



Series name: Israel Studies Seminar

Link to series: <https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/series/israel-studies-seminar>

Episode name: Michal Huss - You cannot really live (or die) here: ongoing struggles over cemeteries and housing in Tel Aviv-Jaffa, 1957-2020

People: Michal Huss

This transcript was auto-generated using Microsoft Word Online and may contain errors.

Transcript

OK. Hello everyone. Hello. Good afternoon. We had our third seminar, Israeli Studies Seminar and I'm really happy and excited to have you, Doctor Michal Huss is a Leverhulme Early Career fellow and a lecturer in the in in architectural studies at the University of Manchester. And it's a good time to say, congratulations for your new job there working at the intersection of architectural and political theory. She studies the built environment of post and colonial and divided cities as it facilitates daily life rituals and acts of repair and resistance. Lama she completed her years as she sponsored PhD in architecture at the University of Cambridge, and her forthcoming book based on her thesis entitled Refugees, Urban Belonging and the Transgressive Art of Walking, Will be published by Amsterdam University University Press next year. And the floor is yours. Thanks again.

OK.

Thank you everyone for being here and thank you for the kind invitation and my talk today is titled You cannot really Live or Die here, which is a direct citation from one of the activists I was interviewing for the research I'm about to explain in more detail and what I'm going to talk about today. Are struggles around cemeteries and housing in the officially named Tel Aviv Jaffa Municipality from early stage year formation to the present. And through this, I'm going to make the argument that. The the scale of the city and its built environment are actually very useful and crucial in order to study Israel, and indeed the Israel Palestine conflict. So this talk today is based on two recent publications, 1 focusing more on the the the disputes over housing. In Java as interlinked with gentrification. And one looking specifically on the struggles of the Muslim community in Jaffa over cemeteries in the Tel Aviv, Jaffa region, which was Co published with Professor Talia Margalit. This is also part of a larger project that I'm currently developing which is funded by the Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship. In which I'm looking into very similar types of disputes around housing and burial sites in Indian cities, and the idea is to really the this a broad question I'm trying to address here is how do violent legacies of colonialism partition new state and border formation, continue to shape the city? And its built environment. Adopting this stance of urban comparative research also aims to trace a multidirectional transition of spatial laws, practises and knowledge between Israel and India. So here we have a sign on the right

from Delhi and the sign on the left. From Jaffa, that activists have created to try and mobilise their communities to protest against the demolition of their burial ground. So we're talking about very, very distant and distinct geopolitical context. Where nonetheless, minority communities are dealing with a very similar reality by which bulldozers come in, they destroy their holy site. So I see a point about comparing it, and I think also whilst Israel and India might be very extreme aspects of what you know, I would call bulldozer politics or. Bulldozer and justice this also is very fundamental to understand contemporary cities more broadly. And the methodology developed for this research includes interviews with community leaders and activists, analysis of archival material, analysis of media coverage, as well as participatory walk along ethnography, joining official and alternative city tours, protest events and documenting them through photography. And drawing. I want to say before I dive into the particular case study that I'm presenting today. I also want to say something about the the decision to focus on symmetries. So these are sites that are very much overlooked in architectural and urban theories. Where I come from, where I'm situated. I would dare say also in Israel studies, they're probably under exam. And and yet I think they are so crucial for us to look into in the sense that they really undermine our assumed divisions between the sacred and the mundane, the past and the present, the symbolic and the material. So they really embodied this tension, which I would say really defines. Contemporary cities this tension between development, growth versus preservation and commemoration, and of course through them we can really zoom into issues around competing claims of belonging and ownership, which of course are very relevant to understand cities in India and Israel. And I also want to point out that in fact the first real estate deal deal in to be recorded in the Torah or the Bible concerns a burial site. So after the death of Sarah, Abraham asked the hit team not sure how to pronounce it in English for property, for burial and noun. Since he owned no property and had no land to call his own, and he wanted at least this land to be in his possession, so he says I am a stranger and a surgeon. With you give me a possession of buying a piece with you and as well as being a story of real estate, it's also a story that echoes the idea that the dead deserve hospitality as much as the living. And this is also a claim that their data makes and is really well known series of seminars. Vitality. So you know, we can talk about how the hit team offer Abraham immediately a choice of their finest tunes. He instead chooses a cave. We won't go into this, but you know, they're actually offended that he wants to buy it. So there's a real story of. Vitality here, which I think is relevant for what I'm about to talk about as well. And and as I said, I'm talking today about housing and about cemeteries and housing. First of all, together, I think they really represent the sort of life cycle of the city. And of course, if we're talking about symmetries as real estate housing are very much at the forefront of this struggle between looking at land and belonging to land as an issue that is about capital versus a human right. And so, for the sake of the talk today, I'm going to focus solely on the official named Tel Aviv Jaffa Municipality, and I want to go over a few key dates just to make sure we have the context to understand these type of disputes that I'm going to talk about soon. Now, I could have started this. Timeline far earlier, you know, looking at the very old city of Jaffa and the New city of Tel Aviv, and the conflict that they've experienced since the formation of Tel. Leave. I would need another hour for this talk in order to go backwards. So today I'm going to start with the UN partition plan according to which Jaffa was supposed to remain an independent Palestinian enclave and

nevertheless, with the Arab Israeli War, Israel occupied Jaffa and 95% of its Palestinian. Population fled or were forced to leave. The 5% that remained in the city were subsequently concentrated in one neighbourhood, the Ajami neighbourhood that was fenced up and patrolled by IDF soldiers for two years. During that time, Israel officially announced the annexation of Jaffa to Tel Aviv as part of one municipality, and Israel also introduced the Absentee Property law, which not many people know. But actually, this is a law that Israel adopted from Pakistan and India to give you another reason for why I'm making this a comparative stance. In my upcoming research and the absentee property law basically declared all the Palestinians that left or forced to leave as absentee and their property absentee property belonging to the State of Israel placed under the management of the custodian of absentee property. Now with relevance for our story that I'm talking about today, this also included work of property which refers to community Community endowment assets supervised by religious institutions such as symmetries, and in 1960, the Israeli Land Administration. Formed to manage all this land confiscated, dispossessed here. If you want to refer to it and. And. Semi private and semi governmental companies formed to manage the actual housing on this land. So in in Java we had we still have the amidar company that is in charge of managing managing these houses. I also want to add another event to this calendar. The May 2021 events which referred to an upsurge in violence in mixed cities in Israel between Jews and Palestinians, culminating into mob lynchings of both communities, severe damage to prop. Empty at the time, it seemed like a very unprecedented outburst of violence. Of course, it pales in comparison to what we're seeing right now in the region and you know, very heartbreaking. But I think it's. Crucial for our. Story in the sense that these events really brought forth the scale of the city cities themselves, as well as Palestinians with Israeli citizenship that live in. What is now Israel as key players in the broader Israel Palestine conflict, and both are often neglected in this story. And I just want to stop for a minute and say that the mix cities as afraid or towns is actually a phrase that was coined by the British authorities in Mandatory Palestine. So it used to describe Palestinian cities with a Jewish minority. And it now describes the reverse situation. So here is one of the newspaper reports about this story as it was unfolding in in Israel. And the title reads the Temple Mount riots inflamed the mixed town and the illusion of coexistent. Was shattered and I'm showing you this because this I think really sufficiently captures the type of common sense that emerge around these events. So more critical voices would say the illusion of less would say, coexist and shattered in the mix. Cities in that moment. And the reasoning that the cause of these issues. Was attributed to the Temple Mount. As you know, if you'd like the sort of core, you know, roots of the Israel Palestine conflict. So it it was attributed to stuff happening in the broader scale of the Israel Palestine conflict in Jerusalem and not to overlook these as really important. I think what this framing does is that it forgets some of the more prolonged and localised issues that characterise mixed cities in Israel and I will be showing this today through the example of Tel Aviv, Jaffa, where I'm going to talk about the type of continual, continual harm to symmetries to Muslim. Cemeteries under the guise of regeneration that the Palestine. The community in. Jaffa was witnessing, coupled with a very severe housing crisis and wave of demolition that preceded these events. So a lot of people were talking about the Palestinian neighbourhoods of Sheikh Jarrah. You may have heard about it, I think even in the international discourse that was talked about as one of the issues that sort of brought up this outburst of violence. No

one was talking about how in the so-called Liberal Left Centre of Israel, Palestinian minority was experiencing a very similar. And I'm going to start with the symmetries and then move on to the housing. So to give a bit of historic and legal context for the struggles over cemeteries, Abed Abu Shahada, a Palestinian activist and chairperson of the municipal party Yafa, and explained to me I'm packing. These struggles requires us to forget the city's borders as we know them. Jaffa, prior to 1948, was a city. Surrounded by Palestinian suburbs and. Villages, each having its own cemetery, and they were spread over most of Tel Aviv. So I created a map to showcase this for you so you can see the that the spread of the villages. And he also knows that the local history of cemetery destruction is motivated by the booming real estate interest in the city. So this very in in the the long chain of struggles, the first to emerge with the after the formation of the State of Israel concerned the the Abbott and Nabi Cemetery which served until 48 the village of so. So the story here was that Israel was really interested in the Hilton company to come and build their first Hilton Hotel in Israel, you know, to put it on the the map, the international map. Hilton Company, in their part, looked at this very scenic Cliff where the cemeteries stood, you know, overlooking the sea and said this is the location, this is where it needs to be. When the Palestinian community in Jaffa realises that this was the plan, they initiated a legal and an advocacy battle. The legal battle was unsuccessful. The advocacy battle, you could say was successful in the sense that even the UN wrote a letter to Israel warning against the destruction. Of the abiding Nabi symmetry and a similar story that was happening in Jerusalem. So you know, by all means this is not only a story of of Tel Aviv, Jaffa. But nonetheless, a sale agreement was reached in 1963 between the government tourism company that was in charge of this project, Tel Aviv Jaffa Municipality, that we're interested in in a plot within the cemetery to expand the public park, the Independent Park. And and elderly representatives of the Muslim community, I was told by by the community. Now when I interviewed them that we're talking about illiterate people that didn't necessarily understand what they were signing. In terms of the legal? Approval of this sale, what happened was that Israel basically relied on a religious endorsement fatwa that was issued by a Muslim court. However, one that was appointed and supervised by Israel, so they were relying on this idea that the obliteration or disintegration of a. Muslim Cemetery is permitted in Muslim law after 36 years. If the cemetery is neglected and it is difficult to maintain its sacredness, there are some problems in this story because 36 years would have not passed. Since the community last used the cemetery and of course the community neglect, the cemetery became neglected when the community was displayed so they couldn't maintain it. So doesn't that change the the context a bit as advocate Muhammad adari, the current chair of the Muslim Committee of trustees in Jaffa, notes a fatwa is known to change by time and place. When you are under occupation and your lands have been expropriated, surely religious approval for the sale of land and removal of its dedication is forbidden. But this nonetheless served as. A. Sort of legal precedent and framework to enable future sales. Now the type of outrage that emerge around Abbott and Abby, which you know, eventually the Hilton Hotel was built there. I showed in the photo before and did prompt. According to some people would say, that was one of the reasoning that. Prompted the amendment to the absentee property law in 65. Which mandated the release of remaining work properties, so those who have not yet been sold to Israeli Jewish hands to state appointed and supervised committees of trustees. So this may seem as though, you know, Israel was actually giving the the

Muslim community the control of their assets back, but these committees. We're probably. They were the people appointed to them by Israel were close to the Israeli authorities. They were seen as corrupt by the by the community and indeed a report issued by Israel nearly a decade later has noted the ill management, lack of transparency and improper financial conduct of these committees. So the fact of these committees, rather than doing their job of protecting religious assets, became vehicles to allow for further sales of burial grounds to Jewish hand. And you can see here in 73 we had the half of the tasks of cemetery which to this day is the only functioning Muslim cemetery in Tel Aviv. Jaffa was sold to private entrepreneurs. Then the village, the cemeteries of of two villages were sold to Israel Land Authority in 67. In 86, the symmetry of the village of Jungshin was sold to private entrepreneurs, and this created such an outrage by the community that these cells were continuing to happen, that the House of one committee member was burned and another member was murdered. So this is how much the the community in Jaffa was against the the the people in these committees. AM. The community would often find out about these cells after they've happened several years after they'd happened, when the developers started to build in the land and destroyed the cemeteries. And so first of all, a very important development that happened was that in 1980, the Muslim community in Jaffa decided to create a Muslim council. To act as a sort of oppositional body to the Committee of trustees that they saw as corrupt and not representing them, this Council was democratically elected. Bringing the voices of the community and it became really focal and organising and staging a variety of protest events and as well as legal battles to try and save cemeteries. So the as you can see here the, the, the, the struggles sort of spread all across this the the Tel Aviv. For municipality and different periods for several decades, it included marching and protest. Staging and prayer events and cleaning operations of the burial grounds to reiterate their sacredness to the community and also leaking images of some of the damage that was caused to burial grounds to try and sort of create a shock by, you know, in the broader community. I am. And indeed, at times people were were kind of horrified by this. So in 1992, one of one of the earlier struggles that emerged when the Hamish company started to build in a neighbourhood or on the the cemetery of Abu Kabir. And. The legal battle was unsuccessful, Hamish said. They're going to wait before they start building till a new battle is launched, but they didn't. They started construction there and actually it was a Jewish and local resident that witnessed this and called the the police and called reporters to try and stop it. And this is a statement. He issued to to the press. So he, he says it was terrible to see skeletons and skulls scattered. My conscience would not be at ease if I would live in a house built over grave. And to give you a bit of to sort of bring us back to the relationship that I'm trying to draw between these very localised disputes and the broader Israel Palestine conflict, this matter was actually discussed in a Knesset meeting where an Arab Knesset member has said. 92 We're talking about a very specific date in the Israel Palestine conflict, right? So he's saying how the mayor of Tel Aviv Shlomo ahead and Prime Minister attack have been planned to recognise a Palestinian state in the occupied territories, while not recognising a Muslim cemetery in Tel Aviv. And I now want to move to one of the one of the latest struggles. So this struggle because for me it sets a sort of precedent in terms of the type of tactics that protesters adopted and the kind of success it had. So I should say that most of the the disputes that I've. I've showed you or the struggles to try and protect. Symmetries were unsuccessful except

for Jamisin, where actually the Israeli court ruled that it should be returned to the community because it was written in the. They had documentation proving the ownership, which was did not happen in other cases in the same way, but mostly they were unsuccessful. Here it's a bit more ambiguous whether it was successful or not, but this whole story emerged in 2018, so it's very recent and when the Tel Aviv, Japan is ability decided to build a homeless shelter, obviously a very important. Pause and when they you know, there's a procedure in Israel where when you start building you need to invite the antics authority to do an initial digging. And when they did it, they found some findings. They cited. It's not important from an archaeological perspective and. They collected bones in boxes and allowed the work to continue, so it was very clear from the position of the the burial grounds that it was a Muslim burial ground. This was somehow leaked to the community. I'm I'm not exactly sure how they found out about it. I think because maybe some of. Them were. Working on the site. And Palestinian activists from the Muslim Council that I mentioned before return arrived to the site, returns the bone and erected makeshift graves and initiated a legal battle. Two years later, when the legal battle was sort of exhausted and and it didn't seem like, and the the court is going to rule in their favour, the community initiated a four month long struggle and that was really unprecedented in terms, you know it included. Setting ablaze to municipal, you know, infrastructure across the city, mass prayers on the site. Again to reiterate its sacredness, protests in central Jaffa, but also in front of the City Hall. And in front of the mayor's house. So in the right you see a photo of the protest stage outside the mayor's house. The the activist brought in a ladder to help the the mayor of Tel Aviv climb down from his refusal to try and resolve this issue peacefully. So a lot of creativity, you know. Very strong visual language and most importantly, the whole framing tactically was around the city level. To the appeal was to the municipality, to the mayor. We are your citizens. We are the citizens of the city. We deserve our religious rights to be acknowledged, and activists even told me that, you know, some of them felt very conflicted about it because they care about the the national scale of their dispute. But they made a strategic. Choice, even not to to have Palestinian flags present in protest because they felt that this way they could win the the broader public support, and they could actually save the the the burial ground. So it it was a strategic choice. In 23. The the shelter was officially built on site, so supposedly this battle is was unsuccessful. However, Abush Hada has said to me he does view it in some ways is successful in the sense that the goal to influence public opinion succeeded and we looked into. We analysed Israeli newspapers. To try and understand, you know, kind of find evidence for his claim, and in these four months of protests. We found 37 articles in different newspapers, which is really unprecedented in any one of these other struggles that happened before, maybe had one to two error presentations in the Israeli press. 13 interviews with Community Representative, 12 quotes from demonstrators, statements, signs and chants, so again the voices of the community were not represented at all in previous events. So here suddenly their voices become heard, became heard. There was extensive verbal and visual review of their. Protest event. Their marches, prayers. They're very clever use of visual language. The newspapers did not refer to them as Muslims, as would have been the case prior, but as protesters or residents of the city. They managed to reach even the support of supposedly unlikely allies in the Ultra Orthodox community in Tel Aviv, so they're engaged in similar type of disputes around this tension between, you know, expanding and developing Tel Aviv and preserving

Jewish burial grounds. And the the the Chief rabbi of Tel Aviv came to the one of these protests to show his support. So, you know, I think there were a lot of opinion pieces written in their favour, talking about the long, deep, deep and roots of the, the, the sort of flight of Palestinians in Jaffa, Tel Aviv. So in that sense it was really. Really different and unprecedented. Beyond the symbolic victory, there were some actual achievements on the ground and first of all, and this we created a precedent in terms of construction laws in Israel. The plans were altered to avoid the removal of graves, which is really important from our religious perspective, not to remove the graves. And Tassel cemetery. I'm not sure if you remember. I mentioned that it was sold in 73 parts, half of the burial ground and ever since then there was extensive battle to try and save that half of the plots. In 2008, the Supreme Court. Ruled that not only do they favour the perspective of the owners, the private entrepreneurs that were the owners of this land, but this issue cannot come to court ever again. So it was a final verdict. I'm not. I don't come from the legal side, so sorry. My legal terminology is not great, and so it seemed like a very kind of you know, something that could never be resolved. As I mentioned it was, it is the only Muslim cemetery in the city that is still functioning. And after these events, the municipality managed to reach an agreement. With. The Israeli land authorities that I've mentioned before to change the location of the land so it could to asymmetry so it can no longer be used for development. So it's no longer appealing to private entrepreneurs. So they've they've done they they went out of their way to to protect the cemetery now. This issue is still ongoing. There was a recent court case, so I can't say fully that the the the cemetery was saved, but that that seemed to be the the direction in which it was going and. They they also ever since this event in recent construction projects that were happening, such as the light rail that is developed in the north of the city. Rather than only inviting representatives of the Ultra Orthodox Jewish community, they now invite representative of the Muslim Council to ensure that no harm is done and and that very, you know, bones are treated respectfully. So that's another victory. Also, the alternative body, the Muslim Council. Was merged with the official body, the. Which was something that the community initiated to retake control of their bodies, that the bodies that represent them, and through this their assets. So these are all sort of not obvious victories, but small victories that the community itself sees as very crucial. AM. At the same time, as I was sort of saying in the beginning. The community in Jaffa is also fighting. Against what Amir Badran, a Palestinian lawyer and municipal opposition member of we are the city party, describes as an intergenerational housing crisis. Why is it intergenerational? So we're we're talking about two things that are happening simultaneously. I'll try and go through this sort of route of. Of both of them and their connection. But we have the issue of gentrification and we have the issue of the absentee property, the housing, the absentee housing which I I started to explain about earlier. Now according so. If you remember I mentioned that the 5% of the Palestinians that remained in Jaffa were concentrated. Neighbourhood. So they when they were concentrated there, they were often placed in if they own property there, they lost control of their own property. They were often placed in the property of Palestinians that already fled. So in this way they actually became tenants. Absentee property in the same way that a lot of Jewish immigrants that arrived were were housed in absentee property and. And the Israeli law includes a limited possibility of inheritance of absentee property. So people that after the war were placing absentee property, we're now reaching that threshold of the third generation that no longer has any. Right. Or

claim over these properties and This is why a sort of new wave of eviction has emerged in recent years. And and again, I will, I will try and explain more the context of this, but just to to to give you a few numbers. So as of 2022. 1000 in absentee properties, there are still 1000 in absentee properties in Jaffa, mostly housed by Palestinians. Only 500 hundred and 20 residents are entitled to purchase their homes. 334 eviction orders have been filed and 47 evictions carried out. Most of these absentee property are concentrated in Adjami and Jabalia. For the reasons I explained, but also if you look now in this map I sort of marked all the cultural institution religious institutions so in a way the community is feared.

Being.

Losing their home, but also a sort of communal infrastructure that grew there after 47 to sort of, you know, initial attempt to rehabilitate the community after the trauma. And. So it's important to know that since in the 90s there is a policy of selling absentee property to existing tenants, so some of them would have already bought their homes and gained access to them. But it excludes those who defines as invaders. Now the issue of invader is very complicated, and if you want, you can ask me about it. I don't want to go into this in detail, but as I was saying, at this moment of time because of the inheritance being only permitted for two generation, almost all the residents would be considered invaders very soon or are already. Considered invaders, so it's a very acute issue that is happening right now. And it's also and here the gentrification comes into the story because the Israeli law does offer a discount to the existing tenants in absentee property to buy their homes. However, it does not take into consideration the increase in housing prices. So in other big cities that are not, the property is not as expensive. This could work as a way to resolve this issue, but in Java the housing market has increased so much and in the middle I'm going to go over this a bit more in detail to the extent that it sort of does not allow that solution. Ohh sorry. So yeah, so. To understand gentrification as. How it has happened, we need to go back into this history again. So as I mentioned so, so from 48 to the 60s, I would mark the transformation of Jaffa through urban planning into Key 3 phases from the war till the 60's. The occupation and resettlement with Jewish refugees and immigrants. And then in the 60's, the municipality of Jeff of Tavik Jeff initiated a very deliberate policy of intentional neglect and eviction for construction. So huge parts of the built infrastructure of Java were destroyed during that period. At the time it was really. It was associated the area was associated with crime and neglect, people that could during this period left, which means the Jewish residents who had the the means would have left that area by then, which is how from. So during that period, also, Palestinians went back to being a majority in, at least in the Ajami neighbourhood because all their neighbours that were that arrived there after the war had left if they could. But then in eight in in the 80's, the municipality announced a new policy and they titled it. Facing South and this policy was about gentrification, testification and beautification of the the the housing that survived these waves of demolition. And so. I gave you the sister to kind of claim that this we can talk here about ethno gentrification. So whereas the gentrification is often seen as something that happens, you know, by the invisible eye of the market forces, it's just about, you know, real estate prices evolving. What I tried to show you is the municipality itself of Tel Aviv. Jaffa had a hand in creating this reality. Of of increase in housing which causes gentrification. So specifically talking about agency, neighbourhood and. In to in, in 1990, the municipality announced a plan which included adding three additional

neighbourhoods in this area. They referred to it their their goal was really rehabilitating the agile neighbourhood for its existing and future population, preserving. It's its special urban character and architectural quality. But it wasn't about it the the the the policy did not actually help preserve the existing population because the type of housing renovation that they supported or the new construction of houses were really big houses that would only benefit wealthier tenants. They they said that it was explicit that their intention was to bring back Jewish. And a stronger population of wealthier Jews into the area. And this was also done by adopting this new Oriental listed architectural language and. So this is an architect who was really involved in the regeneration of Java and Alchemy and he says. We made an Orientalist building, a kind of imitation that is not preservation, but a play with jafan elements. So rather than seeing the Arab architecture is something that needs to be abolished. Suddenly it was celebrated as something that could attract wealthier Jews to arrive to the area. It's very romantic and beautiful, and as I would, I would try to explain to tour participant, he does these political tours. To try and explain the connection between. In the history and the the contemporary issues in this city. So he describes after the war, an Israeli official visited my mother's family home in Ajami to ask if she was the owner. So this is when they were establishing the absentee property. She could have said yes, but she said no. My brother is the owner. And since her brother was in Jordan, the house was declared. Today the House which we started with zero, there isn't the capital that should or could have helped people. So that kind of explained the intergenerational issue at stake. OK, good. And so after explaining the issue, I want to point. Out. That so, first of all, this wave of demolition is part of a broader story. So from there there have been other waves of demolition. And and there are a few bodies have formed in Java specifically to try and fight. House eviction, so already in 79 and Arabica Jaffas Arab Association was established to foster communal restoration and fight home demolition and evictions in Jaffa. They launch what they referred to as a housing intifada in 1995, where they just went and sort of claimed possession of emptied. With our housing saying we have a housing crisis in our community, we're just going to come and live here. This is one of the reasons why some of the tenants are now considered invaders. And but they've also staged a lot of protest events and political tours to try, and, you know, reinstate their kind of historical right to the city and just deal with these very acute problem of housing crisis. And more recently, the Arab Jewish Association of Kunafa was founded by the Palestinian activists on Mao, Sikh Sikh, in the wake of the violent events in May 2021. Again, fighting around the house, resolving the issue of absentee property. And. So. The way the community, you know, they're quite recently there was a meeting where where these bodies have invited the the the public to come and hear about their their struggle and the way the deputy chair of and Rabita Abita explained it was the legal option does not exist. Developers will not give us houses. And therefore the only option is a public struggle. So there you know, in recent years they've launched. Hundreds and hundreds of walking tours to try and explain this problem, which as you're seeing from me trying to explain it, is quite complex and there have been a lot of negotiation behind the table with the municipality to try and find a solution. There have been some solutions proposed. Again, you can ask me about it. Later at the minute it has not been resolved. Even I think last month we heard the rumour that one house is going to be evicted and you know we all came to protest outside the Amidar and Hamish offices and it didn't happen. I think right now the municipality is very fearful of causing more tension in an

already very. A volatile situation. And and yeah, just to finish. So Sami Abu Chada and Paddy Chavita, activists that have really for many, many years been involved with this cause are saying the prolonged housing struggle in Jaffa is driven by the need for recognition of the Palestinian Arabs of Yafa as a group with a historic right to the land. Of the city and its assets. How we've got a few more minutes. Yeah. OK, good. And so as well as this grassroots struggle, I do want to acknowledge and you know, again, I'd love to hear your thoughts on on, on how you take this initiative that the municipality of Tel Aviv. Alpha again, I would say very much following the May 2021 events and the sort of fear that more violence will start erupting in the city and maybe also for goodwill, I don't know. And so in official documents, they're starting to talk about the municipality taking affirmative. This is quoting them action to tackle many years of deprivation which derived from complex historical circumstances. So, you know, it's not transitional justice. They're they're not saying, you know, the knockabout happened. We took your houses. We we are sorry and we're going to repair you, but there is some kind of awareness that there are. You know prolonged. Issues at stake and a need for the municipality to take action, so I put here on the slide on the right. This photo from one of their older leaflets that says, you know, opportunities for new development. And Hebert actually reads for new and good development. So municipalities always claim that the kind of redevelopment they initiate. Are good. I tried to show you that what was done in in Jaffa, Tel Aviv, was not good, increased the issues and and caused a lot of tension. Are they now opening a new chapter? Are they taking responsibility and trying to fix it? I would like to point at this point that Jaffa, Tel Aviv is very financially strong in comparison to municipalities in other mixed cities. It's very uniquely independent in the Israel landscape, where the the local authorities do not receive much independence. It is well known to challenge state agenda and curating oppositional sociopolitical space. In some issues, more within the sort of Jewish public I would say so. Is that putting them in a position to actually try and create solution? That we can't. We were not seeing elsewhere. And could you know, grow to something bigger. That's something I'm I'm leaving open also as much as the Israel Lando. 40 is is a very big land owner directly linked to the 48 war. Tel Aviv, Jaffa Municipality is also a big landowner. In Jaffa, Tel Aviv, so in that sense it gives them some options to try and resolve the issue that they wouldn't have had otherwise. So what they're doing now? Is initiating lottery. That in Java that specifically targets the Palestinian population in Java. And so this is 1 project that Michael Angelo project and it included a lottery for jaffas our population at a 30% discount from the. Good price. So 380 people are registered with an average age of 35. So it's really talking. The young Palestinian population in Jaffa that really don't see any way to to be able to afford right now to to buy a house in in Java. And but first of all, we can talk about. The number of of. Apartments. I think. All in total there may be. You know. I don't know 50, something like that. We're not. It's not a a big substantial solution. Also, the municipality faced this issue that the local Jewish population started appealing against this solution. So in 2021 and a petition was filed to the District Court court by local resident Jewish resident. On the basis of exclusion on racial grounds while succumbing to violence. So they're saying because of the the may events, you're suddenly giving housing to the Palestinians, you're discriminating against us. We're also residents of of Jaffa. And in this case, the court ruled against the petition, but on technical. The court did not say no Palestinians and Jaffa have a historical right to this place and the municipality should tackle many years of discrimination and resolve this.

No, another story slightly bigger project than Maccabee Java project. So here the land is owned so 65% by the Israel Land Authority, 35% by the municipality and we're talking about 1279 housing units. So this is already you know. This is a big number. This is more like it in terms of resolving the. Issues at stake. And out of which only 163 discount apartments from the land owned by the municipality were allocated and they used the words when they started advertising for this project, they said allocated to natives of Java in respect to land owned by the municipality. In 2022, Jewish residents filed a petition against the municipality and Israel and authority. Criticising harm the the the that harms equality through racially discriminatory condition that were agreed in secret in the dark. Now this time the court ruled in favour of the petition. Why? Because they're saying the natives of Jaffa is unclear. So it was confusing. People, I would personally say that if they use the word indigenous of Jaffa, you know when we accept the sort of Palestinian indigenous claim, maybe that could have worked. I'm not sure if an Israeli court would have approved it, but we're seeing here some of the kind of deeper issues at stake of the Israel Palestine conflict. Who belongs to this land? Not only who owns this land at present. Feeding into this everyday this, you know, issues of housing and affordability of the city. So to give you a conclusion and homes and cemeteries of social political entities that correlate with the issues at the heart of the Israeli Palestinian conflict concerning land allocation and who holds an and historial right to it, urban autonomy and citizenship constitute a significant framework for political struggles in our. Reality, where national politics actively discriminates against ethnic minorities and indigenous communities, thank you very much for listening.