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Government and Policy

National Coexistence at the Local Level Workshop

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A Note from Dr. Raviv Schwartz and Sir Jeremy Beecham

It was our distinct privilege to chair this prestigious workshop, “Coexistence in the Framework of Local Government”, held on May 29 2006 at the Arab-Jewish Community Center in Jaffa. Its underlying rationale was to convene a group of individuals from very diverse geographic, national/ethnic, disciplinary backgrounds, who share a local/municipal perspective on solving problems, in order to collectively address this theme.

“Coexistence” in Israel is typically viewed through the prism of policy at the level of central government, which should come as no surprise, given the myriad of security, territorial and political considerations brought to bear on this issue. However, the organizers of this workshop were of the opinion that local government also has a contribution to make – not only to the policy process concerning coexistence, but to the very discourse surrounding it. This workshop then, represents a first step towards providing local government with a voice to weigh in on an issue that is normally the province of central government. In the end, it was a fascinating experiment at treating a “national” issue from a local – and at the same time – an international perspective. As the presentations and the subsequent discussion in these pages indicate, this issue is of critical importance to the future of Israel, as a democratic and pluralistic polity, but very much resonates elsewhere as well.

The workshop was conducted as part of a three-day program designed for a delegation of local government officials from the UK, USA, The Netherlands, Belgium, South Africa and Australia attending the Hartog School’s second Annual Conference on Local Government. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert addressed that same conference. The following was among his remarks:

The Israeli government, under my leadership, is committed to narrowing the gap between Jewish and Arab local authorities. This will be achieved in an integrated manner as part of our overall effort to address the problems faced by minorities in this country. I’ve said many times – both before and after elections – that the goal of equality for Israel’s Arab minority demands immediate attention and my government will work with all its power to achieve this.

Our delegation was able to gain a first hand impression of some of the problems alluded to by the Prime Minister, as we took part in a brief tour of Tel Aviv-Jaffa that provided a historical backdrop for and contextualized the complex relations between Jews and Arabs in the city.



We'd like to take this opportunity to thank those whose generosity made this workshop possible: the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, the Pears Foundation, the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles, the Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipality. We also thank the Arab-Jewish Community Center and its director Ibrahim Abu Shindi for graciously providing an eminently appropriate facility in which to conduct it. We are also indebted to those nonprofit organizations that contributed their time, expertise and wisdom to this event: the Abraham Fund, Sikkuy and Shatil.

We now invite you to immerse yourself in the proceedings of the "Coexistence in the Framework of Local Government" workshop – one that featured riveting, and at times rather heated, discussion.

Respectfully,

Dr. Raviv Schwartz

Hartog School of Government

Sir Jeremy Beecham

Local Government Association, UK



Profiles of Participants



Ibrahim Abu Shindi, Director, Arab-Jewish Community Center, Jaffa

Ibrahim Abu Shindi is the director of the Arab-Jewish Community Center located in the heart of the Ajami neighborhood of Jaffa. This unique center serves three communities: Jews, Christians, and Muslims. It provides welfare services for children and families in need, offers cultural programs, and works to empower underprivileged groups in the city. The activities of the community center are founded on the values of coexistence between Jews and Arabs and education for familiarity and partnership among peoples of differing nationalities and religions.

Adv. Ahmed Balaha

Ahmad Balaha is a former member of the Tel Aviv-Jaffa City Council and a resident of Jaffa.



Dr. Robbert P. Baruch, Provincial Legislator, The Netherlands

Robbert Baruch represents the Labour Party and is the founder and director of Baruch|SCPA, a strategic communications and public affairs company. He is Labour Party whip, and was the Labour Party's campaign manager in The Hague during two consecutive successful elections. Robbert lectures on US-European relations and local consequences of the War on Terror, and writes about local affairs, including the administrative organisation of the Randstad. He is the Chairman of the Pierrot Foundation and a member of the Global Executive of KolDor. Robbert studied political philosophy and public administration at Leiden University, and is an alumnus of Yeshivat Machon Meir.



Sir Jeremy Beecham, Newcastle, UK

Sir Jeremy Beecham has been a Newcastle City councilor since 1967, and led the Council from 1977 to 1994. He was Chairman of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities from 1991 to 1997 and of the Local Government Association from 1997 to 2004. Jeremy played a leading role in a Cabinet Sub-Committee on Modernising Local Government, and is currently Chairman of the Labour Party National Executive Committee. He continues to serve as a councilor for the Benwell and Scotswood ward. Jeremy serves on the boards of numerous public bodies and is a member of Labour Friends of Israel. He became a Knight Bachelor in HM Queen's Birthday Honours in 1994. Jeremy was educated at University College, Oxford, where he obtained a first class honours degree in law.



Dr. Nahum Ben-Elia, Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies

With an extensive background in public policy and public management, Nahum has served as policy advisor and program consultant for a range of national and local institutions in Israel. An associate researcher at the Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies, he has published a substantial body of studies focused on critical local government issues. His latest book – *The Fourth Generation: A New Local Government for Israel* – (now in its second edition), advances a new conceptual view of local government in Israel.



Solomon (Sol) Cowan, City Councilor, Johannesburg, South Africa

Sol Cowan has been a member of the Executive Mayoral Committee of the City of Johannesburg since 2001. He oversees the five-year turn-around strategy for the Inner City, which includes the development of City Improvement Districts, and the establishment of the Johannesburg Development Agency and of an inner city task force. Previously, Sol was a member of the Mayoral Committee of the Eastern Metropolitan Local Council, where he was responsible for the unification of the tax base for Johannesburg. Sol earned a BA Honours in political science and was owner and director of a number of small businesses.



Busayna Dabit, Shatil

Busayna Dabit is the national director of Mixed Cities, a citizens-empowerment program run by Shatil, a public-advocacy NGO. In this capacity, she is continuing her long-time efforts to alleviate the housing crisis faced by Arab residents of Ramla, Lod, Jaffa, Haifa and Acco; to find viable alternatives to illegal construction; to preserve historic Arab residences; and to promote the peaceful coexistence of Jews and Arabs. Trained as an architect, Busayna has worked on a variety of public and private building projects throughout central Israel. In addition to being involved in numerous non-profit associations for the benefit of Jews and Arabs in Israel, she helped found the A-Dar Association for the preservation of the Old City of Ramla. Busayna holds an MA magna cum laude in architecture from VUT, Brno, Czech Republic.



Dick Gross, Port Phillip Council, Blessington Ward, Australia

Dick Gross has served as a councilor and three-time Mayor of the City of Port Phillip. He has also served as director of the Victorian Local Governance Association and the Municipal Association of Victoria, where he is currently leading a project on the future of local governance. Dick was formerly a corporate investigator with the National Companies and Securities Commission, and helped found and lead the Consumer Credit Legal Service. Dick has authored several books, and has a Bachelor and Master of Laws.



Isi Halberthal, Etterbeek Commune, Brussels

Isi Halberthal has been involved in community development and cultural activism in the municipality of Etterbeek since 1982, when he was deputy mayor. He has additionally held the post of mental health administrator for the Brussels Free University. During the past 30 years, Isi has been economic advisor to the Minister of Regional Economy in Brussels; principal private secretary to the Secretary of State for the Brussels area and the Minister and President of the Executive of the Brussels Region; an independent consulting engineer for SORCA (Management Consultants for Development); a researcher at Brussels University's Center of Econometrics and Management Science; and the administrator-director of the C.E.S. software company. At present, Isi is chairman of the South Iris Hospital board, an administrative delegate of Blue Development Property, and an administrator for "SOFIPARI". He is the author of "The Strategies of a Long-term Company", published in 1971 by Dunod, Paris. A native of Lyon, France, Isi earned degrees in chemical civil engineering and commercial engineering from the Brussels Free University.



Robin Kramer, Chief of Staff to Antonio R. Villaraigosa, Mayor of Los Angeles

Robin Kramer began her career in public administration in 1976, when she became director of the Democratic Party of Southern California. She was deputy mayor for communications and community affairs under Mayor Richard Riordan, and became the mayor's Chief of Staff in 1995 – the first woman ever to hold this position in Los Angeles. In 2005, Robin joined the administration of Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa as Chief of Staff. She holds a BA in political studies and journalism from Pitzer College, and an MA in urban studies from Occidental College.



Sir Simon Milton, Leader of Westminster City Council

Simon has represented Lancaster Gate ward for 14 years, and is the current Leader of Westminster City Council, in which capacity he is responsible for council policies and services citywide. He is the author of *Civic Renewal*, the Council's strategy for regenerating the city's physical and social infrastructure. Simon is keenly interested in effective city management, maintaining the vibrancy of city life, protecting residential quality of life, and improving education and school standards. Simon was educated at Cambridge University and Cornell University in the United States.



Michael P. Ross, Council for District 8, Boston

Michael Ross is the youngest member of the Boston City Council and the first Jewish city councilor in over 55 years. Michael has worked to advocate affordable housing, improve residential parking, maintain clean streets, and increase police presence. He is the first councilor from his district ever to chair the municipal Ways and Means Committee. Michael also chairs the Committee on City and Neighborhood Services and the Special Committee on Youth Violent Crime Prevention. He holds a bachelor's degree in government studies from Clark University, an MBA from Boston University, and is currently completing a law degree at Suffolk University, where he is also an adjunct professor.



Aviad Sar-Shalom

Aviad Sar-Shalom is a senior fellow with the Government Tourist Corporation and a freelance environmental planner. He has been a member of planning teams in the Arab sector, and has participated in trans-boundary environmental projects. He is active in "Yaffo Yafat Yamim", an NGO dedicated to achieving an equal standard of living for Jews and Arabs in Jaffa. Aviad holds an MA in geography from Hebrew University. He and his family have lived in Jaffa for seven years.



Dr. Raviv Schwartz, School of Government and Policy, Tel Aviv University

Raviv Schwartz has been researching inter-group relations among populations in conflict, and populations whose relations are characterized by kinship. He has conducted independent research on Israeli NGOs engaged in peace-building between Israelis and Palestinians, both before and during the current round of violence. Raviv was also a part-time research fellow at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, where he studied programmatic attempts to nurture relations between Israel and Diaspora Jewish communities. He has also studied the work of philanthropic foundations, specifically that of the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, in Israel and the former Soviet Union. A recipient of the prestigious Kreitman Fellowship, Raviv recently earned his doctorate from Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.



Youval Tamari, Sikkuy, the Association for the Advancement of Civic Equality

Youval Tamari is the project coordinator of the Jewish and Arab Mayors' Forum initiated by Sikkuy, The Association for the Advancement of Civic Equality. He oversees the tourism and environment aspects of this project, which is being implemented in the Wadi Ara and Hof HaCarmel regions.



Greetings and Introduction

Raviv Schwartz:

Welcome to you all. We have a slightly larger audience here this afternoon. Firstly, I'd like to give the floor to Ibrahim Abu Shindi, Director of the Arab-Jewish Community Center in which we are now located. He'll say a few words, after which this session will commence.

Ibrahim Abu Shindi:

Welcome to the Ajami neighborhood of Jaffa, home to this Arab-Jewish community center. Jaffa has some 60,000 residents, of whom 40,000 are Jews and 20,000 are Arabs. For the Arabs living here, it is a very poor area; 70% of them have low socio-economic status.

The idea behind this Arab-Jewish Community Center, established 12 years ago, was to provide services to the people living here – such as informal education and enrichment programs – and also to increase the level of coexistence between the Arabs and Jews who live here together. The funds for operating this community center are received from the Municipality of Tel Aviv-Jaffa, but funds are also generated from our coexistence projects. Others have also provided valuable assistance. For example, the center was originally a project of Project Renewal, [which partnered Jaffa and many other neighborhoods and towns in Israel with Jewish communities from abroad]. Marty Karp is here from the Jewish Federation of Los Angeles, which provided us with substantial funds when we started our social and physical renewal of this area.

We are dealing with two issues: One is to provide these services, and the other is to enhance coexistence. We are like a circle with many points: social, educational, religious, etc. We hear a lot about hatred between Jews and Arabs, but the truth is, people don't really know anything about the other side. Primarily, it is the Jewish majority that knows very little about the Arab side, so the idea is to give them the opportunity to know one another through music, art and science, without addressing the political/religious issues that divide us. As you know, when these issues are raised, each side retreats to its own group identity and seeks to demonstrate its own correctness. On the other hand, when you play music or include ballet or gymnastics as part of the school system, members of each side can meet as friends and then, only later, argue politics or religion or whatever, but continue to be friends.

The center is open every day from 8:00 AM to 10:00 PM. During the day, pupils from both Arab and Jewish schools come here as part of their school schedule to participate in activities such as music, ballet, gymnastics, and science. In the afternoon, from 4:00 PM until 10:00 PM, the center is open for people of all ages, from infants to senior



citizens. We have Arabic and other kinds of music, sports, language instruction, and many other programs. The idea is that the whole family can find something to do here. As I mentioned previously, we also have activities aimed at peace and coexistence. We have a special choir led by Shlomo Gronich, who is a very well-known Israeli musician and singer. In this choir, Arabs and Jews sing together in three languages: Arabic, Hebrew and English. We also have a day care center for kids from broken homes, we work with handicapped children, and we help a lot of the poor families in this area.

I wish you very a good day, enjoy your time here. If you have any other questions, please feel free to ask me. Thank you very much.

Jeremy Beecham:

Well, we're running on Jewish time, which means we're half an hour late, so I won't make too many opening remarks. Coexistence is a feature of life in all of the places from which we international visitors come. In Israel, the problems of coexistence must be addressed for a settled population – that is, one that migrated over time, but that is now largely settled. In contrast, the countries most of us come from are dealing with the impact of globalization, which includes population migration. Nevertheless, there are common features about which we very much want to learn; some of our experience may be relevant to the problems and opportunities here. I'm sure all of us want to contribute to the discussion. We'll begin with some presentations from Israel and responses from three international visitors. I'd like to start by asking Busayna Dabit to talk about the "Mixed Cities Project".

Raviv Schwartz:

Let me briefly introduce Busayna and the other guests as well. Just a word about the rationale behind the structure of today's program which, as Jeremy mentioned, is going to be largely interactive, drawing on the experience of those we've asked to attend, as well as the audience. The first two speakers represent two NGOs, which are involved in coexistence – in fact, the very term "coexistence" may be something they will address in their remarks. Busayna Dabit is from an organization called Shatil, about which I'm sure you'll hear. An architect by training, she directs a program within Shatil called the "Mixed Cities Project", directed at those cities in Israel that have a mixed, Arab-Jewish population. Of course, Tel Aviv-Jaffa is one of them; however, the emphasis of this project is, for the time being, on other cities. Youval Tamari represents an organization called Sikkuy, which addresses equality and civil rights in



Israel and is a very prominent NGO in the struggle against Arab disenfranchisement in Israel. An urban planner by training, Youval will speak not about mixed cities, but about coexistence at the regional level. The other two individuals who'll be with us, Aviad Sar-Shalom and Ahmed Balaha, are members of "Mishlama", a unit for local neighborhood governance here in Jaffa. Aviad is an urban planner and a tour guide by profession, and Ahmed is an attorney and a former member of the Tel Aviv-Jaffa City Council.



Presentations and Responses

Busayna Dabit:

I identify myself as a Palestinian-Israeli and Arab citizen of Israel. I will share with you my experience as an Israeli citizen, who was born, raised and still lives in the old city of Ramla – not to be confused with the city of Ramallah. Ramla is inside Israel. I will speak with you about our collective experience living in a mixed city and, in so doing, share with you the two faces of Ramla and Lod.

First, a little bit about our historical background. Before 1948, there were about 66,000 Palestinians living in Jaffa; after 1948, only 3,900 remained. In Lod, located some five minutes from Ben-Gurion Airport, there were 40,000 Arabs before 1948, and just 1,000 remained thereafter. In my city [Ramla], only 900 of the original 17,000 residents remained after 1948. About 10% of the Arab inhabitants of Israel – approximately 90,000 – live in what we call mixed cities; these are Ramla, Lod, Jaffa, Haifa and Acco. [Shows aerial map from 1940.]

I want to highlight a little bit about the history of how Ramla was founded. Situated ten minutes from Ben-Gurion Airport, Ramla is the only city in Israel that was founded as an Arab-Muslim city. For 400 years, it was the capital of the whole Palestinian region. It was on the way from Jaffa to Jerusalem, so it was at the intersection between the south and the north, between Syria and Egypt, and between Jaffa, the sea and Jerusalem. Herein lies the historic importance of this city. Presently, the neighborhood in which I was raised is a ghetto. It's important to talk about why it is referred to as a ghetto. When I would ask the reason, the elders would talk about 1948, when the majority of Palestinians were expelled from Ramla. As I said earlier, only 900 of the original 17,000 remained. The whole neighborhood was blocked from all around. Compare the first view of Ramla [previously shown on aerial map]: Ramla now has maybe 15% of the buildings that it had before.

When speaking of Jaffa – where you are now – this city lost more than 3,000 housing units between 1948 and the present. We are talking about the effective destruction of the city's distinct original character.

The Old City of Ramla still appears on the plans. The mayors treat it as a ghetto. It is essentially an overcrowded slum, with the trend of demolishing the Old City continuing apace. This part of the city was the Armenian Quarter. One year ago it was demolished because the mayor decided to erect a parking lot in its place. The Arab-Israeli minority lives in the houses in the Old City, but does not own them. After 1948, these houses became the property of the government, through the Public Housing Authority [Amidar].

Since the establishment of the State, no housing projects have been built for the Arab minority. Therefore, people expanded their houses and built additional units, and now face the daily reality of [living in] illegal houses. We are trying to draw attention to the fact that the planning apparatus in our cities is in fact a tool for controlling people, not for developing communities. Ongoing evacuation and construction in the Old City, which as I said is a ghetto neighborhood, demonstrates this. The majority of this neighborhood has already been demolished.

After 1948, new neighborhoods were built for Bedouin communities, which were uprooted from the Negev in the south of Israel and brought to Ramla to live. The new urban planning – I mean the planning of the past 15 years and for the 15 years to come – is choking the Arab neighborhoods. The result is more segregation and separation between Arab and Jewish neighborhoods.

Before we talk about coexistence, I want to raise the problem of “existence”. What is really at issue here is the policy of recognition. We are not recognized as a neighborhood. The majority of these houses are not recognized and, as such, are illegal. Hence, we suffer from repeated housing demolition orders. There is a phenomenon



within the mixed cities called “unrecognized neighborhoods”. They’re similar to the unrecognized villages in the Negev. When the municipality plans for the future, for the next 20 years, it systematically ignores the existence of Arab neighborhoods. There is a plan called “RAGAM 3000”, entailing 3,000 dunams of industrial zone, which is going to surround the “Train” neighborhood, totally ignoring the needs of the neighborhood’s residents. The daily life of this neighborhood has become truly dangerous, since access to and from the neighborhood is via railway tracks and highways. Six people have died attempting to cross from the neighborhood to the city – a necessary trip, due to the lack of municipal services inside the neighborhood. Gan Hakal, the Bedouin neighborhood established at the beginning of the 1950s, is another example. There are no extra land solutions for housing in these neighborhoods, as they are surrounded by industrial zones.

The other case is that of neighboring Lod, a place featuring 5,000 years of history. Evacuation and construction plans are already being implemented. When discussing the difficulties of daily life in a mixed city like Lod, we often overlook the main reason for destroying the old part of the city, because it’s like the heart of the city and it’s already been destroyed. No one wants to live there; it is very unattractive. Most of the residents of Lod – both Arabs and Jews – suffer from what’s happening in this city because it has been abandoned, and the municipality appears powerless.

The part of the city called “Shamir” or the “Train” neighborhood does not appear on any official municipal plans. Some 5,000-6,000 Arab-Israelis live there – yet they are invisible in these plans. Our existence in these neighborhoods is simply not recognized. Compare this with the Ganei Aviv neighborhood, for example, which was built just 10 years ago for new immigrants from Russia. You can see in the plans that there are roads and buildings; in short, this place enjoys recognition. Nearby is the [upscale, Jewish] Nir Zvi village, where they recently began constructing a wall to separate their property from that of the Arab neighborhood.

If we want to compare Ramla’s case with that of Lod, the former is over-planned, and it is the plans that are causing problems, for they are creating the shortage [of housing opportunities for Arab residents]. In Lod, in contrast, there is a flagrant lack of planning. In both, the result is that our existence in these cities is effectively unrecognized.

Another point worth mentioning is that when local government is weak, the police become stronger. In essence then, the police control the city. When somebody has problems with his sewage, he typically calls the police, not the municipal authorities. We view this phenomenon with great concern, since the local authority is theoretically responsible for a whole range of issues and services. But when we talk about Arab neighborhoods, their authority is not felt; for this and other reasons, the majority live below the poverty line. Many criminal activities take place: Drug dealers deal openly in these neighborhoods. The only solution the authorities have found thus far is force [directed against the residents themselves]. When we want to enter our neighborhood, we are forced to walk through a check point and show our identity cards. This scene reminds one of the West Bank in the Occupied Territories. Clearly, force must be part of the solution – but it cannot be the whole solution. Responsibility must be taken for educating the population and raising awareness among the residents of the implications of 12,000 drug addicts coming daily to buy drugs in this neighborhood. Solutions other than force must be found.

I’d like to say a bit more about housing demolition. In Lod, for example, more than 2,000 units are slated to be demolished, and in Ramla a similar situation prevails. Yoel Lavie, who is mayor of Ramla, has opted for the solution of force: He has asked military units to help implement the demolition order. When implemented, demolition looks like a military action in every respect; the surprise factor, the mass deployment of forces, etc.



There is no real thinking about alternative solutions to this problem. We demand to have legal status in our city, but instead we encounter closed doors at our municipality. It costs more than \$100,000 to demolish one home. We think this money and these resources could be invested in developing the community, not in destroying it – especially when there is no other place for these people to go. So while new projects are built for and marketed to discharged soldiers and new immigrants, not one housing project has been built in Ramla for the Arab community since the establishment of the State. This discriminatory municipal policy extends of course to a lack of municipal services, open sewage, no transportation, no garbage collection, etc. This is our daily struggle for basic human rights from the authorities. You are only five minutes from all this as you go through Ben-Gurion Airport.

I spoke earlier about unrecognized neighborhoods. One example is the “Dahmash” neighborhood. Another is the “Barbur” neighborhood in Acco. A third example is the “Train” neighborhood, in Lod. The unsafe living conditions and train crossings have claimed over 12 victims to date, 15 in the past three years, just by crossing [the train tracks]. Until now, these neighborhoods have not been recognized on the maps.

There is a trend underway of separation walls between Jewish and Arab neighborhoods, and this trend is on the rise. In Ramla for example, such a wall has been in place for almost ten years. Once again, resources are invested in building walls instead of being invested in the community or in coming up with alternative solutions. Walls are ultimately against both communities. We do have some hope in the courts, as residents. In cooperation with another advocacy organization called “Bimkom”, we recently obtained a restraining order from the court, which stopped the building of these walls.

The result of all this is that nobody is proud to be a resident of these cities. The majority of the Jewish residents are leaving these cities for newer neighborhoods or suburbs that are being built for them. Those who remain in Ramla and Lod are from the weaker communities – Ethiopians, Russians, Arabs. All are stuck in these cities and have no alternative.

For over 12 years, Shatil has been struggling for social change, as a capacity-building center. We are trying to support and offer consultancy services to civil society, because we believe that when civil society does not take responsibility, it becomes part of the problem. When we started four years ago, there was not one non-profit organization in Ramla, only in Lod. What we are now trying to do is to empower the community to take responsibility, not just to lay blame. We are trying to act as an agent of civil society, using our citizenship to struggle for our basic human rights and for housing issues.

I didn't mention the education system or our problems with education, because we are focusing first and foremost on our existence before education. Education is certainly part of our existence, but our very physical existence is the most important. The strategy of the Mixed Cities Project is, firstly, to mobilize and empower communities using the media and through advocacy, in order to raise awareness inside our communities, in the whole country, and internationally. We are seeking alternatives to meet our demands, our needs. We need to be legal, to promote our interests as citizens of these cities, to receive recognition, to be part of municipal planning and to be involved in decision-making, which is not the case in either Ramla or Lod.

I'm not talking only about the Arabs but about the Jewish community, as well, because this is the authorities' policy toward the residents of these cities. We try to give voice to those who aren't normally heard using traditional, legal tools of struggle, such as demonstrations. We try to create sustainable change by empowering residents, building the community, and creating cooperation between the Jewish and Arab populations. We still have a lot of gaps, a lot of differences between the Arabs and Jews who live in Ramla and Lod. Until now there has been



no cooperation, since there isn't even a civil society to speak of – no organizations that could cooperate. Most of our cooperation comes from advocacy and activist organizations, which are not from the cities themselves. This is our issue: to have more common interests, to promote our civil interests in the two cities. Thank you.

Raviv Schwartz:

Youval Tamari from Sikkuy will now say a few words about the organization he represents.

Youval Tamari:

I will tell you about Sikkuy in a minute; I want to start with Busayna's opening. She said, "I'm a Palestinian". I think this is very important. Had I given this lecture about 15 years ago, I would have used the term "Israeli-Arab". In the past 15 years, there has been an ongoing discussion about the name of this group; today I would use the term "Palestinian citizen of Israel", and in short, either Palestinian or Arab interchangeably.

I work for an organization called Sikkuy, which means "opportunity". It is the Association for the Advancement of Civil Equality in Israel. We have several civil projects, a few of which are being implemented at the national level. One of them is an annual report, which tracks the allocation of funds from the government to Jewish and Arab groups in Israel in various fields. Another project works toward equal representation in government, government firms, and the private sector. Two projects that are not implemented at the national level are the "Grassroots Community" and "Municipal Cooperation" projects. The Grassroots Community project approaches communities with Jewish and Palestinian residents and tries to create a grassroots group of people who work toward civil equality. The Municipal Cooperation project, which we sometimes call the Mayors' Forum, is a regional project that promotes cooperation between Jewish and Arab municipalities. I work on this project, which started two years ago in the Wadi Ara region.

To give you some background, Wadi Ara has close to 120,000 citizens, about three-quarters of whom are Palestinians. For Jewish society in Israel, the image of Wadi Ara is a negative one. It is connected to the Islamic Movement, which is dominant in Wadi Ara. Some of the events that occurred in 2000 occurred in Wadi Ara. One of the things we're working on is how to work with or counteract that image. The idea behind the Mayors' Forum was that if it's very hard to work on civil equality at the national level, maybe we should try working at the regional level. I think it was a good idea, because during these two years, we have been able to achieve some success. I will talk about that a little bit now.

Of the ten municipalities in the region, eight were willing to attend the meetings of this Mayors' Forum. In particular, one Jewish and one Palestinian mayor were very much into this; they have been the axis of cooperation. It was very important to have that axis, because you could always rely on it. Whenever obstacles and difficulties arose, they could be approached and asked, "How would you tackle this? What do you think? Where do you want to take this?" We asked these eight mayors, "What fields do you think are ripe for cooperation among the municipalities?" They chose three fields.

The first involves establishing two industrial zones. This is very important, first for employment and second for tax revenue. This has been and still is the major issue for the mayors and the municipalities.

The second field is environmental infrastructure, such as sewage systems, which benefit from economies of scale.



The third field is the development of tourism, which addresses the economic side of attracting people and money to the area, while working on the region's image. If the area has a good reputation, it will be able to fight its bad image. For example, today's newspaper features an article about the region – where to hike, places to go, etc. Also, a tourist map has just been printed of the region, in Hebrew and Arabic, with the other side listing sites of interest and hiking routes.

I want to end by noting several important lessons we have learned from this project. First, I think the municipal level is a very good level at which to work, both because of the ability to overcome or circumvent obstacles that would be impassable at the national level, and because of the balance of power. The Palestinian majority in this region creates a balance of power, since the Jewish population and Jewish society are usually dominant. I think this balance of power is a key element of the success of this project.

It's also important to note that we're working against a pattern of discrimination. Allocation of land, allocation of funds – everything favors the Jewish municipalities. For instance, the Menashe Regional Authority controls the whole area, while the territory controlled by Arab municipalities is very small. The city limits of the latter are close to the houses, which means limited opportunities for development. When you seek to change that, you have to fight against a situation that is fundamentally discriminatory. You have to always bear that in mind.

People are also very important to this project. As I mentioned, on that axis of one Jewish and one Arab Mayor, the personalities of both have been important, as have the Jewish and Arab tour guides we've brought together, and who now work together. Their personalities make this thing work.

We have one year to go on this project. Our aim is to build a framework that will continue after the project has ended, to establish a cadre of people who will continue meeting, continue thinking together. One of the main fears we're confronting is what happens if the people who are now in office are not re-elected. Since so much is dependent on their personalities – this might be to our detriment.

Question:

Is there organizational backing for the mayors involved in this project?

Youval Tamari:

The framework that we're building is voluntary. It's their decision to meet, their time that they decide on, and it's not backed by any organization. As an NGO, we are merely creating a framework, but for three years only. It will be up to them and those who come after them to make this permanent.

Raviv Schwartz:

So far we have discussed two organizational interventions that address coexistence. We will now hear two personal perspectives of Jaffa from two residents of Jaffa. I won't say a Jewish perspective and an Arab perspective, but rather two individual perspectives, formed through individual experiences. We'll begin with Aviad Sar-Shalom.



Aviad Sar-Shalom:

I'm not an official of any kind, I don't run any project. My life is personal, but it's a project to live in Jaffa. I don't know if it can be translated into English, but in Hebrew we say that life can be "a project" – that is, it isn't always simple or easy, because you deal with the everyday aspects of this session's theme: coexistence. When I was asked to talk today, I began to wonder whether I'm even pro-coexistence. The term "coexistence" means that two things exist. At the individual level, at the neighborhood level, if we're trying to live everyday life, existence should be mutual – and not coexistence. The big question is whether this is possible.

For myself, I don't know the answer. I'm sure that, on an individual level, it was easier "before". This is always true. My neighbors say that, once upon a time, Jaffa was paradise. They're not talking about the time Jaffa was an independent city, before 1948, because most of them don't remember it. Most of the Arabs who live in Jaffa today are not subsequent generations of Jaffa's previous residents, but rather "immigrants". The paradise they mean existed in the 1950s, perhaps the late 1950s, when a military government was imposed on the residents of Jaffa. Immediately after that, they talked about a "Poor Man's Heaven", because they were all poor – the Jewish immigrants from the Balkans, Bulgaria, Greece, from Rumania as well, and the Arabs – they were all very poor, so those were the good times, the best times. They had nothing to eat, but they were starving together. Then, Jaffa was thrown into the sea. Here [showing a photograph], outside the window, these barrels hold poisonous chemicals...they were on the way from some factory to where they were supposed to be disposed of, but it was cheaper to throw them away in Jaffa. In this respect, coexistence still exists, because discrimination in Jaffa is against most of the population.

It doesn't matter if the new population is of an upper socio-economic status, which is usually referred to as "gentrification". I'm probably also part of it, coming to live in Jaffa, because the money I had let me build a nice building here, whereas for the same money, all I could get in Tel Aviv was a three-bedroom apartment. The municipality of Tel Aviv deprived Jaffa of most of its rights in the past, in the present, and probably in the future. So in this respect, we're equal, and equality is the basis for coexistence.

In the past, when the new Arab immigrants and the new Jewish immigrants were all poor, they were equal and there was no problem. Today, we're equal as residents of this municipality. Here's a new example to show you that the behavior of the municipality has not changed [showing a photograph]: the sewage pipe down Jaffa's main avenue, Jerusalem Avenue. It demonstrates that a sewage pipe is much more important than the residents – they have to go to the other side of the street, because the sewage pipe has to be laid on the main avenue of the city for a few months.

The next picture shows you how things work in different places. In Berlin, the rights of the civilians are important to the municipality; but in Jaffa, the sewage system is more important than the residents. I brought this picture to show that in having all of Tel Aviv's sewage running through the main avenue of Jaffa, on the way to Rishon LeZion (always to the south, never to the north), we are equal.

The question is whether individual equality in the eyes of the municipality is enough to create a mutual existence. I'm not so sure about that, because despite this discrimination, I'm stronger. Being Jewish, I have more direct access to the municipality. Even you [a representative of the Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipality] thought that I was part of the municipality, because I talk to them on a daily basis. I don't let them discriminate in my area. They know that if they don't come two days in a row to clean the area, they'll get a phone call, and then they'll have to come immediately. My [Arab] neighbors don't behave like that. They don't want any relationship with the municipality because of the discrimination of the past 50 years.



I try to ask myself an even deeper philosophical question: Is it possible at all to create mutual existence in the situation we live in today in the State of Israel? What kind of mutual existence can we have the week before Independence Day, when we observe the official memorial day for the Holocaust, which means nothing to most of the Arabs, and the week afterward we observe the memorial day for the soldiers who died in the wars against the Arabs? At the same time, all over the neighborhood there are signs that remind you that they're remembering the Nakba, which is a day of agony and grief for the Palestinian population living in Jaffa. So the question is, can we aim at mutual existence, or should coexistence be enough? Two cultures living side by side, knowing that at some points we live a mutual existence, and at other points we live a separate existence, and that that is how things will be for the next few generations...

In other words, in order to reduce the tension and the potential of not being able to live together, we have to aim toward a mutual existence on a personal level. However, I'm not so sure we can do that on a social level. When I came to live in Jaffa, I didn't want to live like this, in a project. This is called a project. When you talked about the Arab ghetto in Ramla, in Lod, I immediately thought about the Jewish ghettos in Jaffa. The most expensive flats in Jaffa are in ghettos, which is not a very common phenomenon in Israel. I know that in many places around the world, there are gated communities. It's not a very popular thing in Israel, although it's becoming more popular. In Jaffa, it's already very popular for the upper-middle class. I don't live like that. As a planner, I think it shouldn't exist. The municipal planners thought so, as well. You see, this is a ghetto, but it was not designed to be one. There's a street going through it, which was not meant to be closed. Now the street is closed, from both sides. This is here in Jaffa, the Andromeda Project. The project overlooks the sea. There is a gate down there, but it is locked. As you can see on the maps, the original plan was that anyone and everyone could walk through the project. Today, no one can go through the project – unless he lives there, or has a Jewish accent when he rings intercom.

I don't have a solution for this situation. I know that gentrification is both bad and good. If there were no gentrification, this place where we're sitting would not exist, the sewage system in Jaffa would look like the sewage system of Ramla, the garbage pile I showed before wouldn't become a park as it is planned to become. On the other hand, gentrification also creates projects like [Andromeda], which creates walls not around but within the heart of Jaffa. I'm not sure I know how to balance my personal will to live together – not in coexistence but together with my neighbors – with the more general, societal life, where the Arab-Israeli conflict influences solutions.

One thing I am sure of is that the solution must involve education. Today, there is no coexistence in schools in Jaffa, only in informal education. My daughter and Ahmed Balaha's daughter went to kindergarten together and they were friends. Today, they are not friends and they don't even say hello to each other when they meet, because she went to an Arab school, or actually she's still in the kindergarten, and my daughter went to a Jewish school. The potential to become friends has been lost. At that age you lose friends very easily. After one year, you forget about your former friends. This potential has been lost because they will not continue in the same education system. There is no mutual school, I'm not even talking about a coexistence school, but there is no mutual school in Jaffa. Afternoon activities are too few and too late to create mutual life. Mutual life exists at the official-statements level. There is an Arab-Jewish community center, there is an Arab-Jewish theatre, you can go see a play and then go home. There is no real integration, even for those like myself, who wish to have it.



Youval Tamari:

I want to remark that a trial is underway regarding the right of passing through the Andromeda Project. Next Monday, the judge is supposed to visit the project and see for himself.

Aviad Sar-Shalom:

That reminds me that the municipality agreed to change the plan. The reason for the trial is that they didn't build according to the plan, so the municipality has agreed to change the plan, to let them have the street closed. In exchange, the project would give part of its property to the public, outside the gates. That is, a public building that was supposed to have been built within the compound would have to change its designation from general use to something specific, perhaps a kindergarten. However, according to the developer's new plan, which was approved by the municipality, this hypothetical public building would become a synagogue.

Youval Tamari:

You know, in a big city like Tel Aviv, there is no way to fight market forces. People are allowed to buy and sell. I wouldn't like to live in a place where you're not allowed to sell or buy property because of your religion. I am saying that the idea of taking this public building, which could have been a kindergarten for both our girls [for Arab and Jewish children], and turning it into a synagogue that the citizens don't really need – there are plenty of synagogues in Jaffa – is a statement. It's a statement that this is a Jewish ghetto with a synagogue that will never be used.

Raviv Schwartz:

We will now hear the perspective of the last of our four panelists, Ahmed Balaha who, as I mentioned earlier, was a City Council member and is a resident of Jaffa.

Ahmed Balaha:

I think Jaffa is the biggest failure of all of the cities we call now "mixed cities". Jaffa was really the capital of Palestine; Jerusalem was the religious capital and Jaffa was the cultural and economic center – the heart of Palestine. Before 1948, 120,000 Palestinians lived in Jaffa; afterwards, only 3,000 remained. This is why I think that Jaffa, or the residents of Jaffa, were shocked. It can be said that we have been living in trauma ever since. Tel Aviv became the capital of Israel [sic] and Jaffa with its Arab residents became the backyard of Tel Aviv. We have now a Municipality of Tel Aviv-Jaffa. Once Jaffa and Tel Aviv were separate municipalities, now it's a joint municipality. Since 1948, we have remained the smallest minority of all those in the mixed cities. Arabs comprise only 4% of the residents of Tel Aviv-Jaffa and something like 40% of the residents of Jaffa. We are approximately 18,000 of the 42,000 inhabitants of Jaffa, and the 370,000 inhabitants of Tel Aviv-Jaffa. Nevertheless, we are the strongest, when compared with Lod and Ramla. We have had greater achievements during the past 10-



15 years. I don't know why. I think the Arabic minority in Jaffa has shown a lot of endurance. There are many activities here in Jaffa and we are good at pressuring the municipality. Perhaps that's why Jaffa has gotten a facelift for the past 10 years.

For instance, we forced the municipality to build three schools in Jaffa. We now have a park in Jaffa – a big park – and there has been much development in the infrastructure of Jaffa. Nevertheless, we still have many problems. Thirty percent of the prisoners from Tel Aviv-Jaffa are Arabs from Jaffa – even though we are only 4% of the city's total population. Fifty percent of all the prisoners from Tel Aviv-Jaffa [Jews and Arabs alike] are from Jaffa. I think this demonstrates that the situation is very bad, in the Jewish community in Jaffa, as well. What Busayna said about Lod and Ramla is also true of Jaffa. For instance, in this, the Ajami neighborhood, some 70% of the houses have been demolished, 6,000-7,000 houses in just this neighborhood! Maybe not many, but a number of Jewish families have come to the Ajami neighborhood. Aviad spoke about luxury ghettos – they're all over Jaffa. I think that this kind of building is very problematic, because the Arabs here want to first see themselves living in nice homes, attending good schools, and so on. Until now, this hasn't happened. I hope that we'll continue to struggle, because we're struggling for the future of our children.

As for coexistence, I think we do live here together, but separately. There really is no coexistence in Jaffa. The people who remained in Jaffa after 1948 lived in the Ajami neighborhood. The new [Jewish] immigrants from Turkey, Bulgaria, Morocco and so on came to live with the Arabs – in their houses, to be precise. They actually shared their homes. It's true that all or most of these immigrants were very poor, but only temporarily. Afterwards, most of the Jews left for Rishon LeZion, Bat Yam, Holon and Tel Aviv. We don't have anywhere to go. We can't leave Jaffa, because we have all our religious and educational centers here. We would not get any services in Rishon LeZion, for instance. I can't go to a mosque or a church there, or send my children to school there, because I think my kids should have an Arab education and not a Jewish one. That's why we're here, because we don't have any other place to go. Busayna said that a lot of people left Acco for other villages nearby. I think we have been very fanatic about Jaffa. We love this city and that's also why we're here.

There are two kinds of Jew in Jaffa. One kind, which Aviad spoke about, are those who came to build their homes here and live here, but most of them actually only sleep in Jaffa. Most send their children to school in Tel Aviv, and not in Jaffa. They work in Tel Aviv, and not in Jaffa. The other kind of Jew in Jaffa lives in another neighborhood. Some of them actually think that the main problem in Jaffa is the Arabs. Others accept coexistence or exist alongside the Arabs, each according to his own political viewpoint.

I would like to see a different Jaffa. I think we have many things to struggle for together. Aviad spoke about the sewage pipe, the port, the park, about better housing, education, services and so on. We have begun dialogue groups in Jaffa. Maybe in this way we will start living together and sharing our life together and not only live in "coexistence", which has meant each living separately. Thank you.

Raviv Schwartz:

As I said at the start of this session, we have structured this day so that we would first hear from our local speakers, and then hear formally from three of our international guests who speak, of course, from their own perspective. Some of the themes raised so far probably resonate among many if not all of you. I suppose we're about to hear just how much that is the case. Jeremy will introduce this next segment of our session.



Jeremy Beecham:

As noted, we have three respondents. They will give an initial response, but I hope this will develop into a discussion. First we will hear Isi Halberthal, from Brussels.

Isi Halberthal:

Thank you. I don't feel what has been said "resonates". I think that the problem Israel is facing is not the same problem we are facing in Europe. Even though we have two cultures in Belgium – the Flemish and the French – and there are two different histories, I don't feel that what was said resonates, because I don't feel the same models should be applied. So I'll leave it to the university people, sociologists and others, to try and find the closest possible model. A model is always close to something – it's not reality. There are certain ways of working and considerations, which to me are important. You've got two levels in Israel, one is the formal-political level; there's a fight within the parties, institutions, etc., trying to find something that clearly establishes equality of rights among citizens and neighbors. If you want to improve the day-to-day situation, I think what you need at the local level, with the help of national authorities (through subventions, money, etc.) is to work simultaneously on different aspects of a whole neighborhood – urban planning, schooling, unemployment. You cannot tackle one and not the others, because they're interrelated. The most difficult thing is to get NGOs, public service providers, and political authorities with money around the table and have them work together to change the condition of the neighborhood. I think that's basically the responsibility of the politicians, but they can be helped by all the actors in the neighborhood putting pressure on them. After all, politicians have to be elected, and it is citizens who vote for them, be it on a local or national level.

I also think that if you don't fight the existing socio-economic differences, then the gap between the different strata of population – the socio-economic classes – increases. In my municipality, I have a monthly conference of NGOs, civil servants. Some of them get money via the municipality – it's government money that we manage – some of them don't get money, but they're around the table to discuss things, they feel themselves to be involved. I'm ready to answer questions.

Robbert Baruch:

I want to start with the final remark of Ahmed and finish with one of the remarks of Busayna. Last Ramadan, I tried to get invited for as many iftars [break-fasts] as possible, because the end of fasting is very pleasant. Iftar is when the fast is broken; it's a festive meal in the evening [after sunset], with time for contemplation and dialogue. I'm anti-dialogue; I'll explain why a little bit later. We have to realize that we are going to face a very different reality in thinking about states. This is true for Israel and for states in Europe, at least. The nation-state came into being as a result of the Enlightenment. During the Enlightenment, there was a notion that certain peoples with a certain history and a certain language should have a certain piece of ground. This was revolutionary; this thought hadn't previously been in existence. As nation-states were created throughout the world, the Jews also thought, "Hey, we should have one as well". Now that we are thinking differently about the Enlightenment and about the nation-state, I think Israel, too, is becoming a post-Zionist state, or at least a state that will think differently about the relationship between a certain people and a certain territory. When you look now at the



reaction to Yugoslavia, for instance, or how we think about national identity within a European framework and how people are reacting to that, it's much different than the reaction half a century ago to Blootson Gordon's theory of the Germans. Back then, the nation-state was still accepted. Now, in essence, the nation-state and the concept of the nation-state are changing. How this will evolve, in Israel and elsewhere, is not the topic of our discussion here, but I find it a very fascinating part of the discussion.

The link between the Israeli situation and the European situation is that there are ghettos in Europe, poor ghettos, mainly in the big cities. There's also a large percentage of unemployment among certain groups, and also less contact with mainstream society, a high level of criminality, etc. What is unacceptable for a social-democrat is unequal access to knowledge, power and income. This should strike all of us as an injury or injustice. I'll skip the whole discussion of how to solve the problems of the multi-cultural society, but I do want to discuss a few solutions that didn't work. Everybody knows now, it's accepted that they didn't work. Then I'll note things that do work or have a higher success rate. Unlike Isi, I want to point the finger of responsibility at politics, and then relate to what Busayna said.

What doesn't work is ignoring the problems. This was the strategy until well into the 1970s and 1980s all over Europe. Things happened but they were not discussed – not even by left-wing political parties. Instead, they were minimized. For example, when valid remarks were made about a higher level of criminality amongst certain groups of new immigrants, the response was: "That's fascism. That's something that creates inequality, we're not going to have that discussion".

Another thing that doesn't work is affirmative action. It is now well-accepted that affirmative action often lowers the standard. Of course, people who are adversely affected by affirmative action become very angry when their position is taken by a woman, or whomever.

Yet another thing that in my opinion doesn't work is dialogue, and now I will explain why. After Theo Von Gogh was killed by a Muslim fundamentalist [in Amsterdam], many evenings were organized for dialogue between Moroccans and indigenous Dutch people all over The Netherlands. The only people who came to these discussions were those who were already convinced that there should be dialogue. It therefore didn't pay off. The other thing about dialogue is that a very small number of people are involved, and it doesn't have much impact. The final point with a dialogue is that it is two parties, talking with each other, when what is really desired is the two parties coming together in order to do something else.

So what does work? What I try to work for in the various roles I play is the creation of joint projects with real money and real power to solve real problems, be they in education, housing, culture, etc. When, instead of simply talking to each other about each other, people have a third objective, and really start thinking about something, be it organizing a cultural event, or discussing real solutions to housing problems, they are given a role as equals in the discussion. Existing inequality is thereby minimized. Of course, this has to be based on self-interest; when you invite people just to talk, it doesn't work. People have to have a real interest in the project in which they're participating.

What also works very well is to have a common enemy. I think The Netherlands still exists because The Netherlands has always had common enemies. You know, we have a big Catholic minority and a Protestant majority, but The Netherlands never broke up. According to various theories, this is because of two common enemies: the Germans and the water. Of course, you also need to be able to talk as equal partners; that means you have to invest in empowerment and in leadership. Empowerment is a big debate in The Netherlands. We have a large Moroccan minority, and there is debate as to whether the Moroccans should be "Hollandified", or



brought up with their own culture. I think they should speak the [Dutch] language, but they should be proud of their own heritage, which they bring with them in any case. You have to invest in leadership, give people responsibility, and work toward a better economic situation. These are things a government can stimulate. What a government must take care of is security and keeping the surroundings clean. In order to make people responsible for their own surroundings, there should be no criminality, and the lamp posts and all these things should work. This is the lesson of Rotterdam and Amsterdam; zero tolerance for crime and much effort to keep things clean.

There is another question at the moment, which might or might not be interesting, which has to do with economic zoning – that is, that certain projects or housing areas will be inaccessible to certain income groups. This is only because discrimination against race is not tolerated. This does work, but it's something about which people are very hesitant.

Jeremy Beecham:

We'll now hear from Sol Cowan, whose experience in South Africa may be the most relevant.

Sol Cowan:

I'm going to address two things: the national framework as we've experienced it in South Africa, and the municipal one. First, I'll give you background on the context. As Robbert would say, "What is the objective of politics? What is the objective of power?" I think the theory of power, in the main, is the allocation of resources.

Since 1948, roughly at the same time as the birth of the State of Israel, South Africa saw the birth of national scattering, which was basically 42 years of apartheid. You have to live under such a system to actually understand the degradation. It was a dehumanization of the majority of the black people in South Africa, but it also dehumanized the rest of us, because we were all part of it. We all suffered under the same laws. I'm not going to go into them, but the laws suppressed Communism, and allowed people to be taken from their homes and dumped in open areas with no facilities, with no infrastructure, with nothing. The Head of State would stand up and say, "Black people should only be carriers of water and hewers of wood". This meant they would have a totally inferior education, that they couldn't become doctors, or lawyers, or engineers; in fact, they couldn't become anything. We sit with this legacy now, with generation after generation after generation of people who have no education or skills.

In 1999, the leaders of the two parties decided to suspend the armed struggle and all actions against each other and to sit in dialogue to seek a common ground. We were going nowhere, the country was going down fast, and we had to have a solution. For two or three years, under the "Codessa" as we called it, they sat and had a dialogue. One of the things that came out of this, besides changes to the constitution, was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). It was headed by Bishop Desmond Tutu. Under this commission, which was unlike the Nuremberg trials after World War II or various other trials in the Hague, the perpetrators of apartheid would not be punished. Rather, they had to sit before the commission and explain what they did and beg for forgiveness. These had been members of the Security Police, leaders, foot soldiers, etc. The TRC also heard the victims of apartheid and what they had gone through. This is the common ground that was found at the



settlement. The nationalist government and the people under it could feel that they would not be victimized by the new government under the ANC. I don't think it was totally correct; I think certain people should have gone to jail; certain people should have been punished. For instance, P.W. [Botha], architect of apartheid who today sits in a place called George, by the sea, and has a comfortable life, and no regrets about the past...that's my personal view.

The national question lies in identity. We have two races, the Blacks and the Whites. What is an African? We're still debating that. According to the Black Consciousness Movement, an African is a Black person born on the continent of Africa. The ANC took a different view: We believe that everybody is an African and that the land is for all the people who live on it, whether they're Muslims, or Jews, Christians, atheists, or whatever.

My personal view is that political settlement and political freedom are useless and void of any essence unless they're linked to economic freedom. If you have one without the other, you create the conditions conducive for future problems. One of our big aims at the moment is to build a Black middle class. I'm going to disagree with Robbert here; we aim toward Black economic empowerment. Our legislation sets certain targets that must be met in various industries, whether it's banking, service industries or whatever; and certain ownership rates, whether it's 20% or 30% or 40% of companies that have to be Black-owned or equity-owned. This has caused huge debate. We tried to use this to create jobs, especially for people who have no job and no chance of getting one. This is how we're trying to cope.

I'm not going to go into detail about what we're looking for at the national level, but what do we do at the city level? You must remember that democratically-elected local government has only really happened since the year 2000, because prior to that there were still negotiations, what the local councils would be like, how they'd come into being, and so on. The first thing we did at the city level was to address disparities in service levels between Black and White areas. For example, Soweto had no infrastructure, so we've tarred the roads there, built parks, created an environment that is generating opportunities for mobility, enabling people to move out of ghettos and into the middle class. We are trying to take Soweto, which was a dormitory, and transform it into a proper suburb. As a Council, we're creating economic opportunities, integrating our informal sector, ensuring it can trade. Because of unemployment, which is probably close to 40%, there is a huge second economy, which is trading, etc., and people are forced into it. We're trying to facilitate markets to help people make a living. We also have a conscious policy of procurement, meaning that the Council must order from companies that are Black-owned. Gender is also a big factor. We're trying to enable small businesses to feel part of the general economy.

We have public spaces for integration, in which all people can feel welcome. For example, we have a place downtown called the Mary Fitzgerald Square, where people can congregate, with musical and cultural events – we get people to meet. If you come to Johannesburg, you'll find huge shopping malls. That is actually where there is significant integration. Nevertheless, we still face major challenges of integration. We still have people living in Black areas and White areas, although we have an upwardly mobile Black middle class moving into the latter. We still have large disparities, gated communities...we are also trying to integrate poor and rich areas. We now have poor Blacks and rich Blacks, for instance, who are antagonists. So we have those problems, as well as the classic Black-White issues, the existence of which is largely class determined.

In view of the problems we are facing, it is my personal belief that our generation, which lived in the 1970s and 1980s, has to die out. We have too much baggage – on the left and on the right. It's the people who have been going to school since the birth of democracy who are feeling it's positive. My kids mix with everybody:



Black, White, Indian – it doesn't matter. There is no color in their framework, no sense that they're different from others. They see everyone as a human being.

That's one thing I haven't heard in any of these discussions. What is a human being? Not: What is a Jew, an Arab, an atheist or a Christian? That's irrelevant. What do human beings stand for? As an analogy, if the Jews had to wander the desert for 40 years before they could enter a new land and get new leadership, I think many of us have to go through the same process.



Discussion

Jeremy Beecham:

I would like to contribute a few thoughts before I respond to some of the points that have been made. Robert talked about the changes in nation-states, and I think he's right about that. However, for many people, this is a painful process. It's actually part of the problem. The perception that the nation-state is somehow disappearing carries implications for the disappearance of identities, and people feel threatened. I'm speaking of Europe, but this can be applied here.

I'd like to comment on what Isi said about strengthening neighborhood representation. I'd like to ask our Israeli friends whether the system here is designed to facilitate that. As I understand it, you have a strong mayoral, party list system. You don't have a constituency system in which geographic areas are individually represented and therefore have a specific voice. I wonder whether this might militate against the kind of neighborhood approach that makes sense. Is the system designed to deliver this? If not, what's the prospect of changing that aspect of the system?

I attended the first Local Government Conference organized by the School of Government and Policy last year, and I was struck by the disparity – about which I knew something, though not as much as I have learned today – between Palestinian-Israeli citizens and Jewish citizens. That all of the Arab municipalities are at the bottom quarter of the socio-economic rankings is of course very striking. It's also true that there are deprived Jewish communities and, as we've heard, mixed communities, as well. The question that occurs to me is whether there is any basis for a coalition of the disadvantaged, i.e. Jewish and Arab municipalities that are struggling financially and/or going bankrupt. In the battle to secure reallocation of resources, is there any room for coming together?

As the afternoon has gone on, I have been thinking about the “peaceful coexistence” that characterized the Cold War. The situation had gradually improved with a balance between two roughly equal Blocs, which couldn't damage each other significantly. “Peaceful coexistence”, then, was a way of living with that situation. It didn't advance anything, but it stabilized things. We're certainly only at the beginning of the journey, but perhaps this is a first stage which, even if insufficient, is necessary. The question is: Are we there yet? Perhaps we're not, as we've been hearing. How do we get there? How do we move on? I don't think we can jump from where we – you – are right now to that final stage. You may need an intermediate stage. I'm sounding a little bit like Karl Marx. I'm no Marxist; I'm more of a Marks & Spencerist...

Raviv Schwartz:

Two quick points. One: Some of the presenters during the first portion of the panel implicitly or explicitly mentioned the role of civil society, both nationally and locally. I was curious to what extent – for the international guests – that arena is one in which coexistence is somehow being negotiated?

One point that I think deserves mentioning, which has only been dealt with superficially, is the role of the Jewish Diaspora in Israeli civil society. In the early years of the State, the Jewish Diaspora contributed to nation-building in a way that, for the most part, excluded the non-Jewish minority in this country. This had all kinds of



structural and legal manifestations, some of which can be felt to this day. What's important to mention is that more recently, the Jewish Diaspora, or certain elements within it, have played a role in the evolution of Israeli civil society and had a fairly positive effect on the effort to redress the structural inequality in Israel between Arabs and Jews. More specifically for our purposes, the Abraham Fund is an American-Jewish organization, funded largely by a single philanthropist but involving other contributors as well; Shatil, which was represented by Busayna, is formally linked to the New Israel Fund, also an American-Jewish philanthropic organization; Sikkuy, although it's an Israeli non-profit, is largely supported by funds derived from the Jewish Diaspora. I am curious as to whether this has any resonance for those of you from abroad.

Simon Milton:

I'll start by trying to answer that question directly. I would guess that most of us are pursuing this idea of civil society, in some shape or form. I suspect it's developed at different paces in different countries. What we've learned in the UK is that it's much harder to govern in a satisfactory way if civil society does not exist. It's like playing a game of tennis with nobody on the other side of the net. It's pretty boring and you don't win – that's the point. You need to have partners to progress, and civil society is part of that progress. The part of London that has some of the wealthiest but also some of the most disadvantaged areas in the whole of the city happens to be the borough I lead. The difference between the successful and the unsuccessful parts is usually the degree to which civil society has developed. When you have an articulate, self-confident middle class, those residents demand more from the local authority. Aviad described ringing the municipal authority in Jaffa every day; he probably knows more about what goes on than elected City Council members. We all have residents like that in the areas we represent. They help make the city and the politicians perform better.

So how do we get there? We're experimenting with lots of different forms of capacity-building to get the disadvantaged, immigrants and newly arrived groups in London to be sufficiently well-developed and to engage with the local authority and ministerial parties. It's hard work and it takes a lot of time and investment, but, ultimately, it's essential.

If I may, just a few reflections on the first set of presentations we had. On one hand, I heard many things that were familiar from a local government perspective, certainly in the UK and I suspect elsewhere. We all know of powerful mayors who have sweeping regeneration schemes that pay little or no attention to historic communities and their needs. We all know of municipalities that feel they're discriminated against in receiving federal or national funding. We all have experience with voluntary segregation. It's a big debate in the UK at the moment; immigrant communities living completely separate lives, attending separate schools, having separate leisure and social interests, living in different parts of town – and yet they're all supposedly living in the same place. These things are all common and familiar, I suspect, to those involved in local government.

Of course, what we have here is the overlay of the corrosive history of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the very significant degree of inequality in the experience of life here, which we've heard expressed. What needs to be tackled are neighborhoods. At the moment, there are big debates in London about UK local government; terms, like "place shaping" and "leadership of place", in the sense that politicians can actually help give a place an identity and bring people together. This can only happen if politicians feel connected to the places they're meant to represent.



Busayna Dabit:

In Israel we have two levels. Some of you spoke about the national level, but no one mentioned that most of the State's resources are going to the occupation. All of us as citizens are paying for that – Arabs and Jews. The freedom of our relatives in the Palestinian Authority is connected to our civil rights here. Because of this, I think our municipalities lack resources for investing inside. At the local level, I think that it is the attitude, the policy toward the existence of two nations, Arab and Jewish, and the multi-cultural nature of places like Ramla, Lod, Jaffa, Haifa or Acco. There is a real problem, but I also think it depends a lot on how we think and see the other culture. We must first educate and invest in the other; to respect the other is also to respect yourself. When you demolish the Old City and destroy local character, you also destroy something in yourself. This is the link between the two levels. I think the proper attitude is to treat a place as an asset. For example, in Ramla, there are Arabs and Jews, but on another level there are Christians, Muslims, Jews from Arab countries, Jews from Europe, etc. This, too, is an asset, and so I think we have to look not just for dialogue, but also for common interests, such as justice and the environment. For example, we have no third choice in our city. There are Arab neighborhoods and Jewish neighborhoods: two separate systems. Two peoples living at a great distance from one another. I know nothing about my neighbors, and they know nothing about us. The walls are getting higher and the distance is growing because of fear. The fear between us is the reason for these walls, between the Palestinian Authority and Israel, also: Fear builds big walls. At least at the local level, if decision-makers were aware of an alternative (one that is voluntarily adopted and not coerced), a third option of living and being educated together might emerge; that could be the start of a solution.

Jeremy Beecham:

I would argue that that's pluralism, rather than coexistence.

Busayna Dabit:

I can respect the majority of people who prefer to attend exclusively Arab schools and the majority of Jewish residents who prefer exclusively Jewish schools. But there must be a third option; it need not be black or white.

Dick Gross:

There is a lot of pain and sadness around this table, which I never imagined I would encounter. I think we have to acknowledge that pain and sadness and then use it to galvanize future action. Raviv asked, "Is there any resonance?" There is. I wanted to tell three little stories. The first is about a boy called Eddie Mabo, who was an indigenous islander, he died; he tried to claim some island fishing rights. His claim went all the way up to the High Court. The breakthrough in the Mabo decision was the repudiation of a notion called terra nullius, which basically says that, when a colonial imperial power comes to a land, there is no one and nothing there. Terra nullius is being expunged from Australian law. All law used to say that White people created land rights; an entire legal system of titles was predicated on the assumption of terra nullius. Since the Mabo decision, there



has been a series of fights about what this actually means. The implications are profound, because if you say that indigenous people actually do exist on the land, then they have land rights and that creates a whole series of complicated questions.

That brings me to the second question about land rights. I'm a tourist, so I went on a tour of Jaffa. I was standing on this municipal area, an open square, and I asked the tour guide what had happened to the people who had owned the land. Of course he said, "They left, it's their fault they left, they therefore relinquished all claim to title on the land". I didn't want to start an argument on the tour, but this was completely repugnant to me. I think when Jews are claiming title for property confiscated in Europe, it is completely unacceptable for Israel to say that the confiscation of land rights is standard upright procedure. I hadn't looked into the situation at all, but you know, I'm just absolutely amazed that this notion of land rights could occur.

This brings me to my last little story, which was at my son's Bar Mitzvah. It was secular, not in a synagogue; it was in Town Hall with no yarmulkes. We thought we'd have a guest speaker, so we got an Israeli-born guy named Robert Rechter. He stood up and said: "I'm an Israeli, and Israel is the most racist community I've experienced on this earth". I thought the Bar Mitzvah was going to degenerate into a riot. I had somehow put that story behind me – until today. But it's there, because you know, this guy is a very eminent person in Australian society. He's an Israeli and he came out and made this claim. Given what I've heard about land riots, I think there's a really disturbing, unacceptable issue here. I'm going away irrevocably saddened by what we have learned.

If Raviv asks, "Is there resonance here?" – well, for me, there is complete resonance with the way the British Empire dispossessed the indigenous Australian. That is what I am taking away, this resonance, and the consequent tragedy of the Australian indigenous community, the ongoing tragedy for Australian society, which we haven't been able to reconcile. We can't even get a national apology for that.

Robbert Baruch:

Dick, I want to ask you a small question. This morning we were talking about some of the dilemmas of being a Jewish politician. What if the comment, "Israel is the most racist State" were made not by a Jew, but by an Arab in the political arena? Would you treat it differently?

Dick Gross:

Oh, yes. Of course I'd treat it differently. What I would say is that it all depends on the qualifications of the person making this statement. This guy had certain qualifications: He was Jewish, he was Israeli!

Michael Ross:

I think the solution is community organizing, like you've been doing, and I think the problem here is government. Some people have recommended that government is the means by which things get done, but I think in your case, it's an obstacle. I think you need to organize as a community.

In a neighborhood of Boston, Mission Hill, the federal government gave local, Boston government a tool to take land by eminent domain – which allows government to take property from one private owner and give



it to another. They did that for the hospitals. Harvard University has hospitals in Boston; it went into a great neighborhood, Mission Hill, and basically bulldozed perfectly good triple-decker houses, where working class people lived. In some cases, they just bulldozed the houses and never even built anything instead, because they changed their minds. These places became breeding grounds for abandoned automobiles; the neighborhood was destroyed. This caused a complete loss of faith in government. Residents got together and started something called “moral site control”; they controlled the site by enough of them saying, “This is what we want here”. They didn’t actually own the site (the government didn’t recognize them), but as neighbors they established these areas, which did become economically viable.

Aviad said something about being a firm believer in the market. I am, too, and now so are they. They proposed a project and then asked, “Who wants to build this?” They didn’t own the land, but they solicited proposals and chose the one they liked, so the government had to take notice. It said, “They have a viable economic proposal, there’s enough of them, there’s community support”, and so the project was built. Now they’re doing it a second time and this time there’s less resistance; there’s more of a cooperative working relationship with the municipality. This is a success story. There was a significant lack of infrastructure there, so they had to push a little bit and they had to organize. If you don’t have enough believers in the community who want to organize, you have to go after a project that’s obtainable, that can be built. Once you have one success, you’ll get a whole group of people who are lured into it, paying attention and saying, “Wow! They did it over there, maybe we’ll get involved”. Then you tackle larger issues.

The larger issue of inequality, which you have here in schools and education – you’ll drive yourself crazy trying to do everything. You need to go after a small, obtainable, market-driven opportunity. You guys have leverage, because you have people living in those houses. They can negotiate their support for development in their area, provided they live there. I don’t know how difficult that would be, but perhaps there’s something in this.

Nahum Ben-Elia:

I think a number of the themes in this discussion are not linked together in the most logical way. Are we talking about coexistence? Are we talking about the quality of living conditions, opportunities and rights? Are we talking about power politics? I think there are many different themes, some of which work according to what statisticians call “co-linearity”. This refers to a number of phenomena working in the same direction, which give the impression of a causal relationship.

I am reminded of two personal experiences. Twenty years ago, I worked in the Prime Minister’s office, helping to develop a major national initiative called “Project Renewal”, which was directed at close to 200 disadvantaged urban neighborhoods across the country. I learned a few things about how the system works vis-à-vis disadvantaged areas. There is a difference between discrimination against a geographic area and discrimination against people. Some areas are being discriminated against even today, either because they are marginal or because they are powerless, or just because they have a low income level and can be disregarded politically. We have the Israeli-Arab or Palestinian-Israeli population, with a correlation between ethnic background and socio-economic level. This is essentially a poor community and, as such, suffers from and experiences the disadvantage of being poor and powerless.

The second personal experience is more than 20 years of working with Israeli-Arab local authorities. Before I address discrimination, there is the question of institutional ignorance. “I don’t see you, I am not in contact



with you, and therefore, you don't exist. Your problems do not exist". Then there is a problem of institutional mismanagement, and third, the problem of negligence. There are also structural factors in the Israeli government system, before we reach the issue of discrimination. These same factors apply to other localities and geographic areas, as well. It's not just a question of discrimination against a particular population, but rather against an area. It is not by accident or by discrimination alone that Jaffa continues to be an under-developed area within Tel Aviv. It's the same in other areas in Tel Aviv that happen to be poor. It's a question of municipal priorities, which are linked to the political system. Because we don't have local area representation, marginal areas have no voice. How many voters do we have in Jaffa, among the Arab population? About 7,000 or 8,000. At least we have one representative on the local council. I think it's important to distinguish among these factors, because a cool, scientific analysis is required in order to sort through them and ultimately identify the strategies for intervention, or change.

"Discrimination", in my opinion, is simply a substitute for what I call a clinical analysis. The more emotional you are about an issue, the more important it is to be clinically detached. I am not sure that good will, as such, is enough. I have a great degree of sympathy for NGOs; I also used to work for Sikkuy. It's very important to provide professional assistance and so on, but additional variables must be taken into account. This is not the place to discuss them – just a comment to "disrupt" this otherwise very interesting discussion.

Ahmed Balaha:

We are the smallest minority in the mixed cities, but we are actually quite strong. That's why I think Jaffa has changed in the past ten years. On the other hand, I think we have some people in Jaffa, some Arabs, who will tell you there are very good relationships, which I think is very important. Good personal relationships are good for Jaffa. Together, people make demands. Recently, the mayor established something called a "Mishlama". No one is quite sure what that means, but it's something like a very local government of Jaffa. Through this body, we are trying to find common ground for Jews and Arabs to work together, to look past their national differences so they can focus on local problems. If it succeeds, it could be a very good model.

Nahum Ben-Elia:

When I talked about neighborhoods in terms of action, success and timing, I think this touched on basic problems of society and development. If we want to change things, or help change them a little bit, we are working in the long, not the short, range. But what we're facing politically are short-term responses. My problem isn't that the neighborhood should be represented politically or be a constituency. I've talked to colleagues and politicians and asked for examples of neighborhoods where the trend has really changed. I don't mean Harlem, which changed only because some offers came in; that's not what I call real change. Maybe you know of neighborhoods that experienced a reversal of poverty, low education, unemployment, etc.? When I say "focus on a neighborhood", I mean put all the money together and work on a long-term project. Some things can change pretty rapidly, but when you talk about changing education and the lives of young people, you need a perspective of many years. If you link criminality to non-education, for example, you're talking about very long-range programs. If you want an efficient program, and if you want to be able to sell it to the people who will elect you, you need to come up



with success; that's why we talked about the quantification of change. Otherwise, we just keep saying, "You know, it seems to be a little better"; or in five years' time or ten years' time we'll say, "something changed". What changed? That's why I was focusing on the notion of neighborhood, to pull together all the forces and the means.

Raviv Schwartz:

First of all, I thank our guest speakers. If one thing was made clear, it's that, analytically speaking, we can approach the notion of coexistence as a discrete issue. Essentially, it's related to the other factors we discussed here, but politically and analytically, you might wish to probe each one differently. Thank you all.



(l-r) Dick Gross, Sol Cowan, Isi Halberthal, Robbert Baruch, Michael Ross, Jeremy Beecham and Nahum Ben-Elia



(l-r) Robin Kramer, Sol Cowan and Aviad Sar-Shalom



(l-r) Simon Milton, Michael Ross, Robbert Baruch and Busayna Dabit

