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Editors:
Jaime Almansa Sánchez & Elena Papagiannopoulou

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FORUM

ARCHAEOLOGY AS A TOOL FOR PEACEMAKING

Shortly after publishing Volume 3, a colleague submitted a very interesting paper about the value of archaeology as a tool for peace between Israel and Palestine. As it passed the review process, we thought it would be interesting to open the topic for debate and discussion in order to support what we understand as a fair cause. Thus, we created this second forum in close relation to the main topics (looting and conflict) and asked for contributions by different authors. Three of them responded and that was enough for us to open a discussion on a very relevant topic for public archaeology based on a critical experience of current interest.

Weeks passed by and just as we were trying to close Volume 4 this summer, the main paper was withdrawn: the author was not sure anymore about the content of a paper that had already passed the peered review—and the forum was built on it—and decided to withdraw a contribution that we, as editors, found extremely interesting.

The paper aimed to delve into the current situation of archaeology in the region and its ideological use, as well as the shift could/should be made in order to use it as a tool for peacebuilding and local development. Some ideas and examples where shown and the answers in this forum with offer some more light about them.

Timing is essential in research and June was the beginning of a very difficult time in the region this forum focuses on. We are not going to question the reasons for this withdrawal, but we need to take a moment to explain why the responses are still here and why we want this topic to be part of the journal, especially at this time.

Public archaeology is a political tool: We are not objective, we do not want to be objective, and this is a Social Science with an agenda. When Stottman asked if archaeologists could change the world (Stottman 2010) we answered YES! The use of archaeology

as a political tool is older than archaeology itself. The past serves a purpose and we have a word in this as professionals (McGuire 2010). The conflict between Israel and Palestine has been constantly escalating since the foundation of the new state in the 1940s, causing only destruction and death for both sides.

All of us in the editorial team wish to condemn this violence in the region and state that education and archaeology are one of the very few tools for understanding the conflict and helping towards a peaceful solution.

In the following texts, you will find the views of three researchers with expertise in the topic, in relation to the main paper that, unluckily, you will not be able to read, and due to respect to the withdrawal we will not reproduce further. There is no need for more context than the news and the fact that we, as public archaeologists, have a responsibility to the present. However, have a look at this video, if you have not done so yet.

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http://vimeo.com/50531435

Using Archaeological Information to Promote Peaceful Co-existence in Israel/Palestine

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The issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and role of archaeology in helping sustain it has been thoroughly discussed, especially in the last decade. The social, ideological, religious and cultural dissonances present in today's Israel/Palestine are important contributing factors behind this intractable conflict. Some of these disparities are closely linked with issues of archaeology, history, and cultural heritage. Ongoing ideological and political clashes to control the present and the past of this region have had direct implications for archaeological remains, practices and management. For example, archaeological sites are strongly affected by large-scale looting, as well as by the construction of the separation barrier, military operations and smaller-scale vandalism. The definition, protection and preservation of archaeological and heritage sites are also influenced to a great extent by political instability, poor law enforcement and ambiguity in management responsibilities. The management and interpretation of archaeological sites may also suffer from 'cultural appropriation' and biased presentation to the public.

The coexistence of diverse historical narratives and different prioritisations and valuations of cultural heritage has had a substantial impact on how archaeology and heritage are perceived and interpreted—and too often archaeological convictions are used as weapons in the fight for historical legitimacy. However, archaeology does not always have to drive a wedge between Israelis and Palestinians—it actually has a great potential to do just the opposite, and create a positive change towards reconciliation. Various ways to use archaeology to bridge gaps between both sides and to promote peacemaking in the region have already been suggested and implemented in the past. These include, for example, community archaeological projects, alternative tourism, and joint archaeological groups engaging in discussions on archaeology. There is yet another aspect of archaeology that can transform the

way in which local communities perceive and understand it, and that is archaeological data, information, or knowledge.

Archaeological data has been systematically acquired in Israel/Palestine since the nineteenth century. The region has been extensively surveyed and excavated mainly by European and American archaeologists, to be followed by Israeli and Palestinian ones, resulting in a series of listings and descriptions of numerous archaeological sites. Many of these archaeological inventories, or databases, are conceived to sum up our knowledge on the archaeology and history of the region. And, just as other facets of archaeology have been affected by the political atmosphere and the socio-political reality, so did data collection and the creation of archaeological inventories.

In order to understand just how the creation of archaeological knowledge has been influenced by the political circumstances in Israel/Palestine, it is important to consider the context in which archaeological data collection has taken place in the region since its inception. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, archaeological practice took place in a colonial fashion—almost always by Western foreigners, and according to what they considered important or interesting to investigate. In the case of Palestine, the main interest was the bible—the Old and New Testaments—and any archaeological sites that these scriptures may have referred to. As such, cultural knowledge production has been a reflection of powerful, modern, Western societies who remained unaware of the priorities of indigenous communities, minority groups and less well-resourced societies. The dominance of Western archaeologists has had significant implications for archaeological practice, and is also well reflected in the types of data prioritised to be collected—creating and sustaining an imbalanced control over archaeological knowledge production.

This historical imbalance between the colonisers and the colonised has been gradually inherited by today's Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Jewish archaeological societies and institutions had been active since the beginning of the twentieth century, to be followed by Israeli ones after the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. Israeli archaeologists have been working in the West Bank since its occupation in 1967, conducting exhaustive archaeological

surveys and hundreds of excavations—endeavours which entailed mass collection of archaeological data. Many of these projects have been conducted with Israeli interests and agendas in mind—namely the research of biblical (Bronze and Iron Ages) and Jewish (Persian, Hellenistic and Roman periods) archaeological sites. Large-scale Palestinian archaeological and cultural heritage projects have been taking place primarily since the mid-1990s, after the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority. Some of these would try and shift the prevalent focus on biblical archaeology, and concentrate instead on Islamic remains or the archaeology and ethnography of the more recent past, combined with research on local traditions and ways of life. However, to this day, there is still an evident asymmetry between the sheer quantities of data collected and interpreted by Israelis and Palestinians, and each side has limited access to archaeological data generated by the other.

In today's Israel/Palestine, both nations practice archaeology in isolation. There is no collaboration, no partnership, and no data sharing, in a region that is geographically, historically and archaeologically continuous. While archaeological projects and other cultural heritage endeavours generally adhere to high scientific standards and professional methodologies, the nature of these projects, their objectives and motivations, may greatly vary. Since many of such projects, namely archaeological surveys and excavations, include data collection and the creation of inventories, these too are affected by certain agendas and research priorities. And in turn, these seemingly 'final' corpuses of archaeological knowledge have a significant impact on their audiences.

One way to try and amend this reality and create a positive change using archaeology is, in my view, through the re-consideration of archaeological knowledge. When it comes to motivations, methodologies and outcomes of different types of data collection practices, it is highly important to encourage reflexivity, transparency and accountability. The glaring imbalance of power between Israeli and Palestinian institutions should be addressed in various ways, by a re-examination and re-evaluation of disciplinal practices such as research, surveys, excavations, interpretation and presentation of archaeology and cultural heritage, in order to ensure the inclusion of different narratives and cultural values.

While today's archaeological practices are generally more reflexive and self-critical than they used to be, this should be expanded to the more specific practices of documentation and recording. Professional archaeologists should be aware of their role as mediators and interpreters of cultural knowledge, as they shape heritage records and have a significant impact on the information being passed on to posterity. Archaeological inventories can never be objective—it is impossible to collect data 'objectively', as choices and decisions are always being made in the process. However, being transparent about one's own research agendas and interests is taking an important step towards trust building.

Another step in this direction would be promoting accessibility to information—making archaeological data as accessible as possible. There is a general conviction that archaeological and heritage knowledge is universal and belongs to everyone, and the prominent and the popular movement of 'open data' also asserts that data should be available to anyone for free and without restrictions. Therefore, by facilitating access to data, and by promoting the exchange of archaeological and cultural heritage information, we will achieve higher levels of transparency and accountability, and encourage mutual understanding, respect and trust.

Archaeologists and heritage practitioners are capable of transforming data collection and dissemination practices into positive socio-political driving forces, by taking more inclusive, responsible, critical and ethical approaches towards the study and interpretation of the past. Particularly in a region such as Israel/Palestine, professional archaeologists should be more aware of their ability to promote mutual confidence and trust and to encourage dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian organisations and communities. Archaeological and cultural heritage knowledge is indeed a resource that can facilitate a peaceful co-existence, and I am hopeful that archaeologists in the region would use this resource in a positive and constructive manner.

Palestinian archaeology between political conflicts and peace process

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Although many archaeologists would like to believe that separating archaeology from ideology and politics is achievable, reality indicates something else. It is almost impossible to separate them, particularly in countries where political conflicts are hotspot issues, such as in cases concerning the Holy Land. The question is how to tackle this matter? Do we need to exploit archaeology to prove or disprove the right of existence for different ethnic groups or religions? Do we need to be a part of expanding the conflicts that already exist in the Holy Land, and thus create more hatred and distrust for generations to come? In this brief discussion, I will reflect around this disputed matter and on how we can use archaeology to build bridges instead of barriers.

Archaeology as victim

The influence of colonial and nationalistic archaeology has shaped cultural heritage in the Holy Land throughout the past century. After the establishment of the state of Israel, the history of Palestine has been rewritten to adequately fit into the Zionist agenda. Some Israeli archaeologists have paid more attention to certain archaeological layers and neglected others. Some of them have not been interested in preserving the complete cultural heritage of the country as a record for all humanity, and have instead focused only on the remains relevant to Jewish history and traditions. Those in political power have maneuvered the cultural heritage of the country as they wish, without taking into consideration the vast majority of the native inhabitants who still live in their homeland.

Palestinian archaeology

During the past two decades, a new generation of Palestinian archaeologists has emerged and is fostering awareness and spreading knowledge among Palestinians (see Sayej 2010). These archaeologists, however, are divided into three major groups: academics, NGOs and governmental bodies. Instead of working towards a common goal, these groups tend not to cooperate well, most likely due to the fact that they consider each other as competitors for funding and power.

Thus, it is very important to work hard in order to achieve a common goal of protecting the cultural heritage of Palestine as a universal heritage and not as a source of income for different organizations.

Furthermore, the Palestinian territories are divided into three major parts: Gaza, which is under the control of Hamas; Areas A and B of the West Bank, which are under the control of the Palestinian Authority; and the rest of the West Bank (Area C and East Jerusalem), which is still under the control of Israel.[1] The current political division of the Palestinian territories reflects negatively on the cultural heritage of the entire nation. Those who are in the Gaza Strip have almost no contact with their counterparts in the West Bank and vice versa. The Palestinian Authority in the West Bank has no control over the vast majority of the West Bank, which is controlled by the Israeli Authority. The Staff Officer for Archaeology of the Civil Administration of Judea and Samaria, who controls all archaeological sites and activities in most of the West Bank (area C), does not cooperate with the Palestinians. In this lack of political stability, looting of archaeological sites has flourished and is therefore one of the major challenges to the cultural heritage of the entire country. Another major problem is Israeli settlers who are using archaeology as a tool to prove their roots to the land.

Subsequently, how can we overcome all these obstacles, or at least find a way to get out of this downward spiral? It seems to me that we as archaeologists and social scientists need to do the following:

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1 The political division of the West Bank has been discussed elsewhere (see Sayej 2010).

1. *Political divisions among Palestinians*

Palestinian archaeologists need to cooperate together beyond the geographical and political divisions. We need to be more open and talk to each other to establish a common understanding regardless of who is controlling what and who gets more funding. We need to consider each other as partners in order to achieve our common goal of protecting the cultural heritage of the Holy Land, not only as our own heritage, but also as world heritage. The abundance of technology today links people together regardless of where they live in the world, and thus the geo-political barrier is not an excuse anymore.

2. *Political divisions between the Palestinians and the Israelis*

This issue is even more problematic due to the fact that archaeology has been used in Israel to support the current occupation of the West Bank (e.g. Trigger 1989: 183-184). In a neighborhood of Jerusalem called Silwan, a right-wing Jewish settler organization called Elad controls most of the archaeological excavations in the old city including the Silwan neighborhood. This organization is led by ex-Israeli commando David Be'eri, and has the backing of the Israeli Prime Minister's office, the municipality of Jerusalem, and the vaunted Israeli Antiquities Authority (IAA). The organization's aim is best expressed in a religious website's 2007 interview with development director Doron Speilman. He gestures toward Silwan and says: "Our goal is to turn all this land you see behind you into Jewish lands" (McGirk 2010; also see Greenberg and Keinan 2007, 2009). This kind of archaeological activity is destructive and should be stopped sooner rather than later.

Other Israeli organizations, such as Emek Shaveh, have a wide reach and are working for advocacy and to raise awareness (Hanna this volume). This organization has very high ethical standards and is well accepted locally and internationally. These kinds of organizations are welcomed by both nations and can contribute to building bridges toward a common understanding of protecting cultural heritage and using archaeology as a tool for co-existence between the two nations.

3. *Looting*

Archaeologists should play a positive role in preventing looting and illicit trade in antiquities. Generally speaking, one could say that if trade in antiquities is outlawed, then dealers are less able to operate freely. Looting from archaeological sites will decrease if looters lose the motivation to dig. Archaeologists are the bridge between the past and the present and can work to change perceptions and actions for future generations to come. The goal of archaeologists should be to make local societies and governments understand the importance of cultural heritage.

When we are able to do so, then we can stand together against those who are using archaeology as a tool to fit their agenda.

Conclusion

Cultural heritage among both Israeli and Palestinian societies should transcend ideological concerns and emphasize the protection of archaeological materials as a common heritage. Archaeologists can protect the heritage of the Holy Land when they accept the coexistence of other ethnic groups and religions in the region, not only in the present day but also while documenting the archaeological record. Archaeologists can use their expertise to create a mutual understanding of the past regardless of ethnicity.

This part of the world has been a passage to the old civilizations and dozens of ethnic groups and nationalities have been part of creating its rich history. It is about time to realize, therefore, that no ethnic group or sole religion has the right to live in prosperity and suppress other ethnic or religious groups. Both Israeli and Palestinians, have to realize the right of existence for the counterpart. When future generations will cooperate with each other to build a common future, then we have achieved our goal, not only as archaeologists, but also as citizens of our respective nations.

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Is archaeology a useful tool for peacemaking in the Palestine/ Israel conflict?

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Andrew Leon Hanna's article aims to encourage community-based practices in the field of public archaeology as a resource for building bridges and strengthening bonds between the two communities in conflict in the Levant. Following the theory of bottom-up change (after Hemmer *et al*. 2006), he argues that building links of trust

among Palestinians and Israelis on the ground will help them solve the political conflict in the region. He considers that archaeology has been used to drive ideologies of ancient division when evidence actually encourages unity. Moreover, he believes that archaeology could be transformed into a tool for peacemaking. And to illustrate this, he gives three examples of archaeo-tourism, community archaeology, and inclusive archaeology. Hanna has very good intentions, but I am afraid that he has presented us with a rather oversimplified view of the potentials of public archaeology practice as a peace-building tool in this tortuous political conflict. Here, I would like to focus my comments on two short issues which I think are essential for the full development of the arguments made by Hanna. Firstly, I will focus on the analysis of the Israeli-Palestine context made by him because in political and war conflicts it is necessary to have a full picture of the complex political—but also human, historical, social and economic—background. Secondly, I will focus on the theory of bottom-up change referenced by Hanna, citing Bruce Hemmer, Paula Garb, Marlett Phillips and John L. Graham (2006). I believe that the oversimplified approach made by Hanna toward these key issues may be the origin of his well intended but, nonetheless, under-developed conclusions on the role of public archaeology as a tool for peacemaking between Palestine and Israel.

My first comment here is on Hanna's "snapshot" analysis of the conflict in Israel/Palestine. Actually, it lacks the depth necessary to understand the historical, current political and human situation in Palestine and Israel. In the process of conflict resolution it is important to understand and empathize with all the voices in conflict, and to do so it is necessary to have a clear picture of the kaleidoscopic daily dimensions of the conflict, and where violence is (just) the expedite answer of a deeper and more complex human experience of social and political injustice and fear. Hanna summarizes the Israel/Palestine conflict in war victories (the 1948 and the 1967, and the 1989s Intifada) and concludes that the conflict totalled 8,000 deaths in 1980, added an extensive separation barrier (known as 'the security fence' by the Israelis, 'the Apartheid wall' by the Palestinians, or 'the Wall' by the International Court of Justice), and that the latest tensions (2014) in Gaza produced more than 2,000 casualties. I am afraid the conflict between Palestine and Israel is more than these casualties. A

deeper (though succinct) overview could be introduced in the article, so the readers get a better picture of what are actually the core characteristics of the conflict between these two communities: from its historic roots in 1896 Herzl's book *Der Judenstaat* until today's regional politics (both locally and internationally), but especially how all this is affecting the daily lives of both Palestinians and Israelis (i.e. human rights, the occupation, social justice, militarization of society). Accordingly, I would suggest some key references, such as Beinin and Stein 2006; Benvenisti 2000; Pappe 2006; Rotberg 2006; and Scham *et al*. 2005, (to cite some among the long list of specialized literature), and some useful online sources of information such as the Foundation for Middle East Peace (http://www.fmep.org), PASSIA (http://www.passia.org), B'Tselem (http://www.btselem.org), or the Alternative Information Center (http://www.alternativenews. org/english/), who have been working in the region for decades. I would also add some more authoritative international journals, such as *Le Monde Diplomatique* (http://www.monde-diplomatique. fr/index/sujet/conflitisraeloarabe), the *Palestine/Israeli Journal of Politics, Economics & Culture* (http://www.pij.org), the *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* (http://www.tandfonline.com/action/. U5DVcBYijwI), and some other specialized journalists' accounts, such as Enderlin (2003). For those readers aware of the potentials of drama and documentary films, I would recommend *Promises* (2001, Bolado, Goldberg and Shapiro), *Paradise Now* (2005, Hanry Abu-Assad), *Lemon Tree* (2008, Eran Riklis), *Waltz with Bashir* (2008, Ari Folman), and *Ajami* (2009, Scandar Copti and Yaron Shani), on the basis that these productions, beyond any academic analysis, are able to add the empathic view necessary to embed the conflict to its actual human dimension. Next to this, and because Hanna also gives a snapshot on the power of archaeology in the existing ideology of conflict and division, I would also like to suggest some of the classic references on the role of archaeology in building up both the region's social, religious, and political imaginations, and the inspiration for violent struggles over the territory and national-cultural landmarks: Abu El-Haj 2001; Finkelstein and Silberman 2001; Glock 1994; Gori 2013; Greenberg and Keinan 2007; and Whitelam 1996. I hope that by expanding the sources of information consulted by Hanna, the reader can get a deeper and multi-perspective portrayal of the topic under discussion, a necessary exercise for an accurate understanding of the Israeli/Palestinian hostilities.

My second observation on Hanna's article will address his under-argued advocacy for the theory of bottom-up change (Hemmer *et al*. 2006) as the most useful conflict resolution program for the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Hanna supports this theory and uses it as his theoretical background for defending the grass-roots activism of public archaeology in the present conflict's resolution. However, no arguments are given so that the reader may understand why this theory is so radically different from other theories of conflict analysis and resolution previously discussed (i.e. Deutsch and Coleman 2000) or their updated revisions (i.e. Bercovitch et al. 2009; Ramsbotham *et al*. 2012; Wallensteen 2007). What are the insights of the theory of Hemmer *et al*. in relation to other research and evaluations on peacebuilding work (i.e. Reychler and Paffenholz 2001; Paffenholz 2010)? Why is this theory a useful tool for the particular Israel/Palestine contention? And, more in detail, why, applied to public archaeology, may this transform archaeology into a key element in the regional grass-roots peace-building activism? In summary, what makes the theory of bottom-up change so special and useful to Hanna's interest for arguing for the role of archaeology in the peacemaking between Israel and Palestine?

It is clearer that today's citizen activism has an important role in democratizing local and international politics, and in certain regions, such as the Levant, the grass-roots movement has played a crucial role in building bridges of peace between communities in conflict. Local initiatives definitely have encouraged cooperation between the Israeli and the Palestinian societies in conflict that essentially had added the much needed channels for trust building. And public archaeology can certainly be one of these trust-building bridges, as Hanna believes and exemplifies in three cases mentioned in his text (MEJDI Tours, Lod Communal Archaeological Program and Emek Shaveh). However, I think it is necessary to differentiate between political solutions in the region (that is, the conflict resolution), and the peace process necessary for a sustainable stability of two societies involved (that is, the peacebuilding). In my opinion, this is an essential aspect to differentiate when analysing any conflict under discussion. The Israeli/Palestinian conflict is a political one that needs political/diplomatic solutions (whether this involves a more or less active citizen activism), but also has a human side that deeply affects the social relationship between both countries'

citizens, the capacity of both societies to heal their own citizens from hate and distrust (justice and reconciliation), and the acceptance of the political resolution whatever this could be (post-trauma peace process). The political solution may finally involve the acknowledgment of the two-states solution and accordingly the recognition of the key issues in this conflict: the future status of Jerusalem; the future of Palestinian refugees expelled from their territories during 1948 and 1967 (they and their descendants today total approximately four million people, 40% of today's Palestinians); the disposition of the Israeli settlements (about half a million settlers in both authorized and unauthorized settlements in the West Bank); the borders and nature of the Palestinian state (the Green Line or pre-1967 borders) and accordingly the Israeli security in the region; and the future of over one million Palestinians living inside the Israeli borders (also see Finkelstein 2014). It had not been a serious aim to solve those issues in any of the Israel/ Palestine international conferences; it is agreed nowadays that those are the key issues to be solved if any real political conflict resolution could be developed. In addition, in order to fulfil this political/diplomatic process, both societies will need to go through a process of gaining reciprocal confidence (also called peace building process), something not easy in the current situation. From the 1993 Oslo Accords to the 2000 Camp David Summit, politicians had never really attained meaningful negotiations. Essentially, the Oslo Agreements were not put into effect: the five key 'final status' issues of the conflict remained unsolved, and the violent occupation of Gaza and the West Bank continued. Consequently, during the last 20 years of conflict, both the Israeli and the Palestinian societies had experienced a dramatic shift to more extremist positions which only helps to support violent and aggressive governmental discourse and actions (e.g. suicide bombers, Hamas assassinations, kidnapping of soldiers, military aggression, expansion of settlements, threats on human security, and constraints to civilians' health access, food supplies, and employment opportunities; e.g. see *Human Right Watch's World Report 2014: Israel & Palestine* http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2014/country-chapters/israel-and-palestine), and to wide attitudes of distrust and feelings of adversary amongst each civilian population (Kaufman 1993). Salem and Kaufman (2009: 439) noticed that the rationalization of

violence, including the justification of its reactions, had been one of the main problems not only in the political regional negotiations, but especially in the grass-roots peace initiatives: "community peacebuilders work within an occupier/occupied relationship and a hostile environment. Violence breeds counter violence: this vicious cycle makes peace work extremely difficult and often physically dangerous. When civilians are targeted, the resulting trauma becomes a fact of life. Such vulnerability generates feelings of uncertainty, threat, and stress, which leads to an accumulation of reciprocal hostility". More interestingly, these authors recognised in the same article that the lack of progress in official negotiations had effectively put an increased burden on ordinary citizens to take the initiative in building peace in their own habitat. The authors argued then that the civil society (e.g. NGOs, professional groups, social movements, charitable associations, intellectuals and artists, etc.) needs to search for common grounds for the promotion of peacebuilding relationships. This leads to what Salem and Kaufman (2009) describe as the "sectorial peace" situation where the civil society (re)creates all possible community bridges to ensure trust-building attitudes between the two societies as the only sustainable relationship that can both endure the rigors of confrontational times, and successfully hold the long-term political/diplomatic process. In this sense, the community peacebuilding process becomes both a sort of short—and medium—term survival for the involved societies, and the ground for more imaginative ideas for the resolution of the conflict (e.g. the formula 'land for peace').

Arguably, there is great potential in a theory of peacebuilding that focuses on mutual understanding among people on the ground, as it seems to be in Hemmer's *et al*. theory of bottom-up change, but little has been described in Hanna´s article, nor has this been contextualized with reference to public archaeology practice. Hanna's article aims to be a practical exercise of how the theory of bottom-up change can be successfully applied to a particular case study (the Palestinian/Israeli conflict) using one particular field of the social sciences (public archaeology). He aims to demonstrate "how citizen peacebuilders can create the democratic, social, cultural and human capital necessary to effectively engage national level politics by first building peace and democracy at the grassroots and in local politics" (Hemmer *et al*. 2006). However, further impact analysis

needs to be developed by Hanna to actually demonstrate that public archaeology in the region holds that position of "specialized citizen peacebuilding" organization that produces "mutually reinforcing growth toward peace and democracy at all levels of society" (Hemmer *et al*. 2006). The examples of public archaeology practices described by Hanna are interesting on their own, as public archaeology projects but also as entrepreneurial experiences in a contested region where archaeological and historic narratives are suffering from political tensions. They are surely generating critical views on the actual situation of archaeology in the region, and in doing so they are providing both critical views on the use of history for political interests and bridges of dialogue between different peoples and cultures in the region. In the process of building trustful links among citizens, they could certainly help to frame a different neighbourhood's relationship in the region. They would certainly help to provide the so needed empathic perspective on adversary/neighbour's opinions and necessities. Public archaeology in the region is a necessary experience to develop and support the benefit of friendly relationships among the contested communities: it has a clear role in a playground where different views on the reality, either past or present, could be discussed and perceived among antagonists, and therefore an exercise of community practice in a time and space of disputed lands. But I would appreciate having more analytical tools to see both the effects of these practices in relation to these aims, and how these initiatives are working together with other bridge-building activities in the region under a common vision of a sustainable peacebuilding process.

Finally, I would like to add that we need to also be realistic and accept that public archaeology will not solve the "lack of understanding between everyday Israeli and Palestinians", as Hanna naively summarizes as the "deeper issue beyond the conflict". The Israeli/Palestine conflict is actually much more complex than just a lack of understanding. Public archaeology can certainly play a role in the regional peacemaking process, as far as archaeologists aim to be locally active political citizens, but it will be more effective if it joints the regional peacebuilding camp, as described by Salem and Kaufman (2009), and becomes another of the peace activities working alongside other initiatives in the region (Kaufman *et al*. 2006).

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