

Inter-ethnic cooperation at the local level:
Arab-Jewish coalition-building in Israeli municipal councils

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Abstract

Although national platforms of inter-ethnic cooperation have been explored, little attention has been given to areas of cooperation at the local level. Do local politics provide more space for inter-ethnic cooperation than the national level? If so, what causes variation in cooperative patterns from one city to another? This study examines patterns in Arab-Jewish coalitions in city councils of mixed Israeli cities, where an Arab minority lives tensely side by side a Jewish majority. Using an original data-set covering local coalition patterns the past 20 years, as well as in-depth interviews with Arab and Jewish council members, I find that, though more inter-ethnic cooperation occurs at the city-level compared to the Parliament, ethno-politics still impact local coalition processes. More specifically, the ethno-political stance of a mayor, as well as his unwillingness to cross ethno-political 'red lines,' can make or break Arab/Jewish coalition formation and duration. This study hopes to contribute to deeper understanding of the complex political identity of the Arab minority in the Israel, as well as dynamics of local ethnic politicization in other deeply divided societies.

Key words: Coalition-building, local government, ethnic politicization, Arab minority, Israel

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1. Introduction

"I don't know of any other way that a local party can effectively serve its constituencies besides being a part of the ruling coalition, part of the power that directs things. But not at any price."

Arab council member in Ramla¹

Two months following the 2018 Israeli municipal elections, the newly elected mayor of Haifa appointed an Arab council member as deputy mayor. Within days, what would have otherwise been an uneventful local development shot into the national spotlight when Israel's Interior Minister objected to the appointment on the basis that the Arab representative espoused non-Zionist political views. Soon, the Prime Minister himself requested the mayor cancel the appointment, adding, "I hope that request is heeded."² Vigorous public debate ensued. The mayor, joined with certain Haifa residents, stated strongly that Arabs deserve meaningful representation on local city councils, regardless of their views on national politics. Others contended that individuals who hold such political views should not be given positions of decision-making, no matter the platform.

The Haifa controversy sheds light on both the complex relationship between the Israeli state and its Arab minority, as well as on a commonly held assumption that ethnicity is less politicized in local politics, allowing space for unprecedented inter-ethnic cooperation. Local politics have been described as featuring 'soft' rather than 'hard' ethno-political dynamics, offering a respite from controversial divides plaguing national politics (Aspinall 2011). Theoretically, this is understandable, as municipal work is an area distanced from broader national ideologies, focusing instead on less divisive issues and policies such as schools, infrastructure, garbage collection, ect. (Debus and Gross 2015). However, few studies have been conducted to establish whether this notion holds true empirically, particularly in deeply divided societies. Is the local level truly as a-political as is often assumed? And if so, does it provide a platform for unexpected cooperation? In a time where an increased attention is being given to ethnic cleavages at the local level (Heimeshoff 2011), exploring local inter-ethnic cooperation may provide a useful

¹ Author's interview

² Bachner, Michael. 9 December 2018. Times of Israel. "PM asks Haifa mayor not to appoint deputy who said Israel inspired the Islamic state."

foundation for future studies and a greater understanding of the political underpinnings of this platform.

This study examines the extent of ethnic politicization in local politics, as measured through patterns in Arab/Jewish coalition-building processes. The Israeli case provides a good case study to explore the unique potential of local politics vis-à-vis cooperation. Interesting trends are already at play: for one, while no predominantly Arab list has even been formally incorporated into the ruling coalition in the Knesset³, 16 out of 23 locally elected Arab officials have signed coalition agreements with the ruling Jewish mayors in the last municipal election cycle alone⁴. Many of these coalitions feature Jewish mayors or council members formally associated with right-wing national parties like the Likud, Israel Beitanu, or even the ultra-orthodox Shas- all of which have opposing policies and values to those of most Arab parties. At the same time, stories like the Haifa controversy occur, with some Arab/Jewish coalition breaking down over ethnic-based disagreements, or with Arab council members not joining the ruling coalition at all.

The case-study includes seven Israeli mixed cities, and uses qualitative and archival data to analyze coalition patterns of the past 20 years (1998-2018). The central question is: in Israeli mixed cities, to what extent does ethnic politicization influence Arab/Jewish coalition processes? The first section of the paper offers an overview of existing literature about inter-ethnic cooperation and its salience at the local level, ending with a proposed theory about the specific case study at hand. The second section discusses the methodology employed, highlighting its strengths and limitations. The third section includes a historical and political backdrop of the Arab minority in Israel through a constructivist lens, then moves to an in-depth analysis of the salience of ethnic politics at the local level. In the findings section, the three hypotheses are examined using an original time-series dataset and a set of semi-structured interviews. Conclusions are then demonstrated through a qualitative comparison of two Israeli cities. The fourth section summarises the findings and discusses further research possibilities that emerge from focussing on local patterns of cooperation.

³ The closest Arab parties got to joining a coalition was during the Rabin years, when Hadash joined the blocking majority in the Knesset (Sawaed).

⁴ These figures are based on database personally collected by the author, based on interviews and archival coalition agreements.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Ethnicity, Identity, and Politics

The body of literature on ethnic identity and politics is a prominent one in comparative politics, with foundational theories developing and changing over time. Beginning with basic definitions, this study defines an *ethnic group* as an ascriptive category such as race, language, tribe, or religion that is inherited, rather than individually adopted, and involves an imagined community (Horowitz 1985). As such, an *ethnic party* overtly represents itself as a champion of one particular ethnic group, and makes such a representation central to its office-seeking and policy-seeking efforts (Chandra 2004). As Fenton explains, culture, descent, and so on are merely the dead ingredients of ethnicity: "For ethnicity to spring to life it is necessary that real or perceived differences of ancestry, culture and language are mobilized in social or political transactions" (1999, p.6). Ethnic politics, then, do not just reference these "dead ingredients" in the political sphere, but the way in which such ingredients influence decision-making processes.

Theories about the impact of ethnicity on political patterns are often rooted in normative assumptions about the malleability of ethnicity. For decades, many socio-political studies were underpinned by a primordial perspective, which views ethnicity as static, fixed, and singular (eg. Horowitz 1985, Easterly and Levine 1997, Reynal-Querol 2002, and Fearson and Laitin 2003). This perspective slowly became less popular through a myriad of case studies that showed how group identities can shift based on external circumstances. A well-known example is Posner's research on Zambia, in which the political salience of an ethnic cleavage depended not on the nature of the cleavage itself, but on exogenous factors such as group size and the extent of political competition (Posner 2004). Today, the more commonly accepted perspective on ethnicity is a constructivist one, which views ethnic identities as fluid and liable to change, and social meanings as reinforced or diluted through exogenous and endogenous factors ranging from conflict to economic changes to political institutions (Chandra 2004, Laitin 1999). As one scholar explains, "ethnicities should be conceptualized not as substances or things or entities or organisms or collective individuals... but rather in relational, processual, dynamic, eventful and disaggregated terms" (Brubaker 2002, p.167).

Another change in the field occurred through an increased focus on ethnic politicization. Borrowing from Horowitz's definition, ethnic politicization- often used interchangeably with ethno-politics- is defined as the salience of ethnic, racial, or religious identities in political institutions (Horowitz 1971). This variable became more popular as scholars realized that ethnic diversity in itself is not responsible for negative outcomes such as a low equality of governance, poor democratic stability, or an increase in violent conflict, but it is rather the politicization of such diversity (Weber 2016). One conclusion often made is lower levels of ethnic politicization lead to higher levels of inter-ethnic political cooperation, such as coalitions, joint lists, or co-sponsoring bills (Osnat 2016).

2.2 Inter-ethnic cooperation at the local level

Despite the abundance of theories of inter-ethnic cooperation at the national level, the topic has rarely been studied at the local level. The general assumption, however, is that ethno-political issues are less salient in municipalities than parliaments. The issue has often been framed in terms of hard and soft ethnic politics. In these terms, national politics feature "hard" ethnic politics, in which a large proportion of activity in civil and political society is conducted by ethnic political movements, which, according to Milton Esman (1994, 27), are groups that seek "to combat ethnic antagonists or to impress ethnically defined interests on the agenda of the state." Local politics, on the other hand, are believed to feature much softer forms of ethnic politics which are more blind, at least formally, to ethnic distinctions; contestants for office may still mobilize around ethnic symbols to garner support, but do not claim to be pursuing dominance or primacy for their own group at the expense of others (Aspinall 2011, Heimeshoff 2001). This leads to the belief that the local level is more conducive to inter-ethnic cooperation compared to the national level.

Relatively few studies have been published to test these assumptions. The largest body of literature on the subject to date centers around black/white cooperation in American city councils. Initial studies conducted in U.S. cities generated the polarization model, which states that polarization is the key to understanding local politics, and that inter-ethnic or racial relations in cities can be just as divisive than in higher levels of government. Such studies concluded "consociational alliances" crossing racial boundaries would be exceptionally unlikely to form (e.g. Levine 1974; Eisinger 1976; Kleppner 1985). Most of these studies, however, were done in what are considered racially polarized cities in

the eastern and mid-western cities such as Milwaukee, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Atlanta. Later studies, such as Browning, Marshall, and Tabb's 1984 path-breaking study, questioned the validity of the polarization theory in what are considered cross-over cities in Western states, which have smaller black populations, fewer competing ethnic groups, a reformed political culture, and lower levels of white antipathy. By analyzing ten cities in California, Browning et al found that black unity has been supplemented by major linkages of white support, exemplified through the rise of successful bi-racial coalitions. Sonenshein (1989) honed in on one city to examine the life cycle of a biracial coalition that won power in a major cross-over city of Los Angeles, concluding in turn that, while bi-racial alliances will be unlikely to form in the face of persistent racial polarization, they are possible in regions where trust can be built over time in line with Hinckley's theory of inertia (1981).

This study's first hypothesis is built on this body of literature. As mentioned, while no Arab party has been part of the ruling Jewish coalition in the Knesset since Israel's inception, Arab/Jewish coalitions have consistently featured in mixed cities. I set to test out the assumption that this is due to 'soft' to ethnic politics. From the perspective of a vertical comparison, then, I expect to see the following:

H1: Arab/Jewish coalitions in local politics are more likely to occur than in national politics due to lower level of ethnic polarization.

This leads to a second question about the factors influencing variation in inter-ethnic cooperation from city to city. Even less has been published in this regard, though what does exist places an emphasis on the role of the mayor. Case studies, particularly those in the pluralist tradition, frequently identify the mayor to be an important actor with respect to inter-ethnic cooperation, or a lack thereof (Yates 1977; Jones and Bacherlor 1986; Ferman 1985). In his classic study of New Haven, Dahl (1961) found the mayor to be a critical player in the "executive centered coalition" governing the city. Salisbury (1964) discussed the "new convergence of power" placing the mayor at "the peak of the loose coalition of interests that dominates today's urban scene . . ." (787). This seems to be the case in the local Israeli arena as well, where mayors are viewed as city presidents. Thus, from a horizontal standpoint, I isolate a mayor's ethno-political stance as a significant factor in explaining variations in Arab/Jewish coalition formation and duration from city to city:

H2: A Jewish mayor's perceived inclusive ethno-political stance positively influences the formation of local Arab/Jewish coalitions.

H3: A Jewish mayor's ability to maintain his perceived ethno-political stance positively influences the duration of local Arab/Jewish coalitions.

3. Methodology

In order to test these three hypotheses, I gathered data on local coalition formation and duration in seven of the eight Israeli mixed cities: Akko, Haifa, Maolot-Tarshiha, Tel Aviv-Jaffa, Ramla, Lod, and Nazareth Illit. Jerusalem, the largest mixed city, was excluded from the study due to a long-standing Arab boycott on local elections. The collected descriptive data of Arab representation and incorporation spans from 1998-2018. This time-frame marks the last four election cycles and 20 years of local governance, as well as the beginning of the current cycle. A time-series method was deemed appropriate for the study, as measuring coalition patterns in the same city over several years keeps constant other variables such as demographic size, specific history of political parties, or the general ideology of the voting population.

The methodology of this case study is primarily qualitative, based on interviews and archival data. The decision behind such a choice stems from a pragmatic and theoretical reasoning. Pragmatically, no formal database exists that reports on coalition agreements in Israeli cities throughout the years. Though parties often sign formal agreements, these are not always publicly published, and there is no standardized implementation of storing previous agreements. To create my own database, I interviewed Jewish and Arab mayors and council members who were personally involved in negotiations surrounding the coalition agreements. Before each interview, respondents were asked to record instances of Arab/Jewish coalition in the past twenty years. The answers given were cross-referenced with each other: if more than two council members gave the same responses (Jewish or Arab), the results were taken as given.

Theoretically, a qualitative methodology was chosen due to the nature of the research question. A core goal of interview-based qualitative research is the explanation of outcomes of individual cases to either expand upon existing theories or explore cases that seem to contradict them (Mahoney and Goertz 2006), and is primarily inductive in nature. Semi-structured interviews have the added benefit of nuance compared to a more rigorous deductive method, particularly when it comes to *why* questions as opposed to *what* (Aberbach and Rockman 2002). Such a method fit this particular case-study, where an existing assumption is being probed rather than conclusively proven, and *why* questions are the focal points.

In case studies, external validity is often sacrificed for the sake of more internally valid conclusions. This is certainly the case here, particularly considering the uniqueness of the formation and development of the Israeli state. In truth, whether or not the Israeli ethno-national conflict is comparable to other conflicts is still open for debate. Arab and post-Zionist scholars tend to compare minority/majority relations in Israel with other interlocking conflicts, such as in Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, and Rwanda, with some even comparing them to racial tensions in the U.S (Pappe 2001). Other Israeli scholars, on the other hand, argue for its uniqueness, particularly as related to minority/majority relations. Where else, they argue, does a minority form almost overnight with the arrival of a new majority claiming a land out of which they were expelled 1900 years ago (Smootha 1990)? Though appreciating these concerns, I side with the former camp on the comparability of the case. As seen through the literature review, Israeli inter-ethnic relations can be compared to other instances where majority/minority relations are contentious, such as black/white relations in U.S. cities, or the incorporation of Muslim immigrants (a growing minority) in many European cities. External validity can also extend beyond minority/majority relations to highly fractured societies in general, such as inter-sectarian relations in Lebanese cities or inter-faction relations in Indian villages (Miller 1965).

3.1 Variables, Coding, and Analysis

The generally accepted definition of inter-ethnic cooperation in the political arena is the formal or informal political cooperation of different ethnic groups or parties (Feason and Laitin, 1996). As mentioned, this can take many forms, from co-sponsorship of bills, to joint lists, to formal coalition agreements before or after elections. This paper quantifies inter-ethnic cooperation by focusing on post-election coalitions; considering the structure of local Israeli politics, coalitions are the clearest form of cooperation. Today, local elections occur every 5 years in Israel's 77 cities, following a double-ballot proportional representation system- one direct vote for mayor, and one direct vote for a particular party. The political institution corresponds to Back's (2005, p.83) definition of a local semi-presidential system; it is different than a parliamentary system because the mayor can operate without fear of being deselected by his or her council. After elections, winning mayors generally form a post-election coalition from the list of elected parties, codified through signed coalition agreements. If a party is in a coalition, its representatives are

bound to vote with the mayor. If a party is not, it has little to no influence in the city's decision-making process.

As such, to answer my first and second hypotheses, my dependent variable is a binary one: the presence or absence of a local Arab/Jewish coalition. To answer my third claim, the dependent variable is a continuous one: the duration of an Arab/Jewish coalition. Both variables were measured through an original database covering the prevalence and duration of coalitions throughout the cities and time-frame selected. My main independent variable, the perceived ethno-political stance of the Jewish mayors, was harder to quantify. To do so, I manually coded the interviews, highlighting any references made to the mayor by Arab and Jewish council members and deputy mayors. I then grouped the references into positive and negative ones and differentiated the mayors accordingly (see Appendix C for a sample of the coding method). In all seven cities, a clear consensus arose concerning which group the mayor can be placed vis-à-vis the Arab population.

3.2 Interviewee Selection

Between September and October of 2018, I completed a total of 27 interviews with elected officials (see Appendix B for a breakdown by city). All Arab council members in the selected mixed cities were contacted first by email and then by phone. 18 officials completed the interview, out of a total of 22 (response rate of 81.8%). In order to get a basic comparative understanding on the patterns of Jewish participation in ruling elections, I interviewed a minimum of one Jewish elected official in each city, with respondents randomly selected through municipal websites. Seven interviews were completed. Lastly, I interviewed the mayors of Akko and Nazareth Illit, the two cities highlighted in the last part of the findings section. Except for two phone interviews, all interviews were conducted face-to-face, either in Arabic, Hebrew, or English, as indicated by the respondent's preference.

4. Navigating Identities: the Arab Minority in Israel

A rather developed literature exists on the sociological, historical, and political evolution of the Arab minority in Israel. Various explanations exist on the degree of discrimination it endures, its connection to Arabs in the region, and its degree of loyalty to the Israeli state. However, what most scholars agree on the salience of ethnicity in every day life, especially in Arab/Jewish relations at the political level. As Lustick, one of the foremost

scholars of the topic categorically states, “almost every aspect of Jewish-Arab relations in Israel has been politicized” (1980, p.5). This section begins with a socio-political overview of Arab citizens of Israel through a constructivist lens, while the second part includes a discussion on how identities have played out at the local level, highlighting the historical trajectory of municipal elections and their current institutional structure.

4.1 Socio-political overview

Palestinians were, until 1948, the dominant group in Israel, making up two-thirds of the population (Morris 2009). During the 1948 war, the majority were displaced and gathered in the West Bank, Gaza, and as refugees in neighboring Arab countries. Arabs who stayed on their land throughout the war, numbering around 150,000, were granted citizenship, thus finding themselves in a unique position of being the only Arab minority in the Middle East, separated from their broader Palestinian nation and forced to operate within the confines of a new Jewish state. To distinguish them from Palestinians outside the fledgling state’s borders, the term ‘Arab Israelis’ was given, and continues to be used primarily by Jewish Israelis. The minority itself generally prefers the term ‘Palestinian citizens of Israel,’ as they self-identify as having an Arab or Palestinian nationality and an Israeli citizenship⁵. This tension between both a loyalty to the broader Palestinian nation and the country of their citizenship is a running theme throughout the seven decades since the population’s abrupt formation, described by one political historian as a challenge as difficult as “holding two watermelons in one hand” (Rabinowitz 2005).

The beginning chapter of Arab/Jewish relations inside Israel was marked by military rule, enacted by the first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion. This period, from 1948 to 1966, included a ban on movement, prohibition of political organizations, and limited job opportunities, birthed out of a desire to both alienate and downsize the number of Arabs in the Jewish state (Pappe, 2011; Bauml, 2007). From the perspective of Jewish political leaders, they were viewed as a ‘fifth column’ that at any given moment could join the enemy of the state. As one might imagine, Arab political mobilization during this time was almost non-existent; most elites had fled during the war, and the population’s primary struggle was existential (Pappe, 2011).

The event that began Arab political organization is known as the Day of the Land in March 1967. In protest to a government decision to expropriate 20,000 dunams of Arab

⁵ In this study, I use the politically objective term of the Arab minority in Israel, or Arab citizens of Israel, interchangeably.

land in the North, as well as other grievances, Arabs declared a national day of strike, organizing for the first time with pamphlets and speeches. When the Israeli army was sent to Arab villages to quell the demonstrations, violence ensued, leading to the death of six Arabs. Out of the events emerged party and organizational pluralism that began to focus on combating civil and national discrimination (Ghanem, 2001). Months later, the seismic events of the June 1967 led to a lifting of emergency regulations as Israeli fears about the danger posed by its internal Arab minority shifted to the Palestinians in the territories.

As Arabs mobilized politically, scholars describe the agenda that developed as a 'third-space' strategy, birthed out of a desire to be free from the need to fully integrate, but also not to be consumed by the collective identity of Palestinians around them. The three elements of the 'third space' are: first, a total support for the official Palestinian position that demands an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel, second, a demand for equal civic human rights for the Arab community in Israel, and third, a decision to employ only tactics possible within Israeli law. Scholars often employ a constructivist perspective to explain the balance between these three objectives. As one author puts it, "one can see the various identities Palestinians in Israel endorsed; the national and the civic one which they were forced to adopt. Each of these was displayed and hidden according to the circumstances. At times it was convenient to present a Palestinian identity, at times a religious identity, and every now and then, an Israeli identity" (Peppe, p.116). This is revealed through the Arab reaction to national events such as the 1973 war, and the first and second intifada: while they supported Palestinian movements in theatres and editorials in the press, they generally did not resort to violence.

From the Jewish perspective, what complicates relations with the Arab minority is a desire to preserve Israel's status as a Jewish state. In order for this to happen, Jews must remain a demographic majority (Smootha famously refers to Israel's democratic system as an 'ethnic democracy'), and must be the key decision-makers on matters of social and political policy. Thus, as Arab citizens navigate various identity prisms, "the problem was that the Jewish state did not show any appreciation for this kind of navigation between two uncompromising and demanding forces, and did not tolerate any political behavior that did not present a total acquiescence to the Jewish character and destiny of the state" (Peppe, 118). Though Israeli attitude changed towards the Arab minority during more hopeful times, such as during the Rabin years and the Oslo Accords, a perceived threat of it being demographic danger lingers on (Lustick 1980).

4.2 Local Arab Politics

Various scholars note the importance of local government for the Arab minority in Israel (see Ghanem 2001, Al-Haj and Rosenfeld 1990a; Paz 1989; Lustick 1980). This is clearly reflected through the consistently higher Arab voter turnout in local elections, which averaged as high as 90% in 2013, compared to their lower turnout in Knesset elections. Reasons given for these trends include the fact that the local government is one of the only political areas where Arabs can influence their city's social, political, and economic development with relative autonomy, and also serves as a track for heads and members of councils to potentially reach Knesset aspirations (Ghanem 2001).

The importance of the local level is just as prominent in Israeli mixed cities, as representation and incorporation has increased over the past 20 years under study:

Table 1: Arab representation and incorporation in local councils of mixed Israeli cities, 1998-2018

Year	% Arabs on councils	% Arabs in ruling coalition
1998	12.4%	50%
2003	12.5%	75%
2008	11.7%	80%
2013	15.7%	69.6%
2018	16.3%	83.3%
Average	13.72%	71.58%

*Source: The data on representation was gathered from the national supervision on the local elections, minister of interior (Chanan 2018). Data on coalition formation and duration was gathered through the authors interviews.

In such cities, Arab representatives either campaign with local parties, or national ones. Three national parties are particularly prominent. The first is Jabha (translated as the Front), an Arab communist party and the oldest and first all-Arab party. While still ideologically clinging to communist values, they more emphatically address workers and intellectuals in cities. The second party, founded more recently in 1995, is Al Tajamoua (translated as the Assembly). Ideologically, it champions greater democratic values in Israel. Politically, both Jabha and Al Tajamoua advocate for greater Arab rights within Israel's

borders, a return to pre-1967 borders as part of a two-state solution, and UN Resolution 194 regarding the right of return of Palestinian refugees. Thirdly, Islamic parties have increasingly gained popularity. Cautious in their political behavior, such organizations tend to instead focus on numerous community services and shaping institutional structures in parallel to Israel and its agencies (Landau 1993).

5. Arab/Jewish coalitions in Israeli Mixed Cities

This section tests the study's three hypotheses, covering an in-depth analysis of the factors influencing inter-ethnic cooperation in Israeli cities, as measured through Arab/Jewish coalition-building processes. I find both quantitative and qualitative empirical substantiation for all three hypotheses, concluding that, while more inter-ethnic cooperation occurs at the local level than in the Knesset, the perceived ethno-political stance of mayors is still a major contributing factor for variations in cooperation from city to city.

5.1 A cooperative default

Beginning with the first hypothesis, if the assumption that more inter-ethnic coalitions form in cities than parliaments is correct, then I would expect ethno-political issues like Palestinian sovereignty, foreign relations with Arab countries, and relations with Gaza to be of little importance to why Arabs join or do not join a ruling coalition. In other words, if Arab council members have to choose between a national identity with Palestinians and a civic identity with Israel, they will consistently choose the latter at the local level. Similarly, if Jewish mayors and council members have to relate to their Arab counter-parts in terms of their ethno-political stances or as fellow citizens on city councils, they will also consistently choose the latter.

An initial glance at the qualitative data seems to confirm the central hypothesis. When asked whether there is more space for Arab/Jewish cooperation in municipal councils than in the Knesset, 88% of the respondents, both Jewish and Arab, responded positively, and often quite emphatically. Their main reason, in line with the assumption of current scholarship, is the fact that the issues dealt with in cities are local and not inherently political in nature. One council member from Haifa explained, "we would love for

the Palestinian issue to be solved, to have a two-state solution, and we know that the Zionist parties are responsible for all the misery in Palestine. But if we don't work with Zionist parties, we will just be sitting at home. Of course we don't agree with everything in terms of ideology, but we want to work together as much as possible." One council member in Ramla mentioned the fact that the difference isn't as much about the issues at hand, but "at the local level, people are closer to each other. People live on the same street. They all want the same things: security, education, development. When that need exists, traditional politics get put aside."

Several respondents specifically referenced their personal political stances, but also their intentional decision to put them aside in municipal work. One council member from Lod explained, "when there is a conflict, of course we stand with Palestinians. We are a part of the Palestinian nation... But I'm also Israeli. Jews look at us and see us as enemies, but we aren't against the state here." Another council member from Tel Aviv-Yaffa echoed this view, "true, I am Palestinian, and I admit that, but today I am living in Israel, I am a citizen of Israel, I have an Israeli passport. I am living amongst Jews. I don't understand why people are so surprised we join a coalition with Jewish mayors or council members. You know, there is discrimination in this country, and we are here on city councils and in the Knesset to fight for our rights and for equality."

As can be seen, the primary reason given for joining a ruling coalition is often a purely civic and pragmatic one: more work can be done inside than on the opposition. In this regard, both Jewish and Arab respondents formed a consensus. As one Jewish council member put it, "you can't do much in the opposition except make some noise and criticize."⁶ This trend is in line with what one would expect, as local politicians are office-, policy- and vote-seeking actors just as much as national politicians (Skjæveland et al. 2007). In order to pursue all three goals, and due to the mayor's semi-presidential control in Israeli municipalities, joining his coalition is viewed as the best option for delivering services to constituencies.

On their part, both mayors interviewed were very proud to have Arab council members on their coalitions. In the words of one mayor, a member of the right-wing Likud party, "I tell my people, 'don't be ideological.' We need to focus on cleaning the streets, on education. It's not Israel, it's a city. Politics is the worst thing for a city. And the result? In the last elections, 93% of Arabs voted for me... and I'm Likud!" Jewish council members

⁶ Interview with Jewish council member in Haifa, who broke from her party's stance by switching from the opposition to the coalition mid-election cycle.

generally highlighted that, though Jewish/Arab relations can sometimes get tense in council meetings, conflicts are minimized and overcome, especially compared to dynamics in the Knesset. As a Jewish council member from Maalot-Tarshiha put it, “we agree on almost everything, but of course the projects we are talking about are just local problems, not national ones... if you talk about what happens in the Knesset, our parties don’t like each other at all. But in the local council, we are good friends.”

Indeed, this cooperative default stands in sharp contrast to Arab coalition-building in the Knesset, where ethno-politics play a front and center role in Arab/Jewish relations. When Arabs began breaking with previous habits of running on Jewish lists and founding their own parties, this caused no little stir amongst Israeli leaders and prompted discussions on the legal basis of such action (Landau 1993). In some ways, these discussions are ongoing, as the Central Elections Committee voted to ban certain Arab members due to their seeming extreme ethno-political stances against actions of the state⁷.

The prominence of ethno-politics at the national level is most clearly reflected in the fact that, in the history of the Knesset, no predominantly Arab list has been formally incorporated into the ruling coalition, regardless of the ruling party’s ideology⁸. Neither does this seem like a possibility anytime soon. One top leader in Arab Joint List stated that, though his party would consider *supporting* a center-left bloc who is favorable to Arab Israelis, “we will certainly not be part of the government, no matter how left-wing it is.”⁹ The stated reasons for refusing to join a ruling coalition have typically been a refusal to recognize Israel’s handling of the Palestinian issue, and a stance against internal discriminatory treatment. On their part, the current ruling party of the Likud stated that there is no room for Arab partners in the coalition, while even the newly elected head of the left-leaning Labor party indicated that a political coalition with Arab parties is a non-starter¹⁰. Generally, Jewish politicians have accused Arab parties of not representing the Arab Israeli population, but the greater Palestinian one, and as such share nothing in common to warrant a seat on a coalition. Such language reveals a high level of ethnic politicization on both sides, as the ethnic identity of a party or candidate is salient in the political institution.

⁷ This ban and other similar ones were later overturned in the High Court.

⁸ The closest Arab parties got to joining a coalition was during the Rabin years, when Hadash joined the blocking majority in the Knesset. As one author puts it, “Rabin did not dare invite the Arabs to join his coalition,” but having them on the ‘blocking vote’ was historic (Pappe 2001).

⁹ Elhanan Miller of the Times of Israel. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/no-matter-how-left-wing-arab-parties-wont-join-coalition>

¹⁰ Chazan, Naomi. <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/the-knesset-needs-more-arabs-mks>

Thus, due to a cooperative default of Arabs and Jews at the local level compared to a non-cooperative defaults at the national one, the first hypothesis holds. As can be perceived through the qualitative data, ethnic politics are set aside in Israeli cities for the sake of civic duties, leading to political alliances that are unprecedented in the Knesset. A deeper examination into the factors that influence the actual formation of coalitions, as well as their duration, however, reveals that though ethnic cleavages in local Israeli politics might run less deep than in the Knesset, city councils are not impervious to ethnic politicization.

5.2 Ethno-political conditions: Arab/Jewish coalition formation

What accounts for variation in cooperation from city to city? Is the ethno-political stance of the mayor prominent in influencing Arab/Jewish coalition formation, as is stated in the study's second hypothesis? A quick glance at interview transcriptions seems to confirm this observation; many Arab council members mentioned an unequivocal caveat, or condition, in joining a ruling coalition: namely, that the mayor has to be willing to work with and for Arab residents. As one seasoned council member from Haifa clearly put it: "There are two main reasons for joining the coalition: political, and personal. Politically, we want cooperation in the management of the city, and this is impossible if you're in the opposition. On a personal level, though, you can't join forces with anyone. If someone wants to see good relations between Arabs and Jews, we'll join them even if we disagree with them ideologically. If not, we simply can't."

Out of all the distinct themes extracted from interview transcriptions, this theme was repeated across time periods and locations, and is in line with existing literature. It was perhaps most clearly expressed by a council member from Maalot-Tarshiha, a city in which the same mayor got elected for 42 years. "You can't enter and be partners with a council that will ruin your village. You can't lend a hand to join or stymie the development of your village, or sign laws that are against your people." Even Jewish council members interviewed expressed agreement with the importance of a mayor's ethno-political stance in Arab/Jewish coalition formation. "The Arab representatives want to help their people, but it depends on the mayor. If you get in a coalition with a mayor who doesn't like Arabs, you become like a poodle puppy. You have to be in the opposition. You can't do anything there, but at least your voice will be heard." Thus, a preliminary glance at interview transcripts seems to back the study's second hypothesis.

In order to further test the claim, I operationalized the independent variable as an ‘exclusive’ or ‘inclusive’ ethno-political stance based on an inductive coding scheme (appendix C). The former stance is exhibited first and foremost through actions and words that communicate a willingness to work with and for the Arab minority in their city. The latter is generally exhibited through an acknowledgment of the Arab population’s presence, but not necessarily a posture of ensuring their needs are met as equally as the Jewish population. The following table contains data of the number of elected Arab members who joined a ruling coalition verses the ones who opted to stay in the opposition, based on the ethnic-political stance of the mayor.

Table 2: Arab participation in ruling coalition vs. ethno-political stance of mayor (1998-2018)

	Mayor perceived as exclusive	Mayor perceived as inclusive
Opposition	56.33 %	17.6%
Coalition	43.67%	82.4%
Total	100%	100%

*Source: The data on coalition participation was gathered through the authors interviews. Exclusivity and inclusive variables were calculated by applying a coding scheme to the interviews

Overall, in line with the interview transcripts, a perceived inclusive stance is positively associated with Arab/Jewish coalition formation. These results point again to a cooperative default of the Arab minority in local politics- if a mayor is willing to work with and for them, the natural inclination if to return the favor, regardless of national ideologies or formal party associations. One surprising result, however, relates to the remaining number of Arab/Jewish coalitions under an exclusive mayor (43.67%). To further explore this, the data is presented in the table below per city in order to keep constant other variables such as demographic size or specific history of political parties.

Table 3: Arab participation in ruling coalition, by city and year (1998-2018)

City	Size of city council	Arab population	Elected Arab officials in coalition				
			1998	2003	2008	2013	2018
Akko	17	31%	50%	75%	67%	80%	100%
Haifa	31	11%	100%	100%	67%	67%	100%
Nazareth Illit	17	25%	100%	0%	100%	0%	100%
Maalot-Tarshiha	13	20%	50%	0%	0%	33%	75%
Lod	19	30%	33%	–	–	100%	100%
Ramla	19	23%	33%	50%	100%	67%	75%
Tel Aviv-Yafo	30	4%	50%	100%	50%	0%	50%
Average	147	20.6%	59.4%	70.8%	80.7%	49.6%	87.5%

*Source: The data on representation was gathered from the national supervision on the local elections, ministry of interior (Chanan 2018), and data on incorporation was gathered through the authors interviews.

*Boxes in red indicate a mayor perceived as exclusive.

The surprising results include instances of 50, 70, or 100% of Arab council members joining the coalition of an exclusive mayor, such as in Akko, Nazareth Illit, or Maalot-Tarshiha. A closer look at these cases reveals an added layer of complexity related to the status of a deputy mayor. More often than not, those who choose to stay in a coalition with an exclusive mayor receive the paid position of a deputy mayor (Chanan 2018). As no law exists delineating the role of a deputy mayor, the decision of who to appoint is often in the hands of the mayor. In certain cities, like Tel Aviv, there is an informal rule that every party with more than 3 seats on the council can have one deputy mayor. In other cities, however, there is no correlation between a deputy appointment and party size. Tellingly, the deputy mayor position is the only elected position, besides that of the mayor, that includes a salary.

Some respondents interviewed viewed this phenomenon as a method of co-optation, with one council member from Maalot-Tarshiha claiming that during coalition negotiations after the 2013 elections, “we didn’t want to speak about the deputy mayor position right away, because with this mayor it means take the position, drink coffee, and don’t open your mouth. The mayor asks us to sell Tarshiha for the position.” The deputy mayors themselves, however, said they accepted the position because they were willing to overlook the mayor’s exclusionist attitude to campaign for services to Arab residents. Whatever the case, one can conclude that the second hypothesis holds sway. While a mayor’s ethno-political stance is not the only defining factor on inter-ethnic coalition formation, it does have a significant impact.

5.3 Red lines: Arab/Jewish coalition duration

The third hypothesis deals with a variable whose prominence quickly became apparent in collecting the coalition data-base: coalition duration. Often, Jewish/Arabs do not last until the end of a mayor's five-year term. In fact, an average of 39% of Arab representatives pull out of a ruling coalition before the end of the term (table 4). This leads to the hypothesis in line with existing research that a mayor's ability to maintain an inclusive ethno-political stance positively contributes to longer coalition durations.

Table 4: Arab representation and incorporation in local councils of mixed Israeli cities, 1998-2018

Year	% Arabs on city councils	% Arabs coalitions at beginning	% in coalitions at the end
1998	12.4%	50%	28%
2003	12.5%	75%	44%
2008	11.7%	80%	33%
2013	15.7%	69.6%	52%
2018	16.3%	83.3%	-
Average	13.72%	71.58%	39.3%

*Source: The data on representation was gathered from the national supervision on the local elections, ministry of interior (Chanan 2018), and data on coalitions was gathered through the author's interviews.

To test this claim, I developed a similar inductive coding scheme to the second hypothesis. This time, I gathered reasons for leaving or staying in a coalition into themes. Besides the two times personal disagreements were mentioned, the most common reasons Arab respondents gave for leaving a coalition mid-cycle were tied to a mayor's specific decision that crossed an ethno-political 'red line.' A red line was a term used by the respondents themselves, and refers to an act that is perceived as exclusive. Some examples include the demolition of Arab houses (eg. Haifa, Lod, Ramla), refusal to open an Arab school for ideological reasons (eg. Nazareth Illit, Ramla), or standing against religious symbols like the call of prayer in mosques (eg. Lod).

Honing in on the first red line, as one Arab council member put it, "there is an informal rule in this country that says Arabs cannot be associated with a mayor that destroys Arab homes." From a legal perspective, Arab homes are demolished due to illegal construction of the home itself, or an addition to it (such as an extra floor). However, a recent poll showed that half of Arab Israelis believe home demolitions are motivated by

racism on the part of the government¹¹. Specifically, the move is viewed as a modern-day remnant from the early decades of the state in which Arab land was expropriated. Historically, as the Jewish National Fund sought to increase the area of Jewish land ownership in the early years of the state, all land surrounding an Arab village - except what villagers could prove as theirs- was considered the patrimony of the state and assigned exclusively to Jewish institutions and settlements. State projects such as Judaize Galilee and others led to a 28% decrease in Arab land from 1953-1977 alone (Lustick, 1980). Today, home demolitions are linked with these past actions of the state, as well as present trends of state gentrification prevalent in major mixed cities like Yaffa, Haifa, and Akko. In such cities, Arab representatives highlighted the difficulty of finding affordable apartments in Arab neighborhoods. No Arab party, no matter how good their relations with the mayor were, stayed on a coalition after an Arab home demolition.

The second and third 'red lines' are equally ethno-political in nature. When the mayors of Ramla and Nazareth Illit did not follow up on an issue outlined in the coalition agreement to build an Arab school, all Arab parties pulled out of the coalition¹². The reason given by the mayor was Arab students could go to a neighboring Arab village to school, but Nazareth Illit should remain a Jewish city. This act alone, as well as the language accompanying it, caused Arab council members to view the mayor as exclusionist, and the coalition agreement to be cancelled. Similarly, when the mayor of Lod entered a mosque with a police escort and demanded the volume of the *athan* be turned down (viewed by residents as an exclusionist act), the coalition agreement was promptly considered null and void by the Arab representatives.

On the other hand, Arab parties stay in the coalition longer if the mayor makes a specific decision that is ethno-politically in favor of Arabs. Examples of this include the mayor of Haifa refusing the demand of the Minister of Culture to stop funding a theater that wanted to air a controversial pro-Palestinian film. All three Arab members interviewed proudly mentioned this incident, and referenced it as grounds for staying in the coalition even when relations got tense.

¹¹ Toi Staf The Times of Israel. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/poll-half-of-arab-public-sees-racist-motive-behind-home-demolitions/>

¹² The specific case of Nazareth Illit will be elaborated on in the following section.

5.4 Translating Theory into Practice

This section provides a more fine-grained description of how these patterns and hypotheses play out in practice, while simultaneously honing in on nuanced variations from city to city. The dynamics of ethno-politics of two cities are discussed: Akko, a historically mixed Northern town whose municipal council is considered a model for inter-ethnic cooperation, and Nazareth Illit, a relatively newly designated mixed city overlooking the majority Arab town of Nazareth. By tracing the evolution of Arab/Jewish coalitions in the past 20 years of both cities, the study's three hypotheses will be examined in more detail.

5.4.1 Akko: A Model Grand Coalition

Akko is considered one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world, known for its indomitable military fortifications (Napoleon's army was famously unable to lay siege to it in 1799) and its status as a bustling seaport during most of its history. Like most Israeli cities, 1948 was a watershed moment in terms of a change in demographics, politics, and social tension. According to the British Mandate census in 1948, the city was 99.4% Arab. The residents' confidence that Akko would be able to withstand Jewish military forces in the war were dashed when the Hagana took it over in three days, leading to an influx of Jewish immigrants whose numbers have since increased.

Jewish/Arab relations in Akko have been tumultuous over the years. In the past 20 years, the most notable incident occurred after an Arab resident of the Old City of Acre drove his car into a predominantly Jewish neighborhood on Yom Kippur, regarded as the most holy day for Jews. In response, Jewish teens attacked the man, sparking riots throughout the city, with residents on both sides hurling rocks at each other and vandalizing cars and shops. Other incidents over the years include Jewish protest over the selling of an apartment to an Arab family in 2013, highlighting the ever-present tension between both groups over housing and the city's demographics.

In 2003, Shimon Lankri, a self-defined outsider, moved to the city and won the mayoral elections by a small margin. In line with the study's theoretical framework, Lankri was initially perceived as exclusive due to his official association with the right-wing Likud party. The Arab parties were initially hesitant about joining his coalition, though Lankri appointed one Arab representative as deputy mayor, against the advice of his Likud party and other Jewish council members. Looking back at his decision, Lankri explained, "without

a real representative coalition, we could not govern Akko properly. [The deputy mayor] knows more about the Arabs here than I do.” That year, two other members of the deputy mayor’s party, one associated with the national Islamic Party, also joined the coalition. The candidate from the Arab communist party of Jabha, however, refused to follow suit on ideological grounds.

The deputy mayor’s reasoning for cooperating with the mayor is, “historically, Akko was an Arab city, a Palestinian one. Now we are a minority, which is just reality. So the best course of action is to cooperate with the majority. This cooperation has succeeded... we won’t be able to reach 100%, but we’ve already overcome barriers. The current mayor understands the need for equality and knows how to interact with me politically... if you help the Arabs, they will support you. Of course if you are against the mayor, or his ideology, it is hard to join. But over time we saw what the mayor did, and we joined him.”

In the next two elections, the same pattern occurred; all members of the Islamic Party joined the coalition, and the Jabha representatives stayed out. In 2013, however, an interesting pattern occurred. The Jabha candidate broke party policy and signed a coalition agreement with the mayor mid-cycle. In line with figure 1, and in the candidate’s own words, the mayor had proven his stance of inclusivity, which trumped even his formal association with the Likud party. “I realized I had only entered local politics for societal reasons, not political. Jabha has always been in the opposition, but the mayor has proven he is good. I am against political parties. In my opinion, they ruin everything.”

In the last election cycle of 2018, for the first time in 20 years, all Arab representatives signed a coalition agreement with Lankri as he enters his fourth term.

5.4.2 Nazareth Illit: Unexpected Residents

Though the history of Nazareth Illit differs exponentially from that of Akko, similar patterns of inter-ethnic coalitions can be seen. To begin, Nazareth Illit was founded in 1957 as a new Jewish town overlooking the majority Arab town of Nazareth, often referred to as the Arab capital of Israel. In the words of Ben Gurion himself, “the new settlement must be a Jewish town that will assert a Jewish presence in the area. Not a suburb of Arab Nazareth, but a separate town in its vicinity” (Rabinowitz 1997, p. 6). In the first twenty-five years of the town’s history, Jewish immigrants arrived by the hundreds, and the population increased from 4,290 in 1961 to 21,248 in 1983 (p.30). The majority of residents are first-generation immigrants from Central Europe, Russia, North Africa, and South America; their

arrival was usually complemented with a package of housing development initiated, financed, and carried out by the Jewish Agency¹³.

The 1970s saw a recent development that took the Israeli leaders of Nazareth Illit by surprise: the arrival of Arab tenants from nearby Nazareth. The new arrivals were mostly upper-class, Christian couples and families, who began to rent and buy the superfluous empty homes residents of Nazareth Illit considered less attractive. Though Jewish/Arab tension has always existed in the city, it takes a different form than in other mixed cities. Most importantly, Arabs in Nazareth Illit chose to live there, as opposed to residents of Haifa or Akko who experienced Jewish outsiders settle in their historic Arab city. Secondly, the city's proximity to Nazareth provides Arab residents opportunities for employment, education, and Arab culture. Indeed, most perceive Nazareth Illit as an offshoot of Nazareth, which holds their political and social centers of gravity.

After years of largely ineffective lobbying for services through personal connections with Jewish council members, the first Arab council member ran and was elected in local elections in 1989. Though his campaign was essentially a municipal effort, "the wider context of Palestinian identity and the Palestinian Israeli conflict became a major factor- not an ordinary feature of campaigns in local levels politics" (Rabinowitz 172). During his 15 years in office, this member remained in the opposition.

In 2008, a new mayor of Nazareth Illit was elected. Young and of mezzakhi origin¹⁴, Shimon Gafsou ran on a campaign that promised new beginnings for his town. That year, two Arab representatives won seats on the council for the first time. As in other mixed cities and in line with the theoretical framework of this paper, because the mayor's ethno-political stance was not yet clear, the Arab candidates signed a coalition agreement. Their most important demand was the establishment of the first Arab school in Nazareth Illit. Within six months of elections, however, the Arab representatives pulled out of the coalition due to a disagreement with Gafsou, who famously announced that, "I would rather cut off my right arm than build an Arab school." This move was inherently ethno-political- a red line-, and was followed by repeated assertions that Arabs are welcome to live in Nazareth Illit, as long as they understand and acknowledge it is a Jewish city. "No, no, no. No mosques, ever. No churches. Or Ramadan lanterns or manger scenes. And no Christmas trees."¹⁵

¹³ Explain what it is

¹⁴ Of North African origin. For the majority of Israel's history, Ashkenazi Jews (of European origin) were mainly in positions of power.

¹⁵ William Booth and Ruth Eglash. "High above Nazareth, an Israeli mayor wants to keep his city Jewish 'now and forever.'" Published in the Washington Post.

Statements like these led to a perceived exclusive ethno-political stance. In 2013, some of Gafsou's campaign promises included stopping the demographic shift, as featured slogans like "Nazareth Illit, Jewish Forever," or "No more accepting the law that makes possible for every citizen to live where he wants. It's time to guard the home" (Tait 2003). In response, none of the three Arab representatives joined the ruling coalition.

In December 2016, however, following Gafsou's dismissal from the office for a conviction of corruption, mayoral elections were held mid-cycle. The Arab vote became vital for victory in the subsequent close race between two candidates: Netanel Twito, who had served as acting mayor, and Ronen Plot, a former Knesset CEO identified with the right side of the political spectrum, having served under Likud minister Yuli Edelstein (Daskal 2016). After deliberation, the Arab List decided to publicly back Plot, who won. "We sat with both candidates, and decided to endorse Plot because he said whatever rights the Jews have should apply to Arabs too. He is for equality... after elections we joined his coalition and are a part of the management of this city," explained one of the Arab representatives. In 2018, with Plot having solidified his inclusive stance, the three Arab candidates joined his coalition again.

6. Conclusion

At a time where comparative politics is increasingly testing mainstream political theories to the local level, it is important to outline the unique dynamics therein. This study aims to contribute to the growing literature on ethnic cleavages in local politics by taking Israeli mixed cities as a case study through which to explore the commonly held assumptions about local ethnic politicization and cooperation. Based on interviews and archival data, the study's findings show that, while ethno-politics feature less in cities than in the Knesset, the ethno-political stance of the mayor as well as specific policies he enacts deeply affect inter-ethnic cooperation, and thus the decision-making process of the city.

The results of the study have practical significance vis-à-vis Arab/Jewish relations in Israel. Most immediately, Arab respondents often pointed to an observed ease in providing services to their communities under the leadership of an inclusive mayor. In addition, others mentioned an improvement in everyday relations after several years under the leadership of an inclusive mayor. More generally, past and current Israeli administrations

have acknowledged a need to better meet the social, economic, and legal needs of the Arab minority- understanding factors that foster cooperation, as well as issues they deem of utmost importance, is a step in that direction. As Rabinowitz elucidates, “situations where meaningful incorporation into the system is problematic may push for ideologies which emphasize collective identity, the past, and group allegiance along primordial features and affinity... only with genuine participation in the polity may the emphasis switch to ideologies and genuine independent candidates whose promise is primarily to get things done” (1997, p.179). In terms of the case study, further research could relate to other manifestations of ethno-politics in local politics, such as its influence on voter mobilization or policy output.

The study also hopes to contribute to the broader literature on the unique dynamics of local politics and variation of inter-ethnic cooperation within. Though the backdrop of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict of the case-study might be seen as unique, I argue that the study’s findings can be generalized to other deeply divided societies. Windows of cooperation in areas with deep ethnic cleavages are far from plentiful- a closer look at the mechanisms that influence them can be constructive for understanding the distinctive dynamics of local politics, and beyond.

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Appendix A: Breakdown of interview respondents

City	Number of Current Arab Council Members (2013-2018)	Number of Previous Arab Council Members	Number of Jewish Council Members	Number of Mayors	Total per city:
Akko	3*	0	1	1	5
Haifa	2*	1	2	0	5
Nazareth Illit	2*	0	1	1	4
Maalot- Tarshiha	3*	0	1	0	4
Lod	2	0	1	0	3
Ramla	2	1	0	0	3
Tel Aviv- Yaffo	1	1	1	0	3
Total:	15	3	7	2	27

* Includes a deputy mayor

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Interview Questions for Arab and Jewish Council Members

1) Personal

- a. Can you tell me about your personal history? When your family got to [this municipality], what you studied, what your occupation is, and how long you've been on the city council?
- b. What led you to decide to run for municipal elections? What did the campaign look like? (slogans, promises, etc.)

2) Municipality

- a. What is the history of your municipality and the current demographics? What makes it unique?
- b. What has the history of the municipality been in terms of Arab/Jewish relations at the social level?

3) Elections

- a. How much interest does the Arab population have in local elections? The Jewish one?
- b. What sways Arab voters? Jewish ones? What are the main issues featured in Arab and Jewish campaigns this year?

4) Cooperation

- a. What is your party's history in being a part of the mayor's coalition or opposition? What influences your decision?
- b. What is your opinion about the city's current and previous mayors? Who did you endorse for mayor and why?
- c. Do you think there is more space for Arab/Jewish cooperation at the local level than there is in the Knesset?

5) Future Plans

- a. What do you feel are your main accomplishments as a council member?
- b. What is your future vision for your municipality?

Interview Questions for Mayors

1) Personal

- a. Can you tell me a little about your personal history... When your family got to [this municipality], what you studied, how long you've been on the city council?
- b. What led you to decide to run for mayor? What did the campaign look like? (slogans, promises, etc.)

2) Municipality

- a. What is the history of your municipality and the current demographics? What makes it unique?
- b. What has the history of the municipality been in terms of Arab/Jewish relations at the social level?

3) Elections

- a. How much interest does the Arab population have in local elections? The Jewish one?
- b. What sways Arab voters? Jewish ones? What are the main issues featured in Arab and Jewish campaigns this year?

4) Cooperation

- a. What is your history about having Arab representatives on your coalition? What influences your decision?
- b. Do you think there is more space for Arab/Jewish cooperation at the local level than there is in the Knesset?

5) Future Plans

- a. What do you feel are your main accomplishments as a council member?
- b. What is your future vision for your municipality?

Appendix C: Coding Scheme for Independent Variable

Word codes for 'Exclusive':

- Opposing (against us)
- Discriminatory behaviour
- Prejudice ideology
- Lack of fulfilling commitment to Arab population

Word codes for 'Inclusive':

- Cooperative (works with us)
- Promoting equality
- Grants funding
- Fulfilling commitment to Arab population

Sample Interview from Arab council member (Lod)

Raw Data	Preliminary Codes	Final Codes
Like I said, the mayor himself went into the mosque to outlaw Arabs to pray in the town's center, he outlawed the Arab vendors to open on Shabat, ect. This caused many problems, almost hatred.	Discriminatory behaviour	Exclusive
During the elections in 2013, we put down some conditions on the mayor for us to agree to be in his coalition. There were 1,700 houses to be demolished, and we requests that not one would be demolished.	Discriminatory behaviour	Exclusive

<p>These houses were built on private land, but land that the municipality doesn't acknowledge is ours. We also had other requests: two high schools, a community center, roads to be paved in Arab neighborhoods, two primary schools, teachers who graduated from college would be employed in schools in Lod. We entered the coalition, and signed a formal agreement. After five or six months, the mayor demolished one house. Why? So we would exit the coalition. And we did.</p>		
<p>This is a video of the current mayor entering the mosques here to outlaw the athan. He brought police with him. If he hadn't, they probably would have killed him. He has no brains. This is a racist government, I'm telling you.</p>	<p>Prejudice ideology</p>	<p>Exclusive</p>
<p>But the mayor wants 150,000 Jews to be in Lod. To decrease the Arab population and increase the Jewish one. We understand these politics, and try to prevent it.</p>	<p>Opposing (against us)</p>	<p>Exclusive</p>