City of Haifa

Intercultural Profile

1. Background[1]

A common saying in Israel is that 'Jerusalem prays, Tel Aviv plays and Haifa works'. This undoubtedly derives from the years of the British Mandate when Haifa was developed rapidly as the Levantine coast's major port, oil refinery and a leading rail hub. In more recent years it also acknowledges the presence in Haifa of two of Israel's leading universities, and their association with many high-tech enterprises and spin-off companies in the area. But this rather does Haifa an injustice as it is far from being the dourest or most ascetic of Israeli cities today, and is in fact a relatively relaxed and urbane place. But it may also have been the industriousness of its recent history which has contributed to its reputation as Israel's most ethnically mixed city.

Today, the city is a major seaport located on Israel's Mediterranean coastline in the Bay of Haifa covering 63 square kilometres. It is located about 90 kilometres north of Tel Aviv and is the major regional centre of northern Israel. Two respected academic institutions, the University of Haifa and the Technion, are located in Haifa in addition to the largest k-12 school in Israel, The Hebrew Reali School. The city has an important role in Israel's economy and is home to Matam, one of the oldest and largest high-tech parks in the country. Haifa Bay is a centre of heavy industry, petroleum refining and chemical processing. Haifa was formerly the western terminus of an oil pipeline from Iraq via Jordan.

Haifa is the largest city in northern Israel, and the third largest city in the country, with a population of over 272,181. Another 300,000 people live in towns directly adjacent to the city including Daliyat al-Karmel, the Krayot, Nesher, Tirat Carmel, and some Kibbuzim. Together these areas form a contiguous urban area home to nearly 600,000 residents which makes up the inner core of the Haifa metropolitan area.

Haifa is a leading light in the network of Israeli 'Mixed Cities' and a member of the international network of 'Cities in Transition'. It seeks membership of the Intercultural Cities in order to widen its knowledge base and share its experience of trying to maintain ethnic co-existence within an extremely unsympathetic national and regional political climate.

2. National Context of Migration and Diversity[2]

With regard to the subject of migration, Israel is unusual in one very important way: the state is virtually built upon immigration. Apart from brief interruptions, Jews have immigrated continuously into the originally Ottoman and later British-administered Palestine since 1882. The holocaust in Europe lent the Zionist ideal worldwide legitimacy and accelerated its realisation. Mass immigration characterised various periods of the 20th century, especially the years immediately before and after the founding of the state in 1948. The subsequent war with the neighbouring Arab states led, on the other hand, to a wave of Palestinian

[1] This report is based upon the visit of the CoE intercultural cities experts Oliver Freeman and Phil Wood, accompanied by Werner Puschra representing The Club of Madrid. The report represents the views of the experts and not an official Council of Europe position.

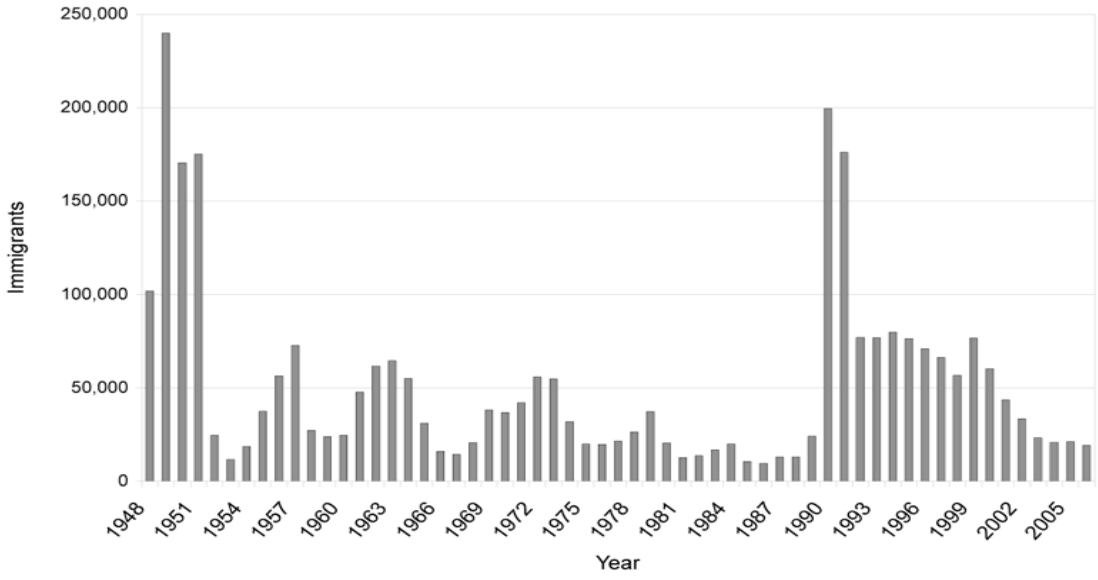
[2] Adapted from the Focus Migration country page on Israel, published by the Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies, Germany, at http://focus-migration.hwwi.de/Israel.5246.0.html?&L=1

refugees and displaced persons. Later wars generated further refugee movements, with the result that today almost three quarters of Palestinians (about 7 million) live outside their homeland.

The population of Israel has doubled several times over the past 60 years, mainly as a result of immigration. Today the country has 7.1 million inhabitants, with an indigenous Arab-Palestinian population that makes up about 20% of the total population figures.

Jews have been migrating to Palestine since the early 1880s and the emergence of the Zionist movement. Five waves of immigration (aliyah) are generally identified for the time leading up to the founding of the state in 1948 and there have been several since. The biggest wave of immigration to date started after the fall of the Iron Curtain. The main countries of origin are Russia and Ukraine and since 1989 a total of about 1.3 million Jews and non-Jewish family members have come to Israel as immigrants. In addition, a significant immigrant group in recent decades has been Jews from Ethiopia. Since the outbreak of the second Intifada in autumn of 2000, however, immigration has declined drastically; in the year 2006 fewer than 20,000 new immigrants arrived in Israel, in 2007 the number stood at just 18,000 (in comparison to an average of 73,000 per year between 1992 and 1999).

Figure 1 Jewish immigration to Israel, 1948-2006



Source: Central Bureau of Statistics

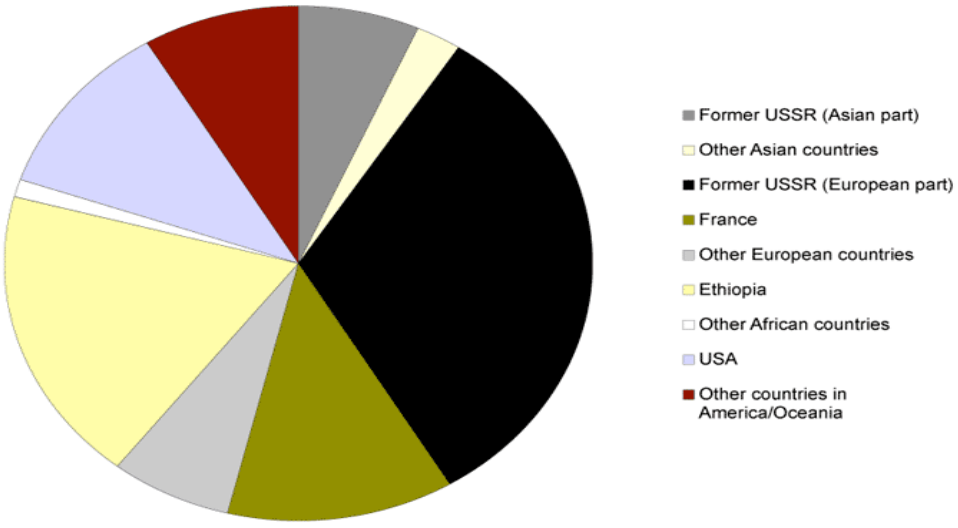
Israeli immigration policy is based on what is known as the Law of Return, adopted in 1950. This makes manifest the concept of a Jewish-Zionist state allowing, indeed suggesting, that every person in the world of Jewish origin or of the Jewish faith should return to the land of their fathers. It literally states: “Every Jew has the right to come to this country as an oleh” [a person entitled to immigrate]. Immigration is described as a “return” or “return to their homeland”, literally an ascent.

The Jewish Agency was established in 1929 to oversee this process of immigration and settlement. Since Israel’s independence it has primarily pursued the aim of persuading diaspora Jews to immigrate to Israel. Today it is responsible for processing all applications for immigration made by Jews outside countries of the former Soviet Union, and checks applicants’ entitlement case by case.

There have also been special actions towards mass immigration of certain Jewish communities. The most prominent and significant in terms of the numbers was the secretly planned transfer of thousands of Jewish families from Ethiopia from the mid 1980s, otherwise known as the “Falasha”.

In addition to an active immigration policy, promoting the family is one of Israel’s important aims in order to secure a medium and long-term “demographic majority” and with it the Jewish character of the state against a background of high birth rates among the Arab population. The avoidance of emigration forms a third element in Israel’s population policy rationale. Attempts since the end of the 1960s to persuade, by means of special support programmes, some of the estimated 200,000 Israeli citizens living abroad to return, however, have so far yielded little success.

Figure 2 New immigrants to Israel according to country of origin, 2006



Absorption and integration

Since 1968, the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption has been responsible for state integration programmes. Integration measures are limited to new Jewish immigrants and members of their family and are directed towards swift, profound and lasting integration. Common governmental parlance, therefore, adheres to the term “absorption”. After decades of mass immigration from completely different countries and cultures, however, it is apparent that the new Israeli society cannot be taken to mean an assimilation into a uniform culture , and that “absorption” has come to be understood as more synonymous with “integration”.

A special Israeli feature of the process are the so-called absorption centres (*merkazei klita*) founded and administered by the Jewish Agency. These simple housing estates for new immigrants were built in the 1960s and offer a

Figure 3 Forms of integration assistance for new migrants

Type of assistance	Form of assistance	Period for which assistance guaranteed	Period of eligibility to make a claim
Help with living expenses upon initial reception	“Absorption basket” in eight instalments	Six months	One year from date of aliyah
Assistance with acquiring household goods	Customs grant	Once, in two instalments	Four years from date of aliyah
Hebrew language course	Assumption of course costs (part of “absorption basket”)	6 months, one-off payment	18 months from date of aliyah
	Travel costs to participate in course	Up to 6 months	One year from date of aliyah
	Assured basic income	Up to 6 months after expiry of “absorption basket”	One year from date of aliyah
Accommodation/ living expenses	Housing benefit/ rental assistance	5 years	-
	Accommodation in public housing	Once	-
	Mortgage loan	Once	Up to ten years from date of aliyah
Employment	Assured income or allowance for job seekers	Up to 12 months	One year from date of aliyah
	Assistance for degree courses, training and retraining	Duration of courses	Ten years from date of aliyah
Student support	Tuition grant, loan	Up to three years of study	At the responsible authorities’ discretion

Source: MOIA (2007)

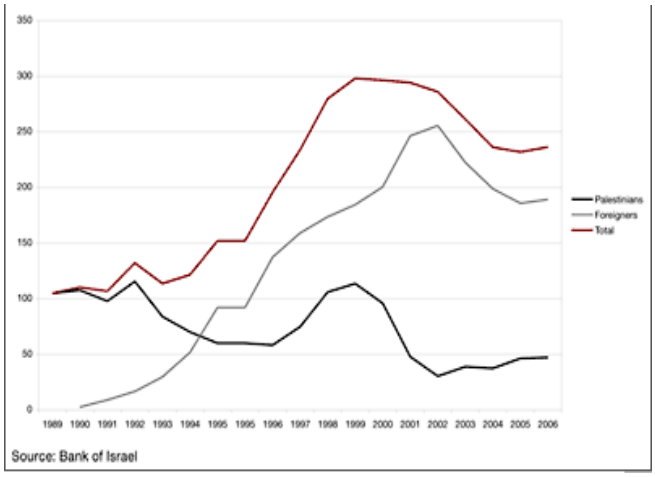
range of different support services. These include, for example, the offer of a Hebrew language and integration course (*ulpan*) right on-site, as well as a formalised network to provide advice on professional and psychological matters, schooling and more. Subsidised living in the absorption centres is, however, normally limited to six months. Whereas the Israeli state adopted a system of "direct absorption" with regard to mass immigration from the former Soviet Union, wherein the immigrants themselves had the financial means and freedoms to organise their primary integration, Ethiopian Jews were almost without exception housed institutionally after their arrival. At times up to 10,000 people were living in the absorption centres, some also for significantly longer than a year. Here they underwent a formalised and bureaucratic integration process.

Citizenship

The citizenship law of Israel is based primarily *on jus sanguinis* and thus follows ethnonational or ethnoreligious principles. As a rule, Jews who 'make aliyah' to Israel automatically become Israeli citizens. Moreover, those non-Jewish inhabitants (Arabs) who were not driven away or did not leave the country after 1948 or who returned there by 1952 were also entitled to Israeli citizenship. Thus, today an Arab minority of Muslim, Christian and Druze faith comprising about 1.4 million people live as citizens in Israel. Although they in fact have the same individual rights, they are *de facto* disadvantaged, in many cases.

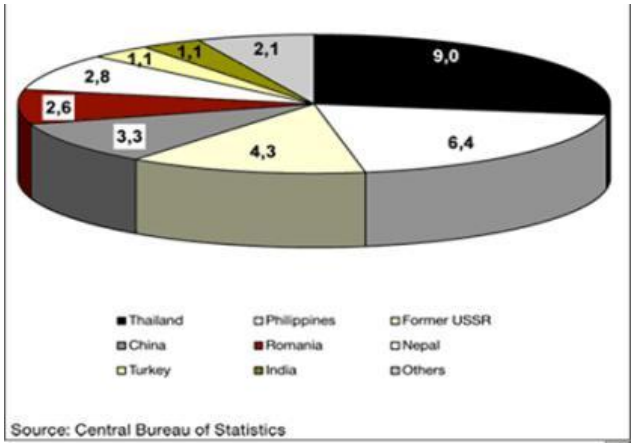
Israeli law does also provide for, as a matter of principle, the naturalisation of foreigners; however, this option is tied to a large number of conditions. In addition, it lies within the discretion of the Ministry of the Interior and has, to date, played a subordinate role. With some exceptions, the latest Israeli policy tends towards the opposite direction: in July 2003 the Israeli parliament (Knesset) adopted a law by which the granting of residence permits or of Israeli citizenship to Palestinians from the Occupied Territories is prohibited, even if immigration is to be in the context of family reunification. According to the Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law, Palestinians who marry Israeli citizens can be granted neither residence status nor Israeli citizenship. The law, which takes the form of a regulation extended annually by a vote of Parliament, is officially justified as being in the interest of Israeli security.

Figure 4 Non-Israeli employees in the labour market



The law runs counter to both the international practice of family reunification and the civil rights standards of western democracies and petitions called for the Supreme Court to review the plan., The Ministry of the Interior may now, in individual cases, grant women over 25 and men over 35 years of age, plus children younger than 14, temporary residence, signifying a slight easing of the law. On the other hand, the scope of the law was extended to the effect that members of families from "enemy states" (listed in the law as Syria, Iran, Iraq and Lebanon) are also excluded from rights of residency and citizenship.

Figure 5 Countries of origin of the new immigrants with work permits, 2006



Labour migration

Until about 15 years ago, the foreign immigration into the Israeli labour market was a negligible category. High birth rates, a comparatively good education system and a permanent migration surplus brought about by immigration secured a constantly adequate

supply of workers for almost all areas of the labour market. Underpaid activities with low social prestige, above all in agriculture and the building industry, were carried out by a reserve of Palestinian workers from the Occupied Territories, who commuted daily or weekly into the Israeli heartland. According to official labour market statistics, during the 1980s at times there were more than 110,000 Palestinians working in Israel – up to 7% of all employed persons.

The first serious shortages came during the 1991 Gulf War, when Israel closed the borders with the West Bank and Gaza Strip for several weeks and the Israeli construction industry practically came to a standstill. In the early 1990s the Israeli army sealed the areas off ever more frequently. As a result, the shortage of workers was to be relieved by recruiting guest workers from overseas and the numbers grew continually to more than a quarter of a million in the year 2006. The Israeli government's aim is to reduce the employment of Palestinians to zero for security reasons but it does not appear to have been attained. Nonetheless, a comparison of employment figures since the year 2000 shows a clear tendency to replace local and regional workforces with guest workers from abroad.

Foreigners are permitted employment in just five economic sectors: in agriculture, in the building and construction trade, large-scale technical industry, home care and the catering industry. With the exception of care for the sick and aged, fixed annual quotas are determined for all areas.

Refugees and asylum seekers

The majority of the estimated 55,000 asylum seekers in Israel are from Eritrea and Sudan, while other communities come from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and the Ivory Coast. More than 90 percent of this population have arrived since 2007. Fifteen percent are women.

Though signatory to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the key international agreement that defines refugee rights and countries' legal obligations, the Israeli government has not yet adopted asylum legislation, and the asylum process in Israel is marked by a lack of clarity in policy and procedure. Israel has one of the lowest refugee recognition rates in the world.

Automatic detention of arriving asylum seekers has become the default course of action in Israel since 2007. At the beginning of 2012, the government signed an amendment to the Prevention of Infiltration Law, which would detain asylum seekers for three years without trial, or indefinitely if they came from "enemy" countries like Sudan. The government has also built mass detention centres and thousands of refugees remain imprisoned until their status is determined.

Once the prisons are filled to capacity, asylum seekers are released into Israeli city centres without any further assistance. Asylum seekers' access to basic services, such as health care, housing, education, vocational training and employment ranges from very limited to none at all. Hundreds of new arrivals, including pregnant women, children and unaccompanied minors have remained homeless.

A significant majority of the asylum seekers in Israel today hold a temporary visa that since November 2010 does not grant the bearer permission to work. As the visa neither explicitly denies nor permits asylum seekers to work, however, confusion prevails among refugees and employers alike. As a result, asylum seekers not only find it hard to secure work; they are also especially vulnerable to the exploitation and dangerous working conditions involved in informal and unregulated employment. In addition, employers are less likely to respect legal obligations regarding medical and national insurance for these workers.

The asylum seekers have barely integrated into Israeli society due to the social stigma attached to them by the government branding them as 'infiltrators' and the language barrier. Children of asylum seekers have an easier time due to the speed with which they learn the language and the school system which places them in classrooms with a cross section of Israeli society. The NGO's working on refugee rights and the workplace

rights are places where friendships between asylum seekers and Israelis are made, although the overwhelming sentiment in Israeli society is that they remain firmly on the periphery of Israeli society.

Palestinians are a special group in the greater international refugee situation. At the end of 1949 the United Nations founded a special organisation to look after the Palestinian refugees in the Middle East: the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). It provides assistance with infrastructure and finance in particular to those Palestinians who live in the refugee camps of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and also the neighbouring Arab states (Jordan, Lebanon, Syria). These currently number about 4.4 million people. Supported by numerous UN resolutions, the international community of nations assumes these Palestinians have a right of return – a right that Israel has so far categorically rejected since it would massively change the current population structure and with it the Jewish character of the country.

From an ethnicized state to a pluralising society

As a result of the mass immigration of Jews from the entire world, Israeli society has been in a state of permanent transformation since the founding of the state. This process of change has taken place with even greater intensity in the last 25 years than in any previous phase. The street scene is characterised by ethnic diversity: Ethiopians and sub-Saharan Africans, Asians and Latin Americans are equally present in the cities. But no migration movement has stamped the public life of Israel so markedly as the immigration of more than one million people from the former Soviet Union. The Russian language has become firmly established despite comprehensive promotion of Hebrew; even some Russian-born Knesset MPs are unable to make parliamentary speeches in either of the two official Israeli languages (Hebrew and Arabic). There exists a broad palette of Russian-language media and a lively cultural landscape. Added to that is the fact that far from all immigrants from the Soviet Union are Jews. In the first half of the 1990s, 20% of immigrants were received as non-Jewish family members in accordance with the Law of Return, and between 1995 and 1999 this figure even exceeded 40% – a total of about 300,000 persons, with numbers rising . Conflict is brought about, for example, by their demand for pork, the consumption of which is not compatible with Jewish dietary rules.

Parallel to this there is a type of “orientalization” running through Israel’s political and cultural landscape in the form of a rise in the importance of Sephardic Judaism. The Sephardic Jews, also known as *mizrachim* (Orientals), migrated from North African and Middle Eastern/West Asian countries after the founding of Israel and are mostly descended from the Jews driven out of Spain in the 15th century. The founding generation of Israel and the political establishment, by contrast, consisted of Ashkenazi Jews – immigrants from Europe and (rarer) North America with roots in central and east European Judaism. They have dominated public and cultural life as well as the sense of identity and self-understanding compared with the less educated Sephardim who were often regarded as culturally inferior and not uncommonly treated paternalistically. This turn towards oriental or Arab Judaism is expressed culturally, for example, through the growing popularity of oriental music. Even if income and educational opportunities continue to be unequally distributed, the situation of oriental Jews, and especially their political representation and self-awareness as a social group has improved in recent years.

However the over-riding factor of multiethnic cohabitation however remains in the opposition between Jewish and Arab-Muslim Israelis.

3. Local Diversity and Policy Context

Haifa is considered to be the pre-eminent example of what are known in Israel as the‘mixed cities’. In addition to Haifa, there are Jaffa (Yafo), Acre (Akko), Ramle and Lod . All of these were very ancient (continuously settled since the times of the Phoenicians and Pharoahs) and became traditional Arab towns which under both Ottoman and British rule were encouraged to become places of mixed settlement. After

1948 Arab-Israeli War, these cities were seized by the Israeli state and large numbers of Arabs were forced to leave, with the residue being concentrated in defined areas, the remainder being repopulated by Jews.

Haifa has a rather different and quite unique history. The place which is now known as Haifa was only established in the mid-18th century and really only started to show any significant growth towards the end of the 19th, but it has been a form of growth which has gone hand-in-hand with ethnic diversity. In 1868 a large group of German Protestant Templars arrived and created a new town which is still known as the German Colony. Jews from Romania started to arrive shortly after. In 1909 Haifa became central to the Bahá'í Faith, when the remains of their prophet, the Báb, were moved from Acre to Haifa and interred in the shrine built on Mount Carmel which is now considered to be the international HQ of the faith. Then in the 1920s the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community (a liberal Islamic reformist movement founded in India) arrived and established Haifa as their base in Israel building the prominent Mahmood Mosque on Mount Carmel. However, most Muslims in Haifa are Sunni, although it should be noted that there are a significant number of Christian Arabs too, and they are sub-divided into Catholic, Orthodox and several smaller groups. To complete the picture of this 'city of six faiths' are the Druze, adhering to a branch of Shia Islam.

Officially Jews comprise some 89 per cent of the 272,000 population of Haifa, some 11 per cent are Arabs of which the larger part are Christian. However, the Arab population has a much younger age profile than the Jewish so these proportions can be expected to change with time. The municipality's statistical research unit confirms this assessment. In 2006, 3% of the Jews in the city were Haredi (ultra-orthodox), compared to 7.5% on a national scale, but the Haredi community in Haifa is growing fast due to a high fertility rate. 67% of Haifa citizens consider themselves secular, compared to a national average of 44%. Immigrants from the former Soviet Union constitute about 25% of Haifa's population. A significant portion of the immigrants from the former Soviet Union either lack official religious-ethnic classification or are Non-Jews as they are from mixed-marriage families of some Jewish origin. Haifa also has a significant community of people of Ethiopian background and the city continues to grow in diversity.

In her welcoming address to the visiting Intercultural Cities team, Deputy Mayor of Haifa Mrs Hedva Almog described the city's approach to diversity and stated "if the state of Israel could conduct itself like the city of Haifa things would be a lot better". In answering the question: Why do people come to Haifa? she said that Haifa does not simply think of how to assimilate people but how to help them feel at home. Perhaps the longest-standing symbol of Haifa's distinctive mixed identity is the Beit Hagefen Arab-Jewish Cultural, Community & Youth Center. Established in 1963 for the purpose of bringing together Arabs and Jews, Beit Hagefen educates towards coexistence, neighbourliness and tolerance by means of communal, cultural and artistic activities. The activities take place in three buildings adjacent to the neighbourhoods of Wadi Nisnas and the German Colony, and in an additional building in the downtown

Abbas neighbourhood. Beit Hagefen, and its Director Asaf Ron, will act as co-ordinator of Haifa's ICC membership.

Haifa has set itself an ambitious Vision to revive its fortunes on the back of innovation, education, tourism and tolerance and it already believes itself to being well on the way to achieving the Vision.

The city is seeking to enter wider international networks such as ICC in order to hone its practical abilities to achieve the Vision. Head of Strategy for the Council Galit Rand says the city has three priorities: economic development, tourism and higher education/research (particularly hi tech and biotech). They want to position themselves as a distinctive alternative to Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Haifa claims its advantages to include higher social capital and lower prices than these cities, as well as fewer traffic and environmental problems). Haifa also claims a higher quality of education and believes that its multilingualism will become a growing advantage. For example 21% of Haifa citizens hold a higher university degree compared to 9% in Jerusalem and 15% in Tel Aviv.

However, the city also senses that the high level of mobility in the population could lead to disconnection and alienation. Thus, whilst Haifa has a vision of itself as a metropolis with broad ambitions, it believes it needs to help citizens feel more at home in their local communities. The Council wants to know more about the factors which encourage people to leave or stay in a city and how to raise their quality of life satisfaction.

Another Vision for the city has been produced by the New Israel Fund in association with Shatil and the Club de Madrid entitled "Haifa – from Reality to a Vision for a Shared City" (2012). Whilst not officially adopted by the City Council, it should be mentioned as it provides an essential component of the discussion which has created the pretext for the city's membership application to ICC. Making recommendations for action in the fields of Politics, Economy and Employment, Education, Urban Planning, Inter-communal relations, Culture and Shared Memory, the Vision is very much in accord with the principles of ICC and we would recommend that the City Council adopt it as a poijnt of reference.

4. Education and training

In Israel kindergartens, elementary schools and teachers are funded by the government but high schools and infrastructure are the responsibility of municipalities. Pedagogic issues are controlled nationally but local government can intervene, leading to many localised variations. Haifa's policy is to make an active intervention in key areas, for example in trying to lower the level of drop-outs.

A remarkable 45% of Haifa pupils are in private schools rising to 70% for Arabs, whose schools are often subsidised by churches. Private schools tend to be more selective whilst public schools are more inclusive. Science, technology and maths are a high priority and many parents pay for extra tuition. The Arab private sector has particularly high standards and rejects difficult students who have to be taken in by the public sector. Haifa is the only city in Israel which offers supplementary support for Arab children with special needs.

The general principle of the Council is that any child should be accepted in any school across the ethnic divide but, in reality, most schools would not welcome this. Of the few which are committed to ethnic mixing the Leo Baeck High School is by far the most active.

The Council's Head of Arab Education said he believed Arab children were receiving equal educational opportunities in Haifa. He nevertheless expressed a concern that some Arabs were becoming locked in a victim identity so he believed the aim of education was to change both hearts and minds. His aim is for a culture of equality, to each according to their needs, which means that extra resources to some schools and pupils are necessary.

However there is inequality in the priority accorded to language. Officially all children are encouraged to learn Arabic as well as Hebrew, but in practice this rarely happens. The Mayor asked the Government Minister of Education to make Arabic compulsory for all pupils so that there would be state funding for it. Haifa says there are many good Arab teachers in the city but they still often feel nervous of applying for jobs in Jewish schools. 30-40% of speech therapists are Arabs as well as a disproportionate number of doctors and nurses and Haifa has become a magnet for highly qualified Arabs from across northern Israel.

It was suggested that civic and environmental education offered better opportunities for mixing than the mainstream school curriculum. In pursuit of great ethnic mixing of pupils, the Council organises a twice yearly convention for Jewish and Arab schools – five of each come together to work with the science museum. Arab schools also visit the holocaust museum and discuss racism in their curriculum.

Since the recent conflict in Gaza, we had received reports that pupils across Israel had received a one-sided and overtly nationalistic account of its causes and effects and we asked how Haifa's schools were handling the situation. We were told that schools would address Gaza during the forthcoming period of Yom Kippur and Eid. However the education service would not seek to engage pro-peace NGOs as many are considered to be ideological.

The education system in Israel has been criticised for providing little teaching in non-Jewish faiths or cultures at school, which is producing a Jewish population which is largely untutored in the norms and values of the minorities amongst them. Also there are only a handful of bilingual Hebrew/Arabic schools in Israel and none in Haifa, although there is bilingual kindergarten with ambitions to become a primary school. Bilingualism is a difficult topic in Israeli education not least because it would greatly increase the cost of education at a time when public sector funding is very stretched. It is also a political hot potato and one which the City of Haifa thus far reluctant to grasp. However, people believe that Haifa's claims to be Israel's predominant 'shared city' would ring hollow if it does not ultimately adopt some degree of bilingualism.

To add another level of perspective, we were informed of the outcomes of a public opinion survey by Professor Sami Samuha of Haifa University, in which 45% of Arabs have stated they would be happy to attend school alongside Jewish students whilst 55% of Jews would be happy to study alongside Arabs.

5. Employment and business

Haifa is in the throes of a major economic transformation. Originally founded as a port and transportation hub it has had to diversify its economy in the face of technological change. Although it still hopes to retain the major seaport function for Israel this sector now employs far fewer than it once did. Haifa now exceeds the Israeli national average for employees in business, the public sector, education and transportation but has fewer in trade and industry. The workplace is said to be the place where Haifans of all background are most likely to encounter each other.

The physical appearance of the city is a clear testament to the economic upheaval of the past few decades. The original commercial district adjacent to the port has been in decline for many years and many properties lie abandoned. The post-1948 commercial district of Hadar is also now in decline having lost many of its business to the thriving newer districts which have sprung up on the slopes of Mount Carmel.

In response to these trends, the city is now trying to address the hollowing out of its downtown with some new thinking. We were introduced to a group of entrepreneurs and artists who are beginning the repopulation of the old port area. Originally there were seven artists who discovered empty properties with no residential population and started a series of galleries and studios. Initially the municipality was suspicious and the police tried to shut them down for planning violations, but there is now a more accepting

attitude. In time-honoured fashion, where the artist led others have followed and there is now a growing business and cultural sector.[3]

Business taxes in Downtown had been the highest in the whole city at 17% whilst the shopping malls on Carmel were paying much less – a hangover from when it was the city centre 50 years ago.
However, the Mayor has cut the taxes and has encouraged many small start-ups to move in. Now people are also moving in to live, so there is a need for a kindergarten and school. Now there is a one-stop-shop to help people wanting to move in and renovate property and negotiate contracts. The city has relocated branches of the university and college, and the local *merkaz klita* has been put there, filling the area with new footfall.

We were told that often, because of security issues, Israel can be heavily over-regulated in its economy and urban realm. Business can also fall victim to extreme political issues. For example, in the recent Gaza conflict Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman called for a boycott of the businesses of Arabs who identified with Gaza residents. There was some shock and surprise that "even in Haifa" this imprecation had been taken seriously and for a time the Wadi Nisnas commercial district was almost deserted.

The vision for Downtown is to simplify life here so that normal things can be done without being over-regulated and -politicized. Haifa recognises that it has lost much of its 25-35 year age group because of lack of economic opportunity, and is anxious to tempt them back. People say that up to now there has been a dissonance between the size of the city and the opportunities available to young people.

It seemed to us that Downtown offers a great opportunity for a fresh start in Haifa. The complex intermeshing of territory and ethnic identity is a severe impediment in most parts of Israel but Downtown, being literally a neutral space having been reclaimed from the sea, cannot be claimed exclusively by any ethnicity. Its historical identity is of being the hub of Haifa at the time when the city was booming under the British Mandate, a time when ethnic divisions were at their least noticeable.

6. Governance and democratic participation

Haifa is controlled by a city council of 31 elected members. The Mayor of Haifa, Mr Yona Yahav, is a political heavyweight who was, for several years in the 1990s, a member of the Knesset representing the Labor Party, but who defected to Kadima, the party associated with Shimon Peres, Ehud Olmert and Tzipi Livni. He has been the Mayor since 2003 – indeed there is a local tradition of the Mayor holding office for considerable time, with only 9 holders of the post since 1940. Municipalities in Israel have a wide range of functions and a fair degree of local independence, although the national government controls the primary level of education, health and policing.

7. Civil society

Haifa has a large and diverse civil society with many organisations in particular dedicated to building greater intercultural communication and cooperation. In recent years the organisation Shatil has provided a coordinating role for these tendencies. Founded 30 years ago Shatil is the New Israel Fund's Initiative for Social Change, dedicated to building civil society and actively promoting democracy, tolerance, and social justice across Israel. Its Shared Cities project was launched in 2008 after the Lebanon War – part of Cities in Transition network.[4]

There is a sense of attrition and strain in the sector at the moment. It was pointed out that there has been, on average, a crisis every 18 months in Israel in recent years. This is becoming a drain on the peace

[3] http://downtown.co.il/en/
[4] http://citiesintransition.net/

movement, with the sense that everything has to start over again after each one. The most recent crisis in Gaza, whilst it did not impact Haifa directly has, in some regards, been the most traumatic (see Conflict and Mediation below).

Key organisations in the civil society sector include:

- Hand in Hand - a campaign for a bilingual shared school in haifa. It started with 14 families and is now in its third year and has 62 children in a kindergarten but Haifa still has no bilingual school. There are a growing number of children of mixed heritage in Haifa (with little official recognition) and this is a space that gives them some legitimacy. The City Council has not yet felt able to offer official backing to the idea of bilingual schooling.
- The Shared Public spaces project is a partnership of 10 Jewish and Arab organisations established to fight racism.
- The Association for the Absorption of Jewish Migrants, which recently organised Pride as well as a Jewish/Arab conference against violence and also pride.
- The Haifa Stories Festival, which documents encounters between the communities and highlights the lack of mutual knowledge.

The members of civil society organisation told us that the City needs a new 'municipal authority' (an arms-length body with executive powers) to take responsibility for 'shared city' issues. The New Israel Fund has offered financial backing to this but the City has declared there is no requirement for such a body at present.

8. Culture and sport

Culture has long been seen as a platform upon which to build closer ethnic ties, with Haifa the first city to establish an institution specifically to encourage Jewish-Arab relations. Beit Hagefen (Place of the Vine) was set up in 1963 as a function of the municipality and, even today, remains one of few such centres in the country. It has a board of 14 directors (50/50 Arab and Jewish) and over 30 staff. Its main functions are to operate a theatre (indoor and outdoor), multi-lingual library, art gallery and public art programme, classrooms and meeting spaces. Over the years it has waxed and waned but is, apparently in a position of some vigour and self-confidence at the moment, hence its role in brokering the relationship between the City and ICC.

Beit Hagefen was responsible for founding the Holiday of Holidays Festival 20 years ago, and continues to manage it. The origins of the Festival were a recognition that Hannukah, Christmas and Eid all fell within a few days of each other (or at least they did in 1993). It was also an attempt to counteract the suburban flight from the city and give people a reason to leave their ethnic enclaves and visit the centre. The Festival is a mixture of indoor and outdoor artistic shows, discussions and debates, markets and food events, focused upon the Wadi Nisnas area. One lasting legacy of the Festival is that each year a group of artists are commissioned to produce works of public art which are placed on permanent exhibition around Wadi Nisnas. Over several years this has created an accumulation of works which makes Wadi Niswas a quite remarkable mixture of living landscape and outdoor gallery.

The concentration of the festival upon Wadi Nisnas has rather divided opinion. Some say it provides the one opportunity in the year for different parts of the city to mix, whilst others say that in turning the Arab quarter into an exotic visitor experience it is doing little to normalise social interaction. It is a welcome event for the Arab traders but it may be less appreciated by ordinary residents who have to negotiate crowds of strangers pointing cameras at them. Whilst the festival has achieved much in two decades we wonder whether, for the future, it needs to expand its scope spatially as making Wadi Nisnas the exclusive focus of the festival could be unhelpful for building intercultural relations. Its underlying message is aimed at the Jewish majority of citizens and is saying "Look, it is safe to enter an Arab area without fear of crime or

terror", but this is placing an unacceptable burden upon the Arab residents. The challenge for the festival is to find ways of extending into the Jewish-only neighbourhoods to normalise intercultural exchange in those places too.

It was said to us by the artists in downtown that Haifa's communities need to relearn how to celebrate together. Celebration has become too politicised. It is really complicated to think of how to celebrate something without taking the risk of causing offence to someone or attracting unwelcome intervention. The city has given too much priority to those people who seek out reasons to be offended and not enough on those who are looking for common purpose.

Haifa is now seeing a blossoming of youthful Arabic culture in the way that Tel Aviv showcase the creativity of Jewish youth. Nazareth used to be the centre of activity but now Haifa is blossoming again. It is more dynamic and tolerant and full of people looking for social freedom. But artists complain that the city is not responding vigorously enough in creating the right institutions and spaces. Some said there is a need to reinstitute an inclusive Arab urbanism that once existed in the city.

Others said there is need of a cultural policy in Haifa as there is currently little clarity on who the audiences are and on what kind of language provision is appropriate. Haifa needs to be put on the map nationally and internationally for it emergent culture. There is no point in it trying to be like Tel Aviv when it could be forging its own distinctive multi-ethnic culture.

The City's sports department takes a proactive stance to cultural difference. Integration is seen as a by-product of opening new sporting opportunities up to people. Soccer in particular is seen as a great opportunity to bring together different ethnic and linguistic groups such as veteran Jews, Arabs, Ethiopians and Russians. In a recent city-wide soccer tournament an Arab team took first place. Unfortunately the local professional soccer club Maccabee Haifa do not have a good role to play in the community.

9. Language

Whilst over 80% of Arabs speak Hebrew fluently, less than 10% of Jews have a functional command of Arabic. All children are expected to make Hebrew their first language and English is taught as the first foreign language, and there is a requirement to offer Arabic in all schools but it is taught as literature rather than as a functional language. The level of quality with which it is taught also varies wildly across the country and the general message that seems to be put across to children is that it is a subject which will be of little use to them in later life so might as well be dropped at the earliest opportunity.

10. Public space, neighbourhoods and ethnic mixing

Although Haifa has a metropolitan population of nearly 600,000, the effect of the city's location on the precipitous slopes and gullies of Mount Carmel, hard against the indented sea coast, gives a sense of Haifa as being rather difficult to navigate and separated into distinct neighbourhoods. It has also experienced the brunt of car-borne suburbanization which has led to an economic and physical decline in the city core. There are two distinct retail districts (upper town and lower town) both of which have lost much of their vibrancy to the suburbs. Much of the city's wealth now resides on the upper slopes of Mount Carmel in splendid isolation from the old city. One central district which appears to have remained largely unmoved amidst all of this change is Wadi Nisnas, the traditional Arab quarter. Segregation has become an important feature in inter-community dynamics in the city. From the outset, Jewish migrants to Haifa chose to settle in the city's higher latitudes on the Carmel Mountain, while the Palestinian community dominated the areas of Lower Haifa. This demographic and topographic pattern also reflects increasing social and economic differences, with the Jewish community, in general, occupying the higher income brackets.

The ICC team visited two residential neighbourhoods for detailed exploration: Hadar and Nave Paz. Covering 2.83 sq. km., Hadar constitutes 4.4% of Haifa's area and its 37,170 residents make up 14% of the city's population, highlighting its density of settlement. Hadar lies between the Carmel area and the lower town area and is now a neighbourhood in flux with numerous new immigrants, mainly from the former Soviet Union, living there. The main street, Herzl Street, is a busy bargain shopping street with many shops, bazaars and discount houses but it has lost much in recent years. Some of the educational institutions like the Technion, Israel Institute of Technology and Kiach high school have moved away; some like Chadash, Bialik, Bosmat and Even-Pina high schools have closed down and some like the Re'ali school still exist. Even the Haifa Central Synagogue seems to have fallen on hard times.

Hadar Merkaz (Central Hadar) contains many of Haifa's architectural, cultural and historical landmarks. Nestled between Arab neighborhoods Wadi Nisnas and Wadi Salib, Hadar has historically been characterized as a Jewish immigrant neighbourhood with many Holocaust survivors settled in the area, and in the early 1990s when many newcomers from the former Soviet Union were first absorbed there. However, both groups treated Hadar more like a launching pad than an ideal destination. Some ex-Soviets have stayed, largely because of economic constraints, but most residents are lower income, and much of the housing has suffered from years of neglect. There is no social housing and 50% is private rented. The area has many infrastructure and security problems and because of the extreme transience of the population community cohesion is difficult to achieve. Furthermore, the longstanding residence complain that they don't have a voice.

There are now several efforts to revive Hadar. Through a partnership of the Municipality, the University of Haifa and the Jewish Agency, a student village – *Kfar Hastudentim* – was created in 2007, and students were encouraged with a NIS 14,500 scholarship. They get an apartment in the area and must do 4-8 hours voluntary work a week, undergo education in social work and urban renewal. Students of many subjects and backgrounds, including secular Jews and Arabs, have opted in. In exchange, they do community work with Hadar residents, such as facilitating youth groups, community organizing, assisting the elderly population and coexistence projects. So far, around 200 people have participated in the program, 50 of whom have remained in the neighbourhood.

The Hadar Community Association has been launched with a new vision to involve young people and to work with the authorities to tackle crime and drugs. The municipality has opened Gan Binyamin, the first planned park in Israel for many years. The community centre focusses on the area called the Rectangle, with a population of 13,000 with 81% immigrants. The population profile is getting younger and it has the greatest ethnic diversity of anywhere in the whole of Israel.

After the second Lebanese war the community activists realised there needed to be greater social support between neighbours and not just a reliance upon the welfare state for everything. An Urban Kibbutz (which has grown out of the old rural movement) was formed in 2005 with a community of 13 national service graduates. It now has 100 members.

Gorani Torani is a Jewish religious charity which has moved into the area to take action. It has argued that the occupation of Palestine has damaged Israeli society and there is a need to put something back into deprived communities. They have recruited a group of young families and singles from all over Israel to settle in Hadar in order to revitalize the area. They have organized a community centre and sponsor activities for Hadar's residents. They hope to create a direct democracy organisation using online discussions for decision making. This Summer there was a summer camp for Arab and Jewish kids during the Gaza War. Usually such things are sectarian. Children aged 6-12 were supported with mixed staff and lots of non-verbal communication through games.

Hidushishi (Friday Renewal) is a group of volunteers who every Friday try to tidy up the abandoned courtyards and alleyways. There is frustration that the municipality is taking too long and spending too little on renewing street infrastructure, but this is the first Mayor who has started to reinvest in the area. There is disagreement over whether Hadar has yet turned the corner, and whilst social relations are tolerant there are few common goals. However, one man who came to live here after living in an outer suburb, said he had never seen a place with more communal life than Hadar.

The second visit was to Nave Paz and Beit Magenza Youth Club. The area, comprising many high-rise developments, was built in the early 1970s and absorbed many new immigrants in the 1990s. Nave Paz is six streets of high rise with 5000 people. 51% from Ethiopia, 31% Israeli veterans, 10% from former Soviet Union and 5% Arabs. The Arabs include former South Lebanon Army and West Bank collaborators living in exile. This is considered the poorest neighbourhood in Haifa.

The main challenges are isolation and discrimination. Everyone says there is ethnic prejudice and conflict between the youth of different ethnic groups with no group able find common cause or shared space the others – with the exception of the youth and community centre. The primary role of staff is as mediators and conflict resolvers. Residents said that fear of their neighbours was a primary concern so the staff have created a 'Good Enough Neighbours' project. All the high rise blocks have desolate neglected vestibules which they are trying to improve and animate. The philosophy of the staff is to face up to conflict and talk about it.

The first step is to go door-knocking and listen to people's complaints and to understand life through their eyes. They then created building coordinators – paid residents who are trained for the role of conflict anticipation. Staff work out a plan with the residents for their vision of their building and then form house committees and a forum of all committees, mainly to establish communication rather than just fix problems. In 2013 the team worked in 11 buildings, set up 8 forums and tackled 15 conflicts and now have 10 building plans.

They organise spatial planning and architecture workshops with residents and experts. For example, one street that had been neglected for 40 years and used as a traffic rat run. They did a 'Planning for Real' exercise which enabled residents to express their ideals for the area. Finally they brought the Mayor to visit and started fundraising and got him to invest in new infrastructure.

Another initiative is the Rainbow Women Multicultural Centre. There are 800 women living in one street but many are invisible and frustrated and isolated from each other. The team set up a brainstorm to identify problems and solutions and, after three years, of meeting they help many Ethiopians to read Hebrew and use the internet.

We met the local community policemen, whose role is rather different from general police. He sees many families where kids are abandoned to drink and drugs and exploited as sex workers.

The staff team describe their work as the 'Haifa Community Organising Model' which has now been tried and adopted in 15 neighbourhoods. The municipality employs a team of 22 community workers who run youth and community centres, after-school clubs, and elders clubs. This struck the visiting ICC team as one of the most coherent approaches to community empowerment that it has seen.

11. Conflict and mediation

Haifa is proud that it has managed to avoid much of the political violence and tension that is common in other parts of Israel and the West Bank. There was nothing it could do to prevent the rocket attacks by Lebanese Hizbollah forces in 2006 but (until very recently) it has managed to keep sectarian violence off the

streets since 2000. On that occasion the Mayor of Haifa himself personally intervened to prevent groups from clashing in the streets. However, warning signs were sounded earlier this year that Haifa is not immune from issues which emerge elsewhere in the region. A hot issue at the moment is the alleged discrimination and evictions by the Israeli Defence Force against Bedouin groups in the Negev region. This led to a large street demonstration by Haifa's Arabs which came within a whisker of erupting into a violent confrontation with the police.

This is a symptom of a wider and very important issue. For many Israeli Arabs, the issues of local cultural diversity, mixing, sharing and interaction are a complete irrelevance. To their mind the only issue that matters is that of self-determination for the Palestinian people (whether resident in the West Bank, Gaza or Israel itself) and no other issues can be satisfactorily discussed until this is resolved. Such people are also disinterested in the nuances of diversity within different communities, seeing the world entirely in terms of a struggle between Jews and Arabs for land. Such opinions were even expressed at the Mixed Cities conference (attended by ICC) – supposedly a gathering of people committed to reconciliation and co-operation.

The situation has been exacerbated by the recent Gaza conflict. Firstly there were violent clashes in the Wadi Nisnas district between Palestininan activists and police on 12 July. Then a non-sectarian group of peace activists held a demonstration in Karmelia district on 19 July which was attacked by a group of pro-war demonstrators. There were several injuries including to Suheil As'ad, the Deputy Mayor of Haifa, and the neutrality of the police has been questioned.

Opinion is divided upon the significance of this event. Some claim that people in Haifa are now denied the democratic right to register disapproval of government policy for fear of physical intimidation and that the city should not tolerate this. Others claim that the disruption on 19 July was caused by two groups of extremists who came to Haifa from elsewhere, and that the events were uncharacteristic of the city and do not therefore merit any remedial or future preventative action.

It is impossible for ICC to arbitrate on such a matter, suffice it to say that a guarantee of the right to peaceable demonstration and protection from ethnic violence is a cornerstone of the ICC network and the very least that should be expected from member local authorities.

The team was able to witness an example of high level mediation during its visit. The mayor of Haifa returned home from China to immediately chair a meeting of religious leaders to avert possible clashes as Jews and Muslims prepared to observe their faith's major holidays of Yom Kippur and Id al-Adha, which overlapped this year for the first time in more than three decades. Anxieties arose because the Jewish custom of static, home-based celebration of their festival could be at odds with the Muslim custom of high-spiritedness and movement between neighbourhoods. The meeting resulted in the designation of certain zones of the city where travel would be permitted and this message was to be transmitted through places of worship, and this appeared to have achieved a peaceful resolution.

12. Summary of the Intercultural Cities Index

The Intercultural City Index analysis is based on a questionnaire involving 69 questions grouped in 14 indicators with three distinct types of data. Indicators have been weighed for relative importance. For each indicator, the participating cities can reach up to 100 points (which are consolidated for the general ICC Index).[5]

[5] The detailed results of Haifa's response to the ICC Index can be consulted at http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/cities/Index/Haifa.pdf

These indicators comprise: commitment; education system; neighbourhoods; public services; business and labour market; cultural and civil life policies; public spaces; mediation and conflict resolution; language; media; international outlook; intelligence/competence; welcoming and governance. Some of these indicators - education system; neighbourhoods; public services; business and labour market; cultural and civil life policies; public spaces are grouped in a composite indicator called “urban policies through the intercultural lens” or simply “intercultural lens”.

According to the overall index results, Haifa has been positioned 28th among the 63 cities in the sample, with an aggregate intercultural city index of 60%. The results suggest that in Haifa there is still room for improvement in the intercultural policies. The municipality could identify useful insights and examples from other cities in the field of commitment, education policy, neighbourhood policy, public services, media policy, international outlook and welcoming.

On the other hand, Haifa’s achievements in the area of mediation, language, governance, business and public spaces are higher than the city sample.

Haifa may wish to look into further examples implemented by other Intercultural Cities as a source of learning and inspiration to guide future initiatives. Such examples are provided in the Intercultural cities database[6].

13. Conclusions and Recommendations

Haifa is a city with an active tradition of diversity, migration and ethnic co-existence which long predates the State of Israel. The City Council and the townspeople demonstrate evident pride in this tradition and in the institutions and customs which they have evolved to enshrine it. They also consider that it lies at the basis of the city’s future plans for growth and gives it a distinctive identity within Israel.

Any assessment of contemporary Haifa should be placed within the wider history, geography and politics of the Middle East. Haifa originally grew and made its name as the major port on the Levantine coast, supplying a large and diverse hinterland. Today that role is severely circumscribed by politics which now limit Haifa’s hinterland to the state of Israel, and possibly only its northern sector. Thus Haifa needs to look both outwards, to explore new markets for trade, tourism and ideas; and it must look inwards to explore more deeply its unique complexion as a multi-ethnic and ‘shared’ Israeli city. The challenge is that it must do this during a period of deteriorating security in the region and in a more extreme political climate at home. The voices of those, from all sides, who demand a separate existence now far outweighs those for whom a shared solution is desirable. Indeed, it may even come to pass that the voice which calls for the intercultural option may even be stifled completely if the state proves unwilling to defend its right and safety in the public domain.

The irony may be that even as Haifa and Israel’s population become ever more multi-faceted, mixed and nuanced, politics will deny it any interpretation of society other than a blunt black and white division between Arab and Jew. By the standard of many parts of Europe, Haifa is already a highly segregated city in both ethnicity and socio-economic life-chances but, set against the context of Israel as a whole it is a place where interactions are still normal and where much more can still be possible. However, these qualities cannot be taken for granted and must be defended and asserted by the citizenry and their leaders. The alliances the city chooses to form, with networks such as ICC, will do much to embed these values of tolerance but ultimately the people of Haifa must demonstrate that they prefer the route of tolerance and cooperation to rancour and separation. They must also recognise that life in a globalised economy is far too

[6] http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/Cities/guidance_en.asp

complex to be explained with bipolar explanations and that ultimately even those who have bankrolled the advocates of this approach will tire of it and abandon the separatists to an impoverished isolation.

The City Council's vision for Hiafa has three priorities: economic development, tourism and high education/research (particularly hitech and biotech). These are familiar aspirations repeated by ambitious cities around the world, and Haifa has already exhibited evidence of the vigour with which it is prepared to pursue its ambitions. The challenge it faces to rebrand itself internationally within an extremely unstable national/regional climate is colossal however. Tourism and conference markets are, for example, very fickle and sensitive to political conflict. Tourism furthermore is in general a low skill/low wage sector which may not deliver the high value outcomes the city aspires to.

However, our concern in ICC is less with a city's global economic ambitions and more with its internal abilities to be an open, just, egalitarian and culturally vibrant place to live and work – although the two are no doubt linked. In this regard, the team was impressed by the considerable investment in resources and methodological innovation given over to community development and empowerment.

Haifa has performed reasonably well in the ICC Index demonstrating that it is a mature city of diversity which is familiar with many of the key issues and has the policy commitment and professional competence to address them. We now encourage Haifa to become an active member of the network, both attending and hosting visits and ensuring a widespread participation across professional disciplines and including civil society, the media and business.

- **Commitment:** the city will need to outwardly express its commitment to the principles of ICC by adopting an intercultural action plan, as well as implementing an evaluation process.

- **Education:** Haifa should move towards a less segregated education approach by deploying a policy to increase ethnical and cultural mixing in the schools and by considering actions to involve parents from minority backgrounds in the school life of children. The decision to support an Arabic/Hebrew bilingual high school would be both a powerful symbolic gesture and would represent the establish of a new city space which is truly intercultural.

- **Neighbourhood:** Haifa has shown an impressive capacity to accept new citizens of many backgrounds and to invest in those people and places which are least favoured. However, the final judgement of whether a city is intercultural is not only the way that small pockets of the most diverse or most deprived are dealt with, but how ALL the citizenry are brought into the process of mixing, ie the areas of exclusively comfortable and/or veteran Jewish settlement.

- **Public services:** Haifa may wish to lay down a strategy to encourage intercultural mixing in the private sector labour market.

- **Business and labour market:** Haifa may wish to upgrade its policies in this field by encouraging 'business districts/incubators'. It may be also interesting to give priority to companies with a diversity strategy in the procurement of goods and services by the city.

- **Cultural and civil life:** Haifa could broaden its cultural and civil life policies, for example, by using interculturalism as a criterion when allocating grants

- **Media:** The print and broadcast media were notably absent during the visit of the ICC team. Haifa may wish to further explore possible media policies, for instance, by providing advocacy/media

training/mentorships for journalists from minority backgrounds and by introducing monitoring mechanisms to examine how media portray minorities.

- **International outlook:** Haifa may wish to aexpress its international outlook policies by designing an explicit policy in this regard, by encouraging co-development projects with migrant groups' countries of origin and by involving the foreign students in the life of the city.

- **Intelligence and competence:** Haifa may wish to further explore promoting the intercultural competences of the city carrying out surveys including questions about the perception of migrants and minorities.

- **Welcoming:** Haifa may wish ameliorate its welcoming policies by creating a specifically tailored welcoming service for different groups (students, spouses, migrant workers). The municipality may also wish to have a special public ceremony to greet newly arrived persons in the presence of the local government's officials.

- **Governance:** Haifa may wish to further explore possible governance policies by introducing standard for the representation of migrant minorities in mandatory bodies supervising schools and public services.