# For a Historical-sociological Approach to the City of Haifa

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# For a historical-sociological approach to the city of Haifa

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**Abstract**

The city of Haifa, in the northern part of Israel, has been the theatre of harsh clashes between Jews and Muslims for many years. Haifa was heavy involved in the Great Arab Revolt of 1936-1939 and during the 1948 the Palestinian population, about 80.000 people, was evacuated by the Jewish militias. After the establishment of the State of Israel, several terror attacks took place in the city.

Today, several religious groups live in Haifa, with non easy relations. Nevertheless, each year the city celebrates the *Holyday of Holydays*, an interfaith festival.

The city presents significant traits that may help us test Tönnies's idea of a dichotomy between community (*Gemeinschaft*) and society (*Gesellschaft*). In different moments of city life, we find features typical of community and, in certain others, characteristics typical of society.

**Keywords:** Haifa; Intercultural relations; Israeli-Palestinian Conflict; Urban sociology.

*Introduction*

Forgiveness is a rare concept within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: the hatred developed between the two warring parties in decades of violence makes very difficult to forgive each other. In many Palestinian cities and refugee camps there are stones displaying the names of the "martyrs" (the victims of the conflicts) with the slogan "never forget, never forgive"; many Israelis, in turn, believe that the Palestinians must never be forgiven for their attacks against Jewish citizens. Moreover, both parties accuse the other to be responsible of the conflict and to commit the worst crimes (Fonzo, 2016). The conflict also involves the Arab citizens of Israel, who support the Palestinian cause and accuse the Jewish state to discriminate against them.

However, Jewish and Arab citizens have some opportunities of encounter and peaceful coexistence, some moments in which they appear

to forget the hatred and share experiences, in a sort of tacit and reciprocal forgiveness. One of this moments is the *Holiday of Holydays*, an interfaith festival held yearly in Haifa.

Before analyzing the festival and the place where it is held, we must remember that the birth and development of a city (Weber, 2003) 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.

## 1. From the intensification of the conflict to the Holiday of Holidays

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.

From 1935 to 1939 the Great Arab Revolt, including a general strike lasting seven months in 1936, took place, involving Haifa. In Haifa, on the 18 April 1938, a bomb placed by Irgun on a train caused the deaths of 2 Arabs and 2 British policemen. On the 24 May 1938, members of Irgun shot 3 Arabs dead. On the 6 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 25 July 1938, 43 Arabs were killed by Irgun at the Haifa market. On the 27 February 1939, Irgun struck again causing the deaths of 24 Arabs at the Haifa Suk. Again, on the 19 June 1939, Irgun, using a donkey loaded with explosives, killed 20 more Arabs in the market in Haifa.

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.

In December 1947, there was armed fighting in the streets of Haifa between Arabs and Jews. On the 24 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 30 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 1 January 1948, members of the Jewish Palmach (Yishuv regulars) took the lives of 70 Arabs at Haifa (the Balad al-Shaykh massacre). On the 3 January 1948, in Haifa, the Arabs eliminated 4 Jews. On the 14 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 3, Arab militants took the lives of 6 Jews travelling on a bus; on the 7, the Arabs killed 3 Jews and Jews the same number of Arabs. On the 19, 4 Jews were killed on a bus at the hands of Arabs; retaliation was immediate and on the 21 February 4 Arabs were killed by militant Jews. On the 31 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 23 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 5 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 2 December 2001, killing 15 Jews. A few days later, on the 9 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 31 March 2002 at the Matza restaurant, Haifa, resulted in 15 Jewish casualties. On the 5 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 4 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 5 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 Shukri, 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 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, ethnocultural 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.

## 2. 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 Nahrel-Muqaṭṭa', 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 workforce 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. ''Ηφα 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 23 April 1948, Israeli soldiers evacuated about eighty thousand Arabs from the city.

The proclamation of the State of Israel took place on the 15 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 22 April 1948. Many of them left and the city's Arab population dropped to 3,000.

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 Daliya tel-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.

## 3. 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 and, 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 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, Ahmadiyya, Baha'i, Catholics and Protestants alike. In this sense, it is quite clear what strategical 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 embedding 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, p. 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, p. 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. The 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, 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 another 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.


## 4. 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 belongs 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 as 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 a 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, p. 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-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 inventions, 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 societary 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 (1961, p. 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."

The 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 Nisas 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 trusting 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[1].

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. ◉

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[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OSrW_QwlUMo. Retrieved 10 may 2017.

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, pp. 571-572) that arise from time to time.

Reciprocity also plays an important strategic role both in communities and social circles. Usually within more restricted ambits it is practiced quite freely and almost without limitations, whereby the *do ut des* (to give in order to take) 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 factor 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 anon-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 factor accruing to its maritime position and reinforced by certain historical episodes of resistance against invaders, occupiers, mandataries 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 endeavours to provide is destined to become an example of best practice to imitate or not.

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