

A TYPOLOGY OF THE LOCALISM-REGIONALISM NEXUS

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Cities are traditionally characterized as a sub-unit of the state that functions as a socioeconomic node. However, global trends in recent decades indicate that cities are gradually acquiring a semi-independent political role, challenging and contesting the nation state's authority. Into the twenty-first century, cities' actions in global politics (e.g., supranational city-based networks) and within the state (e.g., sanctuary cities) indicate that they aspire to attain or even directly claim more political autonomy. However, achieving these localist goals sometimes warrants regional cooperation with neighboring municipal jurisdictions, thereby engendering ad-hoc and bottom-up regionalisms. Addressing this phenomenon theoretically, this Article analyzes three empirically and conceptually distinct types of the localist-regionalist nexus, demonstrating different rationales: (1) regional cooperation supporting localist innovation independent of state intervention; (2) regional cooperation supporting localist contestation of state policies; and (3) regional solidarity in the face of national tensions. Based on recent examples from Israel, it analyzes these three types along with their political and normative implications. Despite various discrepancies and possible tensions between localism and regionalism, the main conclusion emerging from this Article is that these two principles are not mutually exclusive. Moreover, although there are legal, institutional, political, and ideological tensions between them, the analysis suggests a third way between localism or regionalism. Likewise, some types of regionalization may act as a mechanism or tactic to support and deepen localist agendas.

INTRODUCTION

Among the plethora of political and legal conceptualizations, localism and regionalism share a common logic: the decentralization of state power to either the local or regional level of government. Both political and legal principles share an affinity with the principles of subsidiarity, and both have been the subject of some exaggerated accounts claiming that either cities or regions ought to replace the nation-state. For example, Kenichi Ohmae argues that regions should, in the face of globalization, play a central role in regulating economic and social life;¹ Benjamin Barber claims that mayors ought to “rule the world” given what he sees as the growing dysfunctionality

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1 KENICHI OHMAE, *THE END OF THE NATION STATE: THE RISE OF REGIONAL ECONOMIES* (1995).

of nation-states.² Even if we reject these claims, both principles offer a subnational alternative to state centralization.

Despite several affinities, regionalism and localism also exhibit conflicts in terms of their legal settings, implications for institutional design, and the subnational forms of citizenship they employ. While localism generally builds on the principle that local authorities ought to be empowered and relatively autonomous, regionalism is in conflict with this principle in that it transfers political power and authorities upward along the vertical hierarchy—from localities to regional institutions. As Richard Briffault portrays it, from a localist perspective, “regionalism appears to be a step towards centralization.”³ Yishai Blank and Issi Rosen-Zvi define this conflicting dynamic as the Janus-face of regionalism: while decentralizing state power, it also centralizes city power.⁴

Nevertheless, this apparent conflict does not necessarily mean that regionalism and localism are mutually exclusive; to portray this relationship as contradictory may be erroneous. Moreover, achieving localist goals sometimes warrants regional cooperation with neighboring municipal jurisdictions, thereby engendering ad-hoc and bottom-up forms of regionalism. Therefore, the analysis in this Article applies a localist perspective, though instead of theorizing regionalism as a step towards centralization, it analyzes forms of regionalism that support and deepen localist agendas.

Given this tension, the premise of this Article is that some forms of regionalism are not necessarily a step toward centralization but rather constitute an expression and extension of localist endeavors. The questions driving this inquiry are: What are the interrelations between regionalism and localism? What forms of regionalism are constituted by or contingent upon localism? And, finally, how does regionalism support localist endeavors?

The analysis and theoretical typology are based on three case studies in Israel—a country that constitutes a ‘living laboratory’ for studying bottom-up regionalisms. Elaborating this claim, I begin by recognizing that formally Israel is a unitary state; its central government and planning system are often conceived as highly centralized, with the city primarily perceived as subordinate in a command-and-control setting.⁵ However, within this institutional design, local and regional institutions can and do practice varying degrees of administrative and political autonomy and discretion in various policy fields, and cities are not simply a ‘sub-unit’ of the state.⁶

2 BENJAMIN R BARBER, IF MAYORS RULED THE WORLD: DYSFUNCTIONAL NATIONS, RISING CITIES (2013).

3 Richard Briffault, *Localism and Regionalism*, 48 BUFF. L. REV., 1 (2000).

4 Yishai Blank & Issi Rosen-Zvi, *Reviving Federal Regions*, 70 STAN. L. REV. 1895 (2018).

5 Eran Feitelson, *Shifting sands of planning in Israel*, 79 LAND USE POLICY 695 (2018); Nir Mualam, *Playing with Supertankers: Centralization in Land Use Planning in Israel — A National Experiment Underway*, 75 LAND USE POLICY 269 (2018); Itai Beeri, *Lack of reform in Israeli local government and its impact on modern developments in public management*, 23 PUBLIC MANAG. REV. 1423 (2021).

6 Yishai Blank, *The Location of the Local: Local Government Law, Decentralization and Territorial Inequality in Israel*, 34 HEBR. UNIV. LAW REV. 197 (2004); Issachar Rosen-Zvi, *From Localism to Regionalism: Towards A New Agenda for Local Government Law*, 2 HAIFA L. REV. 15 (2005); Yishai Blank & Issachar Rosen-Zvi, *The Municipalities Bill: Present without A Past, Reform with no Future*, 1 HUKIM J. LEGIS. 49

Moreover, despite some success in pursuing localist goals, various cities have initiated the voluntary, bottom-up, regional cooperation required to achieve their localist agendas. These intermunicipal cooperations are not necessarily formally institutionalized, yet they utilize regionalism as a strategy for achieving localist goals. Finally, policymakers and scholars have long called for substantive reform of local government law and highlighted the imperative to adapt regional institutions in Israel.⁷

The Article proceeds as follows. Part I provides conceptual clarifications of how I use the contested terms *localism* and *regionalism*. In this conceptual analysis, I associate localism with municipal autonomy and define regionalism in relation to voluntary municipal networks working to achieve some common goal and/or producing mutually beneficial services. The synthesis of the two perspectives on localism and regionalism emphasizes that municipal networks which constitute alternative forms of regionalism are guided by different governing and spatial logics, primarily due to their institutional flexibility and differentiation, as contingent upon the goals pursued and their noncompulsory nature. Part II goes on to illustrate the empirical background of localism and regionalism in Israel.

The analysis in Part III focuses on three empirically and conceptually distinct types of the localist-regionalist nexus. The first localist-regionalist type centers on *regional cooperation supporting localist innovation independent of state intervention*, as inspired by regional conferences held in Israel that aim to engender regional cooperation vis-à-vis local environmental and climate goals. The second localist-regionalist type focuses on *regional cooperation supporting localist contestation of state policies*, inspired by municipal cooperation in operating public transportation on the Sabbath—a highly contested sociopolitical concern in Israel. The third localist-regionalist type is based on *localist-regionalist solidarity in the face of national tensions*, as inspired by regional cooperation that emerged during a wave of civic violence between Jews and Israeli Arabs in May 2021.⁸ While the central government failed to pacify the violence, thereby exacerbating the heated national cleavage within Israel, various regional initiatives emerged (e.g., solidarity rallies among neighboring cities) that called for equality amongst Jews and Palestinian Israelis and highlighted mutual respect, coexistence, and nonviolence.

The analyses in Part III lead to the main theoretical argument: there is a third way between localism and regionalism and the two are not mutually exclusive. This

(2009) [hereinafter *Municipalities Bill*]; Issachar Rosen-Zvi & Yishai Blank, *Regions in the Democratic Structure of Israel*, 44 TEL AVIV UNIV. L. REV. 233 (2021) [hereinafter *Regions*]; Nir Barak & Nir Mualam, *How do Cities foster Autonomous Planning Practices despite Top-Down Control?*, 123 CITIES 103576 (2022) [hereinafter *How do Cities?*]; Nir Barak & Nir Mualam, *Municipal Autonomy: Changes in City-State relationship in Israel*, 7 REGUL. STUD. 25 (2023) [hereinafter *Municipal Autonomy*].

7 Rosen-Zvi, *supra* note 6; Nahum Ben Elia, *The Missing Link: Regional Government in Israel*, (2007); Rosen-Zvi and Blank, *Regions*, *supra* note 6; Yaniv Reingewertz & Itai Beeri, *How effective is central enforcement? Evidence from convened committees in failing local authorities*, 36 ENVIRON. PLAN. C POLIT. SPACE 357 (2018); Beeri, *supra* note 5.

8 The term 'Israeli Arabs' is a contested concept because some self-identify as Palestinian by nationality and Israeli by citizenship. I use this term interchangeably with 'Palestinian Israelis' to denote this tension.

conclusion implies that regionalism is not necessarily a step towards centralization but rather a mechanism or tactic that may support and deepen localist agendas. In addition, the conclusions highlight that despite the focus on local and regional action, the role of the state and law are critical in these types of endeavors. Finally, the analysis highlights the vital role of NGOs in promoting localist-regionalist cooperation.

I. CONCEPTUALIZING LOCALISM AND REGIONALISM

The concepts of localism and regionalism are often used in reference to different scales, meanings, and practices. This Part offers preliminary definitions of how I use these concepts, while laying the foundation for the analysis.

A. Localism

The suggested analysis links localism to municipal autonomy. Examples of autonomous city initiatives range from awarding same-sex couples city-based marriage licenses to regulating religious freedoms,⁹ policy tools designed to guarantee immigrants' rights within municipal boundaries,¹⁰ or city-based policies in epidemiological crises.¹¹ Recent calls suggesting that the time is ripe to enhance cities' administrative and political autonomy are especially significant in the context of this Article.¹²

I follow the conceptualization that Nir Mualam and I have offered to describe two analytically distinct phenomena and types of autonomy: ¹³*Municipal autonomy*

9 Richard C. Schragger, *Cities as Constitutional Actors: The Case of Same-Sex Marriage Democracy in Action: The Law & Politics of Local Governance*, 21 J. L. POL. 147 (2005); Richard C. Schragger, *The Role of the Local in the Doctrine and Discourse of Religious Liberty*, 117 HARV. L. REV. 1810 (2004); Yishai Blank, *Localising Religion in a Jewish State*, 45 ISR. L. REV. 291 (2012).

10 MIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP: LEGAL STATUS, RIGHTS AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION (Rainer Bauböck ed., 2006); Monica W. Varsanyi, *Immigration Policing Through the Backdoor: City Ordinances, the "Right to the City," and the Exclusion of Undocumented Day Laborers*, 29 URB. GEOGRAPHY 29 (2008); AVNER DE SHALIT, CITIES AND IMMIGRATION: POLITICAL AND MORAL DILEMMAS IN THE NEW ERA OF MIGRATION (2018); Moritz Baumgärtel & Barbara Oomen, *Pulling Human Rights Back In? Local Authorities, International Law and the Reception of Undocumented Migrants*, 51 J. LEGAL PLURALISM AND UNOFFICIAL L. 172 (2019); Fiona Jeffries & Jennifer Ridgley, *Building the Sanctuary City from the Ground up: Abolitionist Solidarity and Transformative Reform*, 24 CITIZENSHIP STUD. 548 (2020).

11 Nir Barak, Udi Sommer & Nir Mualam, *Urban Attributes and the Spread of COVID-19: The Effects of Density, Compliance and Socio-Political Factors in Israel*, 793 SCI. TOTAL ENV'T 148626 (2021); Christof Brandtner et al., *Creatures of the State? Metropolitan Counties Compensated for State Inaction in Initial U.S. Response to COVID-19 Pandemic*, 16 PLOS ONE e0246249 (2021); *Tackling Coronavirus (COVID-19): Cities' Policy Responses*, OECD (2020), <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/cities-policy-responses-fd1053ff/>.

12 Michele Acuto, *Give Cities a Seat at the Top Table*, 537 NATURE NEWS 611 (2016); BARBER, *supra* note 2; Yishai Blank, *City Speech*, 54 HARV. C.R.-C.L. L. REV. 365 (2019); GERALD E. FRUG & DAVID J. BARRON, CITY BOUND: HOW STATES STIFLE URBAN INNOVATION (2008); BRUCE KATZ & JEREMY NOWAK, THE NEW LOCALISM: HOW CITIES CAN THRIVE IN THE AGE OF POPULISM (2018); RICHARD SCHRAGGER, CITY POWER: URBAN GOVERNANCE IN A GLOBAL AGE (2016); Daniel Weinstock, *Cities and Federalism*, 55 NOMOS 259 (2014).

13 Barak and Mualam, *How do Cities?*, *supra* note 6.

type 1 is a municipal government's exercise of its administrative and planning capabilities, independent of intervention by governments higher in the vertical hierarchy (regional, state, and national governments). This type of autonomy relates mainly to core aspects of administrative autonomy and includes the ordinary exercise of power allocated to municipal governments in conventional planning processes; it ties well with what political philosopher Daniel Weinstock terms "jurisdictional autonomy": "Decision-making processes through which the members of that entity make decisions about their common lives without interference from any other political entity."¹⁴ This type of autonomy includes municipalities tapping into local expertise and policy entrepreneurship to fill the lacunae that emerge when central governments neglect or fail to address issues sufficiently.

Municipal autonomy type 2 goes beyond cities' basic administrative capabilities and entrepreneurship, extending to political autonomy when a municipal government exercises its political power vis-à-vis governments higher in the vertical hierarchy. It includes the extraordinary exercise of power and the implementation of policies that challenge the state's authority. As such, it connects well with Weinstock's notion of "metajurisdictional autonomy" in which polities such as municipalities "possess some say as to what the policy domains over which it has jurisdiction are (and perhaps also what the domains are over which it shares jurisdiction with other political entities)."¹⁵ When municipalities exercise their metajurisdictional autonomy, they seek to expand their administrative and legal authority, sometimes in a zero-sum fashion vis-à-vis governments higher up the vertical hierarchy. Accordingly, this type of autonomy applies to local policy implementation that diverges from regional, state, or national agendas.

Further elaborating this conceptual framework, I begin by emphasizing that cities traditionally have been considered "entities of the state," and the degree and type of autonomy they possess have constituted a topic of enduring legal, political, and social debate.¹⁶ Although different political systems generate varying degrees of municipal autonomy, all cities are nevertheless subordinate to the constitutional arrangements that define their legal powers and political capacities.¹⁷

However, while constrained *de jure*, cities nonetheless enhance their political and administrative capacities *de facto*, tackling policy fields that the state has neglected or failed to address satisfactorily. For example, the Sanctuary City movement secures

14 Daniel Weinstock, *Self-determination for (Some) Cities?*, in ARGUING ABOUT JUSTICE : ESSAYS FOR PHILIPPE VAN PARIJS 377, 377 (Axel Gosseries & Philippe Vanderborcht eds., 2011).

15 *Id.* at 377–378.

16 Gerald E. Frug, *The City as a Legal Concept*, 93 HARV. L. REV. 1057 (1980); Loren King, *Cities, Subsidiarity and Federalism*, 55 NOMOS 291 (2014); PATRICK LE GALÈS, EUROPEAN CITIES: SOCIAL CONFLICTS AND GOVERNANCE (2002); Patrick Le Galès, *The Rise of Local Politics: A Global Review*, 24 ANN. REV. POL. SCI. 345 (2021).

17 C. G. Pickvance, *Decentralization and Democracy in Eastern Europe: A Sceptical Approach*, ENVIRON. PLAN. C GOV. POL'Y 129 (1997); Eran Razin, *The Impact of Local Government Organization on Development and Disparities — A Comparative Perspective*, 18 ENVIRON. PLAN. C GOV. POL'Y 17 (2000).

the rights of immigrants and refugees within cities' jurisdictions.¹⁸ 'Human Rights Cities' are repositioning human rights norms through local municipal-based action.¹⁹ The 'Fearless Cities' movement is a global-urban movement that identifies the city as a political platform for social change and civic empowerment.²⁰ It is guided by the declaration that "[i]n a world in which fear and insecurity are being twisted into hate, and inequalities, xenophobia and authoritarianism are on the rise, a renewed municipalist movement is emerging to defend human rights, democracy and the common good."²¹ In areas of environmental and climate governance, cities are taking relatively autonomous climatic and environmental action.²² The common thread connecting these and other initiatives is that a variety of cities are addressing national and global issues commonly associated with the nation-state; as such, cities are positioning themselves as significant political actors.²³

While the literature regarding "fearless cities," new localism, and municipalism provides the theoretical context for this concept of localism, their normative difficulties ought to be acknowledged. A primary normative concern is that fostering increased municipal autonomy at the expense of state intervention in urban affairs may serve as fodder for the enhancement of spatial and social inequalities and tensions. Consequently, cultivating autonomous urban innovation and entrepreneurialism might create pockets of privilege instead of promoting suitable national policies. A second difficulty relates to the "local trap"—the implicit tendency to imply that municipal policies are better informed, more democratic, and therefore more desirable.²⁴ Finally, a third difficulty arises once we acknowledge that just as localism may be instrumental for inclusive and egalitarian municipal policies, it can also be exclusionary and discriminatory.²⁵

18 SANCTUARY CITIES AND URBAN STRUGGLES: RESCALING MIGRATION, CITIZENSHIP, AND RIGHTS, (Jonathan Darling & Harald Bauder eds., 2019); Jeffries & Ridgley, *supra* note 9; Helge Schwiertz & Helen Schwenken, *Introduction: Inclusive Solidarity and Citizenship Along Migratory Routes in Europe and the Americas*, 24 CITIZENSHIP STUD. 405 (2020).

19 Baumgärtel & Oomen, *supra* note 10; BARBARA OOMEN, MARTHA F. DAVIS & MICHELE GRIGOLO, *GLOBAL URBAN JUSTICE* (2016).

20 FEARLESS CITIES: A GUIDE TO THE GLOBAL MUNICIPALIST MOVEMENT (Barcelona en Comu, Ada Colau, & Debbie Bookchin eds., 2019).

21 FEARLESS CITIES: MUNICIPALIST POLITICS IN ACTION (Julia Miralles-de-imperial ed., 2022).

22 Nir Barak, *Civic Ecologism: Environmental Politics in Cities*, 23 ETHICS POL'Y ENV'T 53 (2020) [hereinafter Barak, *Civic Ecologism*]; Nir Barak, *Ecological City-Zenship*, 29 ENV'T POLI. 479 (2020) [hereinafter Barak, *Ecological City-Zenship*]; BENJAMIN R. BARBER, *COOL CITIES: URBAN SOVEREIGNTY AND THE FIX FOR GLOBAL WARMING* (2017); Harriet Bulkeley, *Climate Changed Urban Futures: Environmental Politics in the Anthropocene City*, ENV'T POLI. 1 (2021); John E. Fernández & Marcela Angel, *Ecological City-States in an Era of Environmental Disaster: Security, Climate Change and Biodiversity*, 12 SUSTAINABILITY 5532 (2020).

23 Cf. Bertie Russell, *Beyond the Local Trap: New Municipalism and the Rise of the Fearless Cities*, 51 ANTIPODE 989 (2019); Matthew Thompson, *What's So New about New Municipalism?*, 45 PROGRESS IN HUM. GEOGRAPHY 317 (2021). For analysis of the ideological elements of European municipalism, see Elisabetta Mocca, *The Municipal Gaze on the EU: European Municipalism as Ideology*, J. OF POL. IDEOLOGIES 1 (2021).

24 Mark Purcell, *Urban Democracy and the Local Trap*, 43 URB. STUD. 1921 (2006); Lawrence Pratchett, *Local Autonomy, Local Democracy and the 'New Localism'*, 52 POLI. STUD. 358 (2004).

25 Barak and Mualam, *supra* note 6; Barak and Mualam, *supra* note 6.

B. Regionalism

While the notion of localism suggested above is very clearly associated with cities and municipal governments, the concept of regionalism is less clear. Regions and regionalism are subject to constant conceptual scrutiny, with changing, often contested, and conflicting meanings and practices (e.g., city-region, metropolisation, mega-region, competitive region, bioregion) disclosing different governing rationales and forms of regionalization.²⁶ Given the focus of this Article, the forms of regionalism analyzed here do not necessarily depart from a clearly defined form of regionalism, nor do they rely on formal institutional settings or tiers of government. Rather, the focus is on informal types of regionalism, based on local, intermunicipal cooperation and networks that form effective, often alternative, forms of regionalism.

To flesh out this perspective, I draw inspiration from several definitions. The first associates regionalism with municipal networks. Pier Domenico Tortola and Stefan Couperus define subnational authority networks as “horizontal, voluntary and independent organisations connecting local and/or regional authorities across state boundaries in a stable manner, with the aim of achieving some common goal and/or producing mutually beneficial services.”²⁷ I suggest two alterations: (1) subnational local authority networks may constitute a form of regionalism when they connect local authorities and municipalities, not other regional authorities. (2) The constitution of a region is contingent upon geographic proximity, preferably with continuous spatial spread. To elaborate briefly, municipal networks such as the United States Conference of Mayors or the Israeli Forum of Self-Government Cities (Forum-15) are indeed subnational authority networks.²⁸ However, these types of networks do not necessarily constitute a region, or a form of regionalism, due to their geographic spread (too expansive for the former and too inconsecutive for the latter). Considering these two alterations, I suggest that local authority networks may be considered a form of regionalism when they meet the following conditions: *horizontal, voluntary, and independent organizations that stably connect spatially proximate and consecutive municipal authorities to achieve some common goal and/or produce mutually beneficial services.*

This definition suggests several alterations in the function and role of regions. In their study of federal regions, Blank and Rosen-Zvi identify three key functions that they fulfil: (1) they enforce central governmental policies; (2) they act as mediators between different governmental agencies; (3) and they coordinate between central

26 For a review of the changing meanings and conceptualizations of regions and regionalisms, see Anssi Paasi & Jonathan Metzger, *Foregrounding the region*, 51 REG'L STUD. 19 (2017).

27 Pier Domenico Tortola & Stefan Couperus, *Differentiated Cooperation through Local Authority Networks: Challenges and Opportunities*, 57 INT'L SPECTATOR 54, 56 (2022).

28 The United States Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. See U.S. CONF. OF MAYORS, <https://www.usmayors.org/> (last visited May 29, 2023). Forum 15 – The Israeli Forum of Self-Government Cities, is an organization uniting Israeli cities whose municipalities are fiscally autonomous and not dependent on national balancing or development grants. See FORUM 15 – THE ISRAELI FORUM OF SELF-GOVERNMENT CITIES, <https://en.forum15.org.il/>.

government departments and agencies.²⁹ The forms of regionalism studied in this Article alter these functions in two ways. First, not only do these types of regions not enforce central governmental policies, but they may also even question and challenge them. Second, the mediation and coordination that occur are not between departments and agencies of the central government but rather between municipal institutions.

The suggested concept of regionalism is also inspired by approaches that conceptualize regions as “historically contingent processes that are ‘becoming’ rather than just ‘being,’” thereby emphasizing the relational configuration of space and the power relations within it.³⁰ This outlook highlights the temporal dynamic of regions and regionalisms. It is supplemented by Jean-Paul D. Addie and Roger Keil’s notion of *real existing regionalism*: they argue that “regionalism is neither a mere normative ideational construct nor a set of predictable practices, but a contested product of discourses (talk), territorial relationships (territory) and technologies (both material and of power).”³¹

However, while a voluntary form of regionalism may be instrumental in enhancing regional solidarity and inclusive policies, “common goals and/or mutually beneficial services” may also be instrumental in promoting exclusionary policies and reproducing socio-spatial inequalities. Regional cooperation can result in negative externalities and wild interregional competition. Moreover, the greater authority a regional government possesses, the greater the risk of negative externalities. Lastly, concerns regarding democratic deficits that apply to localism (i.e., the local trap) are also relevant to regions due to the effects of regional decisions.³²

With the intended focus outlined above, this Article centers on the relationship between municipal-networked regions and the central government. Finally, the synthesis of the two perspectives on localism and regionalism as outlined above emphasizes that municipal networks which constitute alternative forms of regionalism are guided by different governing and spatial logics, primarily due to their institutional flexibility and differentiation, as contingent upon the goals pursued and their noncompulsory nature. Therefore, given the aim of the study, the notion of real existing regionalism highlights the need to suspend normative judgment regarding the goals or practices intended for regionalization and first analyze what real, existing regionalisms do and how they impact territorial relationships.

29 Blank and Rosen-Zvi, *supra* note 4.

30 Anssi Paasi & Jonathan Metzger, *Foregrounding the Region*, 51 REG’L STUD. 19, 23 (2017).

31 Jean-Paul D. Addie & Roger Keil, *Real Existing Regionalism: The Region between Talk, Territory and Technology*, 39 INT. J. URB. REG’L. RSCH. 407, 409 (2015).

32 Rosen-Zvi and Blank, *supra* note 6 at 251–4; Blank and Rosen-Zvi, *supra* note 4 at 1956–66.

II. LOCALISM AND REGIONALISM IN ISRAEL

The analysis and typology are inspired by three case studies in Israel. On the one hand, Israel is a unitary state with a highly centralized political system. On the other hand, within this institutional design, local and regional institutions can and do practice varying degrees of administrative and political autonomy and discretion in various policy fields. Adding to this complexity, within the Israeli governmental hierarchy, the central government often sets the agenda regarding land-use policies.³³ It controls the budgets of cities, which are not fiscally autonomous, and makes significant planning decisions that affect localities.³⁴ Furthermore, the central government regularly intervenes in local affairs through national-level and district-level plans.³⁵ There are therefore ongoing struggles regarding centralization/decentralization in land-use planning and urban policy and localist contestation of national agendas.³⁶ While these struggles have local nuances, they reflect similar struggles worldwide.³⁷

This centralized institutional setting is at odds with civic trust in public institutions. Figures 1 and 2 show the trends regarding trust in public institutions from 2016 to 2021 for the Jewish and Israeli-Arab populations. The graphs represent the percentage of the population that expressed high or very high levels of trust in the central government, parliament, political parties, the president, supreme court, and local government. The figures indicate that Jewish and Arab citizens in Israel express relatively stable and high levels of civic trust in local government institutions compared to those of the central government. One difference between Jewish and Arab citizens is that a more significant proportion of the Arab population expresses high levels of trust in the Supreme Court, 7.8% higher than trust in the local government on a 5-year average. Moreover, some might question the extent to which Israel is a strong unitary state given regional segregations based on ethnonational categories and socioeconomic differences. Finally, these drawbacks regarding the central government's power are accentuated given an extended period of political instability: since April 2019 the country has experienced five rounds of general legislative elections. Throughout this period, which also included the COVID-19 pandemic and a round of violent

33 Eran Razin, *District Plans in Israel: Post-Mortem?*, 33 ENV'T PLAN. C: GOV. POL'Y 1246 (2015).

34 OECD, *LAND-USE PLANNING SYSTEMS IN THE OECD: COUNTRY FACT SHEETS* (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264268579-en>.

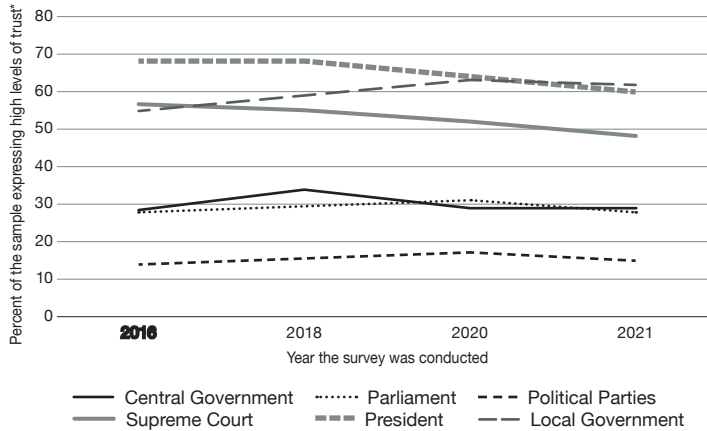
35 NATIONAL-LEVEL SPATIAL PLANNING IN DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES: AN INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON OF CITY AND REGIONAL POLICY-MAKING (Rachelle Alterman ed., 2001).

36 Beeri, *supra* note 5; Sharon Eshel & Ravit Hananel, *Centralization, Neoliberalism, and Housing Policy Central-Local Government Relations and Residential Development in Israel*, 37 ENV'T PLAN. C: POL. SPACE 237 (2019); Eran Razin, *Needs and Impediments for Local Government Reform: Lessons from Israel*, 26 J. URB. AFFAIRS 623 (2004); Razin, *supra* note 33; Reingewertz & Beeri, *supra* note 7; Barak & Mualam, *Municipal Autonomy*, *supra* note 6.)

37 Jose M Alonso & Rhys Andrews, *Fiscal Decentralisation and Local Government Efficiency: Does Relative Deprivation Matter?*, 37 ENV'T PLAN. C: POL. SPACE 360 (2019); Daniel Béland et al., *Paths to (de) Centralization: Changing Territorial Dynamics of Social Policy in the People's Republic of China and the United States*, 36 ENV'T PLAN. C: POL. SPACE 897 (2018); Seonyoung Kim, *Inter-municipal Relations in City-Region Governance*, 104 CITIES 102771 (2020); Shuai Shao et al., *Administrative Decentralization and Credit Resource Reallocation: Evidence from China's "Enlarging Authority and Strengthening Counties" Reform*, 97 CITIES 102530 (2020).

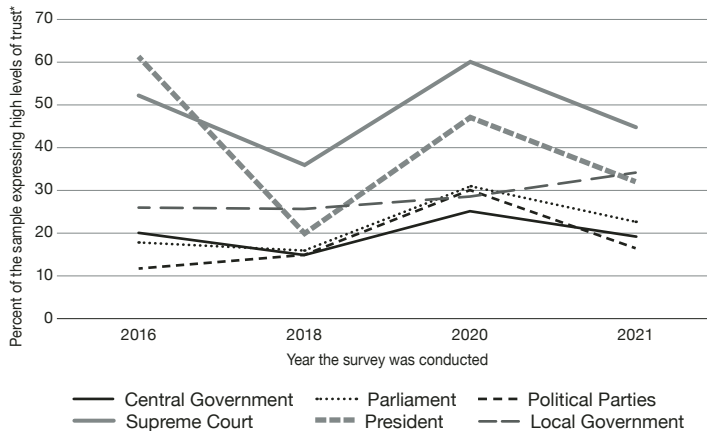
clashes with the Gaza Strip as well as civil unrest and violence, local governments have upheld their responsibilities, enhancing an already powerful localizing force in Israeli politics.

*Figure 1: Trust in public institutions 2016-2021 for the Jewish population*³⁸



* Percentage of the sample expressing 'high' and 'very high' levels of trust in each of the institutions studied.

Figure 2: Trust in public institutions 2016-2021 for the Arab population



* Percentage of the sample expressing 'high' and 'very high' levels of trust in each of the institutions studied.

³⁸ Figures 1 and 2 are adapted from the Israel Democracy Institute surveys from 2016, 2018, 2020, 2021 that assessed trust in local government. See TAMAR HERMANN ET AL., THE ISRAELI DEMOCRACY INDEX (2016); TAMAR HERMANN ET AL., THE ISRAELI DEMOCRACY INDEX (2018); TAMAR HERMANN ET AL., THE ISRAELI DEMOCRACY INDEX (2020); TAMAR HERMANN ET AL., THE ISRAELI DEMOCRACY INDEX (2021).

A. Localism in Israel

In the Israeli context, municipal autonomy is manifest in the daily management of urban, municipal, and planning issues in cities that are fiscally autonomous and not dependent on national balancing or development grants (e.g., *Forum* 15). Tel Aviv-Jaffa, sometimes criticized and at other times lauded for constituting a discrete social and political space (namely, *Medinat Tel Aviv*—the state of Tel Aviv), stands out as a paragon of urban autonomy due to its vast economic and political power in Israeli politics.³⁹

However, while Tel Aviv-Jaffa provides a meaningful point of reference, the phenomenon of municipal autonomy extends well beyond it. In the last three years, Israeli cities have repositioned themselves as an alternative to the state in highly sensitive public matters.⁴⁰ For example, the absence of national supervision over nurseries (ages 0-3) is an open wound long neglected by the state.⁴¹ In response, various municipalities recently declared they would form a municipal standard to supervise nurseries independently.⁴² This is just one of several cases from recent years in which municipalities have practiced local power in a variety of policy fields, such as the promotion of LGBTQA+ rights, the opening of businesses on the Sabbath, local planning schemes in opposition to central planning, the promotion of urban environmentalism, and various others.⁴³ These examples of implementing autonomous municipal policies have been successful despite a centralized planning system and the prevailing perception of the city as subordinate to the central government, thereby highlighting a vital localist element and potential in Israeli politics.

However, beyond innovation and contestation of central-government policies, municipal autonomy has also been exploited to violate individual rights and liberties. For example, Blank's analysis of decentralization processes in Israel's public education system determined that they resulted in deep ethnonational segregation between Jews and Arabs and between Mizrahi and Ashkenazi Jews.⁴⁴ In addition, various municipalities have attempted to close municipal parks to nonresidents, justifying

39 Nurit Alfasi & Tovi Fenster, *A Tale of Two Cities: Jerusalem and Tel Aviv in an Age of Globalization*, 22 *CITIES* 351 (2005); Raphael Lerman, *Tel Aviv and National Planning*, in NATIONAL, DISTRICT AND METROPOLITAN PLANNING IN ISRAEL 110 (Eran Razin ed., 2010); Talia Margalit & Nurit Alfasi, *The Undercurrents of Entrepreneurial Development: Impressions from a Globalizing City*, 48 *ENV'T PLAN. ECON. SPACE* 1967 (2016); NIR MUALAM, *FOREVER YOUNG? THE MAINTENANCE OF HIGH-RISE HOUSING ESTATES IN ISRAEL: TOWARDS A COMPREHENSIVE POLICY FRAMEWORK* (2018); Barak & Mualam, *How do Cities?*, *supra* note 6.

40 Barak & Mualam, *Municipal Autonomy*, *supra* note 6.

41 Yaron Lee, *Ministers Postpone Vote on Regulating Day Care Centers*, HAARETZ, Jun. 18, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-ministers-postpone-vote-on-regulating-day-care-centers-1.6180460?=&ts=1539256558312>.

42 Yael Odem, *Tel Aviv Municipality Will Supervise Nurseries for Ages 0-3*, MAKO, Jun. 18, 2018, https://www.mako.co.il/news-israel/education-q2_2018/Article-a427c6c79d31461004.htm; Bar Peleg, *Regulation of Supervision Over Private Nurseries is Delayed, Municipalities are Filling the Gap*, HAARETZ, Aug. 30, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/.premium-1.6430952>.

43 Barak & Mualam, *Municipal Autonomy*, *supra* note 6.

44 Yishai Blank, *Brown in Jerusalem: A Comparative Look on Race and Ethnicity in Public Schools*, 38 *URB. L.* 367 (2006); Issachar Rosen-Zvi & Yuval Yekutieli, *The Role of Local Governments in Advancing the Cultural Rights of Mizrahi Jews*, 23 *HAIFA L. REV.* 467 (2022).

this policy as adequate use of local taxes while in fact attempting to prevent Arabs from using parks in Jewish municipalities.⁴⁵ In other instances, ultra-Orthodox municipalities have enacted formal and informal policies resulting in gender segregation and limiting women's use of public space.⁴⁶ These and other examples highlight the normative limits and the need to assess local power critically.

B. Regionalism in Israel

Policymakers and scholars have long called for substantive reform of local government law and highlighted the imperative to adapt regional institutions in Israel.⁴⁷ Various attempts to reform local government law and institutionalize regional structures from the top-down (e.g., municipal amalgamations) have not been very successful. Bottom-up city-clustering, from 2016 onward, has been more successful, yet such efforts suffer from three main disadvantages: (1) only one-fifth of the Israeli population lives in these clusters, mostly in peripheral areas; (2) the clusters deal mostly with techno-managerial tasks and do not touch upon more substantive social and political affairs; and (3) the clusters are not democratically elected by the public and lack legal status as a regional governing body. Therefore, local leaders are concerned about irreversible loss of authority and resources to the clusters.⁴⁸

Discussions concerning new regionalism do not assign an *a priori* preference for a top-down or bottom-up approach to regionalization. However, a bottom-up and voluntary approach has proven to be more effective in Israel, engendering more cooperation and trust from local governments. Throughout 2018, an expert forum assessed different regional structures and the normative and political considerations involved in regionalism. Following an extended study, the forum adopted the presupposition that in Israel “the different actors in a regional system will act upon the principle of voluntary association, thereby requiring joint leadership that will effectively promote the action [(e.g., regionalization)] from the ‘bottom-up.’”⁴⁹ This conclusion is supported by a 2019 report by the Israeli parliament's Research and Information Center, which states that in “the years following municipal amalgamation attempts, which were ‘top down,’ it seems that regionalism in Israel had developed

45 See HCJ 8676/00 *Adam Teva V'din Israeli Ass'n for Env't Prot. v. Ra'anana Municipality*, 59(2) PD 210 (2004) (Isr.). In this case, the Justices discussed the claim that a municipality is not allowed to discriminate between residents and nonresidents of the local authority regarding entrance fees to a public municipal park (on Saturdays and holidays), since this would harm the residents of the weaker authorities. In *AdminA* (DC NA) 3161-07-19 *Zouabi v. Elkabetz*, Nevo Legal Database (Jul. 2, 2019) the court discussed the case of Afula where the municipality closed the city park during the summer holidays of 2019 to nonresidents. The case was settled by an agreement that the park would stay open unless instructed otherwise by the Minister of Interior according to the Municipalities Bill article 249(8). For elaboration, see Barak and Mualam, *supra* note 7 at 68–72.

46 Barak & Mualam, *Municipal Autonomy*, *supra* note 6, at 68–72.

47 Rosen-Zvi, *supra* note 6; Ben Elia, *supra* note 7; Blank & Rosen-Zvi, *Municipalities Bill*, *supra* note 6; Reingewertz and Beeri, *supra* note 7; Beeri, *supra* note 5.

48 Beeri, *supra* note 5 at 1425–26.

49 EXPERT FORUM ON REGIONALISM, NEW REGIONALISM IN ISRAEL: CONCEPTUALIZING KNOWLEDGE AND DESIGNING REGIONALISM IN ISRAEL, 2–11 (2018) (Isr.).

from the inverse direction, as a process that began from the ‘bottom up,’ and only later was supported and expanded from the ‘top down’ by the Ministry of Interior.”⁵⁰ This voluntary, bottom-up approach lies at the core of a regionalization reform planned in Israel,⁵¹ thereby encouraging theorizing vis-à-vis the nexus of localism and regionalism.

However, the celebratory tones are overshadowed by the darker aspects of regionalism in Israel, suggesting that regionalism is not necessarily a panacea. Regional cooperation can also result in negative externalities and wild interregional competition. Moreover, the greater the authority a regional government possesses, the greater the risk of negative externalities.⁵² Moreover, concerns regarding a democratic deficit that apply to localism (i.e., the local trap) are also relevant to regions due to the effects of regional decisions. While regions are portrayed as mechanisms for enhancing civic solidarity, they cannot conceal inequalities in segregated land-use policies for the Arab population in Israel.⁵³ Lastly, while regions and regionalism may offer a way of overcoming social schisms, they may also enhance urban-rural antagonisms (i.e., metroregions vs. agricultural regions) and amplify existing ethnic and socioeconomic inequalities.⁵⁴

III. A TYPOLOGY OF THE LOCALISM – REGIONALISM NEXUS

This Part constitutes the core of the Article; it presents an empirically based typology of the localist-regionalist nexus—see Table 1. The analysis is based on three case studies conducted in Israel between 2019 and 2021—each representing a different type and facet of the localist-regionalist nexus. The cases were selected based upon two criteria: (1) they manifest different types of localism (i.e., municipal autonomy); and (2) each case constitutes a form of regionalism in line with the conceptual analysis in Part I above. Each case study is based on a triangulation of qualitative methods, case-study research, political analysis, and an expanded review of policy documents, newspaper clippings, summaries of online meetings, and several interviews with key informants.

50 Michal Lerer, *Regional Clusters in Israel*, THE KNESSET RSCH. & INFO. CTR. 11 (2019), <https://main.knesset.gov.il/Activity/Info/Research/Pages/incident.aspx?rid=6594&businessType=1>.

51 ISRAELI REGIONALIZATION TEAM, REGIONALIZATION AND DECENTRALIZATION REFORM IN ISRAEL: A REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR (2020) [hereinafter REGIONALIZATION AND DECENTRALIZATION REFORM].

52 Blank & Rosen-Zvi, *Municipalities Bill*, *supra* note 6.

53 OREN YIFTACHEL, ETHNIC FRONTIERS AND PERIPHERIES: LANDSCAPES OF DEVELOPMENT AND INEQUALITY IN ISRAEL (2019).

54 Ravit Hananel, *The Land Narrative: Rethinking Israel's National Land Policy*, 45 LAND USE POL'Y 128 (2015); EREZ TZFADIA & HAIM YACOBI, RETHINKING ISRAELI SPACE: PERIPHERY AND IDENTITY (2011); Erez Tzfadia & Oren Yiftachel, *Between Urban and National: Political Mobilization Among Mizrahim in Israel's 'Development Towns'*, 21 CITIES 41 (2004); Levia Applebaum & Anna Hazan, *Cooperation Between Small Municipalities: Lessons for Israel* (The Floersheimer Inst. for Pol'y Stud., Working Paper No. 1/54, 2005).

Table 1 – typology of the localist-regionalist-nexus

Localist-Regionalist Nexus	Example	Localist Rationale	Regionalist Rationales
Regional cooperation supporting localist innovation	Voluntary regional cooperation for promoting environmental and climate goals	Involves the practice of local administrative and planning capacities independent of intervention by the central government	(a) Geographic — different regions face different environmental and climatic conditions (i.e., bioregion), thereby requiring discrete policy measures (b) Policy — various policy goals extend beyond a locality's legal jurisdiction, requiring regional cooperation
Regional cooperation supporting localist contestation of state policies	Voluntary regional cooperation for regulating religious freedoms: public transportation on Shabbat	Concerns the practice of economic and political power vis-à-vis central government policies	(a) Geographic — efficient, and attractive, public transportation lines extend beyond municipal jurisdictional borders (b) Political — cooperation between municipalities engenders a form of 'public pressure' on the central government — to reconsider its policies
Regional solidarity	Voluntary Jewish-Arab cooperation in the face of national violence	Cities acting as a nominative authority in the face of a national cleavage	Regional solidarity is required given a heterogenous socio-political reality even though most localities are homogenous in terms of nationality

A. Regional Cooperation Supporting Localist Innovation Independent of State Intervention

The audit revealed many findings that indicate that the State of Israel has yet to make the necessary perceptual shift. Only a minority of public entities exhibited actions for improving adaptation to climate change. Israel is one of the few countries in the world that does not act based on a national adaptation plan that is budgeted and approved, although it is in a “hot spot” (high-risk area), and thus even more exposed to climate change risks.⁵⁵

These harsh words were written in a special report compiled by the state comptroller in October 2021 concerning national climate action in Israel. The report indicates that the national government is largely mal-prepared for climate change, lacks sufficient mitigation and adaptation measures, and is exposing the country to great risks, despite various governmental decisions on climate change mitigation and adaptation.⁵⁶ However, given that the report focuses mostly on central governmental

55 STATE COMPTROLLER OF ISRAEL, *National Climate Action by the Government of Israel*, (2021), <https://www.mevaker.gov.il/sites/DigitalLibrary/Pages/Reports/7357-6.aspx?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>.

56 Among these decisions is the 4450 Government Resolution, Setting a Guiding Target and Formulating Tools to Promote Renewable Energies in Particular in the Negev and Arava Region (Jan. 29, 2009) (Isr.); 474 Government Resolution, Israel's Preparation for Climate Change – Preparation and Readiness for Climate Change and Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Jun. 25, 2009) (Isr.); 2369 Government Resolution, Approval of a National Plan for Energy Efficiency (Dec. 17, 2017) (Isr.); 4079 Government Resolution, Preparing Israel to Adapt to Climate Change: Implementing the Recommendations to the Government for a National Strategy and Action Plan (Jul. 29, 2018) (Isr.).

agencies, it does not consider the actions taken by Israeli cities. On the one hand, the report emphasizes that “the lack of dedicated funding for the tasks requisite raises difficulties for local authorities to promote action.”⁵⁷ On the other hand, however, cities and municipalities have autonomously promoted several significant climate-related policies despite this gloomy picture.

For example, the Standards Institute of Israel and the Ministry of Environmental Protection issued an Israeli Green Building Code (no. 5281) in 2005.⁵⁸ However, the code was voluntary and was not adopted as an obligatory building standard until 2011, when Forum 15 cities decided to adopt and implement it from 2013. On the one hand, the adoption of this code raised significant difficulties and objections from real-estate entrepreneurs and contractors—exposing the Forum 15 cities to constant struggles. On the other hand, this move put pressure on the central government to adopt the building code as mandatory throughout the country. This pressure proved effective in March 2021, when the central government formally put the code into effect, requiring that all new buildings meet the green building standard from March 2022 onwards.

Another example comes from Tel Aviv-Jaffa, which, in light of central government inaction, took the first steps towards joining the supranational network C40—Cities Climate Leadership Group—in 2017. In 2020, the city devised a municipal Climate Adaptation Action Plan, mapping the risks and vulnerabilities and setting municipal goals and targets.⁵⁹

These two examples epitomize the notion of Municipal Autonomy type 1—municipal policy innovations and entrepreneurship in cases of insufficient state action. They are also consistent with the actions taken by many other cities worldwide, taking upon themselves relatively autonomous environmental and climate action and joining local (e.g., the E.U. Covenant of Mayors, Climate Mayors in the U.S.)⁶⁰ and supranational (e.g., C40, ICLEI)⁶¹ networks, echoing the U.N.’s Local Agenda 21.⁶² While these global actions provide food for thought and research on the local-global nexus of environmental and climate governance, the geographically expansive nature of these networks does not qualify the notions intended by regionalism. However, a recent example from Israel may shed light on the local-regional nexus.

57 *Id.* at 311. (author trans.)

58 Ministry of Environmental Protection, *Green Building Standards in Israel: SI 5281 – Sustainable Buildings*, (2022), https://www.gov.il/en/departments/guides/standards_in_israel (last visited Jan 26, 2023).

59 Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipality, *Climate Adaptation Action Plan*, (2020), <https://www.tel-aviv.gov.il/en/Documents/Climate%20Adaptation%20Action%20Plan.pdf> (last visited Feb 27, 2022).

60 See COVENANT OF MAYORS – EUROPE, <https://www.covenantofmayors.eu/> (last visited Jun. 2, 2023); Home, CLIMATE MAYORS, <https://climatemayors.org/> (last visited Jun. 2, 2023).

61 C40 CITIES – A GLOBAL NETWORK OF MAYORS TAKING URGENT CLIMATE ACTION, <https://www.c40.org/> (last visited Jun. 2, 2023); Home, ICLEI, <https://iclei.org/> (last visited Jun. 2, 2023).

62 Michele Acuto & Benjamin Leffel, *Understanding the Global Ecosystem of City Networks*, 58 URB. STUD. 1758 (2021); Barak, *Civic Ecologism*, *supra* note 22; Barak, *Ecological City-Zenship*, *supra* note 22; BARBER, *supra* note 22; SOFIE BOUTELIGIER, CITIES, NETWORKS, AND GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE: SPACES OF INNOVATION, PLACES OF LEADERSHIP (2012); Bulkeley, *supra* note 22; SIMON CURTIS, THE POWER OF CITIES IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (2014); Fernández & Angel, *supra* note 22.

Between March and June 2021, different cities cooperated in holding 10 (out of 14 planned) different region-based climate conferences, with a concluding meeting in October 2021, all organized and initiated by a partnership of NGOs and local authorities.⁶³ A combination of coincidence and disappointment instigated these regional conferences: as the NGOs defined it, the coincidence that got things moving was the limitations imposed by COVID-19, while the environmental NGOs were disappointed by the results of previous national conferences:

In recent years, close to the Conference of Parties, it has been customary to hold one large, multi-participant Israeli climate conference in Tel Aviv each year, attended by representatives from all over Israel. Despite the initial intention, the connection between the events weakened over the years, no clear connection was established between the Israeli conference and the COP, and experience has shown that the Israeli climate conference did not affect the delegation and Israeli policy presented at the COP.⁶⁴

Given this disappointment, the organizing principles customary for COVID-19 (i.e., Zoom meetings) engendered the notion of regional climate conferences; more flesh was put on these bones later, revealing a regionalist rationale. The concluding report is framed as an “alternative climate report” that represents civil society and local authorities within their geographic contexts and their different sociopolitical characteristics and environmental and climatic conditions (e.g., bioregion and climate-region).

The regional conferences covered and expressed local issues, both in the field of **climate and environment**, such as local plans for climate change, and in the **context of broad issues**, such as periphery-center relations, the regional characteristics of civic participation, division of roles and budgets between environmental units and other urban units. The conferences show that gathering regional perspectives can shed light on national challenges and is essential for understanding the climate crisis and preparing for it.⁶⁵

The regional conferences had two main organizing principles: the first was building *local-regional commitments*. When convening the conferences, each steering committee was committed to producing a document of recommendations and insights addressing challenges in the designated region and policy recommendations at the local and central government levels. Each local authority that joined the process was committed to addressing and applying that document’s recommendations. The second principle was to organize the regional conferences according to *different public and civic formats, and different compositions of participants*. Some of the conferences

63 The analysis is based on a review of the concluding conference, see The Israeli Climate Summit, FACEBOOK (Oct. 11, 2021), <https://www.facebook.com/aklimisrael/videos/606102633878357>; CLIMATE ASS’N COALITION, SUMMARY REPORT OF THE REGIONAL CLIMATE CONFERENCES (Meital Peleg Mizrahi ed., 2021) (Isr.), <https://climatemet.org.il/files>; See generally REGIONAL CLIMATE CONFERENCES (last visited Jun. 2, 2023) (Isr.), [HTTPS://CLIMATEMEET.ORG.IL/](https://CLIMATEMEET.ORG.IL/).

64 CLIMATE ASS’N COAL., *supra* note 63, at 12.

65 *Id.* at 31, my emphases.

were led by NGOs and other civil society actors, some by local authorities, some by engaged citizens, and sometimes a healthy mix of these actors. According to the conference organizers, this generated a wide variety and wealth of models and participants, creating “diverse and fruitful collaborations at the various conferences.”⁶⁶

These organizing principles share an affinity with other local-regional initiatives worldwide and have engendered a wide variety of local-regional topics—some relating directly to certain environmental and climatic concerns and some to the particular sociopolitical context of the region.⁶⁷ Several examples illustrate this claim:

In the Haifa Bay regional conference, emphasis was put on green construction and clean energy. These are topics typical for the region, which is one of the areas in Israel with the highest degree of air pollution due to petrochemical industries. However, the greatest emphasis, directly related to the region’s particularities, was devoted to the effects of climate change on public health; indeed, this region is experiencing the highest degree of lung disease in the country.

Sakhnin, an Arab city in the Lower Galilee region, is also one of the largest in a diverse area in terms of Arab and Jewish populations. The conference centered on promoting environmental responsibility, along with economic prosperity and social equality—mirroring the sociopolitical concerns of the region. Special emphasis was placed on collaboration between different social groups (i.e., Jews and Arabs) and engendering regional forms of environmental peacemaking.

The Sharon region and Gush Dan (Tel Aviv-Jaffa metroregion) are quite similar in their social composition—predominantly Jewish from the upper-middle and higher classes; they are also quite similar in terms of environmental and climatic concerns. In both conferences, the topics were predominantly environmental and climatic, with less emphasis on social context. Given the centrality of these two regional conferences and their relatively large size in terms of population and density, much attention was accorded to issues of transportation and energy, waste management, implementation of nature-based solutions, and engendering civic participation (environmental citizenship). As development pressures are peaking in these areas, emphasis was placed on nature and ecological conservation. While these topics are addressed in local policies, their discussion and analysis in a regional conference highlight the regional rationale: climate- and environment-related goals extend well beyond a locality’s legal jurisdiction.

⁶⁶ *Id.* at 12.

⁶⁷ See for example the ‘Climate City Contract,’ which is integral to the European Commission initiative ‘100 climate-neutral cities.’ This is not necessarily a legal document but rather functions as a political commitment between the municipality and other actors (e.g., other cities, regional governments, European Commission). It rests on the premise that local actors are key stakeholders, but nonetheless achieving climate neutrality requires coordination and multilevel governance. EUROPEAN COMMISSION, DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION, 100 CLIMATE-NEUTRAL CITIES BY 2030 – BY AND FOR THE CITIZENS (2020), <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/62649>. See also the *EU Mission: Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities*, EUROPEAN COMMISSION (last visited Jun. 28, 2023), https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/eu-missions-horizon-europe/climate-neutral-and-smart-cities_en#documents

In Israel's south, three regional conferences were held. The Eastern Negev region discussed the desiccation of the Dead Sea, which is important due to its environmental impact and as an essential source of employment (tourism and the chemical industry). Renewable energy and urbanity were also discussed given the region's significant potential for fostering solar energy. The enhanced vulnerability of disadvantaged populations due to climate change was likewise on the agenda—this is unsurprising given the climate risks of the desert and the relatively low socioeconomic status of the population in the region. Finally, lack of knowledge regarding the challenges of desertification was highlighted. All these aspects relate to the particular socioenvironmental attributes of the Eastern Negev. The Western Negev conference touched upon several of these topics but uniquely centered on the effects of climate change on agriculture—an occupation characteristic of that region.

Finally, the Eilat-Eilat region discussed the specific challenges for the Bay of Eilat, the Red Sea, and the coral reef. Also highlighted were the new risks resulting from the Abraham Accords (between Israel and the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, August 2020) and the decision to increase oil transportation via the Trans-Israel Pipeline. While this topic is highly debated in Israel and creates various challenges and risks throughout the country, due to experience with a major oil spill that occurred in the region in 2014 it poses increased risks for the Eilat-Eilat region and for the coral reefs of the Red Sea.⁶⁸

The stability of these regional cooperations, and whether they will deepen and constitute a *real existing* form of regionalism, is contingent upon regional cooperation in the years to come. The regional climate conferences held in 2021 were also in preparation for COP-26 (Glasgow, October-November 2021), with intentions to hold similar conferences in the future. However, before COP-27 (Sharm el-Sheikh, November 2022), and as of February 2023, no regional conferences have been held. This discontinuity suggests that maintaining long-term commitments, especially when they are voluntary, may require institutionalizing mechanisms—i.e., formal regional governments that can also monitor and control from the top-down.

Nevertheless, several conclusions may be drawn. First, the localist rationale is quite clear. In the face of state inaction, as indicated by the state comptroller's special report, local authorities are putting their administrative and planning capacities into action independent of state intervention (municipal autonomy type 1). In so doing, they are proactively filling major policy lacunae related to mitigation and adaptation to climate change. The second conclusion concerns the twofold regionalist rationale. The first is geographic/bioregional: different regions face different environmental and climatic conditions, requiring discrete policy measures. The second is policy-related and derives from the understanding that urban environmentalism and climate-related goals extend well beyond a locality's legal jurisdiction, requiring regional cooperation. Combining these two rationales discloses one coherent ideal type of

68 In December 2014, the Evrona Natural reserve area (within the Eilat-Eilat region) experienced a major oil spill (approximately 5 million liters) from the Trans-Israel pipeline. This oil spill is considered one of the greatest environmental disasters in the country's history.

the localist-regionalist nexus: regional cooperation supporting localist innovation independent of state intervention.

B. Regional Cooperation Supporting Localist Contestation of State Policies

[In religious terms] I see myself as Masorti [(i.e., not religious but with an affinity to religiosity)], I am not secular, but still—my worldview is “live and let live.”... My worldview personally says that precisely this policy area is within the jurisdiction of local government and local authorities. Just as no minister of the interior will approach the Arab sector and oblige them to close shops on Shabbat because it is not within his jurisdiction—no minister can approach a secular local authority and oblige it to close businesses on Shabbat. Or, conversely, no minister will come to a religious city and oblige them to open businesses on Shabbat. It cannot be. These types of decisions are the business of the local council and authority which the residents elected.⁶⁹

This statement, by Mr. Haim Bibas, mayor of Modi'in-Maccabim-Re'ut and head of the Federation of Local Authorities in Israel, touches upon one of the most sensitive cleavages in Israeli society—the (non)separation of *synagogue* and state, frequently regarded as the status quo. Briefly put, in 1947 in Israel a complex web of arrangements (de jure and de facto) regarding the relationship between religion and state was woven between different parties prior to the establishment of the state. These arrangements include norms and regulations regarding the Sabbath, kosher food, and matrimonial law, where the religious norm was established as the national law and norm.⁷⁰

However, recent years have seen a rise in the secularization of Israeli society and municipal interpretations challenging the status quo.⁷¹ For example, in 2014 Tel Aviv-Jaffa amended a municipal bylaw regarding the opening of restaurants and other businesses on the Sabbath—an amendment that challenges the status quo. This amendment was subject to intense public debate and legal proceedings over three years, at the end of which the Supreme Court ruled that Tel Aviv stores could operate on the Sabbath under the city's amended ordinance.⁷² Following this success, five other municipalities also attempted to amend their bylaws to regulate and enable business operations on the Sabbath. These attempts, however, were halted by the Ministry of Interior following an amendment to the Local Authority

69 Interview with Mr. Haim Bibas, mayor of Modi'in-Maccabim-Re'ut and head of The Federation of Local Authorities in Israel (Feb. 3, 2020).

70 For a brief review of the 'status quo' see SHUKI FRIEDMAN, *THE SHABBAT WARS: A GUIDE FOR THE PERPLEXED ON THE "STATUS QUO" ... AND A POSSIBLE SOLUTION* (2017).

71 GUY BEN-PORAT, *BETWEEN STATE AND SYNAGOGUE: THE SECULARIZATION OF CONTEMPORARY ISRAEL* (2013); Blank, *supra* note 9.

72 Revital Hovel, Ilan Lior & Jonathan Lis, "Live and Let Live": Israel's Top Court Allows Tel Aviv Stores to Operate on Shabbat in Landmark Ruling, *HAARETZ*, October 26, 2017, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/israel-s-top-court-allows-tel-aviv-businesses-to-operate-on-shabbat-1.5460544> (last visited Oct 11, 2018). The amendments to Bylaws for Tel Aviv-Jaffa (opening and closing stores), 5740-1980. Appeals against those amendments were denied in HCJ 6322/14 Gen. Ass'n of Merch. and Self-Employed Persons v. the Minister of Interior, Nevo Legal Database (Apr. 19, 2017); the supreme court denied those appeals after a second hearing in HCJ 3660/17 Gen. Ass'n of Merch. and Self-Employed Persons v. the Minister of Interior, Nevo Legal Database (Oct. 26, 2017).

Law in 2018, which specifies that any attempt to open businesses on the Sabbath requires the approval of the minister of interior, a position that is not accepted by the five municipalities, which appealed to legal proceedings in the Supreme Court.⁷³

This example, which demonstrates one aspect of the *Shabbat struggles* in Israel, brings the notion of Municipal Autonomy Type 2 to the fore: municipal governments put their political power into practice, challenging national legislation and norms—the status quo regarding religion and state in this case. The localist rationale for practicing political power vis-à-vis the state is based on a democratic premise: that city-zens (i.e., citizens in the city, or urban citizens) ought to be able to control decisions regarding the opening of businesses on the Sabbath. This notion is exemplified in Mr. Bibas' argument regarding the 2018 amendment to the Local Authority Law:

The state does not have a position. Only now the state decided to move into a policy field which I believe is not even in its jurisdiction... From the very beginning, I suggested that they ([i.e., the central government]) will not move into this field. Unfortunately, for some strange reason the Ministry of Interior shoved their hands in and did severe damage that we're still trying to clean up.⁷⁴

This quote exemplifies a fundamental disagreement regarding political authority; it demonstrates Weinstock's notion of *metajurisdictional autonomy* in which polities such as municipalities “possess some say as to what the policy domains over which it has jurisdiction are.”⁷⁵ The localist argument, in this regard, is that local governments should make their own arrangements regarding religion and state—at least with regard to the opening of businesses.

The same logic applies to public transportation on the Sabbath. Except for several cities (e.g., Haifa), public transportation in Israel does not operate on the Sabbath. This highly contested social fact has repeatedly incited severe disagreements between secular and religious Jews in Israel. Two noticeable NGOs have mobilized and started offering bottom-up public transportation solutions on the Sabbath: ‘Shabus’ in Jerusalem and ‘Noa Tanua’ in other localities.⁷⁶ In order to bypass legal limitations, the tactic was to provide free public transportation. However, as the founder of Noa Tanua says, “My goal from the beginning was not to transport people on Shabbat, but to make an impact so that the state [(i.e., central government)] would do so.”⁷⁷ Although the central government has not reconsidered its policies, local governments have; following the 2018 municipal elections, several cities started operating public transportation on the Sabbath.

73 Interview with Mr. Haim Bibas, *supra* note 69. See Law for Amending Local Government Laws (Bylaws for Opening and Closing Businesses in Rest Days), 5778-2018.

74 *Id.*

75 Weinstock, *supra* note 14.

76 NA'IM BASOFASH, <https://www.shabus.co.il/> (last visited Jun. 2, 2023) (Isr.); NOA TANUA – PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IN SABATH, <https://www.noat.co.il/> (last visited Jun. 2, 2023).

77 Ilana Shtotland, *The Young Man that Began the Revolution of Public Transportation in Shabbat*, MAARIV, November 25, 2019, <https://www.maariv.co.il/news/israel/Article-731452>.

For example, the city of Ramat Gan founded the project ‘Sababus,’ which currently operates two bus lines throughout the Sabbath.⁷⁸ As the deputy mayor explains in an interview,

It is important to emphasize that neither the mayor nor I did this out of ideology. There is no anti-religious ideology or an ultra-secular one. We did this to really solve a dire need... not everyone owns a private car, like soldiers or students that, for them, the price of a taxi to Tel Aviv costs as much as a night out in the city... because we did not act upon ideology it was essential for us to create a balance. We planned the Sababus bus route so that it would pass only on main roads and not close to synagogues or neighborhoods that are predominantly more religious.⁷⁹

This echoes the notion emphasized by Mr. Bibas above: cities ought to determine how they treat the status quo, and any arrangement regarding religion and state should be within municipal jurisdiction. Several other municipalities have followed this rationale (Kfar Sava, Herzliya) and operate city-based public transportation on the Sabbath; in so doing, they are putting their economic and political capacities into power vis-à-vis central government policies in a highly sensitive policy field, thus epitomizing the notion of Municipal Autonomy type 2.

Following this logic, in October 2019, Tel Aviv-Jaffa founded a project named ‘Naim ba’sofash’ (meaning moving on the weekend and also pleasant at the weekend). However, unlike Sababus (in Ramat Gan) or Kfar-Sabus (in Kfar Sava), Tel Aviv-Jaffa applied a regionalist reasoning and sought to establish cooperation with neighboring municipalities. This project currently includes five neighboring municipalities in the Tel Aviv metropolitan area (Givatayim, Kiryat Ono, Ramat ha’Sharon, Shoham, and Tel Aviv-Jaffa) and Modi’in-Maccabim-Re’ut, which discontinues the territorial connectivity while maintaining spatial proximity.

The regionalist logic underlying this project is threefold: (1) attractive public transportation lines extend beyond municipal jurisdictional borders; (2) given that operating this form of localist-regionalist public transportation requires full municipal subsidies for the project’s costs, regional cooperation is a form of sharing the economic burden; and lastly (3), to foster the type of public pressure that the founder of Noa Tanua hoped to achieve, cooperation between local governments is more powerful and effective in comparison to the work of NGOs. These three aspects come together in the words of the deputy mayor of Tel Aviv-Jaffa, Ms. Meital Lehavi: “It is time to deal with this problem comprehensively since it is a basic service that every citizen in Israel deserves. If the state does not supply this service, it must transfer the authority to do so to the local authorities.”⁸⁰ While this quote reveals the challenge and contestation enabled by this form of localist-regionalist nexus, it also discloses its limitations. Lehavi further explains that “in order to enable the

78 *Sababus*, RAMAT GAN MUNI. (last visited Jun. 2, 2023), https://www.ramat-gan.muni.il/going_out/sababus/.

79 Interview with the deputy mayor of Ramat Gan (Dec. 26, 2019).

80 Meital Lehavi, *The Problem that “Naim Ba’sofash” Cannot Solve*, CALCALIST (2020), <https://www.calcalist.co.il/local/articles/0,7340,L-3793050,00.html> (last visited May 29, 2022).

endurance of this project, it is mandatory to charge a fee.”⁸¹ The reason is that in the present situation, only cities with sufficient economic power and which are not dependent upon national budgets can afford to subsidize this public service—a significant limitation further discussed below. Nevertheless, fostering regional cooperation to practice political power vis-à-vis the central government manifests a second ideal type of the localist-regionalist nexus.

And yet, despite its relative success (at least for the cities participating in the initiatives), the outcome of this form of the localist-regionalist nexus is ambivalent for two main reasons. The first relates to the metroregional relationship with the central government. On the one hand, this cooperation manifests the notion of Municipal Autonomy type 2 and enhances it through bottom-up cooperation among local authorities applying a regionalist logic. On the other hand, however, while it puts pressure on the central government to reassess the status quo, it also relieves pressure from the central government, given that the public transportation in Israel’s central and most extensive metroregion operates quite effectively on the Sabbath.

The second reason for ambivalence relates to this metroregional relationship with other neighboring cities. While ‘Naim ba’sofash’ provides an adequate, albeit temporary, solution for some cities, it has left others behind, reproducing and reinforcing existing inequalities. For example, as Mr. Amir Kohavi, Mayor of Hod-Ha’Sharon, argues, “No other municipality besides Tel Aviv can afford to finance long-term and effective public transportation out of their own budget... the attempt to do good may lead to the deepening of social gaps since financial might is a precondition for joining the project and only really wealthy local authorities will be able to survive.”⁸² Elaborating this claim, the State Comptroller’s report for 2021 shows that there has indeed been considerable improvement in several financial indicators that reflect the financial strength of local authorities.⁸³ However, at the same time, 80% of authorities are unable to finance their expenses and need a balancing grant. The report also found large gaps in local authorities’ resources and their ability to provide services to their residents. Finally, the financing methods of local authorities involve risks and lack the means to assist local authorities in dealing with threats to their financial resilience. This situation, which defines the gaps between the local authorities, calls into question the relationship that will develop in regional cooperation between fiscally weak and strong authorities.

C. Regional Solidarity in the Face of National Tensions

We are going through a challenging and troubling period regarding the delicate and complex relationship between Arab and Jewish citizens. The violent events of the last few days are incredibly alarming and distressing. Only through mutual respect will it be possible to enable life and mutual growth together in Jerusalem and in the

⁸¹ *Id.*

⁸² Shani Ashkenazi, *Naim Ba’sofash? Why Other Municipalities are Refusing to Join Tel Aviv’s Party*, GLOBES, November 25, 2019, <https://www.globes.co.il/news/article.aspx?did=1001308375>.

⁸³ State Comptroller of Israel, *Financial Resilience of the Local Authorities* (2021).

whole country. We are addressing you because we are very close to spreading into wide-ranging conflicts between citizens.

We, therefore, call upon the ([central]) government to work relentlessly to settle the situation peacefully at the national level and in a way that will stop the cycle of violence, restore the peace, and maintain the fabric and routine of life.⁸⁴

This letter was written and signed by 15 Jewish and Arab mayors of the ‘Sharon region’ to their city-zens on May 12, 2021, amid an Israeli military operation in Gaza and a wave of violent clashes between Jewish and Palestinian Israelis. It is just one of multiple local-regional initiatives expressing regional solidarity; some of these initiatives included civic solidarity rallies among neighboring cities. While local governments had a negligible effect on the military operation and the central government’s policy, they played a crucial role in pacifying the civic clashes within Israel—primarily via regional cooperation initiated from the bottom-up, at times with the assistance of several NGOs. These localist-regionalist initiatives stand out in the face of central government inaction and sometimes even its intensification of tensions between Jews and Palestinian Israelis.

Fleshing out this perspective begins with the empirical observation that despite Israel’s being quite a diverse country, 88% of local authorities are homogenous in their religious affiliation (i.e., Jewish, Muslim, Christian, and other). Only 3% of the cities are mixed (Jews and Arabs), and another 2% include regional councils that encompass both Jewish and Arab settlements.⁸⁵ However, despite the municipal-localist reality, which is mainly homogenous, the regional reality is mixed: Israeli Arabs account for 20.6% of the population. Most importantly, quotidian life is mixed in terms of the workplace, educational institutions, and leisure activity.

Remarks by several local leaders from the Western Galilee regional clusters provide examples of the latter claim. Mr. Eyal Shmueli, the head of the Kfar Vradim local council, says: “There is no region as diverse as the Western Galilee. When such events are at our doorstep, we should all come and support each other.... Solidarity and neighborly relations are necessary for our continued existence here.”⁸⁶ Sheikh `Wail Madi, from Yarka, further reflects: “This meeting is an example of responsible leadership that sees the importance of living together. We all here want to live in a neighborly and good relationship. The difficulty of this [regional] meeting is also the beginning of the solution.”⁸⁷ Ms. Sigal Shaltiel, head of the Tefen Industrial Council, focuses on the quotidian reality of mixed nationality: “In our council, we have workers from all over the Western Galilee. We have to work hard to restore

84 Dani Zaken, *Attempts to Appease the Violence: Mayors Call to Stop the Violence*, GLOBES, May 12, 2021, <https://www.globes.co.il/news/article.aspx?did=1001370856> (last visited Feb 15, 2023). A copy of the original letter may be found in ‘Drom ha’Sharon’ regional council’s twitter. See @Dhasharon, TWITTER (May 12, 2021 3:02 PM), <https://twitter.com/DHasharon/status/1392450228276678656>.

85 The figures are based on the analysis offered in hereinafter REGIONALIZATION AND DECENTRALIZATION REFORM, *supra* note 51.

86 Ophir Spigel, *A Gathering of Leaders of Jew and Arab Local Authorities Calling for Good Neighborly Relations and Restoring the Peace*, LOCAL NEWS, May 23, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3UU8GIU>.

87 *Id.*

trust and maintain this reality of our quotidian routine.”⁸⁸ In the Negev region, similar meetings of local leaders also occurred. Mr. Naif Abu Araar, the head of the Araara local council, hosted the meeting and concluded:

Having seen the recent events, we have seen that it is our duty, as mayors of Arab and Jewish councils, to take responsibility and come out with a joint condemnation of the racist and extremist violent events that are currently taking place in our society. There was no council or city in the area from which no representative was present. We want to go hand in hand against extremism, violence, and destruction in the streets. There are ties between us, the Arabs and the Jews that have been built for decades, and we must maintain them and not give in to destruction. We will not lend our hand to start a civil war within our country.⁸⁹

This facet of the localist-regionalist nexus and the call for regional solidarity between Jews and Palestinian Israelis was further enhanced and extended by various civic initiatives. NGOs played a significant role in fostering local leaders’ meetings and holding solidarity rallies among neighboring cities. Places of work, including both public institutions (e.g., hospitals) and private firms (e.g., banks, cellphone companies), further reinforced this type of solidarity. While some of these calls and actions address solidarity amongst Jewish and Arab citizens in the national context, many are based on a regional rhetoric.⁹⁰

These calls to end civic violence and deepen solidarity between Jews and Palestinian Israelis stand out, especially considering the reluctance of the central government leadership to calm the violence. The most heated and violent clashes occurred in mixed cities. Lidya/Lod was one of the central arenas of violence, which included stone throwing, Molotov cocktails, knives, and guns—culminating in the deaths of one Jewish and one Arab citizen and dozens of wounded citizens and police officers.⁹¹ The central police enforced a curfew to control and curb the violence. The police commissioner, Mr. Kobi Shabtai, held an emergency meeting with the city’s local Jewish and Arab leaders. Utilizing speech acts appealing to the rule of law, Commissioner Shabtai said, “We will prosecute all the terrorists,” i.e., citizens who turned to violence, emphasizing that he was referring to “terrorists on both sides,” Jews and Arabs alike.⁹² In response, the minister of public security, Mr. Amir Ohana, engaged in a divisive speech act via Twitter:

88 *Id.*

89 Yigal Jabarin et al., *In the Shadow of the Riots: Dozens of Reconciliation Initiatives between Jews and Arabs Across the Country*, HAARETZ, May 13, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3MoOAZw>.

90 “Halas, Enough!” – Dozens of Online Initiatives for Reconciliation between Arabs and Jews, CALCALIST, May 15, 2021, https://www.calcalist.co.il/local_news/article/rjPlfW6uoo.

91 Declan Walsh & Eric Nagourney, *Israel-Palestinian Hostilities: Violence on Israeli Streets Sows Fear of Lasting Rupture*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, May 13, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/05/13/world/israel-gaza-news> (last visited Feb 15, 2023); STATE COMPTROLLER OF ISRAEL, *Special Audit Report: Mixed Cities* (2022), <https://www.mevaker.gov.il/sites/DigitalLibrary/digitalBooks/2022-Mixed-Cities-EN/index.html>.

92 Eli Senior, *Police Commissioner in Lidya: “Terorists on Both Sides” Minister Ohana: “outrageous statement,”* YNET, May 18, 2021, <https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/HyNjoo0WYu>.

An outrageous statement by the commissioner that should not have been said. To address the problem, it must be recognized: Arab rioters attacked Jews, police, and synagogues. The policy is to act aggressively against the terrorist rioters. There is no, and there was no symmetry. Yes, even the few [Jews] who attacked Arabs will be dealt with severely. [But] From here to ‘Two Sides’ is a *very* long way.”⁹³ (original emphasis).

This statement was followed by another made by the then-President, Mr. Reuven Rivlin, usually considered a pacifying public figure: “[T]he sight of the pogrom in Lod and the disturbances throughout Israel by *many incited and bloodthirsty Arabs*, who hurt human life, property, and even reached out to the saints of Israel, is unforgivable”⁹⁴ (my emphasis). These two speech acts stand in crude contrast to the pragmatic and appeasing tones employed by localist-regionalist leaderships. Moreover, they stand in opposition to civic rallies throughout the country. For example, the NGO ‘Standing Together’ organized 26 regional rallies, at which Jewish and Arab citizens protested against the violence and called for mutual respect and dignity.⁹⁵ The central message uniting these regionalist rallies was:

Instead of letting the government degenerate us into violence, we will demand personal security for all of us. Instead of escalation and arson, we will demand calm and a ceasefire. It hurts to hear about all the Israelis and Palestinians, about all the Arabs and Jews who are wounded and those who have died. And we know: there is a large majority in our society—who want to follow the path of living together, security, and peace.⁹⁶

This quote does not necessarily reflect Israeli society’s general attitude, but it reveals that the localist-regionalist nexus is a means for fostering civic solidarity, as it emphasizes the mixed regional reality in Israel. Moreover, it highlights the potentialities of a regional citizenship that is premised on city-zenship (i.e., local/urban citizenship).⁹⁷ While this form of local-regional cooperation can hardly be expected to alleviate the unequal relationship between Jews and Arabs in Israel, it does indicate possible solidaristic venues of the localist-regionalist nexus. Formally put, the localist rationale is cities acting as a normative authority in the face of a national cleavage. The regionalist rationale is engendered by a sociopolitical reality in which quotidian life is mixed (i.e., Jews and Palestinian Israelis), even though most localities in Israel are homogenous in terms of nationality, requiring regional solidarity.

93 @AmirOhana, TWITTER (May 18, 2021, 9:56 PM) <https://twitter.com/amirohana/status/1394728712592105479>.

94 President Reuven Rivlin, FACEBOOK (May 21, 2021), <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=312998227075689>.

95 This is just one of several events initiated by NGOs. See e.g., ABRAHAM INITIATIVES, <https://abrahaminitiatives.org/> (last visited Jun. 2, 2023); NEGEV COEXISTENCE FORUM FOR CIVIL EQUALITY, <https://www.dukium.org/> (last visited Jun. 2, 2023).

96 Standing together, Arabs and Jews, *We Will Stop it Together Event*, FACEBOOK (May 13, 2021) <https://www.facebook.com/events/743209156357301>

97 Anders Lidström & Linze Schaap, *The Citizen in City-Regions: Patterns and Variations*, 40 J. URB. AFF. 1 (2018).

The limitations of this cooperation are quite clear—it cannot resolve the unequal relationship between Jews and Arabs in Israel, nor can it remedy the harsh damage resulting from the civil violence in mixed cities throughout the country. However, it does indicate a possible step in a normatively warranted direction. Given the divisive tones from the central government at that time, engendering this form of solidarity by creating an ad-hoc localist-regionalist nexus positioned those localities as a normative authority in the face of a national cleavage.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis herein has offered a localist perspective on processes of regionalization. The overview of the three empirical case-studies and the theoretical typology suggests three main conclusions. First, while the analysis of these case studies focused mainly on local action, the role of the state and the law is critical. For example, while regional cooperation supporting localist innovation does not require authorization from central legislation, the lack of preemption by the central government can also be considered a form of involvement. To restrict localist endeavors and regional cooperation, the central government can employ a range of legal methods: centralization, re-centralization, denial of funding and information, delimiting the ability of cities to borrow money, and controlling mayoral appointments.⁹⁸ Moreover, the silence of the central government frequently plays a critical role in encouraging or tacitly supporting localist-regionalist endeavors.

The second conclusion concerns civil society and NGOs, which in all cases played a critical role in fostering regional cooperation: The regional climate conferences were organized and initiated by a partnership of NGOs and local authorities. Public transportation on the Sabbath was pioneered by 'Shabus' in Jerusalem and 'Noa Tanua' in other localities long before the regionalist 'Naim ba' sofash' was established. Many regionalist rallies and joint statements made by local-regional leadership during the hostilities of May 2021 were initiated and assisted by NGOs (e.g., 'Standing Together,' the Abraham Initiative, Negev Coexistence Coalition). This finding suggests that NGOs are not only crucial for fostering the local-regional nexus but may also have some sort of centralizing power in this dynamic. Therefore, NGOs can play an important role in inspiring regionalization and can contribute in several ways: 1) advocating for regional cooperation by highlighting mutual benefits; 2) facilitating communication and networking and fostering a sense of community; 3) promoting shared values and interests by highlighting the commonalities among different groups and helping to build a sense of regional identity; and (4) supporting regional development by working to address common challenges or issues such as environmental degradation or other shared interests. In doing so, NGOs can help build trust and cooperation among different groups in a region and contribute to the wellbeing of the region.

98 Barak and Mualam, *How do Cities?* *supra* note 6, at 2.

While the above conclusions suggest two critical aspects regarding the legal and sociopolitical role of the state and civil society, a third conclusion reflects the dynamic affinities and possible tension between localism and regionalism. Indeed, the main finding emerging from this paper is that these two principles are not mutually exclusive. Moreover, although there are legal, institutional, political, and ideological tensions between these two principles, the analysis suggests a *third way* between localism and regionalism. Briffault, for example, argues that from a localist perspective, regionalism is a step towards centralization—portraying this dynamic in a zero-sum fashion. Blank and Rosen-Zvi define this conflicting dynamic in a more complex manner, highlighting that while regionalism decenters state power, it also centralizes city power. However, by taking a primarily localist perspective, this line of argumentation shows that regionalism is not necessarily a step towards centralization but rather a mechanism or tactic that may support and deepen localist agendas.