

# Setting the challenge for a Grassroots Manifesto and Activism Campaign

by Anil Korotane, director of Belonging.

## Introduction

So far in the campaign, we have raised issues such as challenging existing notions on the discourse of Cultural Properties, and questioned the practices on existing international mechanisms and conventions that ultimately aim to protect cultural heritage. We have learnt that international conventions may not suffice as palpable instruments or safety nets for providing the protection of cultural heritages within Nation States. Ultimately Nation States can reside to selecting history and cultural heritages in favour of mainstream ideological agendas. Notwithstanding, that this can influence negative consequences such as the neglecting of cultural heritages amongst the marginalised and segregated communities. Nonetheless, in our quest to further understand and challenge discourse on cultural heritage, we have also encountered a greater tenacity amongst the professional planning community in generating new agendas to unfold reconstruction and rehabilitation projects.

Belonging NGO's aim is to offer substantial projects guided by conceivable agendas with alternative planning solutions. We are in the process of advocating a grassroots strategy within Lifta's regional context using the wider Israeli and Arab Israeli network. To sustain an achievable goal the campaign will adopt a strategy that will contest existing cultural notions; such as the traditional cultural assumptions in the selection of heritage against the more purposeful opportunities arising from heritage diversity. Nonetheless, any agenda for alternative discourse will be in context to preventing the neglecting of heritage created in the Redevelopment Plan. To substantiate an agenda will require a reappraisal of this situation concerning the current conflict of interest between the different needs and values regarding Lifta. Any strategy will therefore be dependant upon attitudes either existing or supported as intervention that will be vital towards supporting a solution.

For example, this campaign may be perceived as controversial, not coinciding with the current outlook and interests of the authority overseeing Lifta's land and the Nation State. By acknowledging that the character premise of the Israeli Nation State is undoubtedly embodied by its own set of exclusive values and cultural traditions, any reality construction may have to reflect upon this on the premise that it is a rule of engagement. It will be necessary in our objective to engage and challenge existing cultural notions with ideas that have the capacity of penetrating traditional attitudes with alternative breadth of view. Lifta represents an identity, and an identity in context to a reality can be perceived and defined as a series and a set of power relationships. With the agenda to protect the place Lifta, any underlining cause should seek to

reappraise this identity amongst the traditional conceptions, constructions of rival symbolism and outlooks of place.

Belonging NGO's reappraisal is to contend with the cultural workings of identity with a strategy approaching place with the intent to re-cultivate through gaining regional and national recognition. The real challenge will be to create an informed strategy that can stipulate within the real context of obstacles that are present not only in mind but also on facts created on the ground. For instance, the ethnocentric prejudices and segregation in civil society and; the constant barrage of scepticism and antagonism of the 'other'. The grass-roots strategy will aim to counteract such obstacles by reconstructing Lifta's heritage. For instance, Belonging will emphasize the value of the relationship between memory and the tangible cultural heritage so that the landscape can convey historical truths capable of empowering Lifta's identity. The workings of the specific use of heritage can have the effect to demystify, reconcile or suggest alternatively to dominant truths present in the conflict.

So the most invaluable resource for an informed strategy will involve relationships to truthful values of Lifta's cultural heritage. Inevitably, the pursuit to justify Lifta's right to exist will also form to define her as a proponent for capacity building in the region. Architectural writings shall be used to create discourse to be used as a vehicle to guide the exploration. The methods proposed will use a clearly defined set of principles and values to create the tools for regional activism. Belonging NGO believes that their undertaking will sustain the most integral and credible opportunity of generating a reappraisal to Lifta's situation.

The emphasis of the strategy for regional activism will be based upon the following sets of principles and values:

- (i.) Recognize that Lifta has an existing cultivated bond, and that this bond (warrants legitimate recognition) evokes an identity and a relationship to identities.
- (ii.) Recognize that this place is inextricably tied and linked to the creation of the modern Nation State of Israel, and therefore is testimony to the phenomenon/event of the creation of the Modern State as well as placing historical perspective and context to the Nation's present identity.
- (iii.) Recognize that this place contains a unique example of a tangible cultural heritage that evokes a legacy of a place that had a healthy civil equality and no ethnocentric division or segregation.
- (iv.) Recognize that Lifta, a place which has an inextricable relationship to the identity of a people and also of a Nation, should have her cultural heritage reappraised so that she can sustain an

'attainable value' for the evaluation of healthy civil progress for the future of this region.

Appraisals of these principles and values will be made clear in individual episodes - beginning with the first episode below and then followed consecutively each week. After the final episode the tools devised for action will be highlighted, thus unfolding the manifesto and taking the next step into the journey of the grassroots activism.

### **Episode 1.**

**- Recognize that this place, Lifta, has an existing cultivated bond, and that this bond (warrants legitimate recognition) evokes an identity and a relationship to identities.**

Our purpose, first and foremost, is to safeguard the harmony that currently exists between the vivid memories and the architectural antiquities on the landscape; to safeguard a nature of recognition and a sense of belonging. By saving Lifta, we mean to imply that we are trying to protect a place that still exists in the form of a bond. 'Memory' in respect to Lifta is the essence of the place, it is bare without people telling their stories and affirming their union to the place. So sustaining this truthful value is to imply that Lifta is an identity in the shape of a duality. Recognition of this bond existing will mean to recognize a cultivation, which in turn also means to recognize history and a place consisting of a tangible reality.

Considering that an identity in context to a reality can be related to a series and a set of power relationships, Lifta's tangible reality has relationships to other identities either in the form of continuity or of spatial consequence. These relationships are either distinctively within memories - stories - mythologies or through the forms of territory and spatial governance. Authenticating any of Lifta's history would also be laying down the foundations for justifiable cultivations. With the relationship of Lifta, a place with a history prior to 1948 and sited within a territory of the governing power of Israel, Lifta sits inside a surrounding context identifiable by another historical narrative. For the two identities to sustain a shared value - an identifiable relationship, there has to be reason and a value.

Nonetheless, acknowledging that any engagement will initially reflect upon a history of conflict, divisions and segregations between the two identities. And given the differences of outlooks of the main ethnic groups and national identities defined by this history, this should be presumed first as a given situation of the region's reality. However even under these situations Lifta, a place identifiable to a Palestinian origin, still has the capacity to construct a narrative that can allow

her identity to be recognised within her regional frontier of the Israeli Nation State. Lifta may be a modern-day ruin, but more importantly she is a monument of the present. She has a unique quality sustained by her current condition that can inspire a capacity building opportunity with genuine civic purpose. Again, this is on the assumption of acknowledging that differences, which are currently viewed and designated in the identity of Lifta, can be tolerated for the purposes of contesting and creating curative outlooks between identities and place.

Lifta is tangibly connected to a generation of people who still regard the place to be their ancestral home; if not their home. This same essence and feeling of ancestral origin and home has passed down the next generation and is still strongly felt amongst them. Tragically, Lifta's inhabitants were forcibly abandoned from the place in 1948 during the catastrophic mass exile of Palestinian people known as the Nakba or "catastrophe". A sequence of events synthesized with the establishment of the State of Israel. It refers to the tragedy when hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were uprooted and most of their villages and cities - over 530 - were destroyed. Whilst many Palestinian places affected by the tragedy were either totally removed or annexed under the State of Israel, Lifta stood obscurely due to nearly 60 years of un-hindrance from redevelopment. The uniqueness of Lifta is due to the phenomenon that no conquest has physically re-contextualized the place.

This valley landscape torn between Lifta and the proposal of Mei Neptoach lies frozen between two epochs, two histories, two cultures. She is a bond and a sense of belonging amongst 3 generations of people. Her unique circumstance, created out of these consequences, has led her to become a space of captivation, necessity and privilege. At regular periods, tours are given around the grounds of Lifta by Zochrot. Zochrot was founded in March 2002 to promote recognition of the Palestinian Nakba to the State of Israel, its residents and institutions. Yacoub Odeh, a 1st generation descendant of Lifta usually accompanies Zochrot and gives guides to both Palestinians and Israelis on his personal accounts of memories in Lifta. Yacoub is very fond cherishing his childhood memories as he accompanies the tour around his father's old house that is still standing. However, his delight is usually followed by trauma, the trauma of a memory which clearly stays with him always; the Nakba.

Lifta's unique situation has allowed her to be utilized as a memorial in consequence to the tragedy of the nakba. Lifta attracts many people who see her as a place where they can console their grief. Where her desolate state conceals a place which appeals amongst those who want to openly reflect upon an event and a history. She is preserved as a place that has not only tangible significance to the bonds of her descendants, but also amongst the shared value of a people who can relate to an open space that conceals signs of their tragedy and reveals the trauma of their fate. The regular trips by Zochrot and Yacoub Odeh have already demonstrated that Lifta has significant value. They are certain that preservation of a respectful, dignified, and sensitive consideration of this tragedy is a necessary stepping-stone on the path to resolving the conflict

between the two peoples and achieving reconciliation between them.

The importance of keeping alive this memory, preserving and sustaining this bond and shared value is that it allows the moment of tragedy to become tangible. To be able to express this mourning from a place which symbolizes and recreates the moments of a tragic event allows confronting and exploring issues of dissonance and trauma to become a real experience. This makes recognition of Lifta an affirmation of a previous discontinuity, of an uprooting of Palestinian memory, of history, and of cultivated identity to a land. Any recognition of this bond has to engage that the story of the Nakba is being told whilst inside a surrounding context juridically governed and owned to another historical narrative. Allowing this duality to have legitimate recognition would therefore require some form of mediation and renegotiation on behalf of a narrative that can allow Lifta and the surrounding context to coexist.

However, this would require a narrative that openly accepts truths that occurred during the Palestinian Catastrophe Nakba and the Independence of Israel. 'Memory' begins to take on a whole new meaning as it would have to take into account the narrative of the birth of the modern Israeli State. There is quite a distinct separation that places meaning on the land between the narrative of Israel and the narrative of the Palestinian. Lifta's value can be distinctly characterised as contrasting and incompatible with the historical narrative of the Israeli State. Her ontology, nature of being, can quite easily be perceived as an act of subversion; a conflict of interest and values further provoking discord and confrontation in an act of becoming recognised. Situating the Nakba into a revised historical narrative of the surrounding context is more than likely to create tension and controversy and can quite easily be perceived as an historical conflict and problem.

So how does it become possible to resolve this crisis of values, designating Lifta for curative purposes for the Nakba is bound to any real conceivable reason and sense to justify her existence. Lifta may be perceived as a proponent for Palestinian existentialism, nonetheless she needs her history to be told within the narrative of the region that she belongs. Recognition of Lifta's ruins as a memory, a monument, a bond, and a possible cultural foundation existing within Israel adds extra possibilities for the nation. Lifta has the potential to become the untold story of a nation, epitomizing a common history shared between two disparate cultural groups. She confronts conquest and despair; tying together two opposing value systems. This would mean any real pursuit to safeguard the protection of Lifta would also require a strategy that further creates an enquiry that manoeuvres and mediates between a tapestry of recognising histories.

## Episode 2.

- Recognize that this place is inextricably tied and linked to the creation of the modern Nation State of Israel, and therefore is testimony to the phenomenon/event of the creation of the modern State as well as placing historical perspective and context to her present identity.



*Photo: The valley landscape of Lifta.*

Lifta is unique and offers an unrivalled insight into the history of this region. Whilst many Palestinian places affected by the Nakba tragedy were either totally removed or annexed under the State of Israel, Lifta stood obscurely due to nearly 60 years of un-hindrance from redevelopment. She is a place that conceals the traces of a dramatic scene, of an historical phenomenon preserved and made tangible through memory; a space yet to encounter. She has remained predominantly desolate since the uprooting of her population; no conquest has fully re-contextualized the place. A place located disparate between two epochs, two histories, and the two dominant cultures of the region; a space in-between and connecting two paradigms. Through the phenomena of this relationship she reveals that the dissonance and conflict that arose in the uprooting of her village is inextricably tied together to the creation of the Modern State of Israel.

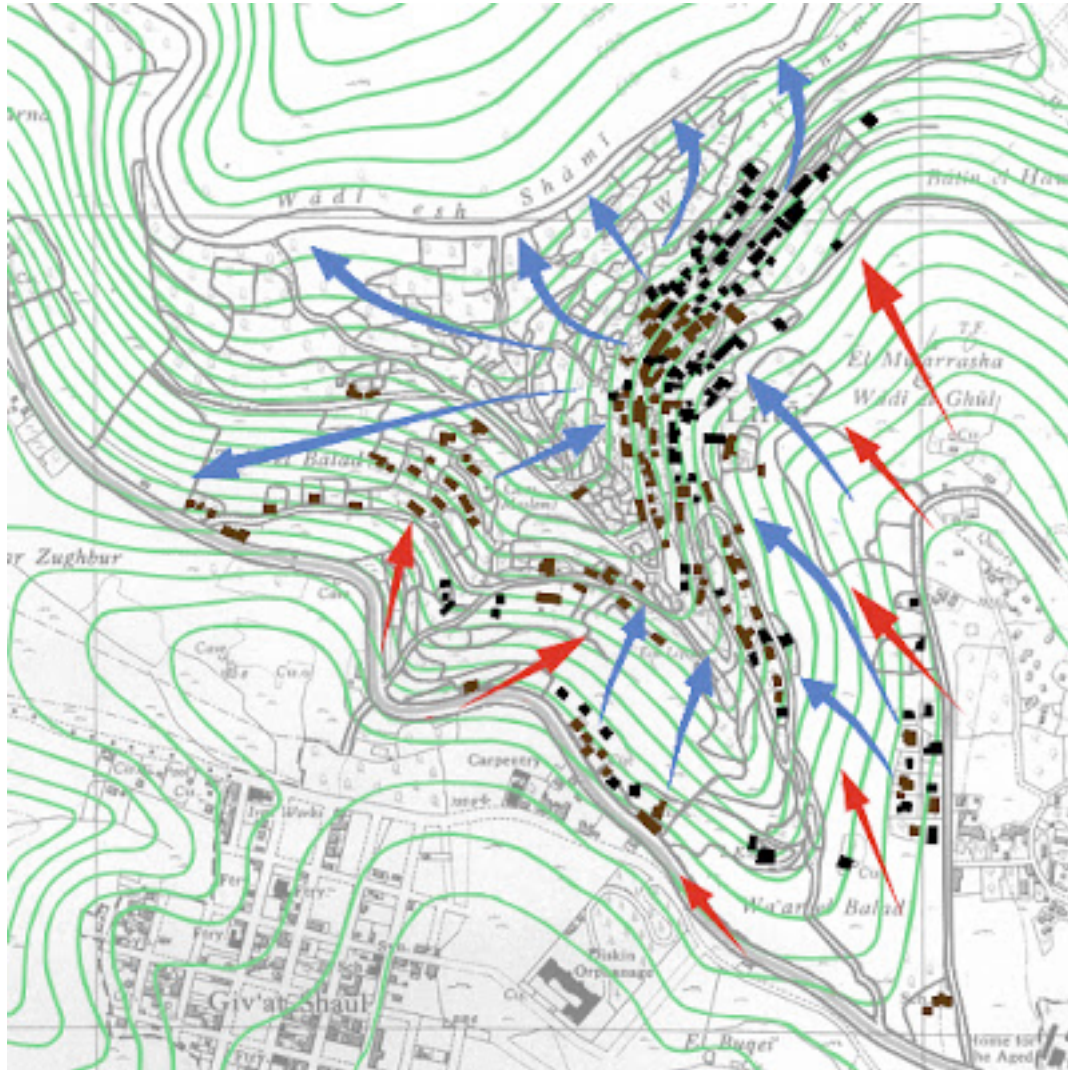
Lifta is a unique and real trace of a contextual origin of the Modern State of Israel. She is a place

where the Modern State can be traced back to an historical event. And regarding genealogical origins, Lifta can also be perceived as important to substantiating the contextual origins of the identity of Israel. She is a contextual origin whereby the genealogy of Israel's history can be traced back to a point of departure; or in this particular case a phenomena made tangible through a bond. The events that occurred during the uprooting of the Palestinian and the establishment of the Israeli are inextricably tied together by a context that needs reason behind one historical event to explain the other. Lifta is a place that encounters the creation of the two dominant existential identities of the region; a 'point of departure' of the two current narratives of the Israeli and the Palestinian. The language of history of the Palestinian and the Israeli are bound and concealed by a place; to fail to recognize Lifta is to also to deny both Palestinian and Israeli history.

The two existential narratives opposed in conflict share the same story with the same language of a reality through the given context of Lifta; what the narratives oppose of one another is also brought together by this place. Lifta is a genealogical origin, a place where the language of the conflict is created and departed into two distinctly separate existential narratives. Their constructions are achieved through dissonance, a staging of a conflict of values, constructing differences and establishing the 'other'. She is a tangible embodiment and representation of the larger context of events in the region during 1947/48, the larger dissonance and the conflict of values. This conflict that defines this particular moment in history has essentially unfolded into the current existential values of today. The current issues of dissonance between the Israeli Jew and Palestinians seen unfolding in the present context have their origins traced at a place whereby the source of the conflict becomes tangible.

Lifta is a place that can allow and sustain a greater insight into the current conflict. As an origin to the modern State, she can be a vital place for contemplating and understanding historical continuity. For instance, the central character of dissonance staged within this region today has the possibility of being objectively engaged and disclosed at this origin. Reflection from a place that conceals the cause increases the likelihood to address further understanding. For Israel's region, Lifta is a place needing enquiry for the purposes of practising self-reflection and reappraisal. She is important to situate, establishing and addressing disregarded aspects of the identity of the Modern State. Evidence of the events of 1948 are not only crucial for establishing the preservation of a memory in remembrance to the tragedy, but can connect these historical events to discordant elements inherent within the current nature of planning.





*(Brown) - Buildings still existing today.*

*(Black) - Buildings destroyed in the event of the 1948 conflict.*

*(Red) - The event of the attack by IZL/Stern gangs conquering Lifta's valley*

*(Blue) - Direction of villagers fleeing in process of uprooting*

Map: "The 1948 conflict in Lifta; the creation of dissonance and the two narratives. (\*The information documented in the mapping is an impression of the phenomena/event that occurred in the village during the 1948 conflict.)

Due to the ideological outlook of space and a vision subsequently reappraising regional identities, Lifta was uprooted as part of on-going strategy for a modern Nation-State of Israel. The conflict created during the uprooting of the village, along with the many hundreds of village and towns in the region underlined the consequence of a radical practice of space and the process of planning. This discord created from this conflict also characterizes particular phenomenon of exclusive constructions in the current nature of planning. With this original 'point-of-departure', the modern Nation State of Israel has a genealogical power origin that



recognizes a traceable character of exclusivity within the current identity of the State. It explains today why parts of Israel's identity can be perceived as an ever-present reproduction of a conflict of 1948, and thus a history sustained through an exclusive existential narrative.

Alive and in practice through reconstructions the current struggles in the region can be perceived as an uncontested phenomena of the original departure and a character also visible within the current nature of planning. If the Nation State allowed the removal of the signs of a unique history, that is still tangible, it would be detrimental in erasing a history that forms part of their current existential truth. Lifta is a unique memorial of facts-on-the-ground that sustains a truth which is significantly crucial to relating and defining the construction of identities. Profoundly, she substantiates Israel's authenticity through the exclusive existential character of her history. Lifta is historically important to the legacy of the State of Israel as well as archaeological evidence of the origin of the modern Nation State. The consequences of the situation of today can be understood by a place that locates exclusivity to a context. An historical point of origin that has the capacity to engage as a common ground at the tangible constructions of confrontation, differences and narratives.

If the past can be understood, drawn upon and engaged at by either side in the conflict, then it can allow greater insight and understanding of the present. Notwithstanding acknowledgement and understanding of the 'other', of how they have become determined and also the situation of being determined in terms of one another. Lifta allows the State to have a space to contest, understand, and respond to the origins of the conflict. It would also be a significant step if truths appearing as confrontational are tolerated through the recognition and preservation of this unique context of place. If cultivations on an historical ground can be recognised as still retaining a form of tangible existence, then here lies an opportunity for the possibility of reconciling differences. Opportunities such as reconciling histories may also allow the possibility to re-narrate sustainable cultivations; it will also allow Lifta to exist as heritage of the modern State and the region.

For the modern Nation State of Israel to deny the existence of Lifta is also to disregard part of their own history, and of what gets overlooked obliviously and unattended within their own reproductive identity. To recognize Lifta is to also understand a particular characteristic of the Nation State's cultivation, ontological practice of space and how it has an affect on the present. Notwithstanding, identities are distinguished out of their particular differences in cultivation; common grounds between identities are not conceivable unless they seek to create opportunities from the definable differences. Concerning Lifta and in pursuit to sustain a genealogy this is an important analogy to make, because the common past can be used to resort to reconcilable narratives and situations. Fundamentally, heritage can provide new insight by elaborating history and determine opportunities in the nature of how we locate inclusively or exclusively.

### Episode 3.

- Recognize that this place contains a unique example of a tangible cultural heritage that evokes a legacy of a place which had a healthy civil equality and no ethnocentric division or segregation.



Lifta is a place of important value, through the preservation of her memory she can reveal insight into the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As a place, Lifta is a common ground to history through an historical-event, tangibly related to the Palestinian Nakba catastrophe and the origins of the modern State of Israel. She sustains the traces of a dramatic scene, a conflict that has perpetuated into the discord between the Israeli and Palestinian narratives. She has the capability of becoming a space of encounter whereby a meeting with the 'other' is possible. And she has the potential to play a role, where this common history can be contested for the purposes of recognizing the creation of difference; a place to reflect upon a conflict of values and a reproduction of identities within the region. Nonetheless, recognizing this place as a common ground to histories is still controversial.

History testifying to the Palestinian tragedy - the Nakba, is not Israel's official line on the history

of the Independence of the Nation State and history since. Any plan that envisages Lifta's history as part of a vision for addressing difference will out of consequence contest attitudes that are traditionally defined within the narrative of the modern State. It will be asking Israel to reflect upon her history for the efforts of contesting and reconciling differences within the region. By contesting an historical narrative that can be traced back to a point of origin, it may question the legitimacy of constructions that influence the state of difference in the relationships between identities and space. For example, how consequences of historical phenomena have filtered through into territorial rules of engagement in public, private, local and national space. Fundamentally, it could also establish a connection between an origin in history with the current situation of Israel, the West Bank, Gaza and beyond.

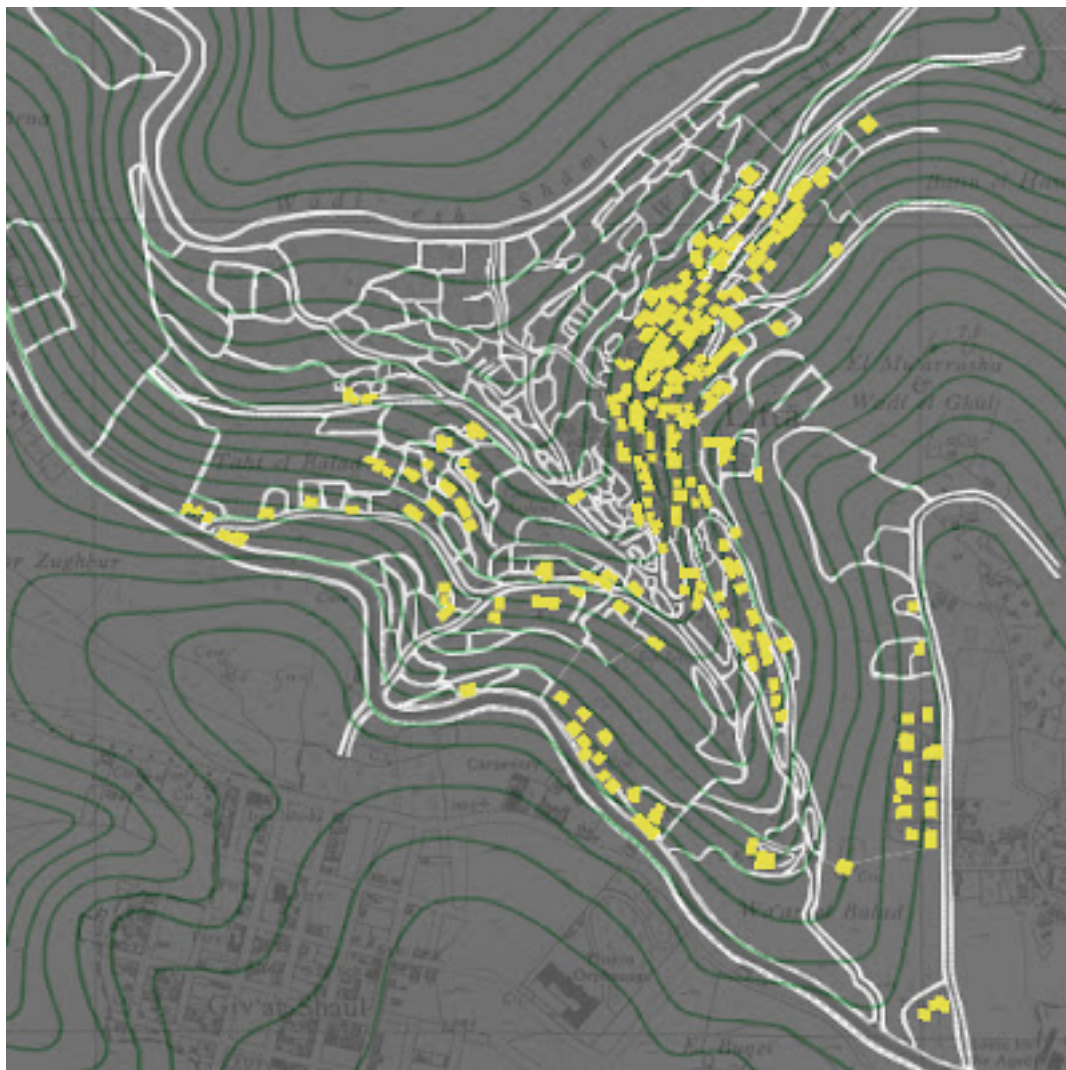
Nonetheless, the creation of dissonance and difference in the space of the region can be traced back to an origin and to an event that is still tangible. This origin, born out of conflict, has influenced the nature of the rules of engagement throughout the history of the Modern Israeli State and Palestinian region. For example, attitudes formed from the narratives act further as agencies of power, affectively influencing and differentiating exclusive engagement in the practice of territory and planning throughout the region. However, this was not always the case and never was a pre-condition to the social relationship of space within this region. The legacy of this conflict as an agency of power halts at the origin where it began. If memory relating to a point of origin is capable of establishing real significance about a tangible heritage, then the same memory can also elaborate upon the society that previously existed and cultivated the landscape.

Taking to one side the significance of memory relating to a conflict and the current context, memory of Lifta also has the capacity to engage and provide a history of a different societal pattern and practice of space. If we were to take a closer examination of Lifta's culture pre-dating the conflict, we can consider that her social identity will have a different set of societal values and relationships. This pre-history reveals a lot more into the everyday life of Lifta, a lot more about her ontology; nature of being. Disclosed from the memory is a heritage of vast richness and potential for the region, excavating Lifta's history reveals a large village that sustained and reflected a society of civil equality. Lifta was a place that embraced a civil society that contained a strong sense of community amongst the ethnic diverse community of Muslims as well as Jewish and Christian minority.

Before the events of 1948 the village had a tribal community with a population consisting of around 3000 people. There were five main tribes consisting of many smaller tribe families within each of the main groups, and most predominantly Muslim by religion. However there was also a Jewish tribe from Lifta known as the Hilo who were not immigrants, but also part of the older assembly of the native people that were from this region. There was also a small Christian minority as well as Mizrahi Jews from Iraq and Jordan; they quite commonly rented and or shared the same houses with Muslim families. Quite a large percentage of houses in Lifta were

more than two storeys, so it was quite a common occurrence that the local tribes to rent of their accommodation. For example, there are descriptions of the grand 4 storey houses of having 2 floors rented to Jewish families, whilst the rest of the property was accommodated by the tribe family.

There was more prosperity in the upper Lifta, known as Romema, this was mainly due to the land being extensively cultivated for olive farming. Lifta was known for the quality of her olives and an industry of olive farming thrived in Romema and was supported by a big factory. There was also other produce cultivated and made in upper Lifta, such as a drink like cola known as Cassouse that was also distributed around the larger region. Lifta's community had also an extensive farming community. The shepherds would travel from east to west and back through the upper plains of Lifta's valley grazing their large herds of cows and sheep. The roads were well construct and very accessible. Stone from Lifta was also quarried and regarded for its aesthetic quality in building houses and mosques throughout the Palestinian region. Romema, also had industrial factories next to the family plots producing calcium fabric to produce paint from the stones.



*A map sketching traces of boundary lines, around the scattered buildings (yellow), of the land areas owned by the multi-ethnic villagers in the valley of lower Lifta.*

*Statistics:*

*Land ownership before 1948 uprooting -*

*Muslim 7,780 Jewish 756 Public Land 207 Total 8,743*

*Land usage in 1945 -*

*Area planted w/ olives - Muslim 1,044 Jewish 0*

*Planted W/ Cereal - Muslim 3,248 Jewish 288*

*Built up - Muslim 324 Jewish 102*

*Cultivable - Muslim 3,248 Jewish 288*

*Non-Cultivable - Muslim 4,415 Jewish 366*

*Statistics supplied by [Palestineremembered.com](http://Palestineremembered.com)*

Lower Lifta in the valley was known as the old Lifta. The family's plots were more condensed although each family still cultivated their own produce or sustained trade on their plots. People would slaughter meat at their homes instead of buying from the shops. A Jew called Yusuf Isra and his daughter Shishana were sharing the lower two floors of a house with a Muslim tribe family. The family above them would supply milk to Yusuf and he produced cheese as trade. Lower Lifta had an intricate web of woven streets, bustling with markets, coffee houses, a bakery, and their very own pharmacy. Lifta's community was inclusive to both Muslims, Jews and Christians alike. They would sit together at the same coffee houses and their children would go to the same village school. Just outside the village, between Lifta and Jerusalem, were public services that gave access to all. For example, the community in Lifta had free access to the neighbouring Jewish eye hospital. The village and the region was a vibrant place sustaining a healthy civil equality.

The community within the village embraced one another's religious events and celebrations. There were many festivals in Lifta for prophets. All cultural and religious festivals were celebrated with the Christians and Jews and all villagers would participate. Festivals were a time to show appreciation to another through customs such as giving each other presents. During Ramadan, all would fast and invite families over to open fast with cakes and sweets, and visit the graves and read Koran of anyone who had died in the village. The Muslim tribes would join their

fellow Jewish villagers to the Dead Sea and celebrate the festival of a Jewish Prophet; another Jewish festival that was celebrated together with a procession carrying green flags. Socially, there was a very good relationship with the Jewish. The village mosque became a social ground to discuss current issues during these festival times.

The Jewish and Christian minorities were treated like family by the tribes, they had been on these lands all the time. There was no inequality amongst the socio-ethnic diversity, so there was never any conceivable idea of segregation. Lifta's traceable history prior the Palestinian Nakba and the creation of Israel is of a society that practised civil equality in the region. Her identity sustained a different set of social values that is quite destitute today in the Modern State. Lifta allows us to look beyond the symbol of the 'other', she is able to show her ontology - nature of being. She sustains ethical values that can be deemed as necessary within in the current regional context of society. Recognition of her heritage can promote the idea of alternative strategies in the social relations of space, not denying the real potential of place in this region. Emphasis of her civil equality can also challenge and mediate Lifta's cultural heritage within the narrative of the Nation State of Israel.

Lifta's cultural heritage is a story of a society consisting of different ethnicities existing harmoniously under the same cultural pretext. This truth should be observed as advantageous and upheld for the efforts of creating solidarity amongst a people. Signifying qualities of justice of the peace and for this reason alone is worthy of preservation for the present and future generations to aspire to. Recognition of this truth and quality can influence the possibility of allowing this heritage, traditionally perceived as belonging to the 'other' genealogy and existential narrative, to become admissible in the region. Emphasis of civil equality also enhances the opportunity of contesting other issues represented by this place to become more tolerable. Lifta still is a traceable genealogy that gives insight into the origins of the conflict, and these issues are fundamental to the process of understanding, tangibly engaging and reconciling conflict. Unveiling an archaeology towards civil equality eases the process of recognition whilst sustaining a greater acknowledgement of tragedy and understanding its implication on identity.

## Episode 4.

**- Recognize that Lifta, a place that has relationships to the identity of a people and also to a Nation, should have her cultural heritage reappraised so that she can sustain an attainable value for the evaluation of healthy civil progress for the future of this region.**



*Photo: The wadi spring - the 'eye of Lifta' & 'spring of Mei Neftoah'.*

Many of the structures cultivated into the landscape remain as ruins, however the spring and part of the pathway leading to it has been slightly refurbished. The spring, known as the 'eye of Lifta' still brings fresh water to its well. Once the focal point of the village, the wadi spring was used by the village ladies to wash their clothes and fill their pitchers with fresh water. Families would sit, in the long afternoons and mild evenings, telling each other of their sorrows and joys. The communal relationship that exists between the spring, the graveyard and the mosque still remains. Villagers would take the bodies of their deceased relatives to the spring where they would be washed under the trees by the spring, then taken to the mosque which was very close, and then onto the graveyard to be buried which was also in close proximity. Today, the spring is a haven for all venturing to enjoy the coolness of her water and is also encouraged by a sentiment to fulfil a purpose of ceremonial use as a Mikvah. The wadi-spring has also an historical reference as a border landmark between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin in the bible 'Joshua 15:9' and 'Joshua 18:15' as the spring of Mei Neftoah.



From the official Israeli outlook the ruins on the landscape are merely oriental remains interwoven with the mystique of the ancient past. The valley has had several incarnations and names through out her history. There are archaeological findings of a Canaanite settlement from the Bronze era. The name Lifta means corridor in Aramaic, Naftoh was its Roman name, which was then renamed Kabesta by the Crusaders. It was during the second Islamic era that it regained its Aramaic name. A few attempts have also been made to transform the valley in some form or another since the creation of Israel. Such as the use of the buildings to house immigrants from Arab countries, such as the Yemenites during the 1950s, or conserving the buildings and transforming the village into the headquarters of Israel's National Parks Protection Authority. And now the valley has been given a another incarnation under the approved plan to conserve and transform the village into a commercial edifice allocated under the guise of Mei Neftoah. The Mei Neftoah approved plan will consist of a commercial center with shops, hotels, bus stations and with land sold for individual housing on the western slopes.

Coupled by the biblical reference of Mei Neftoah the valley is attracting symbolic value amongst the Israelis. Nonetheless, even with this symbolic association one cannot override and dismiss the place is still tangible through memory and a bond that still exists with Lifta. However to have multiple values, such as recognizing ruins in association to the legacy of Lifta, is currently implausible to identifying a role with the existing context, traditions and narrative of the Israeli State. The only possibility of Lifta attaining such a value will be if she can demonstrate her necessity as invaluable and engaging at a level akin to a progression and goodwill for the region. Therefore, any value has to be able to penetrate the imagination of the Israeli consciousness and National narrative. However, in her current form, Lifta only sustains a relative value as a place with an identity through memories held together by a bond. By acknowledging that the principle agent and influence sustaining the place is the bond, it will be necessary to demonstrate if this bond can also redefine its location within a definable context of the Nation State.

The potential to demonstrate the accessibility of this bond is possible through further examination of the location. Currently, the ruins on the landscape lies disparately as if frozen in time between two epochs, two histories, and the two dominant cultures of the region; a place in-between and connecting two paradigms. The event that occurred during the uprooting of the Palestinian and the establishment of the Israeli is inextricably tied together by a context which needs reason behind one historical event to explain the other. Traces of the event are preserved and made tangible only through the memory sustained by a bond to the ruins. Lifta reveals a dissonance and conflict that arose in the uprooting of this village is inextricably tied together to the creation of the Modern State. She is a contextual origin whereby the struggle of the Palestinian people that has perpetuated from the events of 1948 and the genealogy of Israel's history can be traced back to her location as a point of departure. The current issues of dissonance between Israel and the Palestinians seen unfolding in the present context have their origins traced to a place whereby the source of the conflict becomes tangible.

This conflict that defines this particular moment in history has essentially unfolded into the current existential values of today. Part of the influence of their constructions is achieved through a protagonist quality of dissonance, a staging of a conflict of values, constructing differences and establishing the 'other'. If the State allowed the removal of the signs of history, that is still tangible, it would be detrimental in erasing an historical location that forms part of their current existential truth. A place that reveals the creation of the two dominant existential identities of the region; and a 'point of departure' of the two current narratives of the Israeli and the Palestinian. Lifta is a unique insight into truths that are crucial to understanding part of the nature and construction defining identities. The two existential narratives opposed in conflict share the same story through the same language of a reality through the given context of Lifta. What the narratives oppose of one another is also brought together by this place. The language of history of the Palestinian and the Israeli are bound and concealed by a place. To fail to recognize Lifta is to also deny both Palestinian and Israeli history.

The importance of the relationship of the bond connecting memory and place here is that the common history is sustained through an origin. It is a common history that is tangible and a particular history that needs to be re-visited as well as engaged by both parties inextricably tied together to the conflict. Lifta as an apparatus can allow us to contemplate and attend to issues involving dissonance and history by stabilizing memory through a duality. Memory is an invaluable resource and a principle reason for officially wanting to have this place recognized. Memory can provide a stage of communication for those confronting the undeniable raw emotion of trauma and a denied sense of anguish and loss. Memory thus re-inventing a place that has the opportunity to deal and tangibly confront the tragedy. It is through such a common ground that a gathering involving both sides represented in the conflict can in some instance be imagined. Creating the capacity of a space for the sake of openly redeeming rather than reservedly confining the existential natures of identities. The bond provides the capacity to engage with a space envisaged to create acknowledgement for the purposes of reconciliation.

The consequences of the situation today can be understood by a place that locates its entirety into a context. An historical point of origin that has the capacity to engage at the tangible constructions of the making of confrontation, differences and narratives. Locating Lifta in this particular historical context, confronting the real experiences of the conflict of 1948, is important for acknowledging the tragic events of history. Insubordinate and vulnerable with current reality it may shamelessly be however, the necessity to give insight into this place is not conceivable unless it seeks to create an opportunity from the definable differences. As a common-ground Lifta verges onto a space of encounter, but can she continue to voyage further into a space of the possible? For instance, can reciprocation of the bond between memory and the ruins have the capacity to sustain an all-encompassing sense of justice and truth towards the lost temporal landscape? Or in the pursuit to illuminate genealogy, can the common past be used to resort to

reconcilable narratives and situations? So by contesting history can a challenge be set against the moving spirit of dissonance notably characterized within the current situation of the region?

Lifta's last moment during the upheaval of her cultivated platform lay besieged to a conflict. Thus creating an origin that perpetuated into the region's struggle between the two existential narratives of the Israeli and the Palestinian. Either of the cultural narrative's intent and actions can have the effect of creating a counteraction synonymous to a dissonance producing 'otherness'. For instance, attitudes and outlooks of a cultural narrative can interpret situations or a version of events performed by the 'other' as inconsistent and contradictory. The eventual action of response between the narratives can have an effect of reproducing values of difference and discord thus sustaining a potential conflict. The question remains can a likely removal of this central character of dissonance be accomplished if the desolate valley that is an origin of the conflict and two narratives was to stage a meeting with the 'other'? Can using a common-ground enable the possibility of a reality to be accessible to both narratives with the same mutual acknowledgement? And can the common-ground be capable of contesting the events of a particular poignant moment in history whilst encouraging a dialogue towards an all-embracing judgment?

The central character of dissonance can be interrupted if the prominence of the conflict of narratives is reduced by converging on truths that readdress traditional conceptions. The idea and impression of Lifta as a contextual genealogical power origin to the Modern State of Israel is an argument tended towards addressing the creation of dissonance. The interaction of people with a memorial preserving a specific historical period plays with the idea of relevant cultural objects that evoke a new interplay between histories, cultures and place. A need for this particular intervention serving as a place of observation creates an opportunity to question and examine cultural assertions. Demonstrating to educate people about the past for the urgency of reconciling discordant situations in the present context of civil society. Nonetheless, reinforcing history can prove to be an obstacle especially if it required officially acknowledging Palestinian memory about the origins of the conflict. The challenge is finding approaches that can make communicating to broader audiences compatible and acceptable. And the memory of Lifta has evidently more to impart with to allow such a capable intervention.

Language can make realities accessible. Language processes experiences through recognition and interpretation, therefore allowing us to ascertain realities. Israel has a traceable genealogical power origin that recognizes an identifiable character within the current identity of the State. A place where language can recognize contextually and interpret the legacy of the divide of the two main existential narratives is tangibly accessible and can be absorbed, but nonetheless is not immune from being interrupted. This point is significant as the same language has the capability of making other realities accessible and therefore accessible to a same narrative. The bond to the ruins bears testimony to a quintessential form of civil behaviour, allowing a memory of civil

equality to be evoked whilst sustaining a unique insight into the origin of a lineage of historical conflict. Both the genealogy and ontology directly connected to this place offer an ideal and significant opportunity towards providing an historical foundation for reconciling conflict. Memory can be utilized for ascertaining realities to introduce the possibility of new constructions; consequently, the possible ramifications might enable a power origin to be subverted through the common-ground.

Genealogies are important because they can also be identified and distinguished as power systems. Power as control or force can commonly be interpreted within historical social conditions as motivations and attitudes. Genealogies as power systems contain and carry belief systems that define the very nature of our behaviour or nature of being; ontology. Genealogical origins sustained within histories, memories and tangible traces have the capacity to nurture and cultivate future successions of behaviour. (for example, the relationship between the creation of a genealogical origin of the Modern State of Israel and the creation of dissonance.) Nonetheless, rather than resuming specific modes of reproductions as a linear series of ongoing motivations, genealogies can also have the capacity to restore alternative modes of behaviour previously retracted and deemed unnecessary; evolving the ongoing ontology of a lineage. The idea of Lifta as a contextual genealogical origin to the Modern State of Israel is that the argument can be used to create an observation of place that can prove important to the current context and social values. Civil equality as an ontological value can serve to break down obstacles whilst contributing on it's own qualities to readdress a social heritage.

Upon reflection, the uprooting of the village was a tragedy for the Palestinian community of the village however, the community encompassed multi-ethnic groups. The Nakba in Lifta was a catastrophe for the Palestinian Muslims, Christians and Jews. The Jewish Hilo tribe, who apparently were given the option by the pervading force to remain in the village, decided to share the same fate with their community and vacated the village. There is historical evidence that gives reason to believe that this event encompassed a discord for all ethnic groups associated to it. These insights fully deserve to be accounted, recognized, as well as expressed; they provide significant opportunities for suggesting outlooks that provide alternative views upon the region's history and place. What is interesting is that new insights can begin to create a working of a new narrative, a new history, and a new space. The creating of this space which recognizes experiences of both the conflict and of civil equality begins to contests its' own history. The fact that the same language, through and because of a memory, sustaining a history of civil equality 'meets' with the reconstructive language of the conflict means that the acknowledgement of this connection of histories can possibly have influence on a new consciousness making. Where one is aware of their environment and of a space for the re-imagined.

There has to be some form of social upheaval that is constantly reminding the environment of

truths such as civil equality, so to bring some form of contradiction and ambiguity of power contesting the ideology of the environment. Again, through investigative examination into Lifta's memory and juxtaposing truths such as that this place unfolds a story of a tragedy, or is relatively a contextual origin for Israel, and where a multi-ethnic community once thrived - may allow further contestable narratives to be obtainable. Memory can influence the necessary negotiation needed to sustain a dialogue on the recognition of truths underlining currents of genealogical and existential constructions. Again this is significant as it can allow the potential capacity to address issues that fundamentally seek reconcilable possibilities. Exploration of memory can become paramount in creating and enabling mechanisms to defuse the attitudes that translate into a language of adversity and dissonance of the differing existential beliefs. Conducting further research into Lifta's memory and juxtaposing truths can possibly allow further contestable narratives and introduce new possibilities for the reconstruction of heritage. So rather than asking who officially gets the right to choose or imply history and heritage, a need to preserve and develop instruments that actively seek to contest truths can be envisaged as a devisable method for this common-ground.

So what is the objective? Is the objective to sustain the preservation of Lifta so that she can be clearly recognized as a place, or is the objective also to introduce a monument into the environment whom's equivocal workings is aimed at addressing the conflict? Both. The valley landscape should be noted for her many incarnations, from the early Canaanite settlement from the Bronze era, and including the present practices such as the attraction of her natural spring that fulfills the ritual as a mikvah. Nonetheless, there is also a credible history that is invaluable to the present situation and context of identities in the region. A heritage that can allow an acceptance of truths that can bring together both sides of the conflict to share the same grief and hope and re-evaluate relationships for the sake of the regional community. Symbolism of place can confirm power and control over the environment; identities can be inclusive and foundational just as they can be exclusive and oppressive. Saving Lifta is only likely to be achievable if she asserts values that are inclusive in her objective of becoming recognized as a place. And a desire towards a monument that can convey new meaning and understanding as well as offer alternative capacity building can prove invaluable. In prospect, an attainable value through the reconstruction of heritage; aiming to bridge worlds together by creating mechanisms out of a bond between memory and place.