

JERUSALEM מכון ירושלים
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RESEARCH لبحث السياسات



KONRAD
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From Theory to Practice – Shared Spaces in Jerusalem

Research Lab

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Background

In recent years, the Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research, together with the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, has led the issue of shared spaces in Jerusalem.

The Institute's researchers focused initially on creating a body of knowledge on the subject – mapping the current status and changing trends in the city, and analyzing the different factors which cause either separation or meeting, in the various spaces in Jerusalem.

After a significant amount of knowledge had been accumulated, the Institute researchers held a series of workshops aimed at municipal professionals – first for urban planners, and then for municipal community workers.

In these workshops, the participants were made aware of theories regarding the relevant identities of the local groups and populations, and of the influence of prolonged conflict on the nature of their encounters. The participants were exposed to the psychological and sociological factors behind different behaviors, to the data which reveals changing trends in Jerusalem and to other issues. During the workshops, a wide-ranging language appropriate for the issue at hand – shared spaces in Jerusalem – was developed together with the participants, as well as a unique professional approach to the issue.

Subsequently, the researchers investigated various test-cases in Israel, in regard to towns and cities which face the issues and challenges of shared spaces. To conclude the study phase, the participants went on a four-day educational tour of Belfast in Northern Ireland, to learn about their local responses in dealing with the challenges of shared spaces.

Following the workshops, both urban planners and community workers continued, on separate tracks, to expand their knowledge on the issue. The planners even



drafted a policy paper relating to the [development of shared spaces on the seam line in Jerusalem](#).

After essentially making the city planners and community workers ambassadors and full partners in spearheading this field in Jerusalem, it was jointly decided to set up a laboratory think-tank, whose goal was to make the subject and its language accessible to other municipal players, and enlarge the circle of those already engaged by adding additional partners.

Research Lab Event

The laboratory took place on December 29th 2020, a public culmination of several years of research and activity in this area by the Jerusalem Institute and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.

Various municipal professionals were invited to join the laboratory, among them representatives of all relevant municipal departments, council members, and representatives of government offices, connected with this issue, and civic society organizations involved in the field in Jerusalem.

The laboratory event was both fascinating and exciting, and brought different perspectives on the subject to the table – including business, immigrant absorption, and intercultural encounters.

Collaborations between managers from different municipal departments were put in place following the laboratory meeting, and the discussion continues, with the aim of expanding and deepening municipal activity in the field.

The meeting served as a call for action for further activity in the field, among the invited participants, who all stressed the importance of the subject and its development for the future of Jerusalem. It was clear to the participants that discussions should be further expanded to include additional groups, including:



intergenerational shared spaces, access to people with disabilities, immigrants, and with a focus on peripheral and marginal groups and sectors.

Already during and following the lab meeting, several suggestions were made regarding various directions for possible development:

1. In the immigrant absorption arena: The manager of the Jerusalem Municipality Immigrant Absorption Authority, who took part in the meeting, asked to examine further possibilities to promote the subject together with those already active in the field.
2. In the business arena: The vision was that retail centers could create fertile ground for successful community activities. In practice, a community worker was coopted to the municipal department for promoting businesses.
3. In the planning arena:
 - Incorporating the principles regarding shared places in the next Masterplan for Jerusalem.
 - Increasing public participation involvement in the planning of shared spaces.
 - Combining elements of retail and employment in shared spaces.

In addition, the need to institutionalize the field was discussed, focusing on the establishment of a municipal unit that would focus on the subject and offer tailored support to those addressing it, similar to the model existing in Belfast. It was suggested that the Municipal Center for Mediation and Community Dialog could serve as a suitable address, working together with the Community Councils and Civic Society organizations. As the management of this Center is currently undergoing personnel changes, the subject will be examined further at a later time.



Another recommendation was to take advantage of existing municipal platforms to expand and strengthen discussion and the message.

Many people mentioned the Community Council elections as an opportunity that carried within them the risk of expanding a divisive discourse, as well as the opportunity to deepen discussions regarding shared spaces as a factor promoting municipal work for the greater good.

In line with the above, following the first round of Community Council elections, community workers presented a project that they had initiated, titled “Jerusalem chooses together”.

“Jerusalem chooses together”

This project is an example which exemplifies the unique cooperation between different municipal bodies, as part of the desire to find and promote the common good, especially regarding an issue that has the potential to exacerbate division and disagreement and diminish the shared needs of Jerusalem’s societies. The community workers intend to execute the project during the next round of elections of the Community Councils. The following are the main points of this project:



Jerusalem chooses together

The elections for Jerusalem's Community Councils have created an opportunity to strengthen and develop democracy and the public engagement of local citizens in managing aspects of their lives. Different groups and individuals in the community strive to be represented in the elected leadership, to influence decisions and manage the councils' priorities. Apart from the opportunity for democracy inherent in these elections, there lies a risk of emphasizing division and disagreement between different groups in what is essentially one community. This includes minority groups which may not be visible nor taken into account. As a result of ongoing discussions regarding shared spaces, the aim is to recruit the systems participating in the election process, to further strengthen the values of exposure, familiarity and connections with the existing range of human diversity in the community, and to create a sense of commitment among the candidates and the elected management, to work in the spirit of tolerance, to lead a non-violent, respectful and inclusive dialog, and show both personal connection and commitment toward different, especially minority, groups.

The goals of the project:

- Exposing neighborhood and city residents to a public campaign encouraging a respectful and mediating discussion.
- The candidates will address the importance of observing fair elections, by means of conducting discussions, led by the relevant professionals responsible for the elections at both the local and municipal level.
- The elected management in each Community Council will undergo workshops introducing them to the human diversity existing within the community, aimed at strengthening their commitment to representing and acting on behalf of all the groups in their shared space.

Aims: a joint-dialog on the subject "Alone and together in the neighborhood's public space", providing mediation tools, non-violent communication, conflict resolution, and "meeting the other", both for candidates and members of the Community Council management.



Modes of operation:

1. Mapping the various communities: including synagogues, ultra-orthodox communities, asylum seekers, families, young people, students, and immigrants. Creating a document which portrays all the neighborhoods within the Community Council area by voting area, population groups and different sectors (women, the elderly, people with disabilities). This mapping will allow candidates to be found from within these communities, and the document summarizing the results of this mapping will also be distributed to all candidates so as to allow them to get acquainted with the populations and view their different needs. The document will also include content on shared spaces, mediation and dialog.
2. Meeting community leaders in the Community Council space to draw them and their communities into the Community Council election process. This will consist of sending questionnaires to the candidates, requesting their comments relating to answering the needs of the neighborhood's various populations and the vision for the neighborhood. The candidates' responses will be published and distributed within the neighborhood.
3. A municipal campaign regarding shared spaces, which can recruit activists and expose them to the subject. This will include coining a succinct slogan, with a clear and unifying message, such as "Jerusalem Votes Together", and will describe the projects and activities undertaken in the field. The campaign will have a uniting and not a divisive character. Local and national community leaders will take part in the campaign, including the Mayor of Jerusalem, and it will be marketed both in the public space and digitally.
4. Offering training for candidates for management of the Community Councils, in subjects such as media and mediation, with the aim of preparing them to use open and inviting discourse to all of the populations in their neighborhood. Workshops that the management team can choose from include: dialogs within the community, and non-violent communication.

In the Community Work department, the subject will find expression in community worker's working plans, as well as in long-term plans: through creating a neighborhood team, developing services, meetings etc., as well as in events relating to various calendar events throughout the year (whether fixed or special events), through cooperation between different bodies within the municipality and the neighborhoods.



Following the laboratory event, we received many comments supporting our leadership of the subject, and relating to the very existence of shared discourse. Further opportunities to develop the field in different aspects have opened up, and we believe that a significant continuation on the broader municipal level will be seen in the future.

The COVID-19 crisis that entered our lives in early 2020, accelerated the process of integration of East Jerusalem's residents, but also brought about a temporary decline in the fabric of relations between the ultra-orthodox community and Israel's – and especially Jerusalem's – general population. This change in the way these two communities interacted with the Israeli administration during COVID-19 may impact inter-group relations in the post-COVID era, hence considerable importance is attached to the ongoing discussion regarding shared spaces.