



Wadi Rushmia: The variegated histories of a lost nature and community

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Abstract

This essay will examine a place and community in the city of Haifa, Israel, that no longer exists - a resilient community that survived destruction for decades, until it gave in to the attempts of destruction and evacuation by the municipality of Haifa. The essay will review the history of the urban planning of the place as appears in surveys, maps and planning schemes, in parallel, the essay will explore the history of the place as narrated through a series of essay-form documentary films. The paper will explore the potential for a variegated, full and rich history of the resilient Wadi Rushmia and its inhabitants. It will describe the formal history of Wadi Rushmia as it appears in historical documents and planning materials such as maps and plans, and then examine its history through documentary films that use self-narrated stories of inhabitants and poetic point of view of the film maker, to challenge conventional top down planning practices. It will be argued that the destruction of the community and nature of the Wadi and its replacement by a network of roads, has turned it from what Augé (1995) refers to as a 'place', in which people have lived their everyday life, accumulating memories, time spent together, and collective history, into a 'non-place' a space of transience, in which the time of living and social communication is replaced by an accelerated temporality. The paper will then refer to film, to demonstrate the immense generative potentials presented by the filmmaking medium to research of the built environment and that using particular filming methodologies may contribute to the accumulation of multi-media knowledge of place. Film, it will be argued, works against these processes of destruction of the place, as it captures the spatial and temporal experience of the daily lives of the Wadi's community, in its final years. It will be argued that films form an alternative archive of the everyday lives of ordinary people, an archive which will not only guard the past, but also project into the future, to the imagination of a more ethical and sustainable urban reality.

Keywords: documentary film, place, sustainable community, Trauma

1. Introduction

Wadi (valley) Rushmia in the city of Haifa on the Mediterranean is a deep river gully, beginning with a steep incline on the eastern slopes of Mount Carmel and descending to the port. Though it is located centrally, access to it is difficult. It provides a unique view of steep forested mountainside in the midst of a constantly changing city (Figure 1). The Wadi used to be the habitat of a multi-ethnic community that lived in its secluded wilderness.





Figure 1 Wadi Rushmia, photograph by the author, 2017

The Wadi community survived for over a century. Its nucleus was established by migrant workers from Gaza, in the beginning of the 20th century, during Ottoman rule and the construction of the Hejaz railway (1904). Due to the housing shortage in the old city of Haifa the workers established a neighbourhood of tents and shacks (Mansour, 2017). Throughout the years the Wadi's population had grown and often changed. At its peak in the 1930s it reached three thousand. Its residents had escaped early in the 1947-48 battles and the houses remained empty until the 1950s.

After the war of 1948 the city was left in trauma. The majority of its Arab residents had fled, became refugees and scattered throughout the region and beyond. A flood of Jewish immigrants came after the holocaust and the establishment of the Jewish State. In the 1950s, due to the housing shortage, the State settled immigrants in the houses in the Wadi which used to belong to Arabs. The neighbourhood grew, and again, its population reached a peak of around three thousand - Jewish immigrants with modest means, holocaust survivors, and Palestinians who had lost their homes in the battles of 1947-48 and returned to the city - fragments of the city's traumatic past. Life in the Wadi was simple. Some lived in the stone houses built before 1948, others in makeshift housing. It was an intriguing place, with houses built on the steep mountainside, and a racially mixed population, in a city which neighbourhoods were traditionally divided by religion. As the state settled immigrants there in the 1950s, it disregarded the fact that housing was illegal in the Wadi, since the area was defined a public open space in the British Mandate Haifa master plan made in 1934 (Figure 2). Later on it used this law to evacuate them. Since the late 1960s, the neighbourhood has gone through repeated waves of destruction (Shlomi, Reuveni and Karmeli, 1968). Despite the law against building in the Wadi, a mall was built inside it in 2001 (Saul, 2002). Plans were made (though never realized) to turn the valley into a park (Aiadat, 2022). One early plan that was realized in the Wadi is a road tunnel dug under it, connecting the West and East of the Carmel, that opened in 2010, and a highway network that passes in it, paved a few years later. These transportation routes have destroyed the small area of leftover nature and human inhabitants that survived. The inhabitants were gradually cleared out and in 2008 the last residents were evacuated and the community had perished.

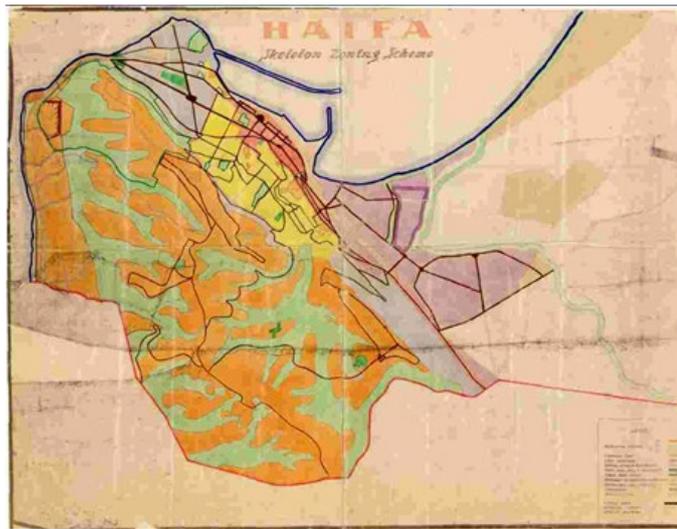


Figure 2 Haifa Plan 229, 1934. Source: the Haifa City Archive

Wadi Rushmia, which existed as a place of inhabitancy since the early 20th century, was gradually disappearing, and in early 21st century, it became part of a road network. As the physical remains of the community in the valley were disappearing, other means of knowledge were crucial to the remembrance and understanding of its story and history. The community which had lived there for decades, accumulated memories and stories which were effaced once the Wadi was destroyed, and its traces remained, arbitrarily, in private collections of past residents (Figure 3, 4).

A significant testimony to a century of existence remained in documentary films. Film, with its ability to tell stories, its documentation of passing time, movement and sound, adds to the two-dimensional history told by words and maps (Bruno, 2002). The films which the paper will relate to are the Wadi Rushmia trilogy by filmmaker Amos Gitai: 'Wadi' (1981), 'Wadi Ten Years Later' (1991), and 'Wadi Grand Canyon' (2001). The series is a gentle and poetic portrayal of the people living in the Wadi and its gradual destruction, in three points in time. Another film examined will be 'Roshmia', a film by Salim Abu-Jabel, which came out in 2015, and documents the final years of the last (human) inhabitants of the valley – Yousef Hassan and his wife Amna.



Figure 3 the way leading to upper part of the Wadi, with some houses in the background, 1960s source: The Private Family collection of the Hoffer Family and Ilan Segal.



Figure 4 a former resident (Yitzhak Hoffer) and wife, under fruit trees in the Wadi, 1960s. Source: the Private Family collection of the Hoffer family and Ilan Segal.

The few formal historical records of the Wadi relate to its legal status throughout the years, to public buildings and infrastructure built there, but not to the shacks, houses and most significantly, the residents. In order to inhibit the obliteration of the Wadi and community from public memory, and to create an archive of their lost history, a different approach to history is needed, one that focuses on the everyday and small places, in which film is considered a historical source (Smith 1976). *The Annales School*, and *Microhistory* schools of history may be referred to in this context, pertaining to the significance of documenting the history of small, seemingly insignificant places over a relatively long period of time.

The paper will begin with the formal urban history of Wadi Rushmia as appears in primary sources such as maps, printed documents – and plans from the 1930s onwards; it will continue with the filmed history of the Wadi and its inhabitants, relating to film both as a primary source that documents the place and the changes it is going through, as well as a secondary source that supplies interpretation and commentary of what is documented. The paper will relate to the transformation of the Wadi from a place of inhabitancy to a part of a road network, through the concept of 'place' and 'non-place' (Augé 1995). The urban history of the Wadi found in institutional archives will be examined in relation to the 'subjective' documentation in the films, relating to Derrida's notion of the archive, and archive fever (1995), and the alternative archive referred to by Azoulay (2014). It will be argued that weaving together these different types of historical sources leads to a more profound understanding of the place, working against planned, state-led obliteration of the place and the eradication of its memory. The films, I will argue, by documenting the everyday life of this marginal community, and giving it a voice, work against the forces of obliteration which have turned the Wadi to 'non-place', erasing its community from the face of the earth as well as from memory. Thus the films constitute an alternative archive of this forgotten urban enclave, an archive which does not only guard the past, but also projects into the future, questioning the ethics of urban planning and the sustainability of urban reality.

2. The Valley of Rushmia and the History of modern Haifa

The city of Haifa began as a small village on a plain at the shore of the Mediterranean and the feet of the Carmel mountain. In the 18th century Daher el Omar, the autonomous ruler of the

Galilee under the Ottoman empire¹ reestablished the new port town of Haifa nearby. While the old village was situated on a plain, the new town, which remained as the location of the present port along the Haifa Bay, was built on a narrow strip of land at the northern foot of Mount Carmel, to make it easier to defend by land (Yazbak 1998: 14). This town is considered the beginning of modern Haifa. In the early 20th century, the Ottomans, who had ruled Haifa since the 17th century, connected Haifa to their Hejaz railway by building the Damascus Haifa road (1904), and in 1909 they built the port (Herbert and Sosnovsky: 1993). The city thus became a significant location in the region. Haifa developed following the Ottoman system, according to which communities (Jewish, Muslim and Christian) were divided according to their religious affiliations, creating a demographic pattern of Christian neighbourhoods to the west, Muslims to the east and the newly established Jewish community at the foot of Mount Carmel to the south of the Old City (Seikaly: 1995).

It was at that time the nucleus of Rushmia Wadi formed, as migrant labourers, who came to work in the Ottoman infrastructural projects built their tents and shacks there. During the British mandate (1918-1948) the city developed intensively. The British envisioned Haifa as a significant regional port city. They made plans and carried out modernization and development projects in the downtown, including the planned destruction of parts of it. The British made a census of the city's residents in 1922 (Barron, 1923, p. 33) and an urban survey of its different zones and neighbourhoods in 1930 (Simpson Report, 1930). As part of this process, areas which were not officially planned like Wadi Rushmia went through basic planning stages. In 1929 a parcellation plan was made for the Wadi, probably for the first time, possibly ordered by the British government. The plan showed the stone quarry in the Wadi and the separate private plots (Figure 5).

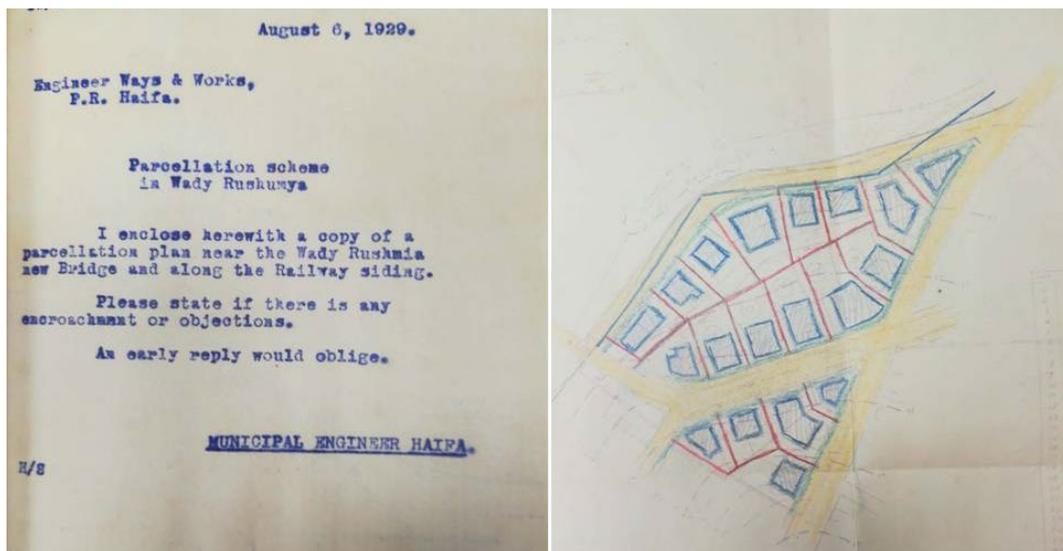


Figure 5 a parcellation plan of the Wadi, 1929, Source: The Haifa City Archive

The population of Haifa and the Wadi continued to grow in the 1930s and 1940s, as more workers migrated to the city with the expansion of the port works, and construction of the bridge over the valley in 1927-28, and its population increased. As Haifa was developing, a Master Plan was prepared in 1933-1934 by British planners. It dictated that residential neighbourhoods would be built at hilltops, and valleys remain as green public open spaces (HP 229) (Figure 2). In these years the city was changing as Jewish immigrants who flooded the city fleeing Nazim, took part in the development and building of the city. This growth was overshadowing the cities older, Arab neighbourhoods, which were considered primitive and underdeveloped by authorities at the time². Despite collaborations between the groups, there were also political tensions. Arabs sensed that

¹ Daher el Omar, (1689-1775) was the autonomous Arab ruler of northern Palestine in the mid-18th century while the region was part of the Ottoman Empire Philipp (Thomas, 2002, p. 393).

² Lionel Watson, the British City Engineer (1934-51) saw Haifa's old town as a typical Middle Eastern urban agglomeration, unsuitable for modern living. (Kolodney & Kallus, 2008: 334)

Jewish population growth and financial development was leaving them behind and unequally encouraged by the British (Seikaly 2002, Yazbak 2002). In the 1940s, tensions were growing steadily in the city and throughout the country until their climax in the 1948 war, a war which the Jewish population calls until this day the War of Independence, and Palestinian population calls the Nakba, meaning catastrophe (Goren 2006, Yazbak 2002). In the battles, as the Arab fighting organizations were centered in the Muslim neighbourhood of Halissa and the adjacent Wadi Rushmia, these neighbourhoods became a major target for the Jewish Haganah and Irgun fighters in Haifa. Their occupants were the first to be driven out of their homes (Goren 2006).

With the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the city had changed drastically. It lost its geopolitical dominance as a regional trade center with a port and railway, since there were no longer connections between Palestine, now called Israel, and its Arab neighbours. Hostilities before and during the war drove some 65,000 Arab residents out of the city, leaving downtown Haifa and the Old City area practically deserted (Kolodney & Kallus, 2008: 332). Some of them came back to the city but no longer held legal ownership of their homes as they were 'internally displaced' and their legal status was of 'present-absentees'.³

After the war, due to the housing shortage and massive immigration, the Jewish Agency settled immigrants in properties in Arab neighbourhoods including Wadi Rushmia, whose Arab owners left behind.⁴ Holocaust survivors, Jewish immigrants from Arab countries, and Palestinian refugees, some of them originally from Haifa, came to live in the Wadi. Between the 1950s and the 1970s, an ethnically mixed population numbering a few thousands lived in the Wadi in close knit relations.⁵

2.1. A Central Park: Rushmia in the first Zionist plan for Haifa

In the early 1950s work began on a new master plan for the city of Haifa, in which Wadi Rushmia had great significance. It was prepared in the years 1952-54 by a committee of architects and engineers headed by architect and town planner Yitzhaq Perlstein. The plan was based on socialist principals and aspired to supply good quality housing for residents of all social classes, close to employment areas, and with a view to the mountain and bay. In the finished scheme presented to municipality officials in 1954, the old city, and the adjacent neighbourhood of Hadar Hacarmel (one of the first Jewish neighbourhoods of Haifa) were to become the central areas of Haifa, with the highest population density. The Rushmia basin was envisioned as the most prominent location in Haifa: a green valley, geographically at the center of the city (Figure 6). The plan envisioned it as the city's Central Park: "with the paving of the new roads in the Rushmia basin, and the preparation of the pedestrian pathways, there is no doubt that this park will be the future, due to its centrality, the most significant and most central open area in the whole city"(TPF 1954).

³ Present absentees are Arab internally displaced persons (IDPs) who fled or were expelled from their homes in Mandatory Palestine during the 1947–1949 Palestine war but remained within the area that became the state of Israel. In 1950, 46,000 out of the 156,000 Israeli Arabs in Israel were considered Present absentees. According to 2015 estimates from Palestinian NGO BADIL, there are 384,200 IDPs in Israel and 334,600 IDPs in the Palestinian territories (BADIL, 2015).

⁴ This was done all around the country, in the Arab villages and urban neighborhoods that were left behind.

⁵ Stories of the friendly neighbor relations in the Wadi are narrated by a past resident in Gitai's film *Wadi ten Years After* (1991).

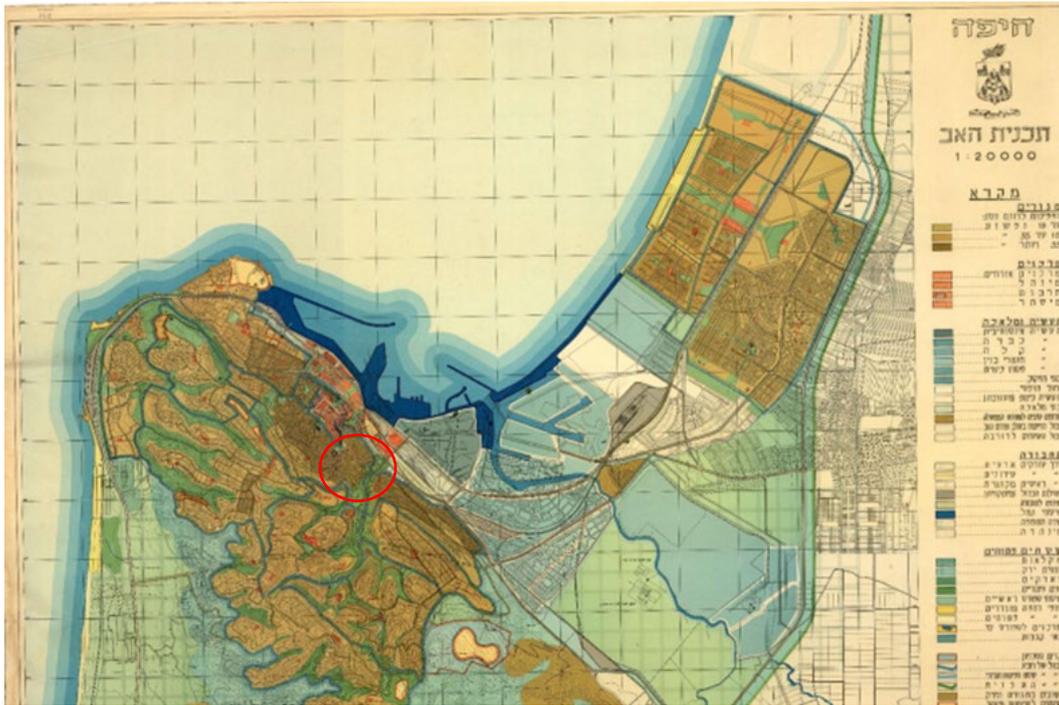


Figure 6 TPF 1954, Master Plan for Haifa by the Office for Master Plan of Haifa, Source: the Haifa City Archive

However, the 1954 master plan was cast aside. The Rushmia Wadi did not become a central park but a backyard. Since the late 1960s Israeli authorities made efforts to destroy the houses and depopulate the Wadi (Schori et al. 1968). The city was developing as far away as possible from its past: the downtown was left in its ruins,⁶ the Arab neighbourhoods around it were severely neglected, gradually deteriorated to poverty and crime, with many houses destroyed. It had become an 'area of trauma', that could not be planned by conventional means (Schwake 2018).

In 1999, the huge "Grand Canyon" shopping mall was opened in the Wadi - the largest in Israel at the time. The entrepreneurs of the mall used the British master plan for the city of Haifa, mentioned above, which was still the stature plan, which permits to build "recreation and leisure" facilities within areas defined as open green space (Saul 2002). The mall, with its large billboards, is positioned like a fortress inside the Wadi, and its name, 'Grand Canyon', inspired by the Wadi, is ironic, as it turns its back on the Wadi – with a blank wall 30 meters high.

In 2003, a landscape plan for the Wadi was submitted, proposing the reclamation of the Wadi and the planning of a scenic route through it which would integrate it into the urban landscape, a plan which was never realized.⁷ In the meantime, it was finally decided to dig an inter-mountain tunnel that will ease mobility between the parts of the city connecting the neighbourhoods of the upper Carmel with the Bay Area and the port.⁸ The last residents of the Wadi were evicted, and a highway was paved at the bottom of the Wadi, decreasing to a minimum its open natural area and the area that could be used as a public park (Figure 7).

⁶ It was destroyed by Israeli army soon after 1948 war (Kolodney and Kallus 2008, 338).

⁷ The design was made by Moria-Sekely Landscape Architecture Office, and was commissioned by the department for long term planning in the Haifa municipality headed by architect Ziva Kolodney. (Kolodney, 2007).

⁸ The plan to build a tunnel appeared first in a British plan for the city, and the idea that it would reach its first exit in the top of the Rushmia Wadi appeared in the 1954 master plan. See 1954 Master Plan, Haifa City Archive



Figure 7 works in the Wadi, 2014, Source: 'Roshmia', Saleem Abu-Jabel, 2015

Rushmia and the old city and surrounding neighbourhoods were Haifa's 'areas of urban trauma', areas with which conventional positivist planning strategies could not contend. As noted by Schwake, when an urban area is subjected to a trauma, its everyday life is disturbed and unable to regenerate, causing it to perform as an exterritorial urban void (2018: 51). In Haifa, urban trauma was created as Israeli planners aimed to destroy and rebuild Arab neighbourhoods, not tending to the trauma that cast its shadow on the urban space and its people, and therefore succeeded only in intensifying its symptoms. As Schwake notes, when an area is redeveloped with a clear intent to obliterate its past, the urban system will be unable to recover from its past, and the trauma will continue to dictate its everyday life (ibid). Urban trauma could be worked through only by acknowledging the past, then trauma could be reconciled by spatial transformations and the improvement of conditions (Hatuka 2010). This paper will suggest that film, which visualizes spaces of trauma, make their stories audible, and become their archive, may be a means of acknowledging and coming to terms with the past, taking part in processes of finding just and sustainable solutions to areas of trauma.

2.2. Place and the Alternative to Formal History

The films show that the Wadi – a unique enclave of nature and society in the heart of the city, is a place with a 'time-space' of its own, a space-time which is seen as it is drawing to an end, as result of brutal and mindless destruction. Augé refers to the transformation of time and space and to the erosion, and even loss of experienced history and lived space in the contemporary era (1995). The process in which the Wadi as a place of the community is destroyed and a highway is paved through it, may be read in terms of the distinction Augé makes between 'place' to 'non-place'. The distinction between 'place' and 'non-place', Augé argues, is based on the difference between place and space [...] "the term 'place', refers to an event (which has taken place), a myth (said to have taken place) or a history (high places). 'Space' is more abstract [...] it is applied in much the same way to an area, a distance between two things or points (a two-metre 'space' is left between the posts of a fence) or to a temporal expanse ('in the space of a week') (it is) in use today [...] in the specific language of various institutions representative of our time. [...] Non-places are transitory, where human actors pass through as anonymous individuals but do not relate/identify with in any intimate sense." (Augé, 1995: 82). The Wadi, as a place of living, of telling and hearing stories and of spending time together, has turned into a space of passage, a highway, the time spent in it is dictated by traffic lights.

Not only has the Wadi as a place of a community ceased to exist, formal historical documents that refer to the community that inhabited it are also very few, it being an informal neighbourhood. Rushmia as neighbourhood of Haifa, is forgotten, as it was never official. Its documentation remains

in private family archives, which yet have to be mined. As early as 1976 Paul Smith noted the significance of film as material for historians and called for historians' engagement in film. He called for the usage of film as a teaching source, and for the development of film literacy and analysis among historians (Smith 1976). The study of the history of Wadi Rushmia through the stories of everyday lives of its people, may be referred to the approach to historical knowledge that values the everyday, the ordinary and the 'non-significant' such that may be traced back to the *Annales* school. The *Annales*, founded by Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre in the late 1920s, replaced the study of leaders with the lives of ordinary people, and while aiming at a "total history," also yielded microstudies of villages and regions.⁹ Another relevant historical approach in this respect is 'microhistory', in which intensive historical investigation is made of a relatively well-defined smaller object, most often a single event, or a "village community", a group of persons, even an individual person (Ginzburg and Poni, 1991: 3). The films about Wadi Rushmia focus on 'small scale' everyday lives, through the filmmakers' points of view, and through the self-narratives of inhabitants. The filming is carried out in slow camera movements, with long duration takes in real time, and the study, in both films, stretches over years, and even decades. Film: from planner's propaganda to the stories of and by urban inhabitants

Films have been a part of the world of planning since the 1920s, when what Ciacci (2010) calls "Town Planners' Cinema" emerged (Ciacci, 2010). Ciacci cites examples in which the tools of cinema were made to serve a thoroughly modernist, expert-driven approach. These films were intended to convince "the public" of the social duties and potential of town planning and to persuade the public of a particular planning scheme which had already been thought through and was being proposed as "the solution" by "the experts" (ibid). One example is the British film, *Housing Problems* (Elton and Anstey 1935). It presented everyday life in London slums and proposed the move to modern, spacious, clean housing projects. Another example is the film *The Proud City: A Plan for London* (Ralphe Keene, 1946). The film explains the re-planning of Post-war London as a progressive and reactive endeavour that aspires to supply proper housing and other necessary amenities and solve conflicts.

Sandercock and Attili (2010) argue for films that would be part of a collaborative planning theory and situational ethics, in reaction to "official" or top-down uses of film. They relate to the epistemological crisis in planning that began in the early 1970s, citing Friedmann (1973) and Churchman (1971). Friedmann criticized the limitations of "expert knowledge" and advocated "mutual learning" or "transactive planning", designed to draw on local and experiential knowledge, placing it in dialogue with expert knowledge, and Churchman explored the value of stories to the planning process (Churchman 1971, p.178). Sandercock and Attili note that the "story turn" in planning has been one response to the epistemological crisis that demanded the acknowledgement of the necessity of using many other ways of knowing: experiential, intuitive and somatic knowledges; local knowledges; knowledges based on the practices of talking and listening, seeing, contemplating and sharing; and knowledges expressed in visual, symbolic, ritual and other artistic ways (Sandercock and Attili, 2010, p. 26). Bathla and Papanicolaou refer to film as a means of reframing conflicts of the urban and of housing and redevelopment (2022). They argue that in allowing for sensory, aural, and visual possibilities, film serves as a generative medium allowing us to make meaning from the embodied experiences of dwelling, resistance, and contestation, allowing a unique opportunity for learning from 'the ordinary practitioners of the city that live "down below," below the thresholds at which visibility begins' (de Certeau, 1984, p. 94), and relate to the protagonists of the films about these conflicts as 'liminal beings' (Westerveld, 2010), experiencing and reflecting upon the loss of ecology and dwelling, and projecting into future possibilities of becoming and undoing spatial injustice". They note that "Film opens up temporal and sensorial boundaries of the 'contested urbanity' under formation" and argue for a filming that "allows a reality to emerge from the film, thus considering the importance of the contested nature

⁹ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopedia (2017, April 19). Annales school. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Annales-school>, accessed 09/12/22

of housing and the urban as cinematic subjects" (ibid 351-352). In the cases examined, film enables to experience the unique individuals that live in the Wadi, listen to their stories, and sense the particular space-time of this community, in a way that cannot be achieved by conventional two-dimensional, maps and plans. Wadi Rushmia and its community are given presence through the films. Though the films of the two directors differ from one another, their aesthetics of filming are similar, both using long duration shots, and the speakers' narratives without any external information given through subtitles or voiceover. Thus, I argue, the Wadi, as a place, is reconstituted through the act of filming and through narratives of the people who have been inhabiting it.

2.2.1. Wadi Trilogy: Amos Gitai

Amos Gitai is a prominent Israeli filmmaker, who, in his rich career, made over 90 artworks, including films (features and documentaries), publications, exhibitions and performances. His work has been mainly evolving around the Arab-Israeli conflict, and, as he was trained as an architect, often has to do with space and place in political conflict. Milja Radovic describes Gitai as an "architect of cinematic space", which contrasts the whole complexity of the region with the "stories of people", and who carefully uses space and time to compose a cinematic scene that aims to transform the audience by telling them an authentic story (Radovic 2017, p. 70). Over a period of twenty years Gitai had documented Wadi Rushmia, resulting in a series of three films made in three points in time: *Wadi*, (1981), *Wadi Ten Years Later* (1991), and *Wadi Grand Canyon* (2001). The films show the people who still live in the Wadi in their domestic environment, which is built and maintained utilizing a collection of artifacts and any kind of waste materials they could find from the garbage of the city: used tires, tin, pieces of cardboard, wooden planks, iron sheets, plastic sheets, fabrics. Gardens and orchards were planted beside the houses and inhabitants tend to them. The films follow everyday life, the rough and meagre living conditions and the work of maintenance: roof repair, reinforcing a wall that the wind blew over, repairing a leak, feeding and caring for animals, nurturing vegetation: watering, hoeing, pruning, planting. These tasks take up many hours. In the times in between work, the inhabitants sit together, eat from and enjoy their gardens, play, sing, smoke, talk. They have their own sense of time, slower, different from the incessant rush of the outside (Figure 8).

2.2.1.1. Filming against the act of Planned Destruction: An Alternative Archive

In the plans for modern Haifa, Wadi Rushmia, though inhabited since the beginning of the 20th century, was not considered a legal residential area. Even in the years when it was populated by thousands, it was considered an illegal development. In the British Mandate map (1934) it was marked it a green open space, a zone in which the building of housing is forbidden, although there were already many houses built in the Wadi. In the first Israeli master plan of 1954 it was envisioned as a central park, and later on, as central transportation hub. The 'garden' that was already there, where Jews and Arabs lived together and thrived, guarding nature, was overlooked. For a majority of the planners and city leaders it was a disturbance, a stain on the neat and orderly master plan. On this background, the films, presenting the unique community, are even more essential.

The people in the films speak in ongoing monologues, with no subtitles that provide any external identifying information besides what they tell themselves and one about the other. On the backgrounds of the monologues, when the speaker is not in the frame, there are wide angle traveling shots of the Wadi, taken from the mountainside or the bed of the Wadi, and from the road on the top of the Wadi. These shots convey the unique time-space of the Wadi— a world apart, with its own sense of time and place (Figure 9, 10).



Figure 8 shack of Yousuf and Amna. Source: 'Roshmia', Salim Abi-Jabel, 2015



Figure 9 Amna in the courtyard of the shack, Source: 'Roshmia', Salim Abi-Jabel, 2015



Figure 10 Amna and Yousuf in the courtyard of the shack, Source: 'Roshmia', Salim Abi-Jabel, 2015

Gitai's protagonists declare that they do not want to leave the place, which they see as a haven. However, most of them do leave or are forced to. Yousuf, the oldest resident of the wadi, notes that those who left fear return, as if they cannot go back on their footsteps, like one cannot go back in time. Gradually but surely, the community and nature are disappearing.

The one who does come back is Gitai, who returns to visit the Wadi numerous times, and documents the gradual deterioration of the place. Gitai is close to the people that he films, and they speak to him openly. Their narration is rarely interrupted and Gitai's camera is a gentle and patient listener, and also a patient observer, who views the place and its people with slow, long takes. These takes slow down the passage of time and thus the change of the people and the place are experienced even more vividly, as the brutality of the forces of destruction upon them is revealed. As Frodon has noted: "documentary film is used in this process which consists in going back on one's steps, filming the time which has elapsed, recording the traces of what has changed and the marks of what has remained. [...] Recording time in its duration, side by side with those who [...] do not decide or control anything, is, in this context, the most radical side step. Just listening to words, tones, changes in language and accent, silences, catching postures, looks, wrinkles on faces and stones [..]"(Frodon 2003). Frodon describes how through these specific practices film becomes a tool of attentiveness, through which viewers are immersed in the experience of the place, and become attentive to the people who inhabit it, whose stories will become evidence to what will be soon destroyed.

2.2.1.2. A Place and its Narrated Stories

The stories of the people of the Wadi are told by the people, mainly through two central speakers, an Arab man and Jewish woman. The man is Yousuf Hassan, a Muslim, who was born in Haifa, the son of a carpenter from the neighbourhood of Wadi Salib who lost his home in 1948. During the war Yousuf, like many others, fled to Acre where he was shot (a bullet entrance wound is visible on his old, scarred face, see figure 13) and imprisoned by Israeli soldiers, and later, with no property or profession, he came to live in the Wadi in 1956, in very simple conditions. Yousuf was later joined by his second wife Amna, who is also a refugee. The other main figure is Miriam, a Jewish woman born in Hungary who fled to Israel after the holocaust, and fell in love with Iskander, a Christian Arab fisherman who she lives with.

2.2.1.3. Yousuf and Miriam

Miriam and Yousuf express the liveliness of the Wadi. They are powerful in appearance and in speaking – though they both speak a broken, foreign accented Hebrew, the language of immigrants-refugees, they have their poetic, idiosyncratic expression, pondering about their life as they speak of it. Apart of speaking, they are busy with maintenance of their domestic environment, symbolically preserving the Wadi.

Miriam

Miriam's long monologues in which she describes her life and construes it, has a symbolism of its own. Miriam speaks broken Hebrew with "high" and poetic language (Figure 11). She speaks of her love to Iskandar, which holds on despite the ethnic conflict, for which they had to pay with condemnation and ostracism. She describes their connection as "a bond of love, love as a natural force that empowers a world of humans, animals and plants, a force which led to the circumstances of my life". She explains that it is love that has chosen them. It is a "force of nature", and the lovers are "already connected, really connected, cannot separate, they have no strength" (Wadi 1981). Miriam lives in the valley in severe violation of the social taboo of the region – the intimate connection of a Jew and an Arab; she lives in a house that is destined for demolition; She guards her life in the Wadi by surrounding her home with green fertile plants. She keeps planting every year "against the destruction, decomposition, and decay of the ground, because earth that is not cared for becomes dirty and even smelly" (Gitai 1991).

Shots of Miriam talking about her life, and the long takes of her inside her garden, working with the land, are edited one next to the other, or one over the other, as voiceover. Miriam began planting as she arrived in the Wadi:

There was nothing there. There was just rocks and dirt, and sticky things. And I began to collect the stones and placed them into rows and I put earth in between the stones, and then I planted trees in them, so that it would be green and nice and cool and lovely... lovers, loving in the way that we had when we lived in the other country, we were in verdant foliage, not in yellow. I wanted people to see something that they did not have, and they would like us...

(Wadi 1981).



Figure 11: Miriam, Source: *Wadi, 10 Years Later*, Amos Gitai, 1991

Miriam lives within the garden she had planted, it is her haven, it also protects her and the choices she made. The garden, argues Radovic, is a crucial metaphor that Gitai applies in the space. It is a symbol of the "outcast community", but also of Israel, or the "holy Land" (Radovic, 2017, 80). The vision of the possible resolution to conflict, discrimination and segregation is given through the metaphor of "the garden" [...] its growth and sprouting is linked to shared and intertwined existence (ibid, 81). It is also used in the filming itself, as Gitai uses one take to explore the space in which this community lives, the uninterrupted exploration of physical space constructs unbroken time and evokes an extra-temporal space (ibid, 140). Throughout the films Miriam is seen as she cares for her garden - in the Wadi, and in the backyard of the housing project she had moved to after she left the Wadi. In the second part of the trilogy, after years of living together in the Wadi, the pressure from Iskandar's family and friends grows to leave Miriam. Iskandar does not leave, but becomes violent, and she runs away from him, leaving the Wadi. Miriam once again becomes a refugee. She must escape, leave. Her gardening resists the decay, destruction and uprooting. Uprooted several times in her life, she is the 'wandering Jew', a plant that hits roots wherever planted, quickly, even in shallow soil. Her gardening is her mode of survival, her mode of belonging and owning her home. Radovic's discussion of the Wadi as garden, is a fruitful image in the act of imagining an alternative future for the Wadi. Rather than a literary metaphor it may be seen as an alternative future for the Wadi, one in which urban planners could have taken part in, turning of the Wadi into a sustainable fruit garden, tended to by an ethnically mixed community, by the voiceless, and for the voiceless.

Yousuf

At the beginning of the trilogy, in 1981, Yousuf had already been living in the Wadi for 28 years. Though he has lived in the Wadi for almost thirty years, his settlement appears to be minimal and survivalist – he and his wife live in a shack, the poorest and simplest of the dwellings that appear in the films (Figure 8). It is made of construction waste, gathered from building sites in the city, and not connected to water nor to electricity, however, it is surrounded by plants and fruit trees. As seen in Gittai's 1981 and 1991 episodes, they spend much of the time trying to maintain the shack, gardening, cooking and heating their shack. At the same time, their modest home is a place of hospitality. Open to the winds of the Wadi, it is also open to guests of all kinds - neighbours, relatives and passers-by.

As fragile and simple as his life is, when Youssef speaks he becomes a grand narrator of his own story and the story of the Wadi. In 2001 Gitai visits the Wadi for the last episode 'Wadi Grand Canyon'. He meets Youssef, whose living conditions have worsened, since a huge shopping mall is being built at the top of the Wadi. The shack, surrounded by trees and plants which they tend to, their modest haven, is severely disturbed by the building of the shopping mall. In the final scenes of 'Wadi Grand Canyon' Gitai films Yousuf as he climbs to the top of the Wadi and walks into the new mall that was just opened, where he stands, in the artificial, loud interior, dumbfounded. This shot expressed clearly how the nature of the Wadi and its inhabitants, which have co-existed for so long, are destroyed by capitalist greed, indifference to ecology, and the disregard of common good.

3. Roshmia

In 2007, new works begin in the Wadi to dig the road tunnel, and an access road is paved for the trucks. The contrast between the road, that symbolizes modernization, and the adjacent, tree surrounded shack, in which Yousuf and Amna are still living their slow, simple life, is a central contrast in the documentary film 'Roshmia' (2015), by Salim abu Jabal.

Abu Jabal is a Palestinian writer and filmmaker, born in a Druze village in the Golan Heights. He studied in Haifa university, was a reporter, and 'Roshmia' was his first film (Abu-Jabal, Culture Fund). He met the couple as he was working on a story about them, and after the story was published he turned to filming: "Filmmaking is all about storytelling. I simply had to bring their story to the world." (Abu-Jabal, 2015) During the time he was filming them, they received a demolition order from the Haifa municipality. Abu Jabal's film was part of the attempt to change the fate of Yousuf and Amna and save their shack, acting against the demolition orders (Figure 12).

At first, it seems that Abu Jabal's film takes off from where Gitai left. His film was shot between 2005 – 2008, when Yousuf and Amna are already in their 80s, and they are coping with the knowledge of their certain and near evacuation. While Gitai was interested in showing through 'Wadi' the life together of Jews and Arabs, Abu-Jabal, who discovered the Wadi when it's community had already perished, is interested in the Palestinian narrative. Like in Gitai's film, the Wadi in 'Roshmia' is a world apart, however, while Gitai includes some shots outside it, Abu-Jabal's film includes no outside.

The film is focused in the cinematographic sense as well, as Abu-Jabal made the aesthetic choice to film in a narrow 4:3 screen ratio. Yousuf and Amna are shot in small, dark spaces, where they stand out through their words and expressions. The couple does not speak much, however, their few words are powerful, as they narrate their own separate stories.

This focus enables Abu-Jabal to create a symbolic narrative, of the Palestinian's connection to his land, of the catastrophic loss of the land in 1948 and 1967 which is now repeated, and the heroic struggle to stay on it against all odds (the Palestinian 'Zumud'). As he notes: "For me, the story of Amna and Yousuf signifies and sums up the story of the refugees, and how they still are facing the colonial mind-set and the brutal machines of the colonizers. Their shack was the last tent of Palestinian refugees. Yousuf decided to keep it as symbol of his and his people's exile" (Abu Jabal, Boston 2015). However, Yousuf and Amna disagree between them, as for Yousuf life outside the

Wadi is not worth living, Amna who is tired of the struggle and is ready to leave and move to an apartment, representing another Palestinian narrative, a more pragmatic one (Figure 13).



Figure 12 shack of Yousuf and Amna, right before demolition, Source: 'Roshmia', Salim Abu-Jabel, 2015



Figure 13 Yousuf right before evacuation, Source: 'Roshmia', Salim Abu-Jabel, 2015

Although time in the Wadi is running out, 'Roshmia', like Gitai's 'Wadi', is a slow film, with many real time shots. On the background of the coming destruction, the two take their time, rolling cigarettes and smoking them, peeling an orange, rolling prayer beads, breaking wooden branches for fire. There is strength in this contradiction. Though it is filled with despair, even grief, the film is quiet, with many moments of silence.

Yousuf, here too, is the guardian of the Wadi, who, like Adam, is banished forever from his garden of Eden. With his dark, rough, bullet scarred face, his past is written on his features, he seems as strong and as fragile as the Wadi itself, and his lifetime, and what remains of it, is the lifetime of the Wadi, as home of community and wild nature (Figure 14).



Figure 14 Yousuf right before evacuation, Source: 'Roshmia', Salim Abu-Jabel, 2015

4. Conclusion

Rushmia Wadi, whose residents have fled in 1948, had been repopulated by refugees, and had suffered repeated evacuations and destructions, is part of Haifa's 'spaces of trauma'. These places, which planning professionals often attempt to replan without acknowledging the spatial and social consequences of the trauma, often 'fall' into the hands of capitalist ventures and private entrepreneurs, who utterly disregard social, environmental, and political justice. Like its neighbouring Wadi Salib, for example, Wadi Rushmia's traumatic history began in 1948. Unlike Wadi Salib, which empty houses remain ghost houses until this day, Rushmia was repopulated after 1948, and remained resilient for several decades – as an urban enclave of a racial mix of people, until giving in to planned destruction and mindless development. It is in such places that films take the role of narrating micro-histories and filling in the gaps left by formal maps and plans, by ongoing destruction and eradication of memory.

My argument in this paper converges with the filmmakers' perspectives, and also diverges from them. The filmmakers capture the unique quality of the place and its history and give voice to the voiceless. As noted by Bathla and Papanicolaou (2022) film serves us in sensing embodied experiences of dwelling, resistance, and contestation, allowing a unique opportunity for learning from those that live "down below," below the thresholds at which visibility begins' [...] seeing the protagonists of these films as 'liminal beings' (p. 351). However, the films express a radical critique of the authorities who are responsible for the destruction of the Wadi, which are presented as omnipotent, invisible forces that cast mindless destruction, this paper aspires to expand the agency of planning through film. The history of planning in Wadi Rushmia is described, giving features and names to the agents of planning. Planning is considered as a legitimate and significant agency, to which the films, as alternative sources of information, can contribute. Films, along with other planning documents, are part of a more inclusive archive. The films provide the 'informal' histories, and where there is an obliteration of history and a lack of archive, they provide an alternative archive, participating in what Derrida has related to as an 'archive fever' (1995). The archive, Derrida argues, is a movement of promise and future, just as it is a record of the past...it carries the remnant (of what remained alive) to the present...The opposite of forgetting is justice (Derrida 1995, 87). Thus, the archive presented here through the films, not only has the role of guarding the past, but also, through the knowledge collected in it, of bringing justice to the future. Azoulay, who relates to Derrida, argues that to take part in the 'archive fever', is to take part in the establishing of new types of archive, which prevent the archetype of the archive, the one established by the state, to determine alone the essence of the archive (Azoulay 2014, 21). Thus, an alternative archive of Wadi Rushmia, if one had been established before its destruction, could have contained formal planning documents, films, as well as materials from personal archives, creating an archive not only of documents created by those in power, but also of the residents which the authorities cleared away.

Urban spaces as unique as Wadi Rushmia, could no longer be considered as backyards that may be destroyed in favour of controversial development. The Wadi, which the 1954 plan suggested should be a central park, could have become a heritage site of a sustainable human society, a garden in the midst of the city, feeding whomever needs feeding, and tended to by a community of gardeners-guardians. The stories of the people of the Wadi, archived in the films, are, as noted by Derrida, an immanent archive, a part of the present and future of the city of Haifa.

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Filmography:

- Amos Gitai, *Wadi* 1981
- Amos Gitai, *Wadi Ten Years Later*, 1991
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Resume

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