My lifelong experiences within a contested ethnonational reality, combined with my personal attributes—in particular, a sharp intellectual mind, creativity, curiosity, an ability to work independently and a high sensitivity to social justice and human rights issues—have informed and directed my choices both in academia and my professional life.

I strongly believe that the Development Planning Unit at UCL's Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment is the best place to conduct my proposed doctoral research in spatial planning, cultural heritage production and cultural tourism development in historical cities recognized by UNESCO as world heritage sites, within the context of ethnonational conflict. The political aspect of planning and development policies in contested world heritage historical cities is an area that has been under-researched, and which would benefit from further academic study. DPU's multidisciplinary and intersectoral approach to urban planning, together with its political-economic, social and institutional research interests--in particular policies in public housing, cultural heritage and developing culture heritage tourism, privatisation and globalisation in the global south--lie at the heart of my proposed research, and would enable me to build on knowledge gained from my previous studies, to further develop my research interest, and to contribute to scholarship in this field.

As a global university located in the heart of London, UCL will provide me with an opportunity to conduct my research in an institution committed to academic excellence and quality, one which has links and partnerships with key bodies and access to vital networks. I would benefit both professionally, academically and personally from the freedom to pursue my academic and career aspirations within an institution with a worldwide impact, while taking advantage of the rich, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic environment a city like London has to offer.

During my undergraduate studies in law nearly 18 years ago I discovered that my academic interest lay in human rights law, and I went on to undertake postgraduate studies in this field. Compelled by the desire to better understand political conditions, I also undertook further postgraduate studies in governance and political theory.

My previous Masters degrees provided me with relevant research tools and an in-depth knowledge of the field I now propose to study at doctoral level. My law studies gave me knowledge of the legal and planning aspects of my proposed research, while my political science Masters gave me a solid grounding in its political aspects. My thesis used context analyses and interviews, methodologies I studied as part of the qualitative research methods course.

**Relevant work experience**

I worked as a coordinator at the Popular Committee for the Allocation of Land and Housing Rights in the city of Jaffa, Israel. As a lawyer, I offered legal services to local residents who were experiencing housing problems, usually demolition or evacuation orders. I also represented the Committee to media and to local and national authorities, including the Israel Land Authority and the Urban Planning Public Participation Committee. I also collaborated with other indigenous NGOs working on the same issues, including Bimkom and Shatil.

This work helped me to understand the development planning and public housing challenges faced by local Jaffa residents. The impact of my contribution to the committee was to provide it with legal services and a dedicated coordinator for the first time. I also managed the creation of a non-profit company to present the interests of the committee.

In my role at the Arab Association for Human Rights (HRA) I undertook research on the housing crisis in Acre's old city, which was exacerbated by privatisation and tourism development policies. This research exposed me to the difficulties and challenges faced by local residents and enabled me to get to know the local community and municipal organisations, which in turn helped me to develop and conduct my MA case study.

My current role as co-manager at the preservation project in the Byzantine old village of Mi'ilya gave me an understanding of various aspects of conserving the village's tangible and intangible cultural heritage, including legal and procedural issues.

My long-term goal is to work in academic research and teaching, and through this to contribute to a better understanding of the political aspects of planning and development policies in world heritage cities that are also contested ethnonational urban spaces. Further, I wish to continue to advocate political and social justice for Arab-Palestinian communities in historical cities in my homeland. In particular, I would like to improve social housing policies and promote equal production of the various cultural heritages that form the urban landscape in my home country.

In summary, I believe that the opportunity to conduct my research at DPU would be profoundly meaningful to me, both on a personal and an academic level.