

Haifa meets Frankfurt 2017-2018

Project summary

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A. Goal, rational and project description

“Frankfurt meets Haifa” is an experiential academic project that was initiated over a decade ago (originally initiated as Haifa meets Berlin). It is conducted parallelly and cooperatively in the University of Haifa and in Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences. The project deals with topics related to diversity and multiculturalism. The narrative approach and the intercultural context present the theoretical framework of the project. The experiential baseline lies in the Jewish-Arab-German encounter. The encounter with the “other” relates to different theoretical terms such as narrative, dialogue, memory and identity on two levels: the individual, professional and personal identity of every participant and the collective, public discourse and policy. Along this line, **the goal of the project is the development of multicultural awareness and cultural competence based on ongoing encounters with "others: "be them, Israelis, Palestinians citizens of Israel, or Germans.**

The project consists of an academic course that is a part of the B.A. program in the two universities. The highlights of the course are two encounters of one week each, the first in Frankfurt and the second one in Haifa, consisting of formal and informal parts.

B. Group formation and dynamics

In order to promote a multicultural composition of the Haifa group, Jewish students (from different ethnic origin) and Arab-Palestinian students with a variety of identities (Bedouins, Christians, Moslems and Druze) are chosen for the program (after being interviewed). Unlike the real life situation (Arabs being the minority and Jews the majority), this year the proportions have been changed, the Arab students consisted the majority (9) and the Jewish students were the minority (3), so that each member had a different experience of belonging. The Haifa group had two meetings at the University of Haifa prior to the encounter in Frankfurt. The project was under the supervision of Prof' Adital Ben-Ari, from the School For Social Work – Haifa University, and Dr. Elka Quindeau, from the School for Social Work of Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences.

C. The encounter in Frankfurt, Germany, 19-26/11/2017

(See Att. 1 for detailed program in Frankfurt)

The excited group of students from the University of Haifa has arrived early Sunday morning. Three of their colleagues from the University of Applied Science in Frankfurt had waited for them with warm greetings and escorted the group to the hostel downtown. Later that day, a formal opening and a ceremonial dinner took place at the University. The first meaningful encounter of the big group took place in the next two days, when the international group had gathered in a spacious and cozy country house. 'Get-to-Know games', group dialogue meetings, cooking together and late night conversations, had all contributed to the creation of a bonded group. Jewish Israelis, Palestinians citizens of Israel, Druze and German students were now ready to leap into a week of examination and learn from the different societies and their own selves. During the week, the group worked on two major levels: activities and Guided Tours, and dialogue processes.

The students experienced a Guided Walk through "Großmarkthalle", an Educational Tour- Deportation Point, watched the movie "Mein Herz tanzt", listened to a lecture about the impact of an encounter group, and visited "Treffpunkt Überlebender; Treffpunkt für Überlebende der Shoah und ihre Familien der ZWST." The experiences listed above were materials and triggers to work on the encounter level.

The students participated in facilitated dialogue sessions under three methodical paradigms; planery, small mixes groups and uni-national groups. The students were able to go through some of the deepest subjects interlinking identities, past national traumas, refugees, the complicated relationship between Palestinians and Israelis, sex workers and other topics.

The intense week was closed with a party and then the Haifa group was hosted at the homes of the Frankfurt group, deepening the cultural understanding and personal relationships.

The first part of the international encounter is over and the group is now in front of the second encounter in Israel, for a completion of the personal and collective journey they all embarked upon five months ago.



An activity with refugees at a local theater



Spending quality time together at the German countryside



D. Uni-national group dialogue

In the months between two encounters, the Haifa group had two-hour weekly dialogue meetings at the University of Haifa. The meetings were facilitated by professional facilitators, focusing on dialogues, which deepen the bonds between the group members and widen the understanding of narratives and memory through personal experiences. The dominant themes were discrimination against women (early marriages), displacement (refugees) and racism. We found, through the personal stories, a clear reflection of the Israeli/Palestinian narratives and collective memory. The final part of this phase was dedicated to prepare the hosting program in Haifa.

E. The encounter in Haifa, Israel, 26-31/5/2018

(See Att. 2 for detailed program in Haifa)

At the weekend, prior to the official start of the program, the German students were hosted by the families of their Israeli peers, allowing them to learn from first-hand experience more about the Israeli and the Arab culture. The formal program started with a traditional fast-breaking Ramadan ceremonial dinner.

During this week, the same three methodical dynamics mentioned above were used and completed by sites visits, lectures, a movie, discussions and informal activities.

The established friendships of the group members had allowed the dialogue to evolve into a more meaningful encounter. The week was very intense and focused on the complex issues that are the brick stones of the Israeli society. The group explored the concepts of *collective memory* and *culture of commemoration* by visiting the Ghetto Fighters Museum and the Humanistic Educational Center at Kibbutz Lochami-Ha'getaot. By visiting the museum and participating in a dynamic workshop that touched the topic of genocide-past, present and future, the group dove into challenging ethical and moral questions. The next activity that day was a Guided Tour at the demolished and displaced Palestinian village of Albasa, where the students learned about the untold story of the Nakba. The next day was dedicated to explore the complexity of the coexistence between Arabs and Jews in the city of Haifa, women rights and feminist NGO activities and actions. Through a specialist panel, Q&A session and group dialogues, the students enriched their knowledge, challenged conventional paradigms and traditional ways of thinking. The program was integrated with informal time as well. In their free time, the students went on an organized camping on the beach at Achziv field school, explored the streets of Haifa, cooked together and ended the nights with deep conversations. The combination of a well designed program (made by the Haifa students), deep

relationships and meaningful dialogues set the conditions and allowed the students to explore and widen their understanding of the world around them. Through the activities and the multicultural discussions, terms such as National Narrative, Collective Memory and Culture of Commemoration, became much deeper and clearer. Those aspects and investigations were all made through the perspective of the Israeli/Palestinian/German triangle, past-present-future.



Group visit at Ghetto Fighters Museum and the Humanistic Educational Center



Group dynamic activity

F. Participant's quotations

M', a German participant said: ***"This project, this journey, made me think about myself as an oppressed person... I now realized that I have to free myself from within..."***

A', a Palestinian participant said during a discussion after visiting the museum: ***"I used to stand during the siren Memorial Day for the Holocaust, now I understand why...It made me think how to avoid replicating this pain and suffering from one generation to the other. If Palestinians would be in powerful positions how to make sure they would not cause suffering to others..."***

Z', a Jewish student said: ***"Through the experience of the Palestinian minority, I as a gay person feel total identification with you Palestinians."***

F', a German participant said: ***"Israelis and Palestinians, sitting together, talking in openness, it is an open invitation to be free and to free ourselves...."***

S', a Palestinian participant said after visiting the ruins of the displaced Palestinian village: ***"After visiting Frankfurt, I learned to expand my horizon and my perspectives, after visiting Albasa, I got connected to my country, my people, myself..."***

G. conclusions

The triadic constellation of Jews, Palestinians and Germans promoted a rich dialogue and manifold experiences for the participating students. The Frankfurt students were given opportunities to relate to their difficult past, to see how, even today, the trauma of the Holocaust accompanies and fuels the Jewish-Arab conflict. They learned to understand the complexity of the conflict and to examine topics such as immigration policies, or the attitude towards strangers and anti-Semitism in Germany today. For the Palestinian students, the opportunity aroused to become familiar with the history of the "other", the Jews, and in particular with the trauma of the Holocaust and the Zionist narratives that underlie the establishment of the State of Israel. For the Jewish students, it enabled them to live the experience of "minority" within a Jewish--Arab group, to familiarize themselves with the *Nakba*, the narrative that exists on the other side of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and also to meet the "other" in their pain.

One of the students said at the final reflection of the project:

"To get to know Christians, Jews, someone from the Islamic movement, someone who is gay, this project taught me what it means to be the "other," to accept the other. I look at people and the world differently today...."



The final gathering of the group of 2017-18, Haifa, Israel