THE TERRITORIAL POLITICS OF CITIZENSHIP IN ISRAEL’S FRACTURED COMMUNITIES

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MINORITY POLITICAL MOBILISATION AND URBAN GOVERNANCE AMONG THE PALESTINIAN CITIZENS OF TEL AVIV-JAFFA AND HAIFA

Research Report
Dr Joseph Leibovitz
Institute of Geography
The University of Edinburgh
EDINBURGH EH8 9XP

Haifa’s Wadi al Nisnas Neighbourhood (source: the author)

Jaffa in 1949 (Source: http://www.jaffa.8m.net/index.html)
Introduction and background

The Palestinian citizens of Israel (PCIs) – an ethno-national minority constituting about 20 percent of Israel’s total population of 7,150,000 – have long represented a ‘classic’ internal frontier within the framework of ethnic democracy. An internal frontier refers to a group or groups of people that tend to be systematically excluded from equal access to power, rights, resources and public discourse. Often, such frontiers are both geographically marginal and ethnically distinctive (Yiftachel, 1997 and 2001). In this context, this research project has set out to examine the distinctive patterns of political mobilisation and collective action that are afforded to PCI activists within the context of Israel’s ethnically fractured cities. Placed within an internationally comparative conceptual and analytical framework, the research has aimed to tackle important questions: given the social, political and economic disadvantage of many ethnic minorities placed within a wider context of territorial struggle, what are the strategic options available to activists and their potential allies in attempting to redress the multifaceted dimensions of their marginalisation? How are political agendas articulated, and what are the circumstances that shape patterns and outcomes of struggles to expand and deepen citizenship?

The introduction of a finely grained geographical approach to citizenship studies – inspired by the growing literature on citizenship and cities – enables one to unpack the wide range of constituting factors in the assemblage of political claims and mobilising processes. It is in the juxtaposition of the national and the local dimensions of the articulation of political claims and mobilisation around inclusion, recognition, and a range of demands to re-assert a community sense of belonging, that the major contribution of this research has been sought.

The Israeli ‘mixed cities’ of Tel Aviv-Jaffa and Haifa

In Haifa, Israeli-Palestinians number, according to recent estimates, 30,000 people, constituting just under 10 percent of the city’s total population (the rest being mostly Jewish). About 55 percent of this group are Christian Arabs, and the remaining 45 percent are mostly Muslims (City of Haifa 2006). In Tel Aviv-Jaffa, the size of the Israeli-Palestinian community is much smaller. It is estimated to number some 15,400 people, which is 4.5 percent of the city’s total population. Within the district of Jaffa, one the oldest Mediterranean port cities, where the vast majority of the city’s Israeli-Palestinians live, this community constitutes about a third of the population, with the other two thirds being Israeli-Jews. Muslims are the overwhelming majority among Jaffa’s Israeli-Palestinians, numbering 12,000 people (City of Tel Aviv 2005). Politically, Jaffa was incorporated to the Tel-Aviv municipality in 1950, thus losing its municipal ‘independence’.

Both places were deeply affected by the process of Israeli nation-building since the early years of the 20th Century. They were subject to significant waves of Jewish immigration and settlement. Thus, during the 1920s and 1930s these cities became de-facto bi-national communities. On the eve of Israel’s independence in 1948, the Palestinian population of Haifa constituted 48 percent of the city’s total (Goren 2004). In Jaffa, the demographic history was even more complicated, as Jews settled both in Jaffa and in its modern off-spring, the city of Tel Aviv. Nevertheless, it is estimated that just before the 1948 War, which followed Israel’s declaration of independence,
Jaffa’s thriving city contained about 80,000 Palestinians. This community was practically decimated, with only 4,100 people not fleeing. Haifa’s Palestinian community fared little better, falling from 70,000 people to between 3,000 and 4,000 in 1948, and resulting with the destruction of entire neighbourhoods such as Wadi Salib (Morris 2002). In both cities, the breakdown of Jewish-Arab relations took place through a series of cross-community hostilities during the 1930s, culminating in the 1948 War (Morris 2002).

Segregation has become an important feature in inter-community dynamics in the two cities. From the outset, Jewish migrants to Haifa chose to settle in the city’s higher latitudes on the Carmel Mountain, while the Palestinian community dominated the areas of Lower Haifa. This demographic and topographic pattern also reflected increasing social and economic differences, with the Jewish community, in general, occupying the higher income brackets (Goren 2004). In Jaffa, following the establishment of Israel, the Arab community found itself increasingly spatially confined to the centre of Jaffa, especially in and around the deprived neighbourhood of Ajami (see figure 2; Fabian 2001; LeVine 2005). In both cities, these patterns of segregation remain salient features (Falah at al 2000; see Figures 1 and 2, where the designation of ‘non Jewish population’ in the Israeli Census largely refers to Israeli-Palestinians). The publication of the last Israeli census dates back to 1996, and thus prevents the display of reliable current socio-economic data. However, given the broader trend of neo-liberal policies and growing inequality in Israel in the past 20 years (Svirsky and Connor-Attias 2006), table 1 captures effectively the relative aspects of the lower socio-economic status of the Palestinian citizens residing in Haifa and Tel Aviv-Jaffa, along a range of indicators, while Figures 3 and 4 broadly demonstrates the relationship between income inequality, residence, and ethnic background in the two cities.
Figure 1: Non-Jewish Population: City of Haifa.
Figure 2: Non-Jewish Population, City of Tel Aviv-Jaffa.
Figure 3. Median income, by census tract in Tel Aviv-Jaffa (Data source: Israeli Census, 2006).
Figure 4. Median income by census tract, City of Haifa (Data source: Israeli Census, 1996).
Table 1. Arabs and Jews in Haifa and Tel-Aviv-Jaffa: selected socio-economic indicators (1995)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Haifa</th>
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<th>Tel Aviv-Jaffa</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jews</td>
<td>Muslim Arabs</td>
<td>Christian Arabs</td>
<td>Jews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependency ratio*</td>
<td>862</td>
<td>928</td>
<td>721</td>
<td>751</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of 25-64 year olds with academic degree (1983)</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of 25-64 year olds with academic degree (1995)</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of households who own a car</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>51.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>% of households with more than 2 persons per room</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of households who are homeowners</td>
<td>72.9</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>42.8</td>
<td>59.4</td>
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</tbody>
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*Dependency ratio is the ratio between those aged 0-19 and 65+ (that is, young and old population), and those who are 20-64 year old, multiplied by 1,000. The highest the score, the more dependent the studied population group on economically active people. The typically higher dependency ratio among Israeli Arabs means that this group has a higher proportion of young and old people (of non-working age) who are dependent on the working age group.*
Research objectives

The aim of the research has been to capture similarities and differences in contemporary patterns of governing ethnically fractured cities, as exemplified by Jaffa and Haifa. The introduction of a geographically sensitive prism to the study of political claim-making by activists, and their interaction with local and national governance frameworks, was aimed to capture important nuances in political organisation, strategies and actions within the nexus of urban politics. A normative emphasis on the viability of local democracy – as an important scale for political engagement and activism – has added a further important dimension to understanding possible models of the institutional contexts of the spectrum between deep exclusion and meaningful inclusion.

The particular objectives of the research have been:

- To assess the various ways through which local state institutions – and urban development policy in particular – in the case study cities deploy a range of opportunities and constraints on the expressions and meanings of urban citizenship experiences by the Palestinian communities in Tel Aviv-Jaffa and Haifa.
- To explain and analyse the organisational and operational foundations of asserting the right to the city, as expressed by political mobilisation and collective actions of activists and organisations among PCIs in the two cities.
- To explore, on the basis of the comparative research and reference to the international literature, the extent to which urban political terrains tend to intensify, replicate or deviate from established national patterns of citizenship.

In light of the literature on contentious politics and political mobilisation studies among ethnic minorities in cities, three particular propositions could be articulated:

*Proposition i.* the politics of ethnically fractured cities tends to ‘mirror’ established national patterns of minority-majority relations (‘no significant difference between national and local governance thesis’);

*Proposition ii.* political dynamics within ethnically divided cities can exacerbate inter-ethnic tensions and deepen social exclusion (‘the double discrimination thesis’);

*Proposition iii.* urban governance dynamics can, at times, develop distinctive models of minority accommodation and inclusion (‘the viability of local democracy thesis’).

Through the use of mostly qualitative methodologies, the research project has provided an assessment of these propositions. The evidence was assessed through an analytical framework that elaborated on important factors shaping the interaction between minority elites and activists, and state institutions. These factors included: (1) historical legacies; (2) local state policy with a particular emphasis on urban planning.
strategies; (3) the organisational foundations of Palestinian minority political mobilisation; and (4) the crystallisation of the deployment of opportunity structures and constraints for collective action through struggles over place-making.

Methods

Following on a literature review on three particular areas in the international academic literature (contentious politics; ethnic mobilisation studies; and urban governance and planning in polarised societies), and on a mapping of key events, issues, institutions and actors in the two case studies, the research embarked on its most intensive phase of a two part fieldwork, lasting in total six months.

The principal research methodology involved 27 interviews in each of the case study cities (a total of 54). Interviewees were chosen and contacted on the basis of their involvement and membership in various forms of community, social and political activism. Given the relatively small size of the Palestinian community in each city, the interviews range provided a representative sample of the spectrum of social, political, religious and ideological positions (See Appendix). Additional 7 interviews in each city were conducted with important officials in charge of significant public policy (especially in urban planning strategies) developments, including the elected mayor of each city and the chief planning officer. This ensured that a good coverage was gained of the policy and discursive framework within which the construction of a ‘local citizenship regime’ is performed. Two focus groups were also arranged in each of the city, containing five to seven members: one focus group of a range of Palestinian activists in Jaffa and Haifa, and one focus group of senior policy officials from each city administration. The undertaking of one focus group capturing the public policy side and one focus group capturing the mobilisation and contestation of policy did much to develop a relational sense of the ‘supply’ and ‘demand’ of urban citizenship and its governance.

The above research methods were also complemented by triangulations gained from: (1) published reports and minutes produced by community organisation and by government agencies; (2) collection of pamphlets and other web-based information assembled by community organisations and by activists individually; (3) systematic newspaper article survey covering the 1990-2006 period, with the help of a dedicated resource centre based at the Institute for Peace Studies in Givat Haviva in northern Israel; (5) non-participant observations of 2 key events in each city, including protests over town planning issues in Jaffa and Haifa and, and 2 public discussion forums dealing with planning initiatives in the two communities. These observations highlighted the major policy frameworks, debates and mechanisms for dialogue between activists and local state institutions, and incorporated into the findings of the research; (6) assembly of descriptive statistics from the formal Israeli Census, which provides the only robust statistical socio-economic data. That the last Census was conducted in Israel in 1995 compromised the ability to gain up to date data, but the data that was gained gives an indication as to the relative disparities between and within community and a general sense of geographical distribution of ethnic groups and socioeconomic characteristics.
In all, an intensive and multi-task (mainly qualitative) research methodology ensured the rigour of the research design and the validity of the findings and their analysis.

**Analytical prism: citizenship, urban governance and minority mobilisation - a matter of geography?**

*The urban governance, mobilisation, and collective action nexus*

In analyses performed at the national and international scales, the political science and political sociology literatures have identified a number of institutional structures through which tensions between ethnic groups might be mediated (Banton 2000; Bulmer 1998; Schöpflin 2000). The Israeli case has been sometimes associated with the “ethnic democracy model” (Smooha, 2002), or even more pronouncedly an “ethnocracy” (Yiftachel, 2001), stressing the ethnic ascendancy of the dominant (Jewish) group, while extending to the minority individual and collective rights only inasmuch that they are deemed non-threatening to the majority. The model is often considered a ‘second-rate’ type of democracy because it lacks features of civic equality and grants explicit privilege to the ethnic majority group, leading to what Jamal (2002) terms “differentiated citizenship”.

Yet, the conceptual elucidation of cities, whether in Europe or elsewhere, as political arenas remain underdeveloped in this context. Struggles over particular places – be it through an urban development programme or resistance to the erection of disruptive urban projects – often crystallise the combined effect of opportunities, constraints, mobilisation and symbolism. The localised dimension of ethnic movement politics draws attention to the internal organisation of minority movements and mobilisation, and is another important dimension which should be considered in tandem with ‘opportunity structures’ for claim-making. Bousetta’s (2000) theoretical contribution on the hidden, or what he has termed ‘infra-political’, dimension of political mobilisation, offers a particularly powerful capturing of the subtleties of minority political organisation. As Bousetta argues, the distinguishing element of infra-politics “is the more opaque mode of political operation it requires. At this level, the strategic actions of the actors involved are oriented towards the control of community agenda” (2000: 237). Informal internal politics often takes precedence within this context.

*Activating the city: geopolitics of mobilisation*

Figure 5 captures two important dimensions of mobilisation and struggles around political claims expressed through the actions of (minority) ethnic movements in cities. The model draws on a geographical extrapolation of Holsotn’s (1999) work on the notion of ‘insurgent citizenship’. By coining the concept, which refers to the various practices and strategies that might enable underprivileged groups to stake their claims to city spaces and to decision-making structures, Holston has suggested that the significance of marginalised groups’ political strategies may lie in their long term rather than immediate outcomes, in that such strategies represent resistance, confidence building and empowerment in their own right.
Figure 5 captures the geographical and discursive expressions of such instances of insurgent citizenship, which may be particularly relevant to minorities such as PCIs residing in ethnically fractured cities. On the vertical axis is the relationship between different geographic levels of engagement (the localised/neighbourhood, the city, the national and the trans-national). The horizontal axis represents the theoretical possibilities of articulating demands in liberal discourses of individual rights on the one hand, or to discourses that more radically attempt to gain recognition and/or defend collective cultural rights. As in any model, this is of course and abstraction, but one that nonetheless captures the possibilities for minority activists to ‘move’ from co-opted forms of mobilisation (remaining localised and restricted to liberal discourses) to radical/insurgent forms of struggles that seek to incorporate the local community with wider geographical engagements, and articulate an explicitly collective rights discourse. Where particular activists and struggles are ‘located’ within any context remains a contingent matter that is uncovered through empirical inquiry.
Research findings

Governance and minority mobilisation in Tel Aviv-Jaffa

1. Main governance dynamics

Dynamics of urban governance have been important in deploying and limiting opportunity structures. The voting system in Israeli municipal elections, which since 1975 have been based on proportional representation for city council members and a separate ballot to elect a mayor directly, means that with around 4.5 percent of the population, and a threshold of having to gain at least 2.5 percent of the total vote, the chances for Israeli-Palestinians in Jaffa of making electoral headway are slim. At best, the Jaffa Palestinian community can hope to elect one member of a 31 member council, if it does not align itself to a coalition of cross-community or larger parties. Between 1995 and 2003 it managed to do just this. This was a remarkable achievement that required the alignment of several forces in a highly fragmented community (Menahem 1998).

Tel-Aviv-Jaffa’s urban regime has long been preoccupied by the economic development of the city of Tel Aviv, rather than the Jaffa district, as Israel’s major commercial, financial and entertainment centre. The period since the late 1990s has seen a significant change, as Tel Aviv’s current mayor, Mr Ron Hulday, explicitly declared Jaffa his highest development priority, and established a separate municipal unit to deal specifically with its regeneration. The effectiveness of these efforts has still to be demonstrated.

Throughout its modern history Jaffa has been subject to an extremely selective development effort, primarily as a chic tourist destination relying on the charms of its old port and its mainly Jewish-occupied artistic quarter, a strategy which did little to benefit its Palestinian residents (LeVine 2005). During the 1980s and much of the 1990s urban renewal policy encouraged speculative luxury housing development on its attractive seafront, again contributing very little to the welfare of local residents (Montereskou and Fabian 2003). Redevelopment and gentrification efforts have been accompanied, at times, by forceful eviction of Palestinian residents into new but low quality public housing projects. In addition, issues of law and order have long dominated the governance of Jaffa, and the relationship between the community and the police force has been contentious. Consequently, Jaffa is often portrayed as a hotbed of criminal, illegal and semi-legal activity. Urban planning in the context of inter-ethnic relations in Tel Aviv Jaffa suffers from poor communication and lack of trust between planners and residents.

The past 10 years have seen greater discursive emphasis on public consultation and citizen input in the governance of Tel Aviv-Jaffa, under the mayorship of Mr Hulday. It is within this context that public participation exercises have been introduced in relation to urban policy in Jaffa, and carried through the auspices of anew governance machinery, the Jaffa Governance Unit (JGU). Yet this has been a highly selective and strongly controlled process which has ‘cherry picked’ particular actors and specific segments of the community thereby strengthening the public legitimacy of urban policy, co-opting certain communities and leaders among Jaffa’s Palestinian residents,
and avoiding or isolating elements which have been deemed unco-operative, unconstructive, or extremists.

2. Palestinian political organisation and its infra-politics

In the absence of realistic, explicit and formal political options, the extremely marginalised position of the Palestinian elite in Jaffa has landed greater significance to and complex patters of infra-politics. In 1979 a group of Arab intellectuals in Jaffa established an organisation called Harabitta – the Organisation for Jaffa’s Arabs. While the initial impetus for the development of Harabitta came from frustration over the long social neglect and severe deprivation of the Palestinian community in Jaffa – especially in manifested poor housing, crime and safety problems, and poorly performing schools – and the failing of the Tel Aviv Jaffa municipality in these areas, there has always been important infra-ethnopolitical, religious and class elements to Harabitta’s activities. From the outset, it objected to explicit forms of collaboration with formal municipal institutions based on the arguments that they represented an extension of the Zionist project of Jewish nation-building and the purposeful disinheritance of Palestinian Jaffa. Its range of activities emphasised the importance of preserving Arab-Palestinian identity in Jaffa through encouraging the use of Arabic language, and it led campaigns vis-à-vis the municipality to provide street signs and public announcements in Arabic. They also raised the issue of housing and community survival against a backdrop of state-led gentrification and the ‘Judaisation’ of Jaffa, organising a number of protests in the late 1970s and through the 1980s against house demolitions and new luxury development projects.

In all, the infra-political elements of their activity incorporated a form of localised ethno-nationalism, relying on the mobilisation of resistance to the Israeli nation-building project as one defined as a Jewish national state (arguing rather that the state should be modelled on a recognition of its bi-national components), and resistance to the eradication of the Palestinian presence in Jaffa. Another important infra-political dimension relates to Harabitta’s complex religious and class based identity. The organisation is associated with professional middle class Christian Palestinians. Christian Palestinians are themselves a ‘minority within a minority’ among the Palestinian citizens of Israel, and even more pronouncedly in Jaffa, where they constitute less than a third of the Palestinian community. The result has been an interweaving of demographic and religion politics among the complex web of political contention in Jaffa. Christian Palestinian elites and community leaders have been concerned with the preservation of this small community, a concern that has impacted both the infra-politics of the whole Jaffa Palestinian community, as well as the articulation of political mobilisation agendas. One strategy through which this group’s elite has attempted to align itself to the Muslim majority has been through the evocation of strong ethno-national stance in addition to civic demands.

In addition to a preservation tactics aimed outwardly, other Christian community activists have turned inwardly, to self provision of services and internal educational and social activities, and to political moderation as a way of securing the standing of the community. Rather than the conflictual stance of Harabitta, these activists have sought to secure informal alliances with local state officials as a way of securing funding to their various community operations (for instance, ex-curricular educational activities, cultural events, and support for various youth organisations). They have
shied away from forms of political protest such as demonstrations, claiming that these represented an “outmoded, ineffective and counterproductive approach” (in the words of one activist), and have raised doubts as to the efficacy of municipal electoral or party politics, given the limited influence that such an approach could yield (bearing in mind the small size of the Jaffa Palestinian electorate).

Yet this pattern of political organisation and fragmentation has not been an outcome of solely internal dynamics. It has been given further impetus and encouragement by the state, primarily the machinery of urban governance in Tel Aviv-Jaffa. The city’s mayor has chosen a strategy of selective incentives and other technologies of regime politics (allocation of resources, coalition politics, and symbolic gestures) in order isolate Harabitta on the one hand, and co-opt the religiously oriented movements and their political elites in particular. In this, he has been successful in sharpening internal divisions with the Arab-Palestinian community of Jaffa, while buttressing the delivery of his own agenda for the city and for Jaffa in particular.

3. Place-making politics

In Jaffa the politics of place-making since the 1980s has been suggestive of the way through which political opportunities do not necessarily adhere to the expectations raised in the literature regarding their likely effect on the form of contestation. Since the late 1980s one area of Jaffa, known as the ‘Jaffa Hip’, has become, in the word of one Israeli-Palestinian community organiser “the nerve centre of our struggle here”. The area, in the west of the district and extending to the Mediterranean shore has been designated according to existing city plans to contain low density housing build. In effect, had these plans were to materialise they would have probably led to another stage in the gentrification of Jaffa, leading to influx of high income home owners, most probably Jewish rather than Palestinian Israelis (as the Palestinian community as a whole tends to occupy the lower income brackets). The implementation of the plan would have every chance of complimenting another prestige development in Jaffa, known as Andromeda Hill, which has generated deep resentment by the Palestinian community of Jaffa as it meant a de-facto Judaisation of parts of the district (Montereskou and Fabian, 2003).

As events would have it, the city has been unable to implement the ‘Jaffa Hip’ plan as a result of fierce opposition from community organisations such as Harabitta, and unfavourable market conditions. Nevertheless, the area served as dumping ground for waste, resulting in an unsightly and ever growing landfill (hence its name). Given this situation, a number of Palestinian and Jewish community organisations have labelled court appeals against the municipality’s use of the area as a waste dumping ground, resulting in a court injunction in 1999 which ordered the city to abstain from this practice. Instead, since 2000 onwards, the city’s planning department and the Jaffa Governance Unit (JGU) have been promoting the development of a municipal park in the area. During the period between 2002 and 2006 JGU has been holding a series of public participation exercises to determine the future of the area, and to shape the specific design and layout of the planned park. In short, the city has moved from planned housing development and state-supported gentrification (with very probable further displacement of Arab residents and ethno-national conflict over Jaffa’s future), to a deliberate neglect and finally towards an environmental improvement policy.
This most recent opportunity structure orchestrated by JGU – that of publicising the new ‘Jaffa Hip’ plan and opening channels for public hearings and participation – might have led to a more vigorous airing of concerns with and opposition to city plans. It could have provided channels for oppositional discourse and the formation of alternative strategies. In effect, however, the city has been able to make use of the internal divisions within the Jaffa community – both Palestinian and Jewish – to establish legitimacy for its plan to beautify the Jaffa beach areas. It has created a highly structured public participation exercise that was carefully divided to several groups, including Palestinian women, Jewish representatives, youth movements, a local environmental association, representative of Arab organisations, business representatives, and so on. This has effectively sterilised the process, and took advantage of existing cleavages to prevent more spontaneous and free-flowing dialogue between the different segments of the community. In the event, the city policy-making institutions have been able to record a participatory process in which they carefully controlled the agenda and diffused tensions. While activists remained concerned that the beautification of the beach would merely be a stage in ‘preparing’ Jaffa for another round of gentrification in the long term (and thus invoking the danger of further ethno-national motivated policies), they found themselves agreeing to the overall agenda, claiming that “anything is better than the piles of trash which lies at our doorstep” (Jaffa resident).

Infra-politics of rivalry, cleavages and the use of selective incentives by city institutions (including co-option and patronage) have combined to reduced levels of contention even when the long-term outcomes of existing policies might eventually exacerbate the tension between Palestinian and Jewish residents, and between Palestinian organisations and the state.

**Governance and minority mobilisations in Haifa**

The northern Israeli city of Haifa has traditionally been cited as an example of Arab-Jewish co-existence (Falah et al, 2000). At the same time, available data indicates that the Arab residents of Haifa tend to have, overall, lower socio-economic status than the Jewish majority, exemplified in poorer housing, segregation, lower income, and lower educational attainment levels in the city’s public schools (City of Haifa Statistical Yearbook 2006; see also Table 1). So there has been an interesting tension between perceptions and officially-supported narratives of co-existence and realities of social, economic and geographic inequalities.

1. **Governance dynamics: leadership and symbolic politics**

There is an important historical legacy of strong local political leadership with its traditional emphasis on ‘co-existence’, inter-community accommodation, and dialogue as key political and symbolic strategies used by Haifa’s civic leaders throughout its modern history (Goren 2006). The important point is, however, that the strength of political leadership in the form of mayoral charisma extends mostly to the symbolic and discursive spheres – exemplified by public statements about the distinctiveness of Haifa as a model of co-existence that is allegedly different than the reality in the rest of Israel – and much less towards concrete policy initiatives. In
fact, the weak policy capacity of Haifa stands in contrast to the situation in Tel-Aviv-Jaffa (For instance, the city of Haifa still operates under a statutory Outline Plan prepared in 1934 under the auspices of the British Mandate of Palestine).

In my interviews and fieldwork in Haifa it became apparent that both the mayor and the senior level of his local government machinery focused much of their resources on symbolic gestures. For instance, during 2001 the then mayor of Haifa appointed a Palestinian ‘figurehead’ to a newly created municipal position of a ‘Vice Mayor for Arab Affairs’, which was in effect devoid of significant power and resources, and was quick to be condemned as an empty gesture by local Palestinian elites. On the other hand, the city’s civic leadership has been reluctant to engage in the development of concrete policy initiatives that would target specifically the city’s Palestinian residents, or even acknowledge them as a distinctive ethno-national group. There has been thus a latent tension between what the city – through the symbolic efforts of its leaders – has proclaimed to be, and the coherence of urban development policy initiatives which have not matched the prevailing characterisation.

A landmark event demonstrating the significance of the Haifa model of intermingled leadership and symbolism in mediating between the geopolitics of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and local circumstances occurred in October 2000. During that time Israel’s Palestinian minority engaged in wide-ranging protests and demonstrations in conjunction with the escalating conflict and violence in the Palestinian Occupied Territories. As in other parts of the country (particularly in northern Israel), Haifa became a scene of confrontation between Palestinian protestors and police forces. During these events, Haifa’s mayor at the time, Mr Amram Mitzna, stepped out of his city council chamber and physically put himself between a group of Arab-Palestinian demonstrators in one of the city’s prominent Palestinian neighbourhood – Wasi Nisnas – and the security forces, persuading both sides to step down. He then called on a ‘summit’ of the city’s major religious groups in order to restore calm and open dialogue. He was consequently rewarded in local elections with an overwhelming electoral support by the Arab-Palestinian minority. While he subsequently did little to follow up with concrete policies aimed at improving the living conditions or the quality of social services in the city’s Palestinian neighbourhood, his symbolic gesture continued to be powerfully ingrained in the memory of local activists and residents.

2. Palestinian political organisation

There is a broader contextual factor which has shaped the terrain on which Palestinian mobilisation has materialised in Haifa. The city has been traditionally a considered a bastion of the Israeli left, and has often been referred to as Red Haifa, because of the strength of the Labour party and the power of trade unions, through which there has been significant representation of Haifa’s Arab elites. Furthermore, the Israeli Communist Party, in its different incarnations, still regards Haifa as one of its most important local branches, and the city has played an important role in the socialisation of Israeli-Palestinian activists and intellectuals into political involvement. Currently part of the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (HADASH by its Hebrew acronym), the party has traditionally emphasised parity and co-operation between Jewish and Palestinian activists, and has attempted to develop class consciousness as opposed to ethno-national discourse. Yet, both the grip of the traditional left (in the form of the Israeli Labour Party) and the more radical left (in the form of HADASH)
on local politics have been seriously weakening in the past fifteen years, with challenges coming from right wing Israeli parties as well as from more radical Palestinian nationalists challenging the viability of HADASH’s ideology. What this has meant is that while Haifa’s Palestinians have tended to enjoy rather strong and visible forms of formal political organisation (in the form of HADASH), there has been a sense that since the mid-1990s the contestation of different ideological streams has become at once more visible and acute, as well as providing grounds for latent intra-community tensions.

3. Institutions and symbolic politics

The third element shaping the ways through which ethnic mobilisation and urban governance have interacted in Haifa refers to the symbolic role of key institutions. Multi-culturalism and tolerance can be enhanced, or at least be constructed discursively and symbolically as important local qualities, by the presence of particular local institutions. In Haifa, the Arab-Jewish Centre, located at the edge of the pre-dominantly Palestinian Wadi Nisnas neighbourhood, has played a key role in engaging both communities with each other through a range of social, cultural and political initiatives. For instance, it has initiated the annual ‘Holiday of Holidays’, a common festive to all three major religions represented in the city. The event has helped to support a sense of identity and citizenship that is at once local and regional, by stressing the character of Haifa as a Mediterranean city rather than merely an Israeli or Palestinian city.

4. Place-making politics

Taken together, the mainly symbolic role of local political leadership, the wider contextual factor of Haifa’s distinctive role with an Israeli Left politics, and the symbolic actions of distinctive local institutions have funnelled the terrain and the form of Palestinian mobilising agendas and the particular formation of urban governance around minority-majority relations in the city. What this view enables us to establish is the complex shades if ethnic mobilisation and the politics of claiming citizenship. It helps us to avoiding the narrowing down of patterns of mobilisation and political campaigns to an overtly simplistic correlation between dependent and independent variables, and to obtain a rich picture of the urban political field as a terrain for the governance of ethnically fractured communities.

For instance, it is precisely the discourse of ‘co-existence’ which has become the target of and opportunity structure for dissenting voices among several more radical Palestinian actors in Haifa. Seeking to challenge the dominant discourse of ‘co-existence in Haifa’, these activists have combined in their strategy particular struggle over space with more imaginary, or visionary, counter-discourses about the reconstruction of Lower Haifa as a re-enlivenment of the lost Palestinian City, the centre of the cultural, national and social life of Palestinian identity which was lost in 1948. The combination of material struggle incorporating liberal civic demands of quality of life and life-chances issues with collective identity and rights demands, and the visionary elements of cultural and nationalist memory has come about at least partly as a result of local elites identifying ‘crack’ in the local political opportunity structures, as well as in recognition of wider political shifts among the Palestinian
citizens of Israel and their relationship to the state (which has manifested in the rise of the Islamic Movement on the one hand, and secular ethno-nationalism in the form of the young BALAD Party).

The confluence of discursive and symbolic institutional features in the governance of Haifa, with the tradition of relatively well organised explicit political organisation forms, and emerging forms of infra-politics where the privileged position of the traditional Left is increasingly ‘squeezed’ by both Islamic and radical-secular ethno-national politics is now prevalent in the city. For instance, rather than representing an ameliorating space within the broader context of the politics of claim-making among Israel’s Palestinian citizens, the governance of Haifa may evolve to an ever closer proxy to its respective national space. And yet local variations continue to matter. In the politics of place that ensued during the first years of the 21st century, such variations mattered in the mediation of Palestinian protest and contention.

An important case in point concerns the threat of housing demolition in the mostly Muslim neighbourhood of Halisa in Haifa. Reacting to a threat by the city authority to demolish an illegally built structure, a coalition of activists from the community, Jewish and Palestinian, supported by elites of both HADASH and the nationalist BALAD organisations, and extended to embrace national actors from Palestinian and Jewish Israeli left wing parties and non-governmental organisations, was able to effectively resist the act. It is important to note that my research in the community revealed that activists sought at once to challenge through their act the notion of Haifa’s alleged symbolic local distinctiveness, whilst also treading a fine line to avoid breaking with the tradition of a local model of accommodation. In the word of one activist, “we knew that things would not deteriorate to violence, or to demolition of homes…after all, this is Haifa!”.

My interviews and fieldwork in Haifa have also revealed significant undercurrents of infra-politics, where rivalry and competition between different political, cultural and religious streams were translated to latent forms of neighbourhood politics. For instance, with regards to Lower Haifa – the section of the city where much of the Israeli-Palestinian population reside – campaigns for educational reform between 2003 to 2006 were actually more than just about raising educational standards. Underneath, these campaigns were motivated, in part, by a middle class elite who wanted to break away from the traditional hold of Christian religious institutions on Arab speaking schools, and in part by Islamic Movement activists who have sought to weaken church-led institutions in the city. In addition, latent tensions and localised forms of ethnic politics give rise to a geographic pattern of political and religious organisation, with the Halisa neighbourhood of the city being increasingly identified with the institutions of the Islamic Movement, while Wadi Nisnas, the other large Israeli-Arab neighbourhood, retaining its more Christian and left-wing orientation (albeit challenged by new secular forms of local ethno-nationalism).

Discussion

Of the three propositions highlighted at the start of the discussion, the findings of the research would support the proposition that urban political dynamics governing the relationship between minority groups and state institutions can deviate, with
limitations, from the overarching dynamics produced at the national scale. Those deviations can be either benign (more inclusive) or negative (more exclusive). The case of Haifa seems to fall into the former category, while the case of Tel Aviv-Jaffa corresponds to the latter.

Table 2 summarises how features of minority politics in the two cities differ from each other, and how they relate to the national scale of state intervention (regime capacity), the prevailing citizenship incorporation discourse, and patterns of minority mobilisation. This summary highlights the contingent nature of territorialized citizenship at the sub-national level. In Haifa, the historical legacy and current claims by civic leadership to produce and represent the city’s ‘distinctiveness’ are examples of the political construction of difference locally. In Jaffa, patterns of conflict and social exclusion seem to re-produce and enhance the subordination of the Palestinian citizens of Israel, which has become an important feature of the country’s form of ethno-national politics, producing what Yiftachel (2001) has coined an ‘ethnocracy’.

While activists in Haifa could draw on both the city’s symbolic gestures and the relative strength of party and non-governmental organisations as important resources for action, activists in Jaffa enjoyed little of either options, and their actions have been further constrained by strong local state interventions.

Table 2. The Political Terrain of Minority Politics in Haifa and Jaffa, within the Context of Ethnopolitics in Israel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regime intensity</th>
<th>Israel</th>
<th>Haifa</th>
<th>Tel-Aviv Jaffa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State control through various forms: budget allocation, planning and land policy, surveillance, etc.</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Weak local state capacity; weak formal policy | | | Strong local state intervention in Jaffa; strong local state institutions (Jaffa Governance Unit)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incorporation discourse</th>
<th>Israel</th>
<th>Haifa</th>
<th>Tel-Aviv Jaffa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selective rhetoric of ‘equality’ and ‘rights’</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevalent local institutional discourse of co-existence; Red Haifa localism; strong symbolism</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak sense of cultural/ethnic recognition; legacy of social exclusion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minority political mobilisation</th>
<th>Israel</th>
<th>Haifa</th>
<th>Tel-Aviv Jaffa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong, through combination of party and non-governmental organisations</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong. Historical role of Haifa in the evolution of Israeli left wing; strong political organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak. An internally fragmented, despite experiments. Dominated by infra-politics.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

+ sign represents a strong factor; -- sign represents a relatively weak factor.

Cities are important arenas for the study of minority citizenship and rights, even under extreme circumstances of inter-nationalist conflict. The interplay between local and non-local political constellations of opportunities, constraints and circumstances represents an important challenge to contemporary studies of urban ethnic politics and the construction of citizenship regimes in light of the intensifying pressures brought about by social and cultural complexities.
Activities

- A preliminary findings paper was written and presented at the session on Local Democracies of the International Conference of the European Political Research Consortium (ECPR) in Budapest (2005). This propelled further activities and networking, resulting in providing an international and comparative context for this research.

- The PI was an invited panellist for a special on Governing Ethnically Mixed Cities (International Perspectives) of the prestigious 2006 World Convention of the Association of the Studies of Nationalities (ASN) at Columbia University, New York.

- The research project has helped to spur research activities at the University of Edinburgh’s newly established Migration and Citizenship Research Group, culminating in a major international research bid to the European Commission on Managing Societal Diversities.

- The researcher has been invited as panellist and discussant to further sessions of the ECPR and the Institute of British Geographers on local democracy, identity politics, deliberative democracy and the public sphere (2006-2007). Sponsored by the Urban and Political Geography Research Groups of the Royal Geographical Society.

- The researcher organised three successful workshops on the themes of Cities, Identity Politics, Citizenship and Urban Governance at the 1996 Institute of British Geographers Conference. In total, 15 papers were delivered and discussed, attracting more than 40 academics and user groups from the UK (e.g. members of community and voluntary organisations). The various contribution helped to the place this Research Project in its international context.

- Proposals accepted to dedicate special issues of the prestigious peer-reviewed journals *Political Geography* and *Space & Polity* to the themes of urban governance, territoriality and conflict; and citizenship, identity politics and the public sphere. The Principal investigator has collaborated with two other colleagues (Dr Peter Hopkins and Dr Caroline Nagel) to initiate and edit these special issues.

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Contribution of two chapters to relevant new books, one on deliberative dynamics and urban democracy, and one on Muslim diversities. The former will be particularly useful to disseminate the research results further, as it is aimed at both practitioner/policy world and academic readers.

 Outputs


2007, Invited panellist and paper – making sense of minority political mobilisation with the use of qualitative methods – Workshop on ‘Conflict in Cities: Evidence and Methodologies in Divided Societies’, Centre for Arts Humanities and Social Science and Department of Architecture, The University of Cambridge, March.

2007, Ameliorating, resisting or deepening the Dark Side of planning: social movement organisations and the struggle for territorial justice in Israel/Palestine, to be presented in an organised session on Planning and Multiculturalism, Annual Conference of the Association of European Schools of Planning, Naples, July.


2007, Leibovitz, Insurgent citizenship: Neighbourhood geopolitics, radicalism, and Palestinian political mobilisation in Haifa, Israel. Under review in Political Geography; awaiting referees’ comments.


**Impacts**

N/A

**Future research priorities**

In light of the findings of this research, future priorities lie in four inter-related areas:

i. Continuity in incorporating Israel’s other Jewish-Palestinian ‘mixed’, or fractured, communities (such as Upper Nazareth, Acre, Ramla, Lydda and Beer-Sheva) to future research projects, so that a full comparative and empirical picture can be drawn;

ii. Researching the increasingly salient topic of identity politics among Palestinians residing on the boundaries of Israel and the future Palestinian state (for instance, the ‘Triangle Region’ in Israel/Palestine), in the context of attempted Middle East peace process.

iii. Extending the international dimension of the research and its relevance, primarily by undertaking research on polarised European cities, with a particular emphasis on Islamic movements and politics in urban Europe;

iv. Further theoretical and conceptual work to elucidate the understanding of the urban governance of difference, diversity, mainstream, and radical ethnic movements within the context of national traditions and international civil society.

**Ethics and confidentiality**

The research project adhered to the University of Edinburgh’s research ethics policy. Confidentiality, respondent-anonymity, trust, and rapport between the researcher and participants were particularly emphasised. For this reason, the researcher made an important adjustment: the initial intention of recording and transcribing interviews was abandoned after it became clear that this may cause anxiety and could have compromised the quality and depth of discussions. Consent was always given following a full explanation of the research agenda, objectives and its ESRC...
sponsorship. Written, non-technical research summaries were provided to all respondents. Full contact details of the researcher were provided to all participants. The researcher followed-up on interviews with acknowledgement and reassurance.
Appendix

Interview and Focus Group Schedule

Interview and focus group notes were analysed in order to gauge the confluence
ethno-politics and ‘multi-layered’ citizenship in its urban context. Thus, the analysis
of the empirical evidence was guided by the following questions posed in semi-
structured interviews and in discussion groups:

- Is the mixed/fractured city emerging as a platform on which alternative
  conceptions and interpretations of citizenship and ethno-politics are exercised?
- How are such ‘alternatives’ understood and articulated, if at all?
- Is there evidence that the Arab minority and local state institutions of fractured
cities are disentangling the local politics of the everyday from the wider
Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and if so how is this being articulated and
practiced?
- What particular political strategies are undertaken by members of the Arab
  communities in order to influence urban and community development policy,
  and to utilise certain urban spaces as symbols and vehicles for identity
  politics?
- Conversely, how do officials in the Jewish-dominated planning institutions of
  Tel-Aviv and Haifa articulate the rights of these cities’ Arab minority, and
  what specific (if any) political action and urban policy is emerging as a result?
- What are the specific ways through which planning processes engage with
  issues of cultural and ethnic difference, and how are these translated to
  particular initiatives? Does planning fulfil a function of territorial control and
  ‘containment’ on behalf of dominant perceptions of nationalism, or does it
  work to ease tensions and promote inter-community cohesion?
- What are the role of institutional features such as historical legacies,
  community organisation, leadership, values and symbols in either inhibiting or
  facilitating inter-community integration and cohesion?

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1 According to LeVine (2005, p. 215-216), the Israeli government decision to annex Jaffa was only reluctantly accepted by the civic leadership of Tel Aviv. The decision, according to LeVine (2005) was largely due to the government’s ambition to further undermine the Arab nature of Jaffa, and to newly demarcate the new, modern municipality of Tel Aviv-Jaffa.