



Final Research Findings Brief

Planning Advocacies and Communicative Politics in Israel/Palestine

Project aims, objectives, methods

The objectives of the research were to explore and analyse various forms of mobilisation and 'communicative rationalities' employed by 'planning advocacies' in Israel, primarily ones that work for, or on behalf of, marginalised communities among the Palestinian citizens of Israel (PCIs). The research has aimed to explore and explain the various organisational dimensions and political strategies employed by this type of NGPA, and assess their outcomes in terms of democratisation. The research was undertaken through a range of qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews with representatives of a wide range of organisations and activists, organisational ethnographies, focus groups, and observation of policy and practice deliberations.

Key research findings

- This type of NGPA represents a professionalized facet of civil society organisations, adhering to – while incrementally challenging – the rules, regulations and procedures placed by state (planning) institutions in Israel;
- This professionalisation, in turn, has been a vehicle for the Palestinian citizens of Israel's civil society in its quest to break away from its structural marginalisation and exclusion within Israel's public sphere;
- Attempting to break away from this structural marginalisation and exclusion has led to a number of competing (and at times complementary) communicative rationalities to emerge, supported by networks between organisations and activists in Israeli civil society. The main dimensions of these networks and communicative rationalities include:
 1. A highly professionalized discourse and action framework, that has sought to tackle Israeli planning 'in its own terms', and thus to attempt to reassert the more benign aspects of planning as a quest for orderly, rational development which can benefit communities.
 2. A discourse and action oriented towards establishing networks with human rights campaigns and activists, thus broadening community, professional, and public understanding of planning as an activity that inherently invokes Planning Rights (such as public participation, transparency in decision-making, the right to adequate knowledge, and so on).
 3. Planning-oriented NGPA which represents the professional wing of a broader and deeper current within the politicisation of Palestinian civil society in Israel. This current has increasingly articulated demands for recognition of the Palestinian citizens of Israel as a national minority to which collective rights should be allocated. Planning-oriented NGPA within this stream of PCI civil society has articulated the territorial and land claims of increasing calls to refashion the constitutional framework of Israel as either a 'state of all its citizens', or (more radically) as a consociational (bi-national) democracy.
 4. An environmental rationality, that has sought alliances with Israel's growing environmental movement.
 5. A new place-building framework, that has been part of local or regional activities (for instance, in the Galilee and *Wadi Arra* regions in Israel) to bridge Jewish and Palestinian civil society in an effort to improve the efficacy of territorial policy (for example, in devising joint industrial parks and tourism projects between Jewish and Arab local authorities), and to create localised fabrics of inter-community cooperation.

This diversity and complexity of NGPA in Israel has expanded, and at times created, new deliberative spaces within the planning system. It confirms a gradual and highly incremental process of democratisation by helping to create 'cracks' in the system and to expand on existing opportunities. But this process of democratisation is one of a long term, and slow, nature, fraught with obstacles and subject to reversals.

Policy and practice implications

- The key **policy** implications are that planning institutions in Israel should enhance the transparency of their decision-making processes; create deliberative forums to provide opportunity for communities to have a voice in the formulation of planning policies from an early stage in the policy process; to amend Israeli planning law to include public participation as a statutory obligation; and to create better interface between planning and policies connected to the social and economic development of disadvantaged communities;
- The important **practice** implications are for non-governmental organisations and other civil society actors to develop a series of strategic recommendations for planning policy, as opposed to the current practice of (mostly) reactive action; dialogue between different organisations and activists should also improve; the connection between NGOs and communities could strengthen, within the resource constraints that already affect NGO engagement.

Key publications and outputs

Discussion papers, book chapter contributions, conference papers and articles in preparation.

For further information

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