



City parks as shared spaces in mixed Arab-Jewish cities in Israel

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Summary

The number of public spaces in Israel shared by Jewish and Arab citizens has grown in recent years, and interaction between the two groups has become more routine and mundane. Efforts at reducing economic and employment gaps have led to more frequent encounters between Arabs and Jews in many spaces, including higher education institutions, shopping centers, public transportation and city parks.

Yet against the backdrop of a national conflict and long-standing trends of separation, including incitement and delegitimization, there are significant experiential and material gaps between Arabs and Jews. Arabic as a language, and Palestinian Arabs culture, history, and identity are largely absent from public spaces, and the laws and procedures that govern public institutions do not guarantee their presence. These gaps create invisible separation in shared spaces, and lead to unequal and often fraught encounters between Jews and Arabs.

In this research, we propose a model as a means for analyzing the public space and recommendations for urban mechanisms that can help manage these public spaces. These urban mechanisms are designed to increase a sense of security and foster feelings of connection and belonging to public spaces among Arabs and Jews and ensure that these spaces as designed are equitable and shared. Examining and planning public spaces (as well as other areas under municipal responsibility) through the lens of partnership and equality helps create better and more inclusive spaces for all residents.

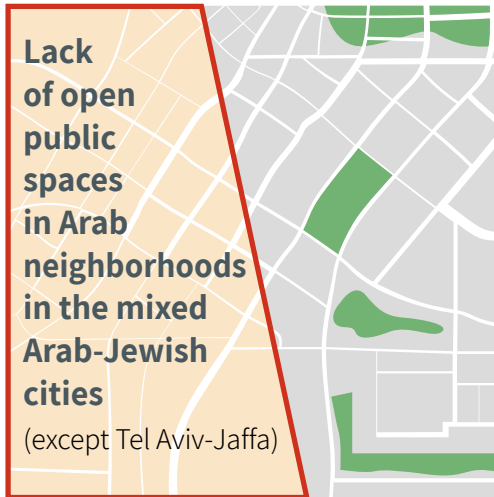
The research

The model proposed by this research helps assess public spaces by examining physical facilities and management-related components and understanding how they affect the sense of belonging and safety experienced by the communities who use these spaces. The model proposed here is based on the model built by Shtern and Feibish, yet in this research we focused on just three components: representation, management, and activity. Each component is examined in this model using several metrics:



City parks as shared spaces

Main findings



The component of representation received the lowest average score

1.8
out of 5



Park names reflect the Jewish majority group by commemorating public Jewish figures, referencing Jewish history and using Hebrew names exclusively.

For example:

Lily Sharon
Ganne Aviv Louis promenade
Bat Gallim Midron Yaffo
Rabin
Hecht NofPark
Tayelet HaHof Charles Clore
HaHagana
HaSofrim Menachem Begin
Gandhi Marmelada
Adi Monfort lake

In Haifa, Acre and Tel Aviv-Jaffa, few activities accessible to the Arab public are offered



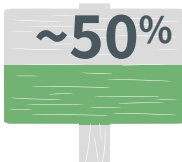
In the rest of the cities, no activities for Arab society were found.

Municipal call centers 106
There is no call routing system in Arabic



It was possible to speak to an Arabic-speaking representative only in Lod.

حديقة
Park



of the signs in **Haifa** and **Nof HaGalil** had Arabic alongside the Hebrew text



of the signs in **Acre** were also in Arabic





















In **Be'er Sheva** very few signs were translated into Arabic



in **Lod, Ramla, Karmi'el** and **Ma'alot-Tarshiha**

Average score by park

City	Park name	Average		Representation	Management	Activity
Ramla	HaHagana	1.9		1.3	2	2.5
Haifa	Hecht	2.2		1.6	2.6	2.5
	Louis	2.4		1.6	3.3	2.5
	Bat Gallim	2.2		1.3	3	2.5
Acre	Lily Sharon	1.67		1	2	2
	Tayelet HaHof	2.7		2.3	3	3
Lod	Ganne Aviv	1.9		1.3	2	2.5
	Gandhi	1.6		1	2.3	1.5
Tel Aviv-Jaffa	Menachem Begin (South)	3.2		2.6	3.6	3.5
	Charles Clore	3		2.6	3	3.5
	Midron Yaffo	3.5		3.6	3	4
Nof HaGalil	NofPark	3.1		3.3	3.6	2.5
Karmi'el	Rabin	1.8		1	3	1.5
	Adi	2.5		1.3	3.3	3
Be'er Sheva	Marmelada	2.3		1.6	3	2.5
	HaSofrim	2.8		1.6	3.3	3.5
Ma'alot-Tarshiha	Agam Monfort	2.6		2	3	3
Average		2.5		1.8	2.9	2.7

Measure of partnership promotion



None



little



medium



a lot



very much

Results and Recommendations

Representation



This component received the lowest average score: 1.8.

Eleven parks received below-average scores, and five parks ranked higher, scoring 2 - 3.3.

For years, public spaces have been constructed as part of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, often planned by and reflecting the Jewish majority's attempts to establish control over public spaces. Constructing public spaces is a powerful mechanism, and the way spaces have been designed for many years intensifies feelings of alienation and hostility among different groups. And yet, this also has the power to transform this dynamic and reinforce mutual recognition among groups, increase familiarity, and cultivate trust relationships. Mixed cities in particular offer opportunities for creating safe spaces for shared life. Visibility for Arabic in these spaces is a first step and it impacts Arab visitors. Language visibility has the power to dispel feelings of alienation among Arabs and Jews.

Guaranteeing that multiple cultural and national identities are visible in these spaces through language, artwork, and representation of Arab and Jewish history will help more visitors feel a greater sense of belonging and subsequently take more responsibility for these spaces.

Main Recommendations:

Promote a policy of bilingual signs in Arabic and Hebrew and ensure that information and services are accessible in Arabic; craft and promote municipal bylaws and directives that define a uniform policy for ensuring that all information resources and services are accessible in Arabic – municipal resources and services including signage, events, publishing plans for development, municipal call centers (including 106), website, documents and tenders.

Until such bylaws are enacted, we recommend taking initial steps to transform parks into shared spaces:

- **Record messages in Arabic for all municipal call centers** in cities, emergency call centers and all other systems to guarantee callers are able to receive services in their languages and provide appropriate services to all residents. Routing calls according to language should take place directly, rather than after listening to a long message in Hebrew.
- **Recruit Arabic-speakers** to work at call centers or operate a translation center that provides simultaneous translation, such as the Ministry of Health offers.

Naming and Visibility:

- **Develop a graduated plan for adding the local Arabic names** to the Hebrew names in historic mixed cities in collaboration with local Arab and Jewish leaders.
- **Begin a process for naming shared public spaces in Hebrew and Arabic**, adding or translating street and park names into Arabic rather than transliterating Hebrew names into Arabic. When the name is a Hebrew word, its meaning should be translated into Arabic.
- **Reserve a seat for a representative of Arab society** in municipal committees responsible for assigning names and incorporate Arab professionals such as historians and linguists in the process of selecting and changing place names in public spaces in the mixed cities.

Management



Management received the highest average score: 2.8.

Menachem Begin (South) Park in Tel Aviv-Jaffa and Nofpark in Nof HaGalil scored highest among the parks - 3.6.

In seven parks, we found several levels of management. Besides managing the physical space, this includes maintenance and establishment of various facilities, ongoing activities, and dining or other types of paid facilities. However, in ten parks management is mostly minimal, including waste removal, landscaping, facility maintenance, and occasional activities throughout the year. The first type of management facilitates an ongoing flow of visitors to the park and attracts people of all ages and with a broad range of interests, while the second type leaves use of the site in the hands of random parties.

In most cities, we found that safety issues have only emergency-based responses, meaning police or municipal policing forces. While enforcement agencies alone (police) may establish a sense of security among some Jews, they create a sense of insecurity and distrust among Arab society. Throughout the state's existence, Israeli security forces and Arab citizens have been engaged in a relationship marked by distrust, which has only intensified in recent years as crime increased in Arab society and the sense of personal security has deteriorated.¹ Therefore, alongside creating safe spaces, response mechanisms – when needed – must involve the local community, be adapted to the needs of both communities, and prevent selective and unnecessary enforcement.

1 For more information in Hebrew please read:

עו"ד רסול סעדה ועדי שטיין "מדד הביטחון האישי אלימות, פשיעה ושיטור ביישובים הערבים" יוזמות אברהם (2017).
"שיטור בחברה הערבית ישראלית סקר עמדות וציפיות בקרב ציבור הערבים אזרחי מדינת ישראל" (חוות דעת של דיאלוג - יעוץ ארגוני מחקר והדרכה; לשכת המדע הראשי, במשרד לבטחון הפנים, (2005).

Main Recommendations:

Safety

- **Map “red hours”**, indicating times when there is criminal activity in parks or no activity at all – this is the responsibilities of municipal police and welfare agencies; initiate activities and add facilities that welcome visitors of diverse age groups and backgrounds throughout the day.
- **Build an Arab-Jewish community system comprised of residents**, municipal police and municipal services that meets regularly and serves as a forum for raising needs.
- **Provide specialized training** for police and municipal enforcement agencies in order to serve the population of a mixed Arab-Jewish city and its diverse age groups.

Activity

The activity component received a relatively high score of 2.7, compared with the other two metrics, with no significant difference between parks.



Just two parks, Gandhi Park in Lod and Rabin Park in Karmi'el, received a low score of 1.5. The data show that in these parks, investment in permanent physical facilities is higher than in cultural activities.

Upholding the right of minority groups to cultural life and fostering mechanisms that encourage culture inclusivity among all parts of society empower and enrich our societies. Developing minority group culture and art typically relies on majority group decisions concerning resource allocation, particularly but not exclusively in mixed cities.

Minority groups' ability to establish an urban cultural life is the foundation for their potential to flourish in the city, and this in turn benefits the city.

When space is given to minority group culture, this normalizes the minority group's presence, allows the majority group to get to know the minority group, and provides a space for building a shared society.

Our examination shows that three parks offered cultural and leisure events throughout the year, all for Hebrew-speaking Jewish audiences, meaning they were held in Hebrew or around Jewish holidays and vacations from the government-Jewish education system. "Festival of Festivals" events in Haifa, Ramadan events (and others) in Tel Aviv-Yafo, and additional events in Acre were made accessible to Arab society as well as to Jewish society.

Main Recommendations:

Arts and culture

- **Designate a budget for incorporating Arab art and Arab artists** in city parks and other public spaces
- **Require that activities offered to children and adults be accessible in Arabic and Hebrew**, including events that are not specifically designed for Arab society.
- **Define a minimum criterion: 20% of all art and culture events** offered in public spaces must be held in Arabic, by Arab artists.
- **Ensure calls for proposals and tenders are published in Arabic**, in a manner adapted to Arab society and via public platforms that are relevant to suppliers from Arab society.
- **Guarantee proper representation for Arab employees in developing work plans** for events in public spaces and define a public participation process for these programs in order to improve from year to year.
- **Draft annual activity plans that incorporate the language and culture** of the Arab population in the city, including invitations in Arabic, planning activities according to Arab school vacation schedules, holidays of different religions, etc.