears quite solid compared to the rest of Israel. If there is a problem, it is that due to the enormous rate of immigration, especially from Russia. The city cannot absorb all the new arrivals alone, so, many are sent, gradually, to other parts of the country.

Finally, considerable attention needs to be paid to the polycentric nature of the city, from Mount Carmel to the industrial zone and the various residential areas surrounding it, almost like satellites

around a planet. The settlements distributed throughout the municipal area suggest a non-negligible multi-layered economic and cultural stratification.

In some respects Haifa may be seen as a global city, because it contains several multi-ethnic and multi-religious realities. So, for this reason, it can act as an example for other cities (not only in Israel) that are divided, more or less, on grounds of conflict, more or less committed to solving the problems of difficult coexistence among their heterogeneous populations. The exemplary nature of Haifa is no accident. It is the result of multifarious factors accruing to its maritime position and reinforced by certain historical episodes of resistance against invaders, occupiers, mandatories and colonists. It may also appear that the present-day inhabitants of Haifa have little or no specific knowledge of the history behind the city's contemporary urban set-up. However, at the same time, the fact that they choose to live there shows that they trust in its future.

So, at present, this case is becoming one requiring greater in-depth study in order to understand whether the answer it endeavours to provide is destined to become an example of best practice to imitate or not.

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