

# When the Glass Shatters: The Mosaic Center & the Lod Community

"People make cities and it  
is to them, not buildings,  
that we must fit our plans."

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Presented to the Leon Levy Foundation  
Prepared by the Shaharit Institute

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## Opening Thoughts

# The Mosaic Center

The Mosaic Center is the home of a rare ancient mosaic that for many years wandered throughout the world, but now, due to the establishment of the Center, has returned to the place where it was discovered - the city of Lod.

The mosaic was uncovered in 1996, during archeological digs in the vicinity of ancient Lod. It is dated to the end of the third century BC or possibly the early fourth century BC, and is likely part of a large house from the Roman and Byzantine period. The mosaic depicts images of animals, plants and maritime vessels, accurately and skillfully drawn.

Due to its unique and impressive traits, the mosaic was sought after by many museums. Thanks to the collaboration between the Lod Municipality, the Israeli Antiquity Authority, and donors Shelby White and Leon Levy, the mosaic is now displayed in the Mosaic Center at the city's entrance. In this way, a meaningful tier was added to Lod's unique story, which is a meeting point of historical periods, peoples, and identities.

The motivation to recount Lod's special story and offer new ways to think about the Center's connection to the city led us to this journey.

# Executive Summary

## Insights

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During the events of May 2021, Arab rioters shattered the windows of the Lod Mosaic Center. Analysis of the events from the residents' point of view sheds light on the museum's status in the city. It seems that the crisis created by the riots widened the rift between Arabs and Jews. The delicate texture of work relations and trust that had built between the two sides over many years and had served as the basis for a stable shared society - fell apart.

Jewish residents in the city reported fear and danger "that they had never experienced before". In the eyes of many, their neighbors' behavior was experienced as treason. Even the residents that could acknowledge the discrimination experienced by the city's Arab residents, stated that they could not come to terms with what happened and emphasized that their difficult living conditions did not legitimize the violence rampaging in the city. The Arab interviewees, from their side, reported a total loss of trust in the authorities and their ability to provide safety. Their frustration and anger over continuous discrimination and segregation in the Arab neighborhoods, which had accumulated over the years, exploded in the city's face. Some of the interviewees claimed that the riots broke out because the "garin torani" (a group of national-religious families that settled in Lod on the past few decades) had taken over the city and their lives, and it expressed their frustration that Jews from outside of the city arrived with arms "to protect" the Jews living in the city. At the same time, many of the Arab interviewees returned after the events to the challenges of their daily lives, with a new harsh reality of rampant firearms in the streets.

The Arab interviewees described the paradox of the mosaic, from their perspective. It is, on the one hand, part of Lod's development that attracts visitors from outside the city, yet, on the other hand, a structure that for them invokes alienation and lack of belonging. The fact that the Center is an impressive building, adjacent to their neglected and under-developed neighborhood, exacerbates their frustration. In their interviews, the Jewish interviewees did not relate to their lack of involvement in the Center's establishment during the planning process, but rather asked "what does having the Center here, with its unique mosaic, do for me?" In their answers they conveyed a sense of pride.

We learned that the residents' feelings towards the museum is reflected through various concentric circles: personal identity, the proximity of the museum to the neighborhood and its surroundings, and the degree of collaboration between the neighborhood's residents and the municipality. The comparison to other mixed cities extends our sphere of study and opened the way to new possibilities to learn and leverage the potential of the city of Lod.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

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**After carefully listening to the concerns and needs of all voices in Lod, we formulated the following recommendations:**

The Mosaic Center is an opportunity to design a neutral space for the residents of the adjacent neighborhood and for the city of Lod as a whole, particularly as it does not carry a past laden with complexities and crises. As such, it can become a place that contains and connects all of the other circles. This can be brought to fruition, for example, through tours and activities in and around the museum; encounters with the city's human mosaic and not just the mosaic of antiquity; integrating the future "Green Way" promenade that will connect the museum to other unique sites in Lod, with the living mosaic of the city. All of the above should be executed in cooperation with the community, from the earliest stages of planning through execution and operation, so that they can play a role in the strengthening of the social, and not just physical and economic, fabric of the city.

**Additional recommendations from the concentric circles of life in Lod:**

- **In relation to the innermost circle of Personal Identity:** There is a growing gap between how the older and younger residents of the city, both Jewish and Arab, feel about their connection and identification with Lod. The younger generation feels far less connected to a local Lod identity. We recommend designing an educational program, to be implemented in both the formal and informal systems, that deals with local Lod identity. The program should be tailored to Lod's unique identity and connect the youth with their home and its roots. The program will contribute to building high-quality young leaders in the city.
- **In relation to the next circle, of Community Life:** The city's neighborhoods are their own mosaic. We recommend hiring

a community organizer, whose job would be to form connections between the museum, the community, and Lod's neighborhoods by encouraging citizen engagement that works together for positive change across the neighborhoods, thus strengthening the social fabric and the sense of responsibility for one another as well as for Lod's future. The community organizer should be a skilled professional that can bring people together, identify shared needs in and between neighborhoods, and facilitate activities that can bring results in improving the lives of all of Lod's communities.

- **The circle of the City and Urban Policy:** The study's interviewees raised meaningful issues that demand immediate attention; from education to personal security. Professional attention to these issues may contribute to reducing the gap between Lod's Arab and Jewish societies. One of the crucial issues that arose is housing. The interviewees pointed at the urgent need to make information and financing opportunities for housing (loans, mortgages, etc.) more accessible, and to establishing a forum, composed of residents and professionals, to discuss future plans of urban renewal.
- **The Circle of Municipal Relations with Lod's Citizens:** We recommend the establishment of a permanent and professional unit to enable individuals and communities to have direct contact with the municipality's various departments and their services.
- **The Outer-Most Circle of Intercity Relationships:** Permanent and organized professional study groups, comprised of education and community professionals from Lod and other mixed cities, focused on exploring the connections between multi-cultural groups, Jewish and Arab in particular, and learning from each other's experience. Establishing an inter-city professional forum, managed jointly by the mixed-cities' municipalities. This will allow the municipal authority an additional avenue for developing and diversifying their modes of coping with the challenges of mixed cities.

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# Introduction

Following the events of May 2021, during which the Mosaic Center at the entrance to the city was damaged, the main partner in establishing the Center, the Leon Levy Foundation, turned to the Shaharit Institute, a thinktank, leadership center and community organizing hub. The foundation wanted to learn how the local population viewed the Center and the damage to it. This difficult incident raised many questions about the Center's place in the city and its surrounding neighborhood.

The Shaharit Institute is active in various Israeli cities to develop community leadership and steer the organization of activists. In light of the current social and political complexities in Israel, and due to the numerous organizations active in Lod, we decided to conduct an extensive mapping of the community's social needs as they are reflected in the eyes of the city's official leaders, local activists, and professional urbanists.

The Research was conducted in collaboration with two of the city's residents - Abed Shehadeh and Noa Mevorach - who are involved with education, community, planning and policy. According to Shaharit's working hypothesis, the research must include the multitude of voices that compose the city's population: new and long-standing residents, religious, traditional and secular, Jews and Arabs, activists and those that are not. Lod is the home to a wide variety of cultural groups, and we wanted to respect this important social phenomenon. We contend that the choice to simplify identities, cultures, and their characterizations, is an obstacle rather than a solution.

The research methodology was constructed systematically: face to face conversations in the city, focus groups and interviews with residents of similar cities (such as Akko and Ramla) for comparison. From the large amount of collected data, we were able to consolidate insights related to the concentric circles defined in the study: personal

identity, neighborhood, city life, residents-municipality partnership. In conclusion, we formulated recommendations based on a variety of tools to allow the interested parties to choose the path most suited for them. The comparison with cities similar to Lod was conducted to learn of new forms and ways to cope that had not been put into action, study them and suggest alternatives to fit Lod's unique challenges.

The research is meant to expose you, the reader, to the feelings, thoughts, explanations and stories that arose from the field - through a unique prism: the new Mosaic Center established in the city. The research surveys the city's unique human mosaic through the Center, which as a new element in the city, carries an opportunity for social change and resilience for the city's residents.





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# Methodology



The main research objective was to formulate operative proposals that could be implemented in Lod by various parties of interest: the local municipality, civic society organizations, residents of the city, and others.

When we began the research, we discussed the correct method for collecting data, taking into consideration the space's complexity and sensitivity. We decided upon two methods:

1. In-depth personal interviews
2. Focus groups

We decided not to use closed-question questionnaires in our interviews nor widely distributed questionnaires, because based on our judgement, anyone participating in the study is a central partner in it, and his or her input is an important and meaningful component in the research methodology, and thus we wanted to hear their opinions in a more open manner.

The interviewees were assured that the information they shared will only be for the research and used by its writers. Therefore, all quotes, written or spoken, were published only after receiving explicit consent.

## **The process of interviewee and participant selection**

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Lod contains many and diverse groups that hold different, and sometimes contrasting, worldviews. Therefore, the interviewees and participants were carefully and thoughtfully selected to afford a deep understanding of the city and gain the most reliable end product possible.

Towards this goal we defined categories:

Political leadership; the city's senior management; education professionals; immigrants from different countries of origin; Muslim and Christian Arabs; new and long-standing residents; representation

of the city's various neighborhoods; men and women; social activists; old and young residents.

These categories were defined to give maximal representation to the city's residents and to those that work in and for it.

## **The definition of core issues**

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In order to focus on the research's core issues and, at the same time, relate to the central issues of the city's public discourse, we defined five axes:

1. The Mosaic Center- its meaning to the city and neighborhood.
2. The neighborhood story.
3. The central challenges in the eyes of the interviewees.
4. The relationship between the Arabs and Jews in the city following the events of May 2021, from a personal and collective perspective.
5. Personal and group identity.

## **Comparison to other cities**

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In order to widen our view of Lod as a mixed city facing unique challenges, we chose two similar but different cities as a basis for comparison: Akko and Ramla. We conducted short interviews with professionals and active residents in both of these cities, and they offered us their insights on the May 2021 events and how they are coping.

## Execution

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- 19 interviews with people from Lod's Arab population
- 18 interviews with people from the Jewish population (mostly residents of the city, excluding professionals)
- 5 interviews in Akko and Ramla
- A visit to the Center and a meeting with its professional directors.

## In addition, we formed three focus groups

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1. Residents that live in the Center's vicinity. In these meetings, we explored their connection to the neighborhood and possibilities to improve it. The group included 25 participants.

2. Residents of Neve-Nof neighborhood. This was a group with both Jewish and Arab participants, who have been active in various projects in the past years. The discussion was focused on the neighborhood's story and Arab-Jewish relations within it. The group included 10 participating neighbors.

3. Veteran Jewish residents that meet on a regular basis in the city center ("parliament"). The discussion was focused the central challenges facing the city. There were 8 residents that took part in the group.

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# Background



# History

Lod is considered a very ancient city. According to archeological findings and various historical research, it was founded in the 15th century BC. Lod was controlled by various rulers: from the Pharaohs, through the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, up to the Ottoman Empire, whose rule ended with the onset of the British Mandate. In the Jewish tradition too, Lod appears in the sources as a central city: during the days of Joshua son of Nun, the age of the 'Return to Zion', the Hasmonean dynasty, and more. Lod is mentioned in several places as "the city of the tannaim (teachers)" where the Mishnah and Talmud scholars resided. The Islamic rule that controlled the country in the 7th century, appointed it as the district capital. In many eras, Lod was considered an important city, and the capitol in the eyes of various rulers who conquered the area.

**It is possible to elaborate about the different eras of the city. We chose to concentrate on the past 100 years, that have the most meaningful consequences on the present.**

During the British Mandate, Lod became the District Capital and central to the area, due to modifications of the train station, construction of a designated neighborhood for the train's workers, erection of major military camps close to the city, and the establishment of an international airport. The fertile agricultural land that surrounded the city also contributed to the city's prosperity.

After the War of 1948 and Israel's Declaration of Independence, the results of the battle were molded into two narratives: the first, conquest and expulsion of the city's native Palestinian population; the other, liberation by the Palmach units to ensure that the Jewish population could live safely in Central Israel, turning Lod into a Jewish city after the declaration of the State.

The exact number of people living in Lod on the day of its conquest is not known. 30-40 thousand refugees from nearby villages resided in the city or its vicinity. The core population at the time was approximately 14,000. At the end of the third day of fighting, there were only some 2,000 people left in the city. The Palmach units drove out all of the city's residents except for 500 living in the train workers' neighborhood that were needed to continue the trains' operation.

Groups of Jewish immigrants came to the city in the first months of 1949, within the framework termed "the large aliyah". Many of them came from North Africa and Europe. The Jewish Agency renovated the urban infrastructure and the refugees' homes and turned them over to Jewish families. At the same time, many new housing units were constructed (as was the case across the country at that time) by Amidar, the governmental company responsible for public building.

The military rule in Lod ended in 1949, and its first Israeli municipal government was appointed. The neighborhood where the Arabs remaining in the city lived, "the ghetto" (a common term used even in history books), was dismantled. Arabs that wished to return to their homes found them occupied by Jewish families. The returning residents found themselves to be refugees in their own hometown - their property was transferred into state ownership and resettled by new immigrants.

Throughout the years, immigrants from many countries settled in Lod, forming a human mosaic of cultures in the city. Living together - Jews and Arabs, a mix of ethnicities, cultures, and religions - the formed a sense of closeness as well as good neighborly relations. The city's children studied together in school, and their parents worked together in their jobs. This partnership was expressed by mutual responsibility alongside shared holidays and familial events. Many of the interviewees



described the situation: “we don’t have a problem with the Arabs/Jews. It is only certain groups that choose to follow an extreme path.”

Despite being governed by an appointed committee between 2007-2013, [rather than elected, due to management difficulties of the previous elected government] and waves of emigration to other cities, Lod has grown and expanded, and so have the challenges and complexities, molding the city to its current form for its residents.

## The populations that make up the city

### Mixed cities

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Lod is defined today as a mixed city. According to Israel’s Central Bureau of Statistics, a mixed city is an urban space in which various ethnic or religious groups reside. The minority group in a mixed city is defined as such if it is larger than 10% of the city’s general population.

The various groups in the city have a common denominator: their wish to live in an urban space that provides them and their children with all of their needs - housing, employment, education, and social services. According to the data recorded by Israel’s Central Bureau of Statistics, at the end of 2021, Lod was populated by 82,629 people; 51,671 Jewish (approx. 62.5%), 24,641 Arab (approx. 30%) and 6,317 others (approx. 7.5%).

Some people claim that the number of Arab residents in mixed cities such as Lod is higher than reported because many Arab families

that move from an Arab municipality to a mixed city do not change their official address, whether for political considerations so that they can participate in their former city’s local elections or to continue to benefit from municipal services it provides. For example, a large number of Palestinian women lacking official status live in Lod, and without official records it is difficult to estimate their number.

Alongside the controversy of the mixed city definition, which is meshed in political and social meaning, most of those involved agree that the Arab population suffers from political disadvantage (their representation in the city council and certainly the professional service providers, is limited) and financial insecurity (most are lower class, and the gap between them and their Jewish neighbors is great). In contrast to the general assumption, the financial situation of Arabs in mixed cities is sometimes worse even in comparison to the situation of Arabs in poor Arab municipalities

### Jewish population

Lod’s Jewish population is comprised of sub-communities, formed according to their country of origin or a religious-cultural commonality. The veteran population, which has been living in the city since its beginnings, is the backbone of the Jewish community. Over the years, it too, has fractured into various social groups along the religious axis, ethnic origin, and culture, but has still maintained close neighborly relations with all of the city’s residents. Other communities have formed around shared neighborhoods, mutual needs, or age.

Most of the Jewish population in the city defines itself as traditional. This is a natural choice, particularly considering their closeness to parents and grandparents. The city is also home to a group that self-identifies as secular. This group is mainly composed of residents that came to the city as young couples or families that immigrated from the

former Soviet Union. This group is interested in culture and recreation suited for a secular population. Many of the study's participants identified as part of the secular group. While in the past, they were actively involved and influential, the secular population is slowly disappearing, and the few that have remained in the city do not feel a sense of belonging.

### **The city's first settlers**

After the city was liberated, it was settled by immigrants that were transferred from the Be'er Yaakov transit camp of the Jerusalem area. In its first years, during the large wave of aliyah, the city received many families that immigrated from North African countries.

### **Ethiopian immigrants**

The city has a large community of Ethiopian immigrants spread across various neighborhoods. Their only religious center is located in Givat-HaZeitim. A meaningful group of their community lives in Ramat-Eshkol, a predominantly Arab neighborhood, due to socio-economic hardship and the inability to improve their living conditions.

### **Immigrants from the former USSR**

Many immigrants from the former USSR arrived in Lod in the 1990s and were acclimated in designated neighborhoods prepared for them by the Jewish Agency. The central neighborhood assigned to them was Ganei-Aviv. The neighborhood's lifestyle is community driven because it is an enclave separated from the rest of the city by railway tracks. Another neighborhood, Neve-Nof, governed as a communal organization, was built for this population. Most of the community's members who remained in the city are elderly, and they are a large percentage of the city's older population.

### **Religious core community (garin torani)**

This community was established in 1996, by young families that grew up in the city together with families that immigrated to it because of social ideology, motivated to empower the residents that remained in the city after its governance was transferred to an appointed committee. Over the years, the community grew and even established a few residential neighborhoods for the national religious public. Today, the garin serves as a network for the city's national religious public that is made up of more than one thousand diverse families.

### **The Chabad community**

The Chabad community is amongst Lod's first settlers, due to its proximity to Kfar Chabad. The community's center is located in a secluded neighborhood - the Chabad neighborhood close to the railway station - but in the past few years it has expanded into the adjacent streets. The neighborhood has many educational and religious institutions that serve both the community and other city residents.

### **The ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) community**

In the past years, large ultra-Orthodox communities, Lithuanian and Sephardic, have been settling in the city's new neighborhood, Ganei-Ayalon.

## ARAB POPULATION

Lod's Arab population is diverse, mostly concentrated in five neighborhoods: Neve-Yerak, Harakevet, Pardes-Snir, S" H, and the mixed neighborhood Ramat-Eshkol (infamous for being an epicenter of conflict during the May 2021 events).

The Arab population can be divided into several main groups:

The "original" residents of Lod, meaning those that lived in the city before the War of 1948. This is a minority group amongst the city's Arab population that enjoys a relatively high socio-economic status compared to the rest of the Arab population. Only 2% of the group is Christian, as most of the city's young Christians emigrated to the neighboring cities of Ramla and Jaffa.

### Residents that immigrated to Lod from adjacent villages

#### Bedouins from the Negev

Who immigrated to the city in the 1950s-1970s in the framework of military bases that were erected in the Negev. This is the largest group of Lod's Arab population.

#### The "collaborators"

Settled in the city by the National Security Service. This group began to settle in the city during the 1990s. During the long years of the Intifada a few hundred families of collaborators that had difficulties to socially acclimating to either Jewish or Arab societies were resettled in Arab Lod.

### The Ramat-Eshkol neighborhood

surrounds the ancient city and is where the unique mosaic was revealed and therefore became the designated site for the Center. This neighborhood tells the story of the city; we can learn of the city's geographical and social processes through the diverse population that resided here over the years. At first, most of the veteran Arab families lived in the areas surrounding the ancient parts of the city, and most of the British governmental buildings were built there. After the 'Danny Operation' and the establishment of the State of Israel, at the advent of the local Arab population's expulsion, Jewish immigrant families were resettled in the old neighborhood homes or in new apartment buildings that were erected for them in the neighborhood. In its first years, Ramat Eshkol was the central neighborhood of the city. As of the 1980s, many left the old buildings and moved into the city's newer neighborhoods, or to other nearby cities. The Bedouin population that arrived in the city at that time, began to populate the neighborhood, joined in the 1990s by groups of Ethiopian immigrants and collaborators that were transferred to Lod in the framework of the Oslo Accords. The neighborhood weakened considerably as most of its residents suffered from a low socio-economic status. In parallel, the city endured a financial crisis, leading to the transfer of governing to an appointed committee that neglected the neighborhood. From being a central and well-maintained neighborhood that housed the city's strongest population, Ramat Eshkol became the city's most complex and challenged neighborhood, wrestling with delinquency and crime. It is therefore not surprising that the Center, a new and shining structure situated in the neighborhood, is a meaningful challenge.

Until 1948, the city's Arab population was characterized with high geographical, social and functional mobility. After 1948, the power balance shifted and opportunities to change status or housing became more complicated (Khamisi, 1992). This resulted in a defeated

and economically and socially weak population, without urban leadership. During and after the “Danny Operation” to conquer the city, the population was placed under military rule and concentrated under duress, into a city enclave. It was a weak community, living under poor conditions and strict mobility restrictions. Many young people, uneducated or without professional training, were forced to work in maintenance, cleaning, construction and craft, jobs with low income. The mixed city did not offer its Arab immigrants a route for advancement. On the contrary, the villages that underwent urbanization, had better conditions than the city (Khamisi, 2002).

The various Arab groups in Lod differ in their ability to assimilate into urban life (the veterans that were born into the city compared to those who immigrated to it from villages at different times), and therefore, have not consolidated into a singular community with shared interests.

It is possible to identify many sub-groups of Arab population in Lod that, while they basically share a common culture, they are not connected to each other. This inhibits the possibility to lead a shared fight to remove barriers that hold back the local community, such as a joint political party for the Knesset or municipality, rather than competing against each other (Khamisi, 2008).



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## Interviewees insights



# The May 2021 events

During the events of May 2021, Arab riots shattered the windows of the Lod Mosaic Center, likely at the same time as the funeral of a the young Mussa Hasona. The newly built Mosaic Center is located in the Ramat Eshkol neighborhood, where most of the May riots took place. The windows of the new municipality building were also shattered during the events.

Despite the similarity of the two public buildings, the Center is a cultural non-political institution. For that reason, the people involved with the Center were stunned by the action. The difference, or possibly the similarity, of the two buildings may clarify the background and reasons for the damage.

**Analysis of the events from the residents' point of view, as presented in this document, sheds light on the Mosaic Center's status in the city and on how to improve it.**

## Background

Violent clashes between Arab and Jews took place in various places across the country in May 2021 following the turbulence in Jerusalem (the events of Sheikh Jarrah, the events of Jerusalem Day, etc.). The most intense events took place in Jerusalem and other mixed cities, including Lod and Akko. During these days, missiles were launched from Gaza towards central Israel and Jerusalem, and Israel responded by attacking the Gaza Strip, in what was to be termed "Operation Guardian of the Walls".

In their 2021 article, Chabaita and Monterescu (Chabaita and Monterescu, 2021) claim that the events of May 2021 illustrate that there are more disparities than commonalities

in mixed cities. According to the article, there are only flimsy connections between the mixed cities' various communities; dismantling the ties dramatically revealed the collapse of the mixed city model into its own internal contradictions - of status, ethnicity, and space. They claim that mixed cities are more sensitive than other places to the sways of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and stand out as ambivalent anomalies that raise complex reactions on both sides.

The events had many implications on the quality of Jewish-Arab relations in the country in general, and in mixed cities, in particular. The crisis resonated for many months, widening the rift between Arabs and Jews and disrupting the delicate texture of work relations and trust that had existed between the two sides. The already fragile basis for the existence of a stable shared society broke down under the fear and suspicion left behind by the riots.

The summation of the events in Lod, as researched by the State Comptroller<sup>1</sup>, show the multitude of incidences, the financial damage following the damage of municipal and private property, and the extent of the flare up despite its lasting only a few days.



<sup>1</sup> According to the police's documents, analyzed by the State Comptroller, in: "Policing and law enforcement in mixed cities during Operation Guardians of the Walls, and in routine. Special report - mixed cities", State Comptroller, 2022. [Hebrew]

## The summary of the May 2021 events from the perspective of the Jewish sector

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On the eve of Jerusalem Day many festivities took place in the city, but the main event, a parade that had taken place every year in the past, was cancelled due to the precarious security situation and Operation Guardian of the Walls. The atmosphere within the Jewish population, in face of the anxious situation and after pictures and videos of the parade's dispersion were widely published on social media, was heavy. Interviewees used the following words to describe their feeling on that day: "we are not free in our own country anymore." In the late evening, when a video showing young Arabs removing the Israeli flag from "The Triangle Three Religions", a public sculpture in Lod, and replacing it with a Palestinian flag, the city was in uproar. Many residents felt that this could not be met in silence, and began to gather in the central square of the Neve-Nof neighborhood, waving flags and chanting. The young Arabs involved with removing the Israeli flag in Ramat Eshkol came to the gathering with burning torches, stones, and Molotov Cocktails. A violent confrontation broke out between the groups. The Jewish neighbors living in the nearby buildings came down to the street in attempt to chase away the Arab youth and prevent them from harming their homes. The women remained at home and tried to reach the police so that they could arrive on the scene and prevent a dangerous flare up, but did not receive a response. Some of the people from the Jewish group fired in the air for self-defense, and an Arab resident from the neighborhood, who was part of the group that tried to harm the Jews and their homes, was accidentally hit and killed.

The next morning, deep fear spread amongst many people from the Jewish public. "The greatest fear I have ever experienced",

"a feeling that there is no one who can protect us" - these and similar words were repeated in the interviews. Throughout the day, a few Jews were arrested as suspects in the shooting. Some of the neighborhoods' residents from where the riots occurred decided to leave the city until things cooled down. Many remained confined in their homes. The funeral of Mussa Hasona, who was killed the past night, took place in the afternoon. The funeral procession walked through Lod's main street and the commotion caused anxiety and fear amongst the Jews. In the evening, the riots resumed; stones were hurled, cars set on fire, and houses left empty by their fleeing owners, looted.

Some of the city's residents stated on various platforms that they felt fear and danger as never before because the police, unprepared for the large number of calls for help, did not respond to their pleas, thus, they felt unprotected. "We felt that there is no one to count on", some of the study's interviewees repeatedly stated. In the coming days, a Jewish resident was killed when stones were hurled from an over-bridge onto his car. "The murder of Yigal Yehishua, whom I knew, was for me, a turning point. A point of no return, where nothing will ever be the same as it was", said one interviewee with tears in her eyes. Others recounted how they saw, from the windows of their home, Arab neighbors damaging their cars and other outdoor property.

Following, a group of Jewish residents, feeling abandoned to their own fate, self-organized. Volunteers from all over the city and across the country initiated a hub to aid in the restoration of the damaged homes, deliver groceries to different parts of the city, guard houses and protect the streets from additional riots. The hub served as a substitution for the state's authorities which failed at assessing the situation and tending to the basic needs of civilians who could not leave their homes.

Many of the interviewees attested to the events of May 2021 as a significant crisis. Some said that living side by side with Arabs was a “dream that fell apart”. In the eyes of many, they experienced their neighbors’ behavior as treason. A sense of fear continued to rule the lives of the city’s residents for many days to come. The streets were deserted, the commercial areas empty, and the embargo that each group put on the opposing side severely hurt the city’s economy. Even the residents that could acknowledge the discrimination experienced by the city’s Arab residents, stated that they could not come to terms with what happened and emphasized that their difficult living conditions did not legitimize the violence rampaging in the city.

Other interviewees spoke of a crisis of trust in the police and anger towards the Arab leadership that abstained from taking a stand or condemning the escalation of events. “I have been asking myself since then, how could it be that none of the senior Arab residents came out to condemn the violence”, said one of the interviewees, and she was not the only one. Others wondered “will the events repeat themselves?” “Is there any chance that we can still live together?” They pondered the weight of the national-religious element of the Arab society in the events and asked, “has there been a change in the Arab society’s attitude towards the Jewish society?”

As we know, the large majority of the city’s residents are law abiding and did not take part in the nationalistic violence. However, even though only a minority was involved in the riots, the reality of life in Lod (and in Israel) has undergone a real change.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> “A danger from home: the strategic challenge. An analysis of the May 2021 riots”, Tnu’at Israel Sheli, 2022. [Hebrew]

## The summary of the May 2021 events from the perspective of the Arab sector

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The summary of the May 2021 events from the perspective of the Arab sector  
The confidence of Lod’s Arab civilians in the state’s authorities to protect them is all but lost since the riots. The loss of mutual trust has led each group to further segregate, while many civilians feel a lack of personal safety and a lack of trust in the other group. The media and academic discourse around the events of May 2021, focused on the ethno-national Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its leakage into Israel’s mixed cities; or, alternatively, on structural discrimination and spatial condensation of the minority Palestinian Arabs. However, there are additional perspectives that can be used to understand the events and the factors that led up to these events in the mixed city of Lod. Stern (2021) highlights the process of “layered integration”. Accordingly, economic, political and spatial processes that transpired over the past two decades - particularly structural changes in Israel’s economy and employment market and the increase in Palestinian Israeli citizens’ immigration to cities with a majority of Jewish residents - laid the ground for constant tension between the Jewish and Arab populations in Israel’s social periphery. He claims that these processes vilified the existing patterns of separation between the communities leading to the socio-economic mobility of the Arab citizens, alongside intensifying friction with the Jewish population in the Israeli periphery.

A different perspective relates to ethnic gentrification in mixed cities (Shmaryahu-Yeshuron, 2021) that reflects the ethno-national and class tensions between the Arab and Jews, tensions revealed in the events of May 2021 that had been hidden under the



pretense of coexistence. An example of these tensions can be found in the words of one of the young men interviewed in the study: “All of these years, we received constant blows on our head, now let us blow off some steam”. Gentrification is the immigration of the middle class into deteriorated city centers, which causes continuous change to the character of the place, widened class and ethno-national gaps, and the expulsion of minority groups. Ethno-gentrification contributes an element of ethnic-national prejudice to the question of economic standing.

Another perspective examines the broader national aspect. Urban riots are not detached from the broad national element; they express continuous structural discrimination, and usually are ignited by a symbolic event connected to it, such as the murder of George Floyd by white policemen in the United States (Shani, 2021). As such, urban riots express a local reality closely connected amongst others, to feelings of discrimination and deprivation, the relationship with the local forces, ethno-economic spatial composition, and the response of the police and the local government.

As noted, local issues are not detached from national issues. The processes of gentrification and ghettoization of Arab neighborhoods cannot be understood without understanding the tension between the Jewish aspiration to control the space and the market forces that stimulate negative social mobility. Many people from the Arab sector claim that the events in Al-Aqsa and Sheikh Jarrah cannot be disregarded, that they ignited the protest. The Palestinian flags and nationalist cries that accompanied the violence should not be ignored either. We must try and recognize the context, as described above. “What happened in May 2021 is a constitutive event in the history of Lod after the War 1948”. That’s what was said, in various versions, by many of the interviewees that experienced these events. The city’s Arab

residents that took part in the study described the events as an actual war. Fear was present in every home. “We are scared to leave the house; I locked the doors so that my children would not leave.”

When relating to Operation Guardians of the Walls, many of the Arab interviewees mentioned having close relatives in Gaza or the West Bank, and that communication with them continued during the days of combat. The stories they shared were extremely difficult.

In terms of the study’s Arab interviewees, the “murder” of the young Mussa Hasona (who was killed in the confrontation between the Jewish and Arab population on the first night of the events, by a gunshot from a civil weapon belonging to one of the Jewish residents) was a turning point. The heavy burden that had weighed them down for years exploded in the city’s face. For them, the violence and damage to public property was an act of protest over the day-to-day occurrences in the city and the domination of the “garin torani” (a group of national-religious families that settled in Lod over the past few decades) over the city and their lives. As described by one interviewee, “it is the people with the kipa that took over everything.” Some of the interviewees that witnessed the riots tried to pacify and moderate, relating to the pain of the young people on the streets and their will to cry out with voices that have been silenced for years. Quickly, the Arab residents felt threatened. The cry to Israel’s Jewish citizens to come to Lod and guard the city’s residents intensified their feelings of inequality, stated the interviewees. Instead of talking to the young people, most of whom are idle and without a permanent framework of employment or education, and offer them help to find their place, especially in a time of crisis - the cries from the Jewish side sounded to them like “let’s come and show them who owns the place.”

Many of the interviewees spoke of another constitutive event. For years, the Arab society in Lod suffered from the fracturing of their own sub-groups, related to their arrival to the city during different eras (a gap in their perception of “Lodness”). The events of May 2021 stirred new feelings of comradeship that “for years failed to develop in the city. Our understanding that now we, as Arabs, only have each other in the city, strengthened our brotherhood”, stated some of the interviewees.

At the same time, after the riots quieted down, the Arab speakers tended to other matters, as we noticed during our research. The city returned to its difficult routine. Lod is still bleeding from the continual rampage of violence on its streets, and this horrible reality is stronger than May 2021’s flare up, as painful as it was.

## The Mosaic Center

The study’s Arab interviewees expertly described the paradox embedded in the Mosaic Center: urban development led to the construction of the unique center that draws crowds from outside of the city, but at the same time, raises animosity and alienation: “there is a place in the city that is visited by people from the outside, and I don’t feel comfortable being there”; “the place belongs to them, not to me”; said many of the Arab interviewees. Others said that during the years of construction, no one spoke to the neighbors, most of them Arab, to explain “what was being erected and why”. Or, in the words of one resident that lives next to the Center: “the place belongs to us, the residents, not to them”.

The Center and municipality were not seen as paying any attention to the residents’ discomfort caused by the long years of construction, or to the harm to their quality of life caused by closing central roads during that time. The result - a respectable structure adjacent to a neglected and underdeveloped neighborhood - a sore to the eye that aggravates the neighbors’ sense of frustration, which existed even before the building. Some of the interviewees said, “With all of the money poured into the Center, they could have fixed the neighborhood.” Today, the Arab neighbors living near the Center still suffer from a lack of parking spaces and an overloaded old sewage system - however, their complaints have not been answered. Thus, while connecting these difficulties with the damage to the Center during the May events is not an acceptable explanation, it cannot be ignored.

The Jewish interviewees on the other hand, did not relate to the Center’s planning or construction processes but still mentioned that they were not included in them. In any case, they were not bothered by the building in their daily lives. “It’s not next to us”, “it didn’t bother us”, said some of the interviewees, while some expressed sympathy and identified with their Arab neighbors that felt excluded from the Center. The Jewish interviewees chose to relate to the conceptual aspects: “what does having a Center with a unique mosaic do for the city or for me?” They described “feeling proud”, “a connection to history”, and one of them said: “For the first time, I have a reason to invite visitors from out of town”.

Despite most of the interviewees limited familiarity with the Center, whether from lack of interest or negative feelings that developed around its construction, we asked them to say what they thought could improve the communication between the Center and the city’s residents. Was it

possible to leverage the festiveness that some of them spoke of in connection with the Center's inauguration to actions that would have a long-term influence? The answers we received fell across a large range, from ideas to produce additional activities and opportunities at the Mosaic Center, to moving and expanding the activities to other venues outside of it. Such, for example, interviewees from Regenerating Ramat Eshkol, where new tourist projects are planned in its surrounding areas, expressed their hopes that "this time we won't see tractors one morning and learn for the first time that a new building is going up". Others wondered, "will my children go to the Center in a school or after-school program visit?" and they expressed their wish to be involved in the Center's affairs.

**In order to continue to deepen the relations between the Center and the city, we recommend to continue mapping the situation with the following:**

- An online extensive questionnaire for city residents that visited the Center.
- A round-table event to discuss core issues related to the relationship of the Center and the residents.
- Forming a steering committee composed of representatives from the city's various groups to work and act in collaboration with the Center's professional team.

## Concentric Circles

The dialogue with the interviewees occasionally strayed away from the issue of the Center and spread out onto broader questions that dealt with other circles of influence through which the connection between the Center and the residents, or other issues in the city, could be examined. We decided to broaden the dialogue because the residents' relationship with the Center can be explored from various prisms, such as personal identity, the neighborhood and surroundings, and participation in the city's events. During the interviews, these prisms were extended to include additional issues that arose from their daily lives.

**Circle: personal identity**

**Circle: neighborhood space**

**Circle: texture of urban life**

**Circle: resident/municipality partnership**

**Circle: inter-city/mixed cities**

The profound gap between the young and older population in the Arab society became apparent, amongst other things, in the interviewees' connection to Lod. The older interviewees described a sense of belonging: "this is my city", "I have no other place", "I will never move away from here even if I end up on the street", "I was born here, and here I will die." Many of the younger interviewees, on the other hand, stated that they would consider relocating if there were better opportunities for employment.

The Jewish interviewees that were born in the city, spoke of their deep connection to it: “after all, this is my home.” For many, the sense of belonging was so great that they had difficulty putting it into words: “a feeling of the heart.” However, when asked if they felt a city-wide sense of pride in their shared ‘Lodness’, they regretfully said that there was none. They also related to tagging and generalizations. As we know, visibility produces stigmas everywhere, but in the urban context, the visibility of people in Lod associates them with particular groups. Some of the interviewees claimed that they would be happy to break away from their stigmatized identity that was stuck upon them. Other interviewees would have been happy to feel comfortable stating their identity, “I am secular”, “I am from the garin torani”, without having to apologize.

### **Circle: neighborhood space and the junction of various population groups living together**

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The Arab interviewees did not elaborate on their neighborhood identity, because in their case, a particular neighborhood was historically assigned to them and was not a choice. They related to their day-to-day challenges in the neighborhood: a lack of services in the neighborhood and their need to leave it. They did not express the advantages of living in the city, within walking distance from many services. In addition, they noted, any exit from the neighborhood is challenging because of a severe shortage of public transportation and damaged roads.

The Jewish interviewees connected their neighborhood identification to their community identity and explained that while in the past, their social identification was based on the neighborhood, now it is based on community. The interviewees

were asked to describe the difference between a neighborhood as a community and a homogeneous community. Those that answered the question claimed that it is about a dialogue brought into the city following the arrival of new communities that quickly consolidated due to shared denominators, “people that are similar to each other.” The engagement with and investment in communities, they said, excludes those who do not feel or wish to belong to a particular community. From the general urban discourse; “if I don’t have a community, it’s as though I have nothing to look for here”. Meaning, the urban community became closed and replaced the municipality’s community work in the city’s neighborhoods.

Veteran interviewees, who have a broader perspective regarding social issues in the city, claimed that the central problem is the absence of a municipal body that binds together all of the various issues related to communities. The subject is divided and dealt with by many organizations and municipal departments, and therefore, has negligible impact. The effectiveness of the neighborhood space is measured, according to many interviewees, in a sense of community; Does anyone think of me? Does anyone take care of me? Do I think of others?

Another significant insight that arose from the interviews is the need to focus on the definition of community in the city. Memories from the past shared by the interviewees, of eating watermelon with their neighbors in the entrance to the apartment building, are sweet memories but in their opinion, represent an irrelevant reality. Thus, their aspiration is not to return to the neighborly and community feelings of the past, but for the residents to figure out together what they want in the present. “Those that dream of returning to the neighborhood of the past doesn’t understand the reality”, said some of the interviewees. We must ask what they expect, what will restore their identification with the place



where they live. Some of the interviewees even suggested a discourse on identification via a common subject, such as schools or the lack of a public park.

The next question asked in this context related to the neighborhood leadership - should there be one, how would it be carried through, and who would be the leaders? The answers were varied. Some of the interviewees spoke of the lack of leadership or of a body that would represent the residents' needs, but also shared their concern that one would be established but not represent all of the voices. This opens a new understanding of the complexities and opportunities of this heterogeneous neighborhood.

The Arab interviewees also described a perceptual shift: from living in a clan to living in a neighborhood; from relying on family for help and protection as accepted in the past, to widen the circle of support by forming new friendships and neighborly ties. Community living in the Arab society is still in its infancy. The need to belong to a group/community can be utilized as a key to social and civil empowerment in Lod's Arab society.

The city's most significant challenge - "how to live together in Lod" - came up, directly and indirectly, around other issues. Many interviewees connected the groups' connection with the conduct of day-to-day or urban life. This attests to the importance of shared life for the residents over all aspects of their lives. It must be noted that a compelling difference was observed between the Jews and Arab in this context. Jewish interviewees were focused on "how do we carry on from here", or "what needs to happen now"; the Arab interviewees didn't necessarily relate to this as a central issue unless directly asked. This was expressed in the way they saw the events of May 2021: while the Arab interviewees described the riots as a passing event and that discussion of it should cease ("in the end everything worked out, it is from above"), the Jewish interviewees said that for them, the event was not over. "How can we go

on as usual after all that happened here", said one of the interviewees. According to her, she feels like she is still living in the events that occurred in May 2021 today. This is a central mood in the city that can explain the various reactions of the communities to the events and conflicts as well as the statements manifested in the urban public space to this day.

When Jewish interviewees were asked about the continuous and escalating sense of conflict that they described, most answered that "the situation will never go back to the way it was", "we are still in trauma", "the basic steps for regaining trust can't be ignored". There were interviewees, from both societies, that claimed that these feelings sometimes produce unhealthy tension: every event is considered to be nationalist, every statement is taken out of its context and portrayed as incitement. The interviewees pointed to an escalation of oppositional behavior that is "out to get" the other side. Most of them spoke of their expectations from the high rank to lead toward an "end of the events". They expect the police to enhance the law, the boundaries and the public order; they expect the political leadership to lead a vision and strategy to minimize conflict and prevent the repeat of such events.

The Arab interviewees expressed frustration that their cry regarding the violence in the Arab society was only heard when the Jewish population was also hurt. The Jewish interviewees also related to this issue and said that when they hear of violence in Arab schools, they understand that this cannot be ignored and that the Arab society cannot be expected to solve this issue on their own.

That being said, both the Arabs and Jews complained that "there is too much talking on the issue and not enough done to amend the situation". Many of them would be happy to participate in conversations between Arabs and Jews, "no one wants a war, who wants to lose their children's lives?" They would

be happy if places for real encounters could occur, where each could express their opinion while respecting the others'. Many stated hope that the public education system would deal with these issues on various levels, and not ignore them as it does today. Agreeing to recognize the identity of the other, possibly an indirect result of the May events, is an opportunity for more meaningful and mature discourse of coexistence in the mixed city.

The Arab interviewees described the rejection they felt from the Jewish residents: "we are interested in discourse and familiarity, but they aren't interested in us". Other describes feelings of existential threat in face of groups that seek to alter the balance of the shared life in the city. When the Arab interviewees were asked who they thought should change the situation they answered that while their feelings of rejection and discrimination by state institutions for the very fact of being a minority group should be separated from their feelings in the city, their status as a minority group exacerbates their sense of discrimination. In their opinion, the municipality should promote equality and a positive spirit between the two groups.

## Circle: texture of urban life and dealing with core issues

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"What do you think are the core issues on the agenda?" was presented to the Arab interviewees as an open question. Although we assumed that the events of May 2021 would be a central issue for Lod's Arab society, most of the interviewees did not relate to them at all. The central issues dealt with the conditions of their daily life: housing, livelihood, education and the crime in the Arab society. Feelings of "survival" and "emotional suffocation" arose as characterizations of the city's current condition.

**The Jewish interviewees, on the other hand, related only marginally to ongoing issues, and confessed to still being disturbed by various daily aspects of the May events,** even when discussing other social issues. Jewish interviewees that claimed that the issue of shared life was not central in their lives and not a subject they dwelt upon - confessed that since the events of May 2021 they still cannot avoid dwelling on them.

## Core issues from daily life that arose from the side of the Arab interviewees

### • Violence and crime

The many cases of violence, the high rate of killings, the daily fear of accidental shootings, or involuntary involvement in conflicts between clans - have made the dilapidated, or non-existent, sense of personal security a central issue in the lives of Lod's Arab residents. This unavoidably, effects every aspect of their lives and makes life insufferable.

The reasons that led to the current situation, according to the interviewees:

- The continuous neglect of Arab society in Lod, particularly in comparison to the neighborhoods acknowledged as Jewish.
- A difficult and deteriorating economic situation. Families that are second-generation poor.
- An average to non-functioning education system, particularly relating to informal education.
- An identity crisis of the young residents; "living in a city without knowing who you are, and not being able to talk about it."
- Persistent negligence by the police and government.

### • The city's Arab educational system

Education is considered by the interviewees as a key to success in life and was mentioned as a serious challenge in the city. Education, the interviewees said, is an opportunity for social mobility. At the same time, most

of the interviewees described the national education system as complex/failing/dysfunctional/not nurturing.

The diversity of the interviewees allowed us to raise various angles:

- The students were offered generic, non-differential, solutions.
- A deep shortage, even total lack, of emotional or therapeutic response.
- A large gap in the students' grade average in comparison to the city's Jewish students.
- Leadership and social involvement were not nurtured.
- Many of the teachers showed animosity to the students.

The statements regarding informal education were even more severe: "most of the children are on the streets", "there are places without any framework", "the solutions are of low quality". The direct implication of the situation is the deterioration of the youth to the gray areas of crime, where, some of the interviewees claimed, "someone paid attention to them".

#### • **The housing crisis**

The general perception is that the housing crisis in the city's Arab society stemmed from house demolitions and resettlement of the Arab neighborhoods, but the interviewees related to the crisis in general terms: their inability to build their children a house. They all said that this is not a unique problem of Lod, but they emphasized that in a mixed city, there are additional challenges to consider, for example, the refusal to sell apartments to the Arab public or construction projects that are not intended for the Arab residents or suited to their needs.

## **Circle: resident/municipality partnership**

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The relationship between the residents and the municipality is intricate. The interviewees were asked to relate to the degree of involvement they felt in the city's events. Most stated that they would have wanted to be more involved. Despite their complicated feelings towards the situation and the city, the question was not met with indifference.

Many of the interviewees noted the need to build the infrastructure for civil engagement. Perhaps, the infrastructure should be adjusted to different needs or various population groups. While there is some existing infrastructure, they are considered to be "cliquish" or "closed club" organizations. The interviewees expressed their hope that "the city would return to be what it used to be", and elaborated: that not all the strong people would leave, but that those who can contribute would stay and exert their influence on the city. They thought that the way to achieve that is to provide space for the residents' initiatives, while separating politics from civil activity. Many of the interviewees sadly remarked that social activity in Lod today is viewed as a political threat to certain agents, "there is no understanding that by being active people are taking responsibility for their city". At the same time, to enable these processes to grow and develop, it is necessary to train the service providers and those that come into contact with them in order to work effectively and in cooperation with active residents.

The Jewish interviewees distinguished between the essence of partnership ("does it even exist", "is it important to the municipality") and its practical manifestations ("who do they partner with", "how is it done"). They pointed at large changes that took place in the city over the

past years, particularly related to the city's physical aspects; "there is a momentum of city development". However, most feel that these processes move forward without involving the residents' formal and informal leadership, or organizations that have been active in the city for many years; "if our city is going to look and operate differently in the future, it is only just, that as those that live in it, our opinions be heard". These remarks were made in relation to the intense urban renewal that will change the existing urban texture, and regarding new construction that is changing amongst other things, the balance between old and new, mixed neighborhoods and those that are not, veterans and newcomers. They were said by the interviewees that both appreciated the city's development but were also deeply concerned; "I see the cranes and get excited, but also worry that perhaps the city isn't prepared for these changes yet". The Arab interviewees claimed that as a minority group in a Jewish city, the anticipated changes do not take their needs and aspirations into account.

The interviewees considered the way that the municipality shares with the public. Many pointed out that various agents tend to make their plan public only at the end of the process, at the "ribbon cutting". Many projects are revealed only after execution, without consulting the public during the various stages of planning. "We have lived here for so many years, what we have to say could help the municipality", many said. As in most areas, there are no existing mechanisms to partner with the public, the communities/groups need to create indirect paths to make their needs acknowledged by the authorities. As a result, there are power struggles that sometimes result in groups pulling out of the game because they don't know how to play in the municipal arena.

The Arab society feels the barrier more acutely. An Arab resident basically perceives all issues to be controlled by the municipality. Many of the Arab residents do not make

distinctions between the various factors or between the public and civil sectors. For that reason, deep and overbearing feelings of exclusion are more apparent in the city's Arab society than the Jewish one. The interviewees described a deep rift between what they hear is done for their society and what they actually see on the ground. They named several types of municipal dysfunctionality and discrimination regarding the challenges of the Arab society: low investment in the pedagogy and social climate of the education system; shortage of infrastructure development and poor treatment of waste and other hazards; under budgeting of cultural events; and lack of response to the needs of the various communities. Many of the interviewees showed anger in face of the lack of transparency in resource distribution and that a lot of the published information was not in Arabic, creating a sense that things were concealed from them. The Arab public feels deprived in many of the city's issues, but the interviewees noted that over the past years, the hard feelings have intensified as they realize the discrepancy in attention that the municipality pays favored communities in comparison to others.

## Circle: inter-city - mixed cities

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The process taking place in Lod is similar in many ways to those occurring in other Israeli mixed cities. Therefore, we asked professionals from Ramla and Akko to underscore the leading points of their work.

### Leading points learned from Ramla

- **Leadership:** A forum of leaders was established 14 years ago, which works within the framework of the city's mediation center. It is an independent body, led by external professionals. Leaders of the city's main communities meet once every month and a half, with the municipality's director and the local police's chief officer, and together work to advance the communities' needs. The forum's main objective is to intercede in emergency situations and prevent crises.

- **Familiarity through education:** Unique programs for the city's children are constructed by the Arab and Jewish schools' teams. Groups of Jewish and Arab schoolchildren meet consecutively for three years to produce a meaningful learning process.

- **Public encounters:** Care is taken to ensure that the needs of each of the city's sub-communities is considered. The various offices that provide public services, culture, community and education, initiate as part of their policy diverse encounters in many places. The goal is to produce as many open meetings as possible that are interesting and relevant to the city's residents. The meetings take place in a variety of places and use various methods, so that the whole population feels welcomed and participates. The meetings are intended to create interpersonal relationships amongst the city's residents.

Leading points learned from Akko

- **Leadership:** Assistance in forming local apolitical leadership in the city's various communities. Because of the inherent complexities of political leadership in mixed cities, it is important to define the difference between political, elected leadership and local unofficial leadership that stems from the ground and is supported by it. Relationships between these two types of leaderships must be strengthened.

- **Inter-religious ties:** Develop personal ties and deep familiarity between the various religious leaders in the city.

- **Empowerment and resilience:** Develop community resilience with regard to the community's internal collective identity. Respond to each community according to its specific needs, help build it up and help it face the challenges it faces in living beside the other communities.

- **An Arab deputy mayor:** Appointing an Arab (Adham Jamal) as the city's deputy mayor for the first time is a resolute statement on the place and status of the city's Arab residents. It is important to note that the decision was not based on political interest (enlarging the coalition) but was made as a necessity of the mixed city's reality.



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## Results and recommendations

## Guiding principles

- **Taking responsibility for the city** by city management and teams composed of representatives from the municipality and the civil organizations in the city, is, despite the difficulties, preferable to the current situation that enables organizations from outside of the city to lead its activities and discourse.
- **Positivity:** The common belief that the solution to facing the city's challenges and conflicts is in joint action - is mistaken. The healing and rehabilitation process must begin with activities that are not directly relate to the volatile issues, so as to create a sense of progress towards a better future.
- **Prevention, not enforcement:** We must focus on the things that can be added upon, so as to strengthen and change the course of action, and minimize enforcement and exacerbation of the problems.
- **Open doors:** for those that are interested in being heard, not for those that boycott and condemn.
- **Utilizing local power:** there must be a clear prerogative to use, empower and grow local forces over external ones - even if developing the local forces necessitated larger resources or longer processes.
- **Multidimensionality** should be used when considering urban issues, not only surrounding the Jewish-Arab axis, which is in the center of the discussion these days. For example: veterans vs. newcomers, secular vs. religious, senior citizens vs. the young generation, etc. Focusing on a variety of subjects may add significant content to the city's growth.
- **Information is power:** informed residents are caring and involved residents. An informed resident that chooses to make his or her voice heard is a resident who chooses to be an active part of his or her city's management.

## The Center as a neutral space of renewed connection and familiarity

The Mosaic Center is an opportunity to design a new neighborhood community space, which is not tainted with a history of complexity and crisis; a space where the neighborhood's residents can use to get together, meet and take part in activities of interest to them. The Center should use various tools, such as questionnaires, to determine the activities most relevant for its neighbors. A new place, opened to the wide public, is an opportunity for familiarity and discourse.

### The various statements about the Center and its surroundings that were expressed during the interviews raised three central and complimentary axes:

- **Familiarity with the Center and use of it:** Strengthen the tie between the city's residents, particularly the young generation's and the Center, by cooperating together in all of the city's frameworks. Develop interfaces with the municipal offices and services that don't come into contact with the Center. Emphasize the tie to the closest neighbors, expand the joint informal activities, and show them appreciation and respect.
- **Make social values present in the Center:** The Center can be the bridge that binds the different parts of the city's human mosaic, consolidate a positive common identity and present the city's various religions and cultures.
- **Partnerships surrounding the Center:** Leveraging the city's and neighborhood's existent human capital by exposing the Center's visitors to additional city treasures: artists, unique narratives of the residents,

and local businesses. The Center should think about how best to serve the city and its residents, rather than how they serve it.

### **Recommendations for action inside the Center and in its surroundings**

In light of the extensive information we gathered about the Center's establishment, location, and activities from the city's residents and the professionals that work in it, we have formulated a few ways to express the great promise that the Center holds for the city. These recommendations can potentially heal, at least partially, the results of the May 2021 riots - the violent events that shattered its beginnings.

- **Lod as a mosaic of cultures:** Exposing the Center visitors to Lod's unique variety of social capital. Connect the material mosaic to the city's and neighborhood's human mosaic, by offering tours of the city: visit local businesses and homes, experience unique local craft-making, listen to personal stories, etc. In addition, create a list of local businesses/hosts that can offer the visiting groups another experience beside viewing the ancient findings in the Center.

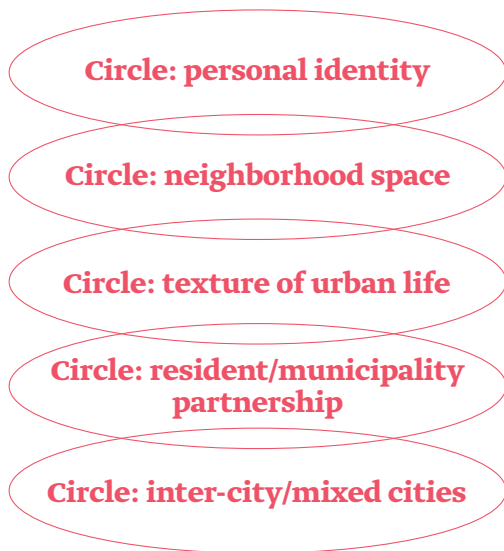
- **The Center as a source of Lod pride:** Plan with the residents an arrangement to have them host their friends and relatives in the Center. Use the residents' desire to invite their relatives and friends to view the local historical moment.

- **Archeology with a cultural-religious context:** The mosaic on display carries great archeological and artistic value, particularly for those knowledgeable or curious about history and archeology. To enhance the Center visit for all of the city's population, it would be beneficial to tighten the link between the mosaic to other mosaics connected to the residents' world: beginning with the influence of Roman art on Islamic and Christian art and ending with their expressions in Jewish art.

- **The "Green Way":** The "Green Way" promenade intends to connect the Center in Ramat Eshkol with the city center via a sequence of focal points. The Center can deepen cooperation in the promenade's erection, with the general residents of the city in general, and of those living in Ramat Eshkol in particular, by adding a group of residents to the planning committee to study the subject and act in conjunction with the Center. The group (together with the professional team) can create "hype" for the project and emphasize its principles of cooperation. Meaning, emphasize that the design of the promenade's motive of identity is entwined with the residents' involvement in it. The professional team should be selected with a process that examines their ability to work in cooperation with the field, not only based on their professional credentials and expertise in architecture, engineering, etc.

# Expanding concentric circles: continuous and complimentary

Another significant component of this research was designed to promote the importance of the circles driven by the ties between the city and the Center. In other words: strengthening the notion of “Lod as a human mosaic”. In our opinion, that will pose a serious challenge for the Center’s staff, its management, the municipality, and other involved organizations.



## Recommendations for the Circle of personal identity

### Developing a program to deal with local identity

In light of the large rift between the older and younger residents of the city, Arab and Jewish, in regard to their feelings of belonging in the city and their identification with it, we suggest designing a unique program, tailored to Lod’s lifestyle, that connects the “self” to his or her place of birth and roots. We believe that this kind of connection will contribute to the formation of high-quality young leadership. The program will enable all of the city’s population groups to learn about their roots and the meaning of life in Lod - with attention to neighbors that are similar or different than them. **Developing strong local identity is a complex challenge. If the challenge is not met by the city in a professional manner, other agents that don’t build leadership or contribute to connecting the young generation to the city, make take over.**

### Additional recommendations:

**Emphasizing the city’s uniqueness in the eyes of the city’s residents:** The local and national media frequently discuss Lod’s challenges. It is imperative to stress the residents’ mutual responsibility by publishing the work of volunteers and other significant figures active in the city on a regular basis. Publishing stories that portray the mutual responsibility of Lod’s residents and of the ties between people that differ from each other, can enforce a sense of local pride and strengthen the residents’ affinity to their city, based on warmth and caring.



## Recommendations for the Circle: neighborhood space

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### Neighborhood organizer

Characterizing the needs of the neighborhood's residents to build sites of attraction and interest that consolidate local identity necessitates a professional agent to lead a strategic process. The city's neighborhoods differ in their level of organization, and appointing a person whose job is to help improve community organization around joint common denominators can strengthen the neighborhood. The organization can include the creation of a neighborhood committee, demanding the municipality to provide a lacking service or develop a public space for informal meetings with neighbors. A pilot program for an organizer in a mixed neighborhood can help create strong bonds around needs that are shared by the Arab and Jewish societies. An existing example is the residents' meetings in the Neve Nof neighborhood to solve a joint problem: the lack of a neighborhood community center ("matnas"). Other neighborhoods can develop multi-generational or secular/religious relations.

### Additional recommendations:

- **A general coordinator in the Arab neighborhood:** a role that doesn't exist yet, and can serve as a kind of pilot for the city. The role of the general operator is to study how to meet the needs of all the neighborhood's residents, rather than just those of one of its sectors. This service can be offered to the various population groups in the Arab society or to different demographic groups in the same neighborhood. Tailoring the service to the specific neighborhood can enhance the residents' trust and cooperation. The general coordinator will collaborate with neighborhood groups around issues related to the shared space. The shift from the clan

model to a neighborhood model, which became stronger during the covid pandemic in the Arab society, revealed the need to validate organization and support within the physical internal Arab space.

- **Schools in the community:** Elementary schools are important to the neighborhood and the Lod municipality uses them as neighborhood rather than city anchors. We recommend using the authority's resources, as well as the school's own resources (in the framework of the Geffen program) to form communities of parents. This will strengthen a sense of community cohesiveness around a common interest - education. Education is the top priority of most local population groups, thus, using it as a leverage for forming networks of social involvement, mutual aid, culture and joint learning can have a significant contribution to the city.

- **Establishing public spaces for informal encounters:** Alongside existing educational or cultural activities, geared toward a specific group, it is important to continue and develop settings for meetings around subjects that attract the public. As the number of places for informal meetings grows, so will the opportunities for meeting and creating trust. To encourage the general population to come to open meetings there is a need for multi-channel advertising, using various modes of content and in a variety of physical sites. The goal is not to create cultural/religious/educational events, which already exist to a large extent in the city, but rather interesting social encounters, with added value. Various city agents, not necessarily of the municipal authorities, can encourage civil activities of this kind.

- **Partnerships in commercial centers:** Harnessing the city's business sector to collaborate in a shared physical business space. A common interest of financial success can enhance and strengthen mutual trust.

- **Building city resilience:** To continue building familial, community and neighborhood resilience: the emotional support, treatment and anxiety relaxation,



that were offered during the May 2021 riots should be carried on. Different forms of therapy in the context of the neighborhood (for example, a designated room in the cultural center for relaxation, or calming activities in the public park) can help deal with the residents' trauma, experienced since May 2021. When the city's institutions become centers of local resilience, healing relationships in the city becomes more possible.

## Recommendations for the Circle: texture of urban life

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### • Education

**A. Establish a steering committee for the Arab society's education (both formal and informal):** A committee that meets regularly in the city's education board, composed of board members, school principals, educators from the Arab informal system, and social organizations. The threshold condition to join the committee is commitment to the process. The committee will have regular discussions dealing with ways to improve the Arab educational system, also including initiatives from the field into the city's system. An example of the central issues to discuss: the gap in the comparative grades between the city's Jewish and Arab schools; fair and effective division of resources; ensuring good basic knowledge of the Hebrew language; etc. This committee will serve as a proper city alternative for unregulated organizations in the city and outside of it, that are active in the educational system. The committee will aspire to create healthy, professional and transparent ties between the various agents active in the city, and will take responsibility of the realm.

### **B. Establish a steering committee on education for shared neighboring:**

We assume that education is the best way to ingrain a positive perception of shared neighboring amongst the city's young generation. This perception will be mapped by a team leading a strategic urban plan that includes all of the city's formal and informal educational organizations. Having the city take the lead in this area, according to the unique character of the shared life in each neighborhood, will produce added value to the content and activity in the spirit of the city, rather than according to the values of a particular organization. The team will include professional and civil agents from the Jewish and Arab societies that aspire to produce content for the city's educational system. The content will be concerned with familiarization of the various religions and customs; coping with the conflicts of shared living through the tools of mediation; and developing tolerance and acceptance of the other. Through the understanding that the identity of each society or community in the city is the most meaningful group affiliation for the students, children and youth, emphasis will be put on the ability to accept and respect the identity of the other, rather than try to blur their distinctions.

**C. Establish a regulated unit for the Arab society's informal education, managed by a professional:** Informal education in the Arab society is scattered and disjointed amongst various frameworks and organizations. An inclusive unit that will examine which of the needs are met and which are not - through continuous dialogue with the field - will enable strong and healthy communication with the children and youth of the Arab communities. The unit will include holidays, localities for activity, strengthening the youth movements in the schools, unique and tailored solutions for populations at risk, and an emphasis on the need for educational adults in the public sphere (for example, Elem's "mat project" that was enacted in the city in the past). The unit will consist of solutions enacted

by the city and by external organizations, educational institutions, cultural centers, coordinated and in constant communication with each other. The operation of the unit will be enforced with added resources.

- **Housing**

**A. Make the information on housing opportunities accessible:** The acute need for housing opens the way for opportunities, such as lotteries, to introduce new spaces. The intensified discourse on regulatory issues inhibits the discussion of practical issues related to housing, such as finding an apartment, which are actually the core of the matter. This could be done with a translated website, accessible to the average resident, or through regular reception hours by a professional.

**B. Make the financial opportunities accessible:** Information and successive aid in relevant subjects: supplementary funding, safe loan plans, mortgage, etc. A path of financial education for young people and families is a possibility that will advance social integration.

**C. Open stage:** A regular monthly meeting for the general public about housing and planning relate to the city's construction plans and projects. The residents will get clear and understandable information and explanations in these meetings. The meetings can form a committee of residents to deal with housing and planning who can relay the information they accumulated to the city's professional teams.

**D. City renewal:** In light of the great impact of urban renewal on the future nature of the city and its social texture, the involvement of local social activists in the process is crucial. An apolitical forum of residents should be established, including formal and informal city activists to meet, learn and discuss the social aspects of the city's development projects. Acting for the future strengthens the city's cohesiveness, which is particularly needed in times of accelerated change.

- **Crime and violence in the Arab society**

**A. Encourage safety by means of education and community:** Increasing projects that deal with the dangers on the roads, leading volunteering programs of youth and adults to increase safety for pedestrians and bicycle riders.

**B. Increasing the sense of personal safety:** Add a variety of platforms to update the city actions to eradicate crime and violence for groups that do not come in direct contact with the police or are not part of an existing city-run WhatsApp group.

**C. Emergency unit:** The many harmful events experienced by the residents suggests the need for an available and massive emergency unit to treat the varying degree of harmed people. In addition, a center, based on volunteers, should be formed to deal with calls in real time.

## **Recommendations for Circle: resident/municipality partnership**

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### **A unit for public participation**

Establish a municipal executive arm to bind together all the issues for public informing and enable it to take part in planning and decision-making. The goal is to substantiate a connection between the residents' and their municipal services in order to strengthen personal responsibility, alongside the possibility of leading urban moves that fit the field. This unit should be aware of local barriers: language, culture, lack of professional know-how, etc. Information that is divulged unprofessionally, in any area, rolls into a negative snowball and stopping is far more difficult than preventing it from forming.

### **Additional recommendations:**

- **Speak at eye level:** Residents ask to be heard. It isn't always about finding a solution for an immediate problem, but rather an expectation of having the realities of their lives seen and recognized. There are several platforms for this: tours or regular meetings in the neighborhoods around broad issues (for example, accessibility for people with special needs, youth vagrancy, cleaning the parks) with municipal employees involved in decision making, can create constructive communication between the city's residents and the municipal authority. Personal (scheduled) meetings between simple residents and decision makers can also contribute to both sides.

- **Increase civil initiatives and civil apolitical activities:** Calls for financial or other resources; training residents for professional activism; encouraging residents to take part in municipal initiatives and inviting them to commit and make an impact in decision-making; public committees around the city's central issues.

## **Circle: inter-city - mixed cities**

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**Lod lacks structured and regulated platforms that deal with peer learning on issues related to education and community, through a focus on multi-cultural groups, particularly Jewish and Arab.** The interviewees in our study that carry professional municipal roles, similar to interviewees in Ramla and Akko, were asked about their peers in like cities, especially after the events of May 2021, in which mixed cities shared similar challenges. Most of the interviewees spoke of inter-personal relationships or professional forums that were conceived by external professional or governmental bodies. Mutual tours were conducted, but there had been no regular or permanent learning following defined subjects by permanent people from the municipal systems.

We suggest to establish an inter-city professional forum, managed jointly by the mixed-cities' municipalities. This will allow the inter-municipal authority to evolve their modes of coping with the challenges of mixed cities.



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# Final Thoughts

Every research carries many challenges, particularly when the interviewees are mostly people from the field and regular residents. In Lod the challenge is multiplied. As if the situation in the city was not complicated enough, with population groups in the city living in it, the events of May 2021 occurred, deepening the break of trust and lack of relations between Jewish and Arab neighbors.

With that being said, the working process was constitutive. In interviews and focus groups, the study's interviewees expressed feelings of relief and closure from the conversations themselves. Many said that although a year had passed since the events, they had not found a previous opportunity to speak openly about the riots, the city and its future after the trauma.

As research leaders we were in conflict. On the one hand, we were filled with satisfaction from the value of our work, on the other, we raised high expectations for a successful end product for the city amongst the interviewees. As activists and professional in the field we understand that the difficulties and challenges of the city, alongside the opportunities it holds, are long-term processes. There are no shortcuts or magical solutions. When we set out on this journey, our main objective was to write a document based on intensive field work. A document that would offer the city's interested party's operative steps to help dissipate the residents' deep distress and bring hope for better days.

We decided to allow the interviewees to speak from their hearts, without curtailing their words or directing them, in personal and group conversations. We tried to avoid directing the talks towards a particular direction, even when the interviewees strayed from the subject to other issues - we enabled the conversation to take its course, professionally understanding that an open and rolling conversation is meaningful.

We strived to talk with diverse people in the city, in an attempt to break the barriers of the existing discourse on the surface, and hear the peoples' deep pain, without excluding voices or filtering opinions - being consciously inclusive and mediating. We constantly reminded ourselves that the city consists of many different groups with varying background, perceptions, beliefs, and identities, and that we need to provide room for everyone. We chose to be cautious in our discussion of Jewish-Arab relations because of the complexities that were stirred following the May 2021 events. The riots further raised the fences between the populations, turning them into walls. We believe in the will and hope of dismantling the walls, returning to fences that allow the different populations of distinct identities, to live together, side by side. During the research we learned that any attempt to demolish the walls without suggesting an alternative that takes into account the need to empower each group's individual identity - is doomed to fail.

Lod's residents include veterans and newcomers, new immigrants and Israeli natives, secular, traditional, religious and ultra-Orthodox groups - in both the Jewish and Arab societies. The key to the city's growth is to erect fences of various size and texture, to enable each group or society to live according to its own ways, through good and authentic communication with its surrounding neighbors. This is what led us to the issue of identity definition - personal, collective, and national. For many of Lod's residents the issue of their identity remains unresolved, for others it is clear and distinct. To our understanding, the issue of mediating that gap is unavoidable, but it must be done in a measured and sensitive manner.

The research we were asked to conduct was commissioned by the foundation that established the city's Mosaic Center. The damage to the Center inflicted during the May 2021 riots was the trigger. In summing up the study, we can safely say that the



Center, perhaps more than any other site in the city, marks the possibility of change; as a new physical and conceptual player, it can suggest new and different modes of work in the city.

This research offers recommendations for action and programs that we believe can improve the situation in many and various areas in the city. It mainly offers a way to create equal and inclusive space based on direct and honest dialogue and the understanding that living in unison is our common fate.

Lod's residents deserve to feel safe and to hope for a better future, and they have all of the elements and capabilities needed to reach that place.

**Noa Mevorach, Abed Shehadeh**

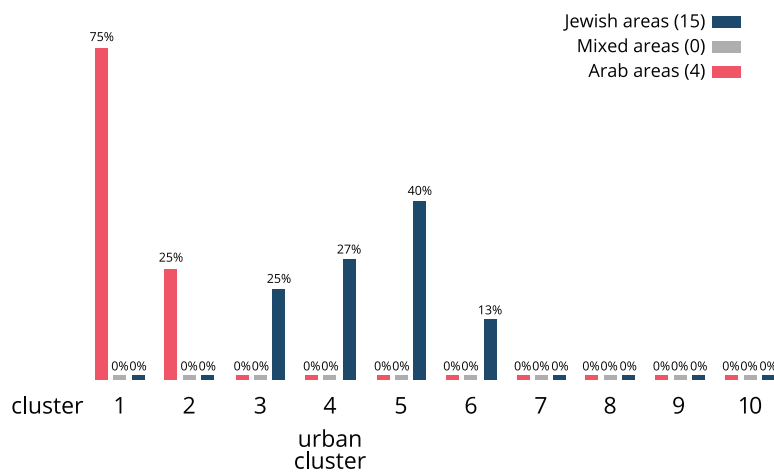
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# Appendix: Data

## a. Demographics<sup>3</sup>

- 82,629 residents
- Age break-up:
  - ages 0-19: 31,528 residents
  - ages 20-39: 22,152 residents
  - ages 40-59: 15,523 residents
  - ages 60 and older: 13,426 residents
- Total fertility rate: 3.37
- Population increase compared to 2022: 4.8%
- Life expectancy: 80.8
- Average number of family members: 3.23
- Statistical spread of socio-economic clusters in Jewish, Arab, and mixed areas, 2017<sup>4</sup>



## b. Population groups<sup>5</sup>

- The Jewish population
  - numbers 51,671 residents (70%)
- The Arab population
  - numbers 24,641 residents (30%)
- In the Arab population
  - numbers: 96.9% Muslim, 3.1% Christian
- New immigrants (as of 1991):
  - approx. 19% of the city's population

<sup>3</sup> Israel Central Bureau of Statistics

<sup>4</sup> "Arabs in mixed cities: an overview", Knesset Research and Information Center, 2021 [Hebrew]

<sup>5</sup> Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, updated 2021.

### **c. Employment<sup>6</sup> and wages<sup>7</sup>**

- Net income per capita: 4,642 NIS
- Average income of salaried workers: 7,734 NIS
- Employment rate: 59.1%
- 53.1% of the employed work outside of the city
- 67.2% of the residents own an apartment in the city
- 27.6% of the residents rent an apartment in the city

### **d. Social security benefits<sup>8</sup>**

- Residents receiving unemployment stipends: 10,599. Average age: 40 years old.
- In the age group 20-67, 25% of the residents are intitled to unemployment stipends.
- Residents receiving old age pensions: 9,791. Approx. 30% of them receive income supplement allowance.
- Residents receiving income supplement allowance: 3,539.
- Residents receiving general disability allowance: 2,854.

### **e. Education<sup>9</sup>**

- 24.9% of the city's residents have a high school diploma.
- 27.9% of the city's residents have a college diploma.
- High school students entitled to receive diplomas (bagrut) in 2019/2020: 65.9%
- Students ages 20-25 (2020/2021): 10.4%
- The percentage of college graduates in Lod according to population groups and gender, 2008-2018: <sup>10</sup>

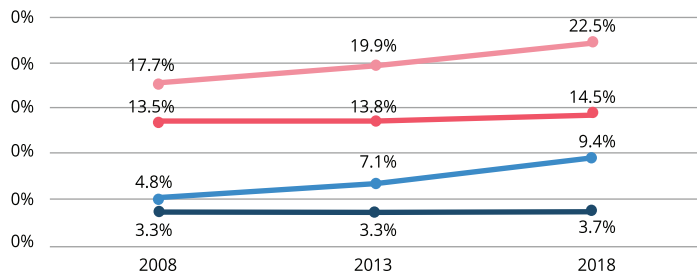
<sup>6</sup> Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, updated 2020

<sup>7</sup> Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, updated 2018

<sup>8</sup> Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, updated 2020

<sup>9</sup> Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, updated 2020

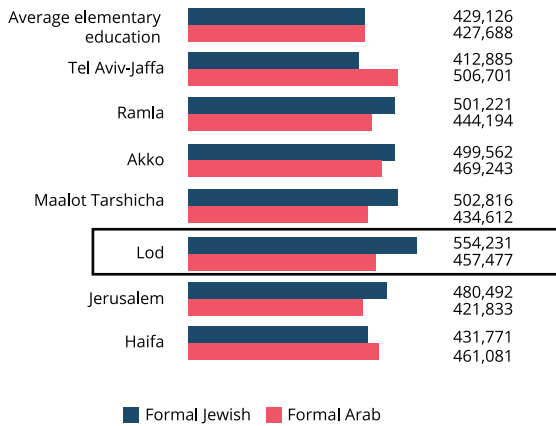
<sup>10</sup>A special analysis of the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics for high education registration. In: "Arab residents in mixed cities: the present situation". Oded Ron, Ben Fargun, Nasrine Hadad-Hadg, The Israel Democracy Institute, 2022 [Hebrew]



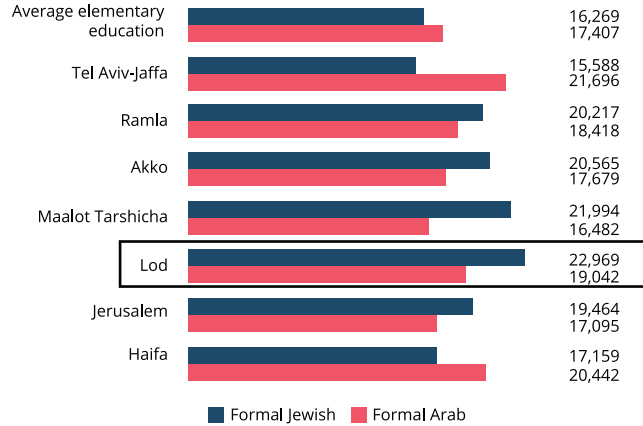
Jewish women — Jewish men — Arab women — Arab men

- The board of Education’s budget for formal elementary education in mixed cities and the national average according to sectors in 2018/2019 <sup>11</sup>

### Budget per class

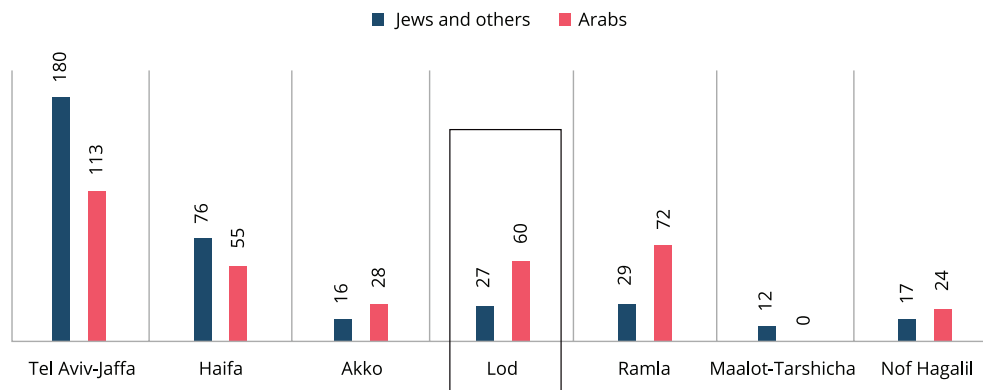


### Budget per student



## f. Crime

- Criminal files for minors in mixed cities, 2020 <sup>12</sup>



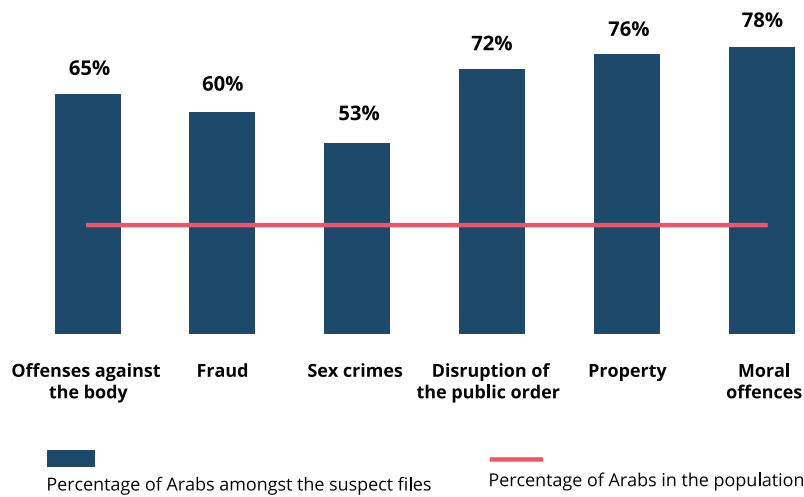
Note: criminal files only, not including files under investigation or treatment of minor offences that were closed for lack of public interest.

<sup>11</sup> “Arabs in mixed cities: an overview”, Knesset Research and Information Center, 2021 [Hebrew]

<sup>12</sup> A special analysis of the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics for the police. In: “Arab residents in mixed cities: the present situation”. Oded Ron, Ben Fargun, Nasrine Hadad-Hadg, The Israel Democracy Institute, 2022 [Hebrew]

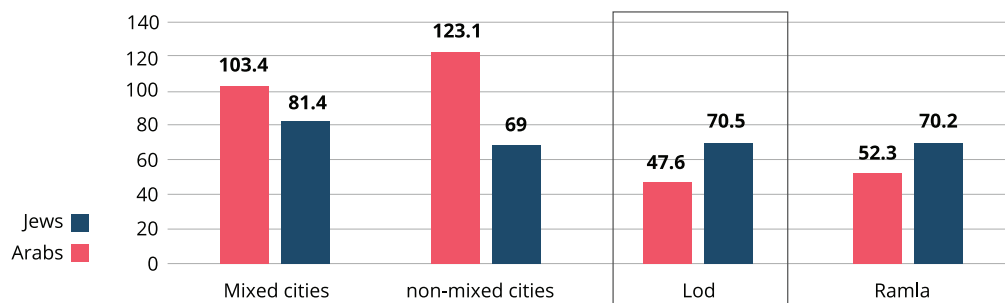


- The rate of criminal files opened for Arabs related to their relative population for central felonies in Jaffa, Akko and Lod <sup>13</sup>

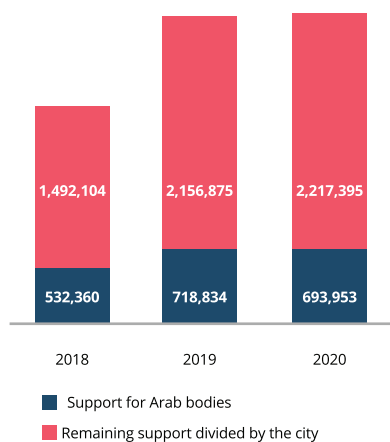


### g. City services

- Inquiries in the welfare department per 1000 people, according to population group in Lod and Ramla and in comparison to all cities, mixed and non-mixed (2020) <sup>14</sup>



- Financial support granted by the Lod municipality, 2018-2020 (in NIS) <sup>15</sup>



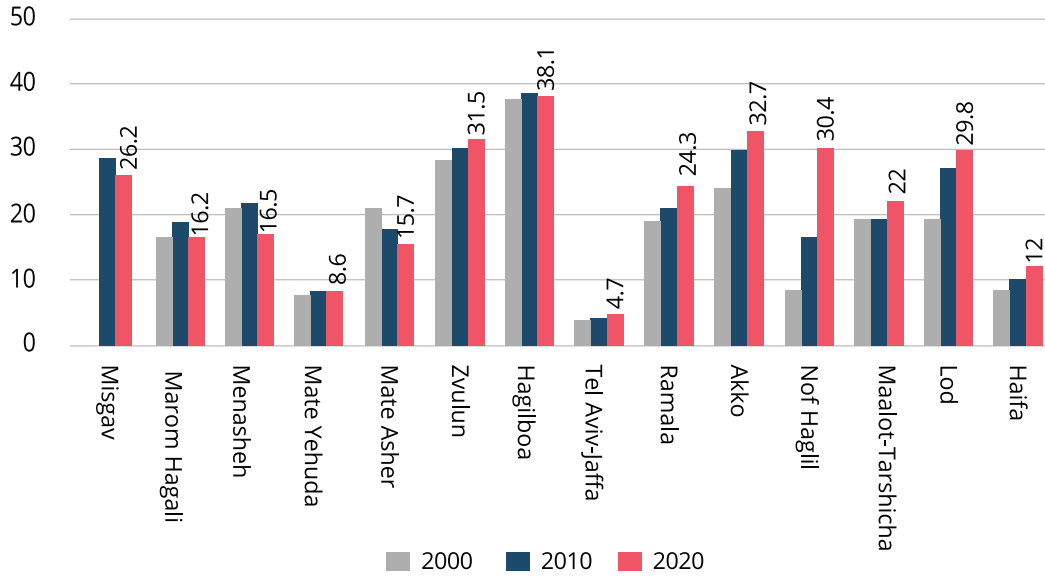
<sup>13</sup> Data from the Israel Police. In: "Policing and law enforcement in mixed cities during the events of Operation Guardians of the Walls and in routine, special report – mixed cities", State Comptroller, 2022 [Hebrew]

<sup>14</sup> In: "Arab residents in mixed cities: the present situation". Oded Ron, Ben Fargun, Nasrine Hadad-Hadg, The Israel Democracy Institute, 2022 [Hebrew]

<sup>15</sup> Data from the Lod municipality, analyzed by the State Comptroller's office. In: "Municipal services in mixed cities, special report – mixed cities", State Comptroller, 2022 [Hebrew]

### g. The Arab society

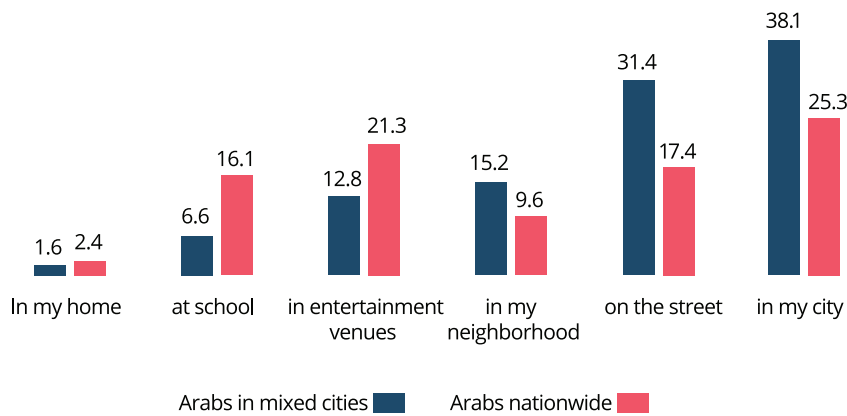
- Rate of Arab residents living in elite municipal authorities, 2000, 2010, 2020 <sup>16</sup>



- Positions related to threat of violence, according to living areas (Arab civilians) <sup>17</sup>

#### ?To what degree do you feel threatened by violence in these places

"the percentage of answers of "to a large extent" and "to a very large extent"



<sup>16</sup> "Municipal services in mixed cities, special report – mixed cities", State Comptroller, 2022 [Hebrew]

<sup>17</sup> "The Abraham Initiative's guide to the challenges of mixed cities in crisis" (2021). Abraham Initiative.









سحرية  
Shaharit

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נשחרלית

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יוצרים מחנה משותף