

## Environmental Justice and Civil Rights Carmit Lubanov

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The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel: Fostering Beneficial  
Development**

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### **Karmit Lubanov / Environmental Justice – Environmental Justice and Civil Rights**

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of the United States defined environmental justice as "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies." (EPA, 1993) "Fair treatment" means proportional distribution of the negative environmental ramifications caused by industrial activity, municipal authorities, or carrying out plans and policies at the local, regional and national levels. "Meaningful involvement" means granting a true opportunity to residents of the affected community to take part in decisions regarding activities that affect their environment or their health, out of a concern for the environmental wellbeing of all parties involved, and compensation for damages.

According to this same definition, "the EPA has this goal for all communities and persons across this Nation." Environmental justice will be achieved when every person, regardless of origin, culture or income, enjoys the same level of protection from environmental risks and equal access to the decision-making process, and enjoys a healthy environment where they live, study and work. All relevant parties must be able to participate as equal participants at every level of decision-making, including assessment of needs, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation, and the right to a safe and healthy work environment...

The environmental justice movement demonstrates that there is a very high correlation between race and low socio-economic status, factors that are interconnected, and the placement of poisonous installations across the United States. The decision-making processes, which are not always egalitarian, affect the distribution of the various resources, such as employment, housing, infrastructure, and land use.

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### **David Ben Gurion (excerpt from Keren HaYesod conference, 29 October 1947)**

In the Jewish State, we will be the ones responsible, and not only for Jews... but for all residents of the State. And for all residents of the State in equal measure. Our concern will not be directed only to Jewish communities and to the educational and health services of the Jews only – but to every community. To the Jew and to the Arab to an equal extent, without any prejudice or discrimination, and to services for all of the residents – and again on the foundation of complete and absolute equality. We will have to attend to the health and education, to development and to all other services for the Arab village, to a no lesser extent than to those of the Jewish village. If we set up irrigation\* – we will set up irrigation for the Arab peasant and for the Jewish settler; if we improve the sanitary conditions, we will do so to an equal extent for all residents of the land. (From Ben Gurion, *Paamei Medina* (Memoirs from his Estate.), 1994, p. 438)

**Sustainable Development** is development that can exist in the same fashion over time, since it does not damage the resource base on which it relies. Resource use takes place at a pace that enables natural processes to replenish that which has been used. Such development limits the growth potential based to the quantity of resources and their renewal on the earth, and takes care to cultivate the natural systems that directly or indirectly provide us with most of these resources. This kind of development is planned and does not create irreversible environmental damages. In other contexts as well, the word "sustainable" (sustainable environment, sustainable agriculture) refers to an essence, behavior or lifestyle that can exist as they are over time without collapsing.

**Sustainability** – translated into Hebrew as *kayyamut* from the cognate "to exist," is the ability to exist, to survive for a protracted period. It constitutes an approach to development and environment, which strives to change normative ways of thinking and current forms of action in all that relates to economic development, planning, and environmental protection.

The aim of sustainability is development that takes into consideration the standard of living the realm of possibilities of future generations, with the intention of preserving the environmental and natural resources that are today at our disposal, for them. Sustainability maintains that **development** must be considered broadly in terms of the long term, space, and population affected.

Central points:

- **Preservation of resources:** Maximum preservation of resources (land, water, air, biological diversity), with an emphasis on non-renewable and dwindling resources
- **Reducing damages at the source:** Environmental damage must be limited at the source, by switching to production processes that do not generate waste, in contrast to the "end-of-the-pipeline" solutions (generating waste and then dealing with it).
- **Enhanced equality:** looking closely at the **population affected** – who earns and who loses from the planned development? Who is affected by the environmental development and from resource use?