

The use of digital space for equal shared cultural heritage for Jews and Arabs in Israel

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Introduction

The development of digital spaces and digital culture since the late 1990s has revolutionized the diversity and accessibility of knowledge and cultural content. The technological advances, the global dissemination, and the widespread adoption of digital communication are ceaselessly increasing the public consuming this information (Kvan and Affleck 2008; Svensson 2010; Kalay; Benardou et al. 2018).

Until the digital revolution, the cultural heritage of excluded groups usually suffered from a lack of availability and accessibility, as a result of a deliberate policy. The hegemonic discourse and establishment tended to hinder the preservation of and exposure to knowledge that did not coincide with the cultural norm, and even impeded the excluded groups from mobilizing to independently act to preserve their cultural heritage (Ferguson et al. 1990). Thus, while the cultural heritage of the hegemonic groups was made accessible and disseminated through various venues: museums, memorial sites, culture centers, archives, and libraries, and through a variety of printed and electronic media channels, the cultural heritage of the excluded groups met with continuous exclusion (Eck 2014). In the absence of active engagement with differences, the stereotypes about the Other are liable to intensify (UNESCO 2001).

Using the digital revolution to make excluded cultural heritages accessible, however, requires extensive resources in order to collect, digitize, and disseminate cultural heritage contents by leading institutions and organizations (Sullivan 2016; Kidd 2018). In this reality, the Arab Palestinian group in the state of Israel, which differs from the Jewish group in its ethnicity, national affinity, and religious faith, has found it hard to raise the necessary resources to preserve its cultural heritage and gain the support of the established cultural institutions and museums (Sela 2007; Berger 2008). The lack of official sites and institutions dedicated to the Arab Palestinian heritage, and the total exclusion of this heritage from the Jewish educa-

tion system, have further contributed to the absence of any respectful exposure of the Arab minority and its heritage.

The ongoing national conflict between Arabs and Jews has also contributed to pushing aside the Arab Palestinian cultural heritage and limiting the (cultural) areas of encounter between the Arab Palestinian group and the Jewish group in Israel. Thus, while Arab Palestinians who are citizens of the state of Israel are exposed to the Jewish Israeli cultural heritage through the contents taught in schools and through visits to Jewish heritage sites, the Jewish population is almost never exposed to the cultural heritage of the Arab Palestinian minority (Haj-Yeia and Lev Tov 2017).

This pioneering study examines the possibilities and limitations of exposing the Arab Palestinian heritage in Israel to the Israeli society at large by using an open and non-institutional digital space called *Tarasa Digital Initiative* (Tarasa). More particularly, the study examines the modes of engagement that the digital tools make possible for both the Jewish participants and the Arab Palestinian minority in Israel, and the possible effects this engagement has on creating a more equal space of reference for the cultural heritages of the two groups, while focusing on highlighting the cultural heritage of the Arab Palestinian minority as an excluded social group.

The findings wish to shed light on the ways in which projects like Tarasa may contribute to developing policy that recognizes the cultural rights of excluded social groups. Translating the democratic digital space into a shared cultural heritage that represents the two peoples in a more egalitarian way may have a future effect on adopting a perception of cultural diversity that would promote understanding and co-existence.

Cultural heritage in the digital era

The rapid development, the global dissemination, and the adoption of digital information and communication technologies have brought on a profound and unprecedented cultural and social revolution in human society and daily life. The digital space created by the internet and by smartphones does not replace the habitual reality, but rather complements and enriches it. As a result of significant advances in the area of artificial intelligence, digital technologies are becoming smarter and more personally tailored. Almost every human experience is mediated through a sophisticated surrounding envelope that is connected to big data and provides every person with context-oriented information made especially for them (Russell 2019; Levin and Mamlok 2021).

As part of this comprehensive digital revolution, profound global changes have also taken place in the field of preserving, making accessible, and disseminating cultural heritage (Robertson-von Trotha and Hauser 2010). Until this revolution, cultural heritage was preserved and made accessible to the public in a series of special

physical spaces: historic sites, museums, memorial sites, galleries, culture centers, archives, and libraries. Beyond these physical spaces, cultural heritage was also disseminated through a variety of media channels, mostly printed, and later on also broadcast on radio and television (Eck 2014).

In the last three decades, the field of preserving, making accessible, and disseminating cultural heritage has extended into the digital space. Many of the channels for collecting, preserving, presenting, and disseminating cultural heritage around the world are gradually moving to dedicated websites, content-sharing platforms, and a variety of social networks. This process relies on substantial resources that are invested in local, national, and international projects for collecting and digitizing cultural heritage content and making it accessible (Sullivan 2016; Kidd 2018). The process in which increasing parts of cultural heritage are moving into the digital spaces (or gaining further representation in them) multiplies the dissemination channels and makes them more effective than ever. Today, investment in digital dissemination channels is undertaken by all the institutions and organizations active in the heritage field.

It seems that investment in digital projects leads to a significant widening of the social circles that are exposed to various cultural and historical contents, and to a change in the visibility of the cultural heritages of the majority and minority groups (Hylland 2017). Moving into the digital spaces widens the dissemination of cultural heritage not only due to the effective dissemination channels, but also due to the upgrading of some of the content to up-to-date formats that capture the reader's attention more effectively. These formats include location-based audio and video guides, 360-degrees and 3-D films, VR – Virtual Reality worlds, and especially AR – layers of Augmented Reality (as well as all the varieties and combinations between them, XR – Extended Reality). Thanks to these advanced manifestations, today cultural heritage has become integrated as a significant central component of smart cities (Siountri and Vergados 2018; Kee, Poitras and Comeau 2019).

The digital revolution fundamentally changed not only the dissemination channels and the means of presenting cultural heritage, but also the ways heritage is collected and preserved. The digital space creates platforms and tools that remove many of the hindrances that used to prevent preservation. Mainly, digital space and tools reduce the high costs that were involved in the work of collection and preservation in the past, and restricted projects dedicated to collecting and preserving cultural heritage contents. The new possibilities for collection and preservation have gone hand in hand with a profound change in the basic perceptions and the accepted definitions around what contents are worthy of being included in the cultural heritage. These processes of change have led to the official decision taken by UNESCO to broaden the concept of “cultural heritage”. In particular, it was decided to stop focusing on tangible cultural and natural heritage, and to move instead to a broader perception that also includes intangible cultural heritage and digital heritage. Accord-

ing to this perception, the cultural heritage that merits collection and preservation also includes: practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts, and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage (UNESCO 2003; UNESCO 2004; UNESCO 2015).

This approach is characterized by greater openness towards more diverse manifestations of cultural heritages, as well by making more democratic decisions about what will be collected and what will be thrown to the dustbin of history. Consequently, today there is a more egalitarian attitude to the cultural heritages of minorities and of excluded social groups. Broadening the definition of cultural heritage and removing the obstacles and the costs attached to collection and preservation processes has led not only to enriching the cultural heritage with an abundance of new projects and collections related to diverse areas of living and creating, but also to widening the circles of those participating in these activities. Alongside the traditional dominance of cultural institutions, in recent years we have seen additional social groups participating more and more prominently in the activities of collection, documentation, and preservation. The social groups that join these activities usually focus on the overall contents and elements that are distinctly related to their historical and cultural identity. Joining these activities stems from the wish to deepen and strengthen the internal cohesion of different social groups and of their unique cultural heritage. Apart from cases where social groups suffer from severe social exclusion, joining the activity in the field of cultural heritage usually embodies the wish to strengthen and extend the imprint and status of the particular-unique heritage within the dominant national cultural heritage (Luz 2018). Sometimes the enlisting of new social groups in activities in the field of cultural heritage is encouraged and supported by the national institutions and bodies leading this field, out of the understanding that it contributes to the efforts to integrate particular cultural heritages into the national cultural heritage. However, there are also many countries in which the leading institutions and bodies in the field of cultural heritage are not committed to the effort to diversify and enrich their heritage, and even prevent the widening of the social circles that show interest in the heritage and identify with it. In such cases, not only do various institutional bodies discourage the new social group from joining the collection and preservation activities, but they even see such joining as a threat, undermining their ability to determine and set in place the cultural heritage that they consider appropriate. To a large extent, the depth of the democratization processes in the field of cultural heritage in the different countries can be inferred from the extent to which minority groups are enlisting in the activities of collecting, preserving, and disseminating the cultural contents and elements they consider significant. No less instructive is the attitude of social groups and leading institutional bodies towards the mobilization of the excluded groups,

and towards the unique cultural heritage that these excluded groups seek to add to the dominant national cultural heritage (Aigner 2016; Peace and Allen 2019).

As in many countries, in Israel as well resource-rich governmental programs have contributed decisively to the field of cultural heritage being extended into the digital space. In 2010, the government published and adopted the *Tamar Program* – a plan of action for revamping and reinforcing the foundations of the national heritage, which included unprecedented investment in the digitization of existing heritage collections and in creating new projects of digital heritage. The concluding document of the program, which was prepared by an especially broad committee that included representatives from different governmental ministries and leading institutions and organizations in the field of cultural heritage in Israel, clearly defined a focus on “foundations of national heritage, including tangible and intangible assets, that testify to the connection between the people of Israel and the land of Israel, and whose reinforcement contributes to strengthening national consciousness, pride, and vitality” (Hauser 2010 p. 7). This approach resulted in a wide variety of digital heritage projects led in the past decade by various bodies, including: the Heritage Ministry, the Social Equality Ministry, the *Council for the Conservation of Heritage Sites* in Israel, the *National Library*, *Yad Ben Zvi*, and the *ANU Museum*. All the projects were dedicated to various areas of Jewish heritage.¹ Due to the preference for the Jewish cultural heritage, even the extension of the cultural heritage field in Israel into the digital space has not rectified, as might have been expected, the conspicuous exclusion of the cultural heritage of the Arab Palestinians in Israel (Hemyan and Yogevev 2018).

The Arab Palestinian minority and the search for equal cultural heritage in Israel

Societies are distinguished by their cultural heritages, which are composed of a complex web of values, beliefs, and points of view. Each heritage is interconnected to a particular lifestyle and mentality, expressed in the customs, traditions, language, practices, and formal and informal activities that characterize the group and divide it from the Other (Bennet 2013). Thus, the uniqueness of the cultural heritage can face constant pressures and be endangered when the group is positioned in the lower strands of society. This tendency can hinder the realization of the minority's collective and individual rights (Oettingen 1995; Taylor 2002). Over time, the pressures of assimilation exerted by the dominant group can also lead to the erosion of the minority's cultural heritage. To avoid cultural exclusion, minority groups may be given

1 A notable exception is the “Arab Press” project conducted by the National Library (<https://www.nli.org.il/he/discover/newspapers/arabic-press>).

a collective protection in order to preserve their cultural characteristics and the national and religious identities that derive from it. But in cases where the dominant majority does not wish to protect the minority's collective rights, the cultural heritage is put in danger, as in the case of the Arab Palestinians living in Israel (Abu-Saad 2008; Agbaria 2015).

Even though Israel is a Jewish and democratic state, the Arab Palestinians are considered full citizens of the state of Israel (Gabison 1999). This duality has led to a discriminating civil discourse (Smootha 2010) that connects the recognition of the Arab Palestinian minority in Israel to its contribution to the nation (Yonah 2005). This tendency has been gaining power, although a multicultural discourse has been introduced in the educational and academic arenas in recent years (Paul-Binyamin and Reingold 2014). Without mutual legitimization, respect, and acknowledgment, the 1.6 million Arab Palestinian minority in Israel (constituting about 21% of Israel's population, excluding East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights) can lose the feeling of belonging to the Israeli society (Ghanem 2000; Ghanem and Mustafa 2009; Haj-Yehia 2022).

The main reasons for marginalizing the Arab Palestinian cultural heritage are anchored in the education system and in the lack of institutionalized cultural heritage centers. Since the Jewish majority determines the cultural content of the Arab school system in Israel, the Arab Palestinian cultural heritage is being neglected (Agbaria 2011). Over the years, the Arab Palestinian minority in Israel has attempted to strengthen its unique cultural heritage in schools, but with limited success (Agbaria 2015). Faced with an ethnocentric Israeli approach, the Arab Palestinian minority have not been given the opportunity to learn their history and their cultural heritage in public schools (Arar and Ibrahim 2016), since this heritage has been almost totally excluded from the curricula (Abu-Asbeh 2007; Arar 2012). While neglecting the Arab Palestinian cultural heritage, the study of the Hebrew language, Jewish national history, and the Jewish-Zionist narrative have a prominent place in the curricula of the Arab Palestinian public schools (Al-Haj 2012). Clearly, Israeli government policy towards Arab education aims to deepen the Arab student's sense of belonging to citizenship in the State of Israel, and the educational curriculum in the schools is an embodiment of this general vision (Abu-Saad 2005; 2006). Thus, teachers in the Arab education system have oscillated between the suppression of any sign of promoting the Arab Palestinian minority's cultural heritage, and a conservative recognition of its character (Haj-Yehia and Lev Tov 2017). The government's control over the formal education curricula has consigned to personal initiatives as well as projects and activities conducted in an alternative and non-formal fashion. Among them: Palestinian Arab cultural and heritage centers, small museums, festivals, and cultural days in schools and outside of school, personal collectors and cultural conservators (Haj-Yehia and Lev Tov 2015), and academic projects (Liberty-Shalev 2020).

Recent research has described the development of Arab Palestinian galleries and cultural and heritage centers, some of which are privately and independently run while others are funded and managed by recognized public associations, aiming to document, preserve, and pass on Arab Palestinian historical and cultural roots. These centers were established primarily to preserve the unique cultural heritage, but also to increase basic awareness of the important contribution of the process of culture building, and of the need to sustain private and collective memories. This is especially necessary because the Arab Palestinian minority have almost no official historical archives and museums. Although there are dozens of government-recognized and -supported public history and culture museums devoted to Jewish history and culture in Israel, there is still no government-supported public museum devoted to the cultural heritage of the Arab Palestinians in Israel (Shay 2011; Haj-Yehia and Lev Tov 2017).

Only in recent years has the Arab Palestinian society in Israel been able to exploit the possibilities offered by the internet, social networks, and virtual projects (Berger Gluck 2008; Haj-Yehia and Lev Tov 2017). The mobilization of intellectual Arab Palestinians and Jewish groups working together to create digital projects to preserve the Arab Palestinian cultural heritage has started to document and bequeath the past for the future generations. These initiatives are often described as a social framework that can enable the process of building an equal shared cultural heritage, which can lead to processes of acknowledgment and recognition (Kymlicka 1995). Such initiatives, mainly in the fields of oral history documentation, visual history, material history, and museum activity, take on special importance for national minority groups who wish to maintain their unique cultural heritage as well as to collaborate with the dominant national group.

Methods

The digital initiative Tarasa, founded in 2019, documents oral historical memories of non-experts (people who are not professional researchers in the field of history, folklore, and cultural studies) from Arab Palestinian and Jewish origins living in Israel. Both authors, an Arab Palestinian and an Israeli Jew living in Israel, developed Tarasa as part of the *Time Tunnel program*² – a contemporary history program that gathers oral histories of everyday life that occurred in the last decades. The program is held in one of the biggest teacher training colleges in Israel, and addresses both

2 The program has been active for over a decade in a variety of frameworks within the Israeli education system. Over the years, thousands of students, high school pupils, and teachers have taken part in it, guided by professional instructors in documenting the memories of their families (<https://www.iataskforce.org/entities/view/1036>).

Arab Palestinian and Jewish students. Tarasa offers a platform that provides space for the construction of different elements of virtual culture and heritage projects. The digital initiative invites Arab Palestinian and Jewish volunteers to visit the website and start reminiscing about their cultural heritage in order to widen the digital cultural heritage collections and deepen the public's engagement with each other's memories and heritage. The memories can be uploaded to the Tarasa Map platform in a simple technical procedure, on the basis of their attribution to places and times in which the memories occurred and that appear on the digital map. As part of the project, the general public is also able to preserve memories, books and long films, by uploading them to the Tarasa Archives.

The project assumes that by making cultural heritage accessible to the public in Israel, and all over the world, viewers and participants can equally explore and connect to their past and to the past of the Other.

In order to analyze the modes of engagement that the digital tools make possible for both the Jewish participants and the Arab Palestinian minority in Israel, and the possible effects of this engagement on creating a more equal reference space for the cultural heritages of both groups, a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the site's characteristics has been conducted (Creswell 1994).

First, the numbers of Arab Palestinian and Jews living in Israel who contributed to the shared digitized memories were examined and compared to their size in the Israeli population. Second, the ways the Arab Palestinian and Jewish participants uploaded their memories (texts, photos, audio, video), and the mode of engagement with these memories were examined.

This data, of this first study of the first digital initiative of cultural heritage in Israel, will be further analyzed in an upcoming study dealing with the content that is uploaded to the site.

Analysis

Digital tools for preserving cultural heritage

In the first two years of the project, the efforts invested in exposing it to the Arab public in Israel seemed to not manage to overcome this public's apprehension and lack of trust. Only about 4% (94 memories) of the first 2500 memories uploaded to the project were of Arab Palestinians living in Israel, with a considerable number of the participants asking to upload their memories without their names being publicized. A breakthrough and a significant change came about in this context only in the third year of the project's activity (2022), when Arab Palestinians uploaded 356 memories, constituting about 18% of the overall 2000 memories uploaded in that year, with the

overwhelming majority of participants agreeing to their names being publicized on the site.

These data suggest that the number of Jewish participants who uploaded memories to the project is still large in relation to their proportion in the population, and in relation to the number of Arab Palestinian participants. These data coincide with the inbuilt obstacles hindering the participation of Arab Palestinians in Israel's public social and cultural arena, and with the culture of silencing that prevents the exposure of information in public channels that are also directed at the Hebrew speaking public in Israel (Rouhana and Sabbagh-Khoury 2019). Nevertheless, there has been an increase in the number of Arab Palestinian memory-uploaders (mainly in the year 2022), with most of them being students. The increase in the number of Arab Palestinian participants attests to processes of change that have been taking place in recent years in the Arab society in Israel. These changes are mainly led by young people who are more assertive and active than their parents' generation, and who don't avoid dealing with various issues on the public agenda (Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker 2005). The changes are the product of an increase in the proportion of educated people, an improved standard of living, deepening democratization processes, and an increase in civil society activity in the Arab Palestinian society in Israel (Jamal 2008). This tendency joins the phenomenon of Palestinization that the Arab public sphere in Israel has undergone in the last decades, resulting in numerous changes driven from "the ground up" and calling for the foregrounding of the Palestinian cultural and national heritage. Thus, for example, it is widespread to name stores after villages that had been destroyed in 1948, to give streets new names commemorating Palestinian national heroes, and to decorate central walls in the Arab public space with graffiti drawings that include a distinctly national content (Milstein 2000).

Analyzing the media in which the participants from the two groups chose to share their memories shows that about 70% of the Arab Palestinians added an appropriate historical photograph to the texts they uploaded to the site. Only about 20% of them complemented the memories with additional photographs, and only a few percentages added clips or audio recordings. By contrast, some 90% of the Jewish participants added an appropriate historical photograph to the texts, about 40% of them complemented the memories with additional photographs, and roughly 10% also accompanied the written memories with historical clips and/or audio recordings.

The layered usage map matches and reflects the big difference in the quantity of historical photographs, clips, and recordings held by the Arab Palestinians in Israel in relation to those held by the Jewish public in Israel, both privately (by the family) and in various public-institutional contexts (archives and museums). These findings coincide with the concept of preserving history "from the ground up" and with the mobilized photography that were widespread among the Zionist Jewish settlers before the founding of the state of Israel, as opposed to the scant use of photography by

the Arab Palestinian society.³ Furthermore, a preference for oral preservation over using technological preservation media is common among the Arab Palestinians in Israel, as part of a tradition of oral storytelling passed from generation to generation. This tradition continues to exist, in light of the absence of public buildings that can house activities of collecting, preserving, and presenting the cultural heritage to the general public in the Arab Palestinian society in Israel (Kashti 2022).

This overall picture suggests that the preservation of cultural heritage in the two groups is continually on the rise. However, the preservation activities are umbilically tied to the traditions of conservation that have existed in the two groups in the past, as well as to the social-political conditions that affect the life of the two groups in the present.

Digital tools for engaging with cultural heritage

The memories collected in Tarasa are available to watch both on the map shown on the site and in an additional display in the memory library. The memories in this display are arranged in continually diversifying thematic collections. The collections already built in the project include memories of childhood stories, family, education, pastime, love, migration, fashion, sport, economy, food, communal life, transit camps etc.

How do the tools used to display the memories create reciprocal relations between the different groups? The very engagement with a wide variety of subjects, by participants from both groups, already confirms Tarasa's basic assumption that every memory that is significant to a certain social group is worthy of being documented, commemorated, and made available for watching and engagement by members of other groups. Moreover, the variety of documented subjects suggests that Tarasa has managed to turn into a respectful digital platform, since each of the ethno-national groups uses it to present different subjects, issues, and events from their past. The multiplicity of subjects also points to a potential in Tarasa for mutual acquaintance and for forging connections across sectorial and national borders. The possibility of connecting the various subjects and memories on the platform with additional sources that can be found in the Tarasa archive deepens the mutual affinities between the groups. This technical option allows the visitors not only to follow memories that interest them, but also to intersect them with the memories of the other group, and thus see the similarity and difference between the two groups. These intersectorial encounters are unique in the landscape of contacts between Jews and Arab Palestinians in Israel. Although the two groups live side by side in one

3 Most of the photographs produced by Palestinians before '48 were imbued with a biblical outlook and a wish to fulfil the visual expectations of the pilgrims and tourists, and therefore lacked any political consciousness (Sela 2005).

state, they maintain separate (and even hostile) cultural heritages, without knowing about the similarity and ties that existed between the two communities in the past. Thus, for example, research advances show that Arab Palestinians and Jews shared common behavioral patterns, outlooks, and experiences in the field of recreational activity at the end of the Ottoman rule and during the British rule in the country. This is one example of many of the similarity that exists between the two cultural heritages (Lev Tov 2011; Klen 2014).

Furthermore, the digital tools enable participants from both groups to engage with subjects that belong to social history and “history from the ground up”. Engaging with these subjects has enabled both the Arab Palestinians and the Jews in Israel to uncover significant layers of the daily routine of each of the groups, connected to the family’s and the community’s history, without straying into mutual political accusations (Haj-Yehia and Lev Tov 2017). In other words, the technical structure of the platform and the characteristics of the technology used enable the creation of direct interfaces between memories that existed in a specific period, and that deal with a specific subject or issue. Thus, for example, it is possible to intersect memories of Arabs and Jews who used to go hiking in the country at a specific period, or to go to the cinema, or to visit the cafes, without the interaction between the interested visitors being blocked by engaging with a volatile political issue. The ability to comfortably examine and juxtapose overlapping-parallel memories may create a space that brings people closer together without necessarily making the ongoing political conflict present. It does not mean that Tarasa is an apolitical space that doesn’t allow visibility to difficult memories connected to the conflict between the two peoples. Tarasa does not promote a depoliticization of the Jewish-Palestinian space in Israel, nor does it eliminate the political dimension from events and memories that are connected to the heritage and culture of everyday routine. It is the way the personal-collective memories, including the most conflictual ones, are juxtaposed, and their simultaneous presence on the same shared map, library, and archive that enable each of the sides to also study the history and heritage of the other people living between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River.

Moreover, Tarasa also enables projects and organizations in which Jews and Arab operate together to upload to the site memories that have been collected and documented as part of their work. These collections created to begin with shared Jewish-Arab memory spaces that reflect the common work done by the two groups. Thus, memories of Arab Palestinian and Jewish students from various academic institutions are kept together in collections dedicated to the projects and courses in which they were created. In a similar way, family memories of high school pupils from Jewish Ramat HaSharon and from Arab Tayibe, as well as from a regional school in the area of the Arab “Triangle” and from the Jewish Drom HaSharon regional council, are kept and presented together in special cross-languages and cross-cultures collections. The possibility of uncovering in Tarasa a shared heritage that existed around

various daily life events already encompasses and presents reciprocal affinities between the two groups.

It further seems that a large part of the settlements, communities, organizations, and families participating in the project are interested in taking part in it because of the possibility they are given to assemble their memories on a separate site devoted to their special stories and built and designed according to their needs. Hence, possibilities have been developed to build interactive community-memory sites, which have created a kind of rhizomatic network of different memory sites. These too are displayed on the map and in the archive, thus presenting entire communities' stories that can be shared and referred to while dismantling the hierarchical structuring that divides between the two groups. It is important to emphasize that most of the memories uploaded to the community-memory sites also appear on the project's central site, thus enriching the intercommunity and intersectorial encounter that takes place on it. As part of the project, 6 memory sites of Jewish communities and settlements have already been built, and 3 community-memory sites requested by local authorities of Arab settlements are in development stages.

Future development plans will enable the full automatic translation of all the memories into Hebrew and Arabic and any other language, in order to deepen the possibilities of intersectorial encounter. Users of the site will also be able to define their areas of interest according to subjects, regions, and periods in order to regularly get links to new memories referring to these areas. In the future it will also be possible to send comments and to contact the memory-uploaders, a move that could further deepen the interactions between the various remembering groups. A considerable extension of the exposure and dissemination of the memories and the cultural heritages they embody will be created with the future development of their manifestations through layers of Augmented Reality. This development, stemming naturally from the project's fundamental characterization as location-based, is expected to also extend its exposure and dissemination to the physical space, while preserving the marked advantages of its digital characteristics.

Conclusions

The uniqueness of the Tarasa project lies in it being a free interactive space for documenting and preserving the cultural heritage of Arab Palestinians and Jews in Israel. In light of the ongoing conflict and its historical roots, Palestinian and Jewish-Israeli sites that document and present the cultural heritage and the social history of the different groups are usually built in complete separation. They thus deepen the feelings of exclusion and disconnection between the two groups, and increase the mutual fears of the history and the cultural heritage of the Other (Maoz and McCauley 2009). The number of people using Tarasa and the characteristics of the digital tools

that the site offers its users encourage not only the preservation and presentation of memory and a unique cultural heritage, but also the mutual exposure of memories and cultural heritages and the creation of spontaneous and multiple interface points between them. True, the space of the internet is also an arena of struggle, where different groups fight for representation and visibility, and it has even been claimed that communication technologies foster the expression of different viewpoints only to a limited extent, since the power relations that underpin cultural mediation are being reproduced by the digital tools (Aigner 2016). However, the technology is not inherently evil. The tools that Tarasa offers the participants afford them an agency that is able to curtail the reproduction of the social power relations on the site. Thus, precisely because of the decentralization that characterizes the site, the users are able to produce more independent mutual affinities than those made possible within centralized heritage institutions (museums, heritage centers and the like).

Accusing the project of circumventing the political dimension and of creating a postmodern false presentation that gives the memories of different groups an identical importance ignores the fact that in the state of Israel, the two peoples are inextricably bound with each other in their daily life (Lustick 2019). Tarasa wishes to reflect this reality, without embellishing it falsely and without creating a counter-hegemony, by creating a space accessible to all. Tarasa's activity, like that of other similar projects, is the initiative of individuals, non-governmental institutions, and non-profit grassroot organizations that operate voluntarily to create dialogue between Arab Palestinians and Jews (Reingold 2007).

The main question we are faced with, therefore, is whether this alternative model of grassroot action aimed at democratizing history, which is built and breaks down alternately and according to the will of its users, will succeed in creating spaces that are characterized by a shared cultural heritage in the future as well.

To what extent are private websites able to bypass the rules of the dominant discourse? Will the prevailing perspective of the dominant group allow a further articulation of the concept of "participatory culture" and shared heritage by the digital platforms? It seems that with the erosion of the peace process and of the very idea of peace, finding ways to formulate a shared cultural heritage and an integrated democracy that will produce a *de facto* coexistence is almost the only solution.

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