

## 2 The political ends of tourism

### Voices and narratives of Silwan/the City of David in East Jerusalem<sup>1</sup>

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#### **Introduction: the performative power of tourism**

Imagine that you wake up one morning and realize that your house and your neighborhood are now part of a tourist site located inside a National Park. Worse yet, you are now residing inside a highly ideological heritage site, the narrative of which has *you* playing the role of a rival, of an enemy. Reminiscent of a Kafkaesque tale, things – even if not yourself – have transformed irrevocably. In this chapter I examine how tourism discourses and practices are effectively put into use for political objectives. I hold that commonly both tourism scholarship and tourists overlook the pervasive political aspects associated with tourist sites, attractions, and discourses, which are the way that the industry serves in promoting and perpetuating hegemony. Empirically, the study explores a Jewish heritage site located in Occupied East Jerusalem. It exposes the mechanisms by which the site serves political aims, and how these aims are effectively depoliticized for the benefit of the sovereign authority and ideology. The chapter also documents the initial phases of my own move into political activism in the context of the Israeli Occupation of East Jerusalem, and my appreciation of how the tourism industry, with its awesome powers of worldmaking, plays a role in this affair of which significance cannot be undermined.

In both academic orientation and research methods I am inspired in attitude by critical approaches in tourism studies, which (in tourism and beyond) always relate to various disciplinary and theoretical backgrounds that share emancipatory aims (Aitchison 2001, Chambers 2007, Hall and Tucker 2004). With regards to critical studies in the context of tourism in Israel, the most burning issues seem to be related to *national ideology*, namely contemporary forms of Zionism. These issues touch primarily on the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict, but also on such matters as militarism in Israeli society, issues of feminism, ethnicity and more. Hence stating that the burning issues that beseech critical investigation concern the relationship between Zionist ideology and tourism, actually supplies a rather wide agenda for critical studies.

Indeed, studies assuming various critical perspectives within the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict have explored discourses, practices and representations that concern how both sides construct social reality according to national ideologies

and goals (Brin 2006, Brin and Noy in press, Feldman 2008, Isaac 2010, Paine 1995, Stein 2008). Schematically, these studies, which discuss political and/or alternative tourism, agree that tourism serves hegemonic aims and ideologies, and that the industry does so in seamless and uncanny ways. I will refrain now from elaborating theoretically on the relations between political tourism on the one hand, and critical studies in tourism, on the other. Suffice to note that these domains are mutually informing, and that at the risk of stating a tautology it can be said that studying tourism critically is a political act, and vice versa – that attending to the political interfaces of tourism requires critical sensitivities.

I employ the concept of performance (or performative power) in tourism in line with previous research and theorizing (Noy 2004, 2008), which in the present context serves within a larger post/colonial theoretical framework (Veijola and Jokinen 1998). I revert to related concepts of voice and narrative, which I draw from the influential work of Mikhail Bakhtin (1968). Together, these terms supply the conceptual framework with which we can appreciate the worldmaking powers of tourism, and the struggle over the ability to shape symbolic *and* material realities that the industry has. I understand the notion of voices as relating to the *social agents* that are effective in a given social scene and have annunciation capacities in that scene; the notion of narratives I see as referring to the ‘content’, or to what is being argued and what are the implied meanings. Voices and narratives are readily critical concepts, primarily due to the notion of *plurality* which they convey. The very plurality of these terms suggests, again in line with Bakhtinian concepts (such as polyphony and authoritative discourse), that even when there is seemingly only one (dominant) voice, if one listens carefully, other voices – often subversive and silenced – can be discerned, and other, often resistive narratives, can be heard.

### **Silwan or the ‘City of David National Park and archeological site’**

The City of David is the name of an archeological site and National Park located to the southeast and very close to the Old City of Jerusalem. The site was declared a National Park by Israeli authorities in 1974 after the occupation and then annexation of East Jerusalem following the 1967 War. The City of David National Park is located inside the large and densely populated Palestinian neighborhood of Silwan, with a population of approximately 40,000 residents, and specifically inside the neighborhood of Wadi Hilwah (with approximately 5,000 residents).

As a Jewish heritage site that is run by Israelis and that is located inside a densely populated urban Palestinian area, the way that the site operates, how it is framed and how it shapes its neighborhood in terms of symbolizing and representing Jewish nationhood, suggests a fervent site of political contestation; a site where the Israeli Occupation of East Jerusalem is promoted as a tourist attraction. This, I will show, is accomplished by claims concerning tourism preservation and development, which mobilize the powerful colonial discourse and visual

imagery of tourism. Visitors to the site consist mainly of organized groups of local Israelis and international Jewish tourists. Many of the visitors consist of groups of schoolchildren from the secular, orthodox and ultra-orthodox educational systems in Israel, groups of armed forces and security institutions, and many international Jewish groups and organizations that visit Israel through organized Zionist tours (such as the Birth Right Tour).

The site of the City of David National Park is a major Jerusalemite attraction, and one of the most frequently visited National Parks in Israel, reaching approximately 400,000 visitors annually (in 2009).<sup>2</sup> In terms of visits to local archeological National Parks, it is second only to the Masada National Park. From a critical perspective it is noteworthy that while the ideological narrative unfolded in Masada (where archeological findings and narrative are also mobilized in the aims of Zionist national ideology) has been discussed in academic literature quite extensively (Zerubavel 1995), to the best of my knowledge the site of the 'City of David' has never been researched prior to the present study. It can only be speculated that the main reason for this disparity – over and above the statistics concerning number of visitors (Masada has nearly twice as many visitors) – is that it is somewhat more convenient to discuss a site located in a remote and unpopulated area in the southern Judean Desert, which is under no national contestations (such as Masada), than to get one's hands into the heated and messy politics of the densely populated and highly contested urban neighborhoods of East Jerusalem and its Occupation by Israel.

### **Critical methodologies/activist research**

For the aims of this research I have documented discourses, images and practices presented and pursued publically by the main actors in Silwan/the City of David, with the aim of socially constructing the site's meanings. Collecting these types of data is accomplished primarily via ethnographies of the various actors' different tours in the site (elaborated below), documenting various texts (brochures, websites, signs, etc.), and conducting observations of and informal (in situ) interviews with visitors, operators, neighborhood residents and political activists there. Analysis follows interdisciplinary critical sensibilities and sensitivities, inspired by the fields of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995, Jaworski and Pritchard 2005), semiotic analysis (Jewitt 2009, Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006), and as indicated earlier, by my lasting interest in performance approaches to tourism. I first seek to identify the actors – those agentic organizations and institutions, and the narratives and the power structures that shape the symbolic meanings of the site, and how these meanings serve to oppress and/or exclude various populations – in the present case Palestinian residents. At the same time, I am also highly interested, even intrigued, by how these actions are naturalized, or how they assume a de-politicized appearance.

Thus far I have attended six tours – three were official tours of the City of David, and three were guided by the activist organization of Emek Shaveh (described later). I visit Silwan neighborhood and the site frequently because I

am increasingly involved with the activities of Emek Shaveh there. Hence my visits are recurrent and the clear distinctions and boundaries between formal, 'neutral' academically oriented activities, and political activism blur. Indeed, my initial interest in the site as a field of research arose as a result of my affiliation with an activist organization of Israeli archaeologists, which seeks to expose and transform the political aims to which archaeology is put to use in the site. Throughout my visits to Silwan with activist Yonathan Mizrahi, my scholarly appetite grew, and I began contemplating the veiled politics of the site via critical academic lenses. In this regard, the research story corresponds with other researchers' narratives, where the personal, political and academic mutually inform and shape each other (Ateljevic *et al.* 2005; Chatterton *et al.* 2010).

## **Narratives and counter narratives: in Silwan/the City of David**

### *ElAd's hegemonic voice*

Undoubtedly, the dominant ideological agent acting in and running the site of Silwan/the City of David is the Orthodox Jewish settler organization of ElAd (Hebrew acronym of 'to the City of David'). Established in 1986, the organization's expressive aims are, 'continuing King David's legacy and strengthening Israel's current and historic connection to Jerusalem through four key initiatives: archaeological excavation, tourism development, residential revitalization and educational programming.'<sup>3</sup> While the site's logo is identical to the logo of ElAd, it is important to observe that the organization's name and its ideological orientation are hidden from sight (at the site and elsewhere), and are unknown to most visitors or to the general population. In addition, crucial information about ElAd is hard to reach because the organization was granted a special permission from the Israeli authorities, which allows it to avoid revealing the names of its donors (a crucial bit of information with regards to non-governmental organizations).

I use the term hegemonic in the subsection's heading with regards to the ElAd organization, in order to indicate that at present, the ideological narrative told by ElAd is most influential and uncontested, to an extent that most of the visitors to the site are not aware of alternative or contesting narrative possibilities. The term hegemony, adopted from Antonio Gramsci's (1971) work, suggests not only that this narrative is prevalent, but crucially that it is *the account that is sustained by the state's official authorities*. In other words, adopting the Gramscian notion of hegemony sheds light not simply on the number of rivaling narratives that compete over the hearts and minds of tourists; rather, it hints that at stake is an ideological narrative that is being promoted by national authorities (Israeli ministries and the municipality of Jerusalem), even if the institution that voices this narrative is a *private organization*.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, in 2005 the ElAd organization became the *sole agent* legally authorized to operate the National Park of the City of David, as well as the sponsor of

the extensive excavations taking place there. This is a rare if not singular case where, of some 115 national parks run by The Israeli Nature and Parks Authority, the operation of a national park was wholly assigned to the hands of a private organization. Ever since, EIAd's personnel are in charge of all activities at the site, from selling tickets and guiding tours, to securing the premises, funding the archeological excavations there, and advancing various projects taking place in and around the site.

As a settler organization that is active in East Jerusalem (Ir Amim 2009: 11), EIAd's broader political aims lie beyond those that concern the site of the City of David, and include promoting a demographic shift in the entire area of the Holy Basin. This aim is pursued by purchasing land and buildings and populating them with Jewish settlers. In addition, EIAd and other Jewish settler organizations seek the eviction of Palestinians by various means. During the last decade, EIAd has gained ownership of a number of Palestinian buildings inside the premises of the City of David, and has populated them with Jewish settlers (many of whom work at the site), together with dozens of armed Israeli guards who patrol the neighborhood. Again, here is a rare case where, of all Israeli National Parks, in the City of David EIAd members actually reside permanently and have achieved ownership of spaces and buildings in the site. Conceptually, then, this site is a hybrid, combining an archeological national park, a tourist heritage attraction, and a Jewish settlement. Further plans have recently been approved by the municipal planning committees. These plans include the demolition of dozens of local (Palestinian) houses and the eviction of their residents from the neighborhood, with the aim of expanding the site's recreational areas (hotels, restaurants, parks and parking lots).<sup>5</sup>

It is hopefully clear by now why the tourist site of the City of David is highly instrumental for settler colonial activities, such as the Judaization of the site and the surrounding neighborhoods. In addition, insofar as the site functions as a Jewish (national) heritage site, it plays a role in fastening the emotional ties between foreign Jews and Israelis, on the one hand, and the 'unified' city of Jerusalem, on the other. Here, too, political goals are at stake, which become clear when acknowledging that any serious reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians would require a withdrawal of Israel from the areas of East Jerusalem.

### ***Hegemonic discourse and practice: the symbolic erasure of Palestinians***

In line with EIAd's attempts at Judaization of the site and at binding the emotional connection to Jerusalem, the narrative that the organization elaborates at the site establishes an organic connection – a link that seems obvious and powerful – between contemporary Orthodox Jewish settlers in the site and Jewish communities in the past. Also, and in a complementary way, the hegemonic narrative seeks to symbolically erase Palestinian presence. In the scope of this chapter, three representations and practices that serve these aims are described and briefly discussed.

First there is the question of the *name of the site* – how the tourist site is commonly indexed. There are two points here. First, there is the Hebraization of Arab names of townships, neighborhoods, streets, as well as of natural landscapes, which is part of a much larger and pervasive Zionist practice (Cohen and Kliot 1992). At stake is a change of the entire linguistic landscape of the site and of its surrounding urban area (Shohamy and Gorter 2009). This change is accomplished with the support of Jerusalem’s municipality, which attempts to change the names of Palestinian streets and neighborhoods. Figure 2.1a presents an official sign that was posted recently near the entrance to the City of David (on one of the main roads of Wadi Hilwah), designating the name of the neighborhood as the City of David (note that on the photo’s upper left side an improvised post is depicted, which was hung by local residents and which indicates the location of the alternative Information Center down the road. I will return to this later).

There is a more nuanced point here, which concerns a shift in the site’s name between *different Hebrew terms*. Throughout the centuries, and for some time after the annexation of East Jerusalem in 1967, other Hebrew terms were employed to refer to the site, including the Shilo’ah Spring (in Hebrew, *Ma’ayan Ha-Shilo’ah*, which is actually the site’s biblical name). Hence the term that is presently used (i.e. City of David) is recent. It became widespread after the Israeli annexation and specifically after the term was gainfully picked up by ElAd during the late 1980s. This Hebrew term represents a planned linguistic ideology promoted by the Israeli authorities and settlers. The differences between the Hebrew names are striking, especially in light of the fact that the name *Ma’ayan/Niqbat Ha-Shilo’ah* is biblical, and carries ancient and holy echoes for Jewish ears. Yet the term City of David brands the site, and unlike the other term it connects back to a notion of Jewish Kings and Kingdoms, and is construed in the context of contemporary politics and the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict as a manifestation of Jewish ethno-nationalism.

The second issue concerns representational devices in the shape of maps and visual illustrations. The political roles that maps play in the Israeli–Palestinians Conflict, as part of the discursive means of advancing each side’s political claims, is not unique in the case at hand (Collins-Kreiner 2008). At stake here are tourist maps, and not geographical or cartographical maps, which, with the



Figure 2.1 A Jewish heritage site or a Palestinian residential neighborhood?

help of tourism imagery, *erase the present of Palestinian populations at and near the tourist attraction.* Figures 2.2a and b include images of the City of David and its surroundings, which are offered in the brochures that are handed out at the site, and in its award-winning website.<sup>6</sup> The figure on the left (2.2a), is a schematic map depicting the entire area of East Jerusalem and the Old City, with the City of David site at its center (marked as 1); the figure on the right (2.2b) supplies a visual illustration of ‘Ancient Jerusalem.’

With regards to the schematic map on Figure 2.2a, which visually resembles typical schematic maps supplied to tourists, what is noticeable is the fact that all the Arab names (places, streets, neighborhoods, sites of worship, etc.) have been omitted. This is striking because the map covers the area of East Jerusalem, which is a distinctly Palestinian area with approximately 150,000 residents and dozens of large neighborhoods. For instance, inside the Old City, the Jewish Quarter is indicated, but not the Muslim Quarter, thereby omitting the commercial center of East Jerusalem, the large neighborhoods of Ras al-Amud, Sheik Jarrah, Wadi Al-Joz, and more. This deletion corresponds with the title of the map, which allegedly concerns ‘Ancient Jerusalem’ (and not the present city).

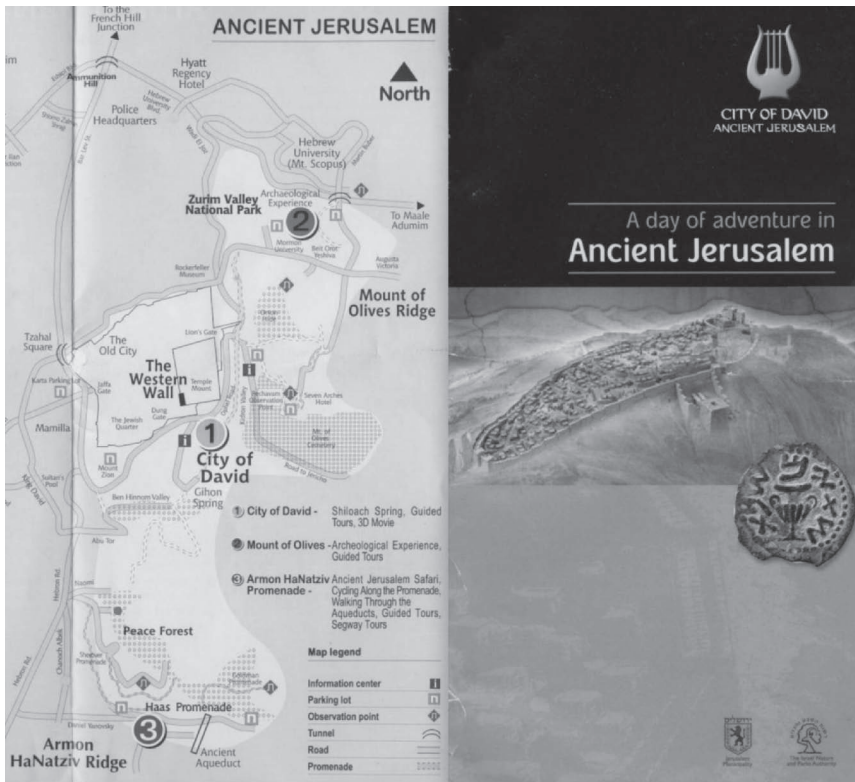


Figure 2.2 Exclusionary imagery.

Yet this title is metaphorical, as many of the buildings and points of interest indicated in the map are in fact contemporary structures and were built rather recently.

The illustrative image in Figure 2.2b depicts the walled city of Ancient Jerusalem, secluded inside a deserted desert territory. The yellowish-greyish (moon-like) grounds that surround the city are completely barren of human settlement. The image communicates the notions that (a) in the past, Ancient Jerusalem was completely sealed, and (b) that the area around it was completely void of people. What is in effect conveyed by this image is not an archeologically informed figure of an ancient city, but a *purist fantasy of a homogenized ethno-national (Jewish) life*. Very much in line with the oft cited Zionist dictum: ‘A land without a people for a people without a land,’ Figure 2.2b is a cleansed image that tells not so much of a mythic past, but of a projected mythic future and of the fantasies of an eradication of the Other, i.e. the Palestinians. Indeed, in all the official tours in which I participated, and in various media operating in the site (such as a three-dimensional movie that presents the history of the site), no references are made to the presence of Palestinians living in the grounds of the site and in the urban areas around it whatsoever.<sup>7</sup> Ignoring the Palestinian urban environment becomes particularly salient when explanations concerning the site’s location and perimeter are supplied by the guides during the tours. In a number of instances, guides made references such as, ‘Can you see those houses there?’ or ‘That neighborhood that’s located on that mountain slope’ without making any mention of the obvious fact that the entire urban surround is inhabited by Palestinian populations.

The complementary side of the ideological discourse of cleansing the symbolic presence of the Arab population, is the over-presencing of the Jewish population, and importantly, drawing a religious connection that seems natural and inevitable between the Jewish settlers who live in the site today and those that lived there during the periods of the First and Second Temples (tenth to sixth centuries BCE, and fifth century BCE to first century CE, respectively). Discursive illustrations aimed at constructing a shared Jewish national character of these periods are prevalent. For instance, when describing the archeological excavations and findings, tour guides generally ignore the many cultures that have thrived in the site, moving on the timeline between First and Second Temple, on the one hand, and present day Orthodox Jewish settlers, on the other. The leaps between these two time periods are accomplished discursively through the use of first person plural. Guides use the term ‘we’ repeatedly, easily alternating between groups that are indexed by this powerful term (for the use of identity markers in tourism discourse see Noy 2009). In the tours ‘we’ sometimes designated the present-day Jewish settlers, and sometimes the Jews of the eras of King David and King Solomon; sometimes the term referred to Zionist Pioneers, and sometimes – in the same tour – the term designated the members of the group of visitors (which usually consist mostly of Jews). All the official tours that I took ended after three hours of walking through the excavated ancient tunnels and paths, in a dramatic, highly moral tone (note that all the guides were Orthodox

Jews who lived in settlements in the Occupied Territories). The guides always had a moral concerning the cohesion of the 'People of Israel' with their past, and the present connection to the Jerusalem.

You want to know what the people of Israel are worth? Go look at their ancestors [...] the people [of Israel] believed that this city could not be *destroyed*, and they had a point but they just got it wrong: it's not the stones that you cannot destroy – it's the people. And *we* [hand gesture referring to the group] are the best proof of that: walking these paths, again, after two thousand years [...] and so I see *us* as kind of pilgrims of Jerusalem being thirdly built.

In this text, 'we' and 'us' are the Jewish groups of (heritage) tourists, who supply a continuation and a connection between the Jewish People and the City of Jerusalem. The reference to 'Jerusalem being thirdly built,' concerns the construction of the Third Temple, due in the time of the arrival of the Messiah. In yet other cases, the guides concluded the tours by performing a Jewish prayer, to which the visitors replied with an 'Amen,' which reinforced the ethno-religious ties between Jews and City of David, validating Jewish political right over Jerusalem.

The settlers' control over the City of David National Park, manifested in the shape of ElAd's ability to effectively tell a narrative of ethno-national heritage about the site and in its ability to evacuate Palestinian residents and take over their houses, has gone unchallenged until recently. During the last few years, grassroots activist organizations have been challenging this hegemonic narrative, offering alternative and subversive narratives.

### ***'The story behind the tourist site': subversive narratives and the politicization of tourism***

Two other organizations that play an important role as social agents, and which have a voice and offer a counter narrative concerning the site of Silwan/the City of David, are the Palestinian *Wadi Hilwah* Information Center (WHIC) and the Israeli *Emek Shaveh*. The activities of these organizations focus on the area of the site and the neighborhood in which it is located, and they both promote a humanist anti-colonial agenda that resists the Judaization of the Holy Basin and of East Jerusalem. Like ElAd, WHIC and *Emek Shaveh* have tourism discourses, images and practices as their vehicles in the struggle over visitors' consciousness and over the larger public opinion in Israel and abroad. In other words, these organizations make use of the performative power of tourism in order to promote an emancipatory social change. Although they are considerably smaller than ElAd, and were established recently (during the last three years), they are nonetheless agents that are active in voicing subversive narratives, and have been receiving growing media attention and public recognition locally and internationally.

I will address these organizations jointly, because their activities and goals are coordinated. Indeed, the cooperation between these organizations – which includes the fact that tours conducted by *Emek Shaveh* conclude at the WHIC, where the tourists meet and talk with residents, and that both organizations' websites and promotional material cross-reference each other – is not incidental. Rather, it is *in itself a political statement*, signifying that Palestinians and Israelis can – and perhaps should – cooperate in their struggles. These organizations' shared aims concern first and foremost the uncovering of the political aims that lie behind the ElAd-owned Jewish heritage site, and preventing these aims (i.e. the demolition of Palestinian houses, restrictions and hindrances on Palestinian mobility, etc.) from being fulfilled.

As stated by these organizations, the first step towards remedying the present condition is acknowledging the fact that the 'City of David' is in effect a highly political endeavor, and that this fact, its mechanisms and implications should be exposed. In other words, at stake is the (re)politicizing of the tourist site. In what follows I shall briefly describe each organization and its discourse and a few of the activities that it undertakes. It should be noted that just as a critical perspective was needed in order to uncover the ideological organization that stands behind the title 'the City of David' (i.e. ElAd), recognizing the presence and work of these organizations is by no means trivial and could have been missed. In other words, outlining the social agents that are active in the scene of Silwan/the City of David is not trivial, and is in itself an important and ethical research process.

Emek Shaveh ('common grounds' in Hebrew) was established in 2008 as 'a non-profit organization of archaeologists, local residents and human rights activists working to change the role archaeology plays in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict'.<sup>8</sup> Since the City of David site revolves primarily around archeological findings, and as its discursive power is conveyed through mobilizing the scientific findings of archeology, Emek Shaveh archeologists challenge its colonial-scientific approach. They propose an alternative perspective with regards to the meanings of archeological practices (excavations, interpretations, representations, etc.) and findings. One of the main vehicles that serves Emek Shaveh in reaching and changing public opinion are tours that they conduct at the site. Each tour lasts about three hours, and takes place right at the site – more or less along the route of the formal tour. In these tours a different narrative unfolds, one which is humanist and universalist, and which explicitly undermines the official and hegemonic narrative. Of course, the site's management are displeased with subversive tours conducted on the(ir) premises, but since these activities are legal, there is little that can be done besides interfering with and harassing the Emek Shaveh tour (which ElAd's personnel do).

Emek Shaveh's use of the performative power of tourism in its tours, via the discourses of archeology and authenticity, is accomplished by considerably broadening the scope of knowledge that is deemed relevant and that is, consequently, shared with the visitors. The two points that I found most impressive in this regard are, first, the way that these tours refer to the *cultural heterogeneity* that existed at the site. In the tours, different past cultures are discussed in

light of the archeological findings in situ, and this has the effect of de-centering the binary structural that excludes all but Jewish culture(s) in past and in the present. In these tours a new and different cultural narrative is revealed, promoting the value of cultural diversity and heterogeneity rather than cultural exclusion and (Jewish) exclusivity. Table 2.1 reproduces part of a handout that is provided to visitors in the Emek Shaveh tours, where different historical periods and corresponding cultures are indicated. The document, which tells of the many cultures that flourished at the site, does not exclude any of these cultures, but rather portrays a diverse and rich image of the site.

The timeline in Table 2.1 carries an additional effect: it indicates (and advocates) cultural continuity by leading from cultures of the past to present day populations and cultures. Contrary to what might be expected of archeological discourse, here the past leads in a continuous way to the present, and the qualities of Otherness and mysteriousness associated with archeological findings – emphasized and mystified in the official tour – are mitigated. Hence events of the twentieth century too have their role in the history of the site, including the Israeli Occupation and annexation of the neighborhood in 1967.

Finally, the notions of cultural diversity and intercultural interaction are effectively conveyed in Emek Shaveh’s tour by meetings with Palestinian residents and local activists. These meetings take place regularly at the tour’s conclusion, and they *embody* the idea of cultural diversity and cooperation. In

Table 2.1 Cultural diversity: Emek Shaveh’s archeological timeline

Date	Period	Event
37 BCE	Roman Period	The King Herod
Around AD 20–33	Roman Period	Jesus of Jerusalem
AD 70	Roman Period	Roman Period The destruction of the Second Temple
AD 324	Byzantine Period	Christian rule in Jerusalem
Fifth century	Byzantine Period	Empress Eudocia
AD 638	Islamic Period	
AD 661	Islamic Period	The Umayyad Caliphate
AD 750	Islamic Period	The Abbasid Caliphate
AD 969	Islamic Period	The Fatimid Caliphate
AD 1033	Earthquake	
	Silwan area abandoned	
AD 1099	Crusader Period	
AD 1187	Islamic Period	Ayyubid Dynasty Salah Ad-din
AD 1250	Mamluk Period	
Sixteenth century	Silwan resettled	
AD 1517	Ottoman Period	
1917	British Mandate	
1948	Part of Jordan	
1967	Israeli Occupation	
	Silwan annexed to Jerusalem	

the political context of Silwan/City of David (and more broadly of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict), these acts are rare and are usually perceived as radical statements. These meetings allow tourists to interact directly with residents, and to hear in an authentic and unmediated way their perspectives on their everyday experiences under the Jewish heritage site and so on.

The second organization that is active is the Wadi Hilwah Information Center (WHIC, see [silwanic.net](http://silwanic.net)), which was established in 2009 as a non-profit voluntary organization of local residents. The organization's goals are giving voice to residents, monitoring and reporting activities that are promoted by the combined policies of ElAd and the Municipality of Jerusalem, as well as various social and welfare activities in the neighborhood. As the WHIC's website indicates:

We, the residents of Wadi Hilwah, did not delegate anyone to convey the information on our behalf, and we do not allow any person to obscure our deep rooted identity which lies in the houses, stones, trees, gardens, springs, and sky of our village [...] We [...] have decided to open an Information Center for those who wish to hear the voice of the indigenous people, to tell the stories of our forefathers and keep the light in the way of youth, and to keep the hope on the thresholds of doors.<sup>9</sup>

Observably, the performative power of the discourse produced by WHIC stems from the fact it is conveyed in the words of the local/native residents. While not making any specific mention of the Jewish heritage site, the narrative in this text is subversive because it has as its point of departure the misinformation supplied to tourists *above the heads* of the indigenous Palestinian population. At stake here are issues of voice, authenticity and authority. The text, where the deictic 'we' is again evinced, represents the residents' attempt to regain the grounds of their neighborhood and of their everyday spaces of livelihood. The text discloses its authors' understanding of the performative narrative power of tourism: such terms as 'voice' and 'stories' are used with an emancipatory aim. The WHIC offers not only alternative information, but also awareness that tourism is an ideological battleground where identities and places are being narrated into existence or otherwise silenced and erased.

Part of the organization's attempts to symbolically regain the space of the neighborhood of Wadi Hilwah concerns re-marking its area as one which belongs to the Palestinian residents and not to the Jewish settlers. As indicated in Figures 2.1b and 2.1c, spontaneous and planned resistive activities are carried out in this capacity. For instance: (a) hanging improvised street signs (Figure 2.1b), which indicate the Arabic name of the streets (Wadi Hilwah St.) and not its tourist Hebraized name, and (b) drawing graffiti (Figure 2.1c), which also serves to indicate the identity of the place as perceived by the residents in opposition to the colonial expansion of the Jewish tourist site (Here is Silwan; and in Arabic: Silwan is Arab).

In one of its recent publications, WHIC relates to a number of issues under such headings as: 'Archaeology in ElAd's Era,' 'A Visit to a National Park or a

Settlement?’ and ‘National Park: Private Property!’, which expose the ideological aims and means of the ElAd run Jewish heritage site, and the grave consequences that they carry for local residents. Under a picture that shows children playing in the neglected and crowded neighborhood of Silwan, the text says:

Behind the scenes of the tourist site live people. They should be seen, heard and helped to oppose the injustices they face. The residents of Wadi Hilwah ask the people of Israel and the world to support their struggle for the right to live in their village as part of a multi-cultural Jerusalem based on principles of equality and peace.<sup>10</sup>

The WHIC text politicizes tourist stages by indicating that the choice of what to show on these stages concerns also the choice of what is hidden and expunged. The voice of local residents, as expressed in and through this WHIC text, tries to access tourists directly; attempting to bypass the institutional and hegemonic voice (which admittedly presently comprises of ‘the scenes’). As with Emek Shaveh, here too, the address is peaceful and multicultural: the goals that are presented include creating a multicultural (and perhaps also multinational) co-existence in Jerusalem.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter commenced with an allusion to Kafka, suggesting that tourism sometimes plays a mean role in transforming populations and in instilling them with a sense of helplessness. Yet at times transformations are not imposed, and can be assumed willingly: as academics, we have room to decide if we want to shift our research perspectives and goals. This chapter documented my shift to an activist academic framework, offering a case study that illustrates the gains achieved when a critical perspective in tourism research is adopted. As indicated, no research has been conducted on Silwan/the City of David heritage site thus far – a fact that can be viewed as a silence that ‘says’ something; if I had not accessed the field from the perspective of someone associated with an activist organization, I might not have considered the site for research or, alternatively, my research would have been very different (namely, siding unknowingly with the hegemonic narrative).

For myself, and perhaps for others in the community of tourism scholars, subversive voices, which are by definition weaker and flickering, are oftentimes not heard and are not recorded in research/as research data. Social activism of sorts offers ways of accessing interesting and otherwise easily unobserved sites of research and fascinating empirical material. At the same time, activism can also supply theoretical perspective and conceptual sensitivities, and in this way a much needed and fruitful bridge is sustained between academic work and grassroots activism, and between the different knowledge(s) that are fostered in these spheres.

## Notes

- 1 This chapter was conceived at the 3rd Critical Tourism Studies Conference (June, 2009, Zadar, Croatia), specifically after hearing a lecture titled 'Living stones and dead children: Palestine and the politics of tourism', by Freya Higgins-Desbiolles. Moving lectures can have this effect, as conferences can be places of (academic) activism. An earlier version of this chapter was presented at the Annual Meeting of the Israeli Association of Tourism Research, 17 February 2010, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel. I am indebted to comments made to this chapter by Jonathan Mizrahi and Dana Herberg.
- 2 Israeli Nature and Parks Authority. Retrieved from: [www.parks.org.il/BuildaGate5/general2/company\\_search\\_tree.php?mc=378~All](http://www.parks.org.il/BuildaGate5/general2/company_search_tree.php?mc=378~All) (accessed 5 June 2010).
- 3 Retrieved from: [www.cityofdavid.org.il/IrDavidFoundation\\_Eng.asp](http://www.cityofdavid.org.il/IrDavidFoundation_Eng.asp) (accessed 24 January 2010).
- 4 Many of the activities of the EIAd organization, such as changing ownership of houses and land from Palestinian hands to Jewish hands, were successful and prompted by much support of state authorities and municipality agencies. In fact, the Jerusalem municipality accounted for the total handover of the City of David National Park to the High Court of Justice by arguing that EIAd is 'an arm of the municipality'. This point is of particular importance because it indicates that in terms of agency, the EIAd organization is supported by Israeli State authorities (Ir Amim 2009: 20).
- 5 Retrieved from: [www.nytimes.com/2010/06/22/world/middleeast/22mideast.html?scp=3&sq=east%20jerusalem&st=cse](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/22/world/middleeast/22mideast.html?scp=3&sq=east%20jerusalem&st=cse) (accessed 29 June 2010).
- 6 Retrieved from: [www.cityofdavid.org.il/map.asp](http://www.cityofdavid.org.il/map.asp) (accessed 18 January 2010).
- 7 The only exception to non-Jewish presence in the past is the earlier Canaanite culture, which is mentioned in the tours. This bygone culture serves as a cultural 'Other', which (having perished long ago) does not pose any threat to ethno-national Jewish ideologies.
- 8 Retrieved from: [www.alt-arch.org/index.php](http://www.alt-arch.org/index.php) (accessed 22 January 2010). A disclosure note: the author acts as a board member of this organization.
- 9 Retrieved from: [http://silwanic.net/?page\\_id=684](http://silwanic.net/?page_id=684) (accessed 26 January 2010).
- 10 *The Story Behind the Tourist Site*, unknown year and place of publication. Retrieved from: [http://silwanic.net/?page\\_id=57](http://silwanic.net/?page_id=57) (accessed 28 May 2010).

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