

The "Making Order" program with Gal Gabai, Monday, July 17, 2017

Interview with Carmit Lubanov, Director of the Environmental Justice Association, on environmental inequality, green space per capita

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Gal Gabai: The Association for Environmental Justice has set out to examine the situation of open spaces all over the municipalities in Israel. They examined two hundred and fifty settlements, and in fifty-four of them it turned out that the green area per person was a round number, zero. Not coincidentally, all of these settlements are considered weak settlements. How do we change this situation? Shalom to Carmit Lubanov, Director of the Environmental Justice Association.

Carmit Lubanov: Hello.

Gal Gabai: Zero green spaces. Provide me these places. Two hundred and fifty places.

Carmit Lubanov: Easy. These places are generic places. Fifty-four settlements are localities with zero green area per capita, which means no planning welfare, no welfare for the individual. Of the fifty-four settlements

Gal Gabai: Human Cages.

Carmit Lubanov: fifty-one of the fifty-four settlements are Arab communities, all in the socioeconomic clusters between one to four¹, most of them between two and three. And only three (of the 54) are Jewish settlements, not by chance settlements in the territories, one of which is a weak Haredi (Ultra Orthodox religious) settlement, Emanuel.

¹ official ranking by interior ministry, ranked 1-10 where 10 is the highest socio-economic cluster

Gal Gabai: Why this? It's in a planning way, are there stereotypes within planning or is it a policy?

Carmit Lubanov: That's an excellent question. That's policy and that's another layer of policy (to be referred soon). After we at AEJI actually sketched the current situation, not only open spaces, while five measurable parameters, to choose open space as parameter it was very important for us to show not only environmental pollution, but also something that is linked to environmental advantage or benefit, something that can be a source of recreation. For leisure, for fun, for connecting the local community to the surrounding. We've examined so far in more than 200 communities. This is not only segmentation by Arab- Jewish communities, it is also a very clear socioeconomic segmentation with dramatic differences. Nineteen of the 20 settlements with the highest open space per capita almost an absolute majority are on the top socio-economic cluster (6-10). Only one of which is on lower clusters, not by chance Mitzpeh-Ramon (Negev desert region), a settlement with no problem of land scarcity.

Gal Gabai: Explain to me that.

Carmit Lubanov: And it's true as well on the contrary, it is true that even in the weak communities the green area per capita is very small, not only the Arab communities. how is it? We went and checked it. What turns out? Which disappointed us very much, that the government not only perpetuates the gaps in regarding the allocating of green area per capita, but also deepens it. About five years ago, a report was issued to the planners of the Ministry of Housing, with very detailed guidelines, defining minimal open space per capita, an average of 20-40 squared meters in urban areas. Whereas in Israel, the recommendations are as follows: in Jewish localities, the minimum per capita of open space is 15 square meters. In Arab and ultra-Orthodox localities, an official guide of the Israeli government guides to 10 square meters per capita

Gal Gabai: In advance?!

Carmit Lubanov: In advance

Gal Gabai: Why? That the assumption is that Haredim (Ultra-Orthodox) and Arabs are not worthy of dignified living? What is the rationale? How do you explain such a terrible thing?

Carmit Lubanov: The explanations were provided contradict each other because one of the explanations we received following our request was that in Arab communities most of them live in detached houses , so now it does not fit with the Jewish settlements where there is planning prosperity and many of them are so-called single-family houses.

Gal Gabai: Of course, that's irrelevant.

Carmit Lubanov: It's irrelevant. As well as for Haredim (Ultra-Orthodox). Now there is another aspect that needs to be addressed. It is not just by 'type of population'. I presented the research findings about two months ago, at the EU conference on environmental justice. One of the comments I received at the end of my presentation was how is it possible that it is legal to present municipalities data by 'population type', rather than professional principles as of texture, population and housing density.

Gal Gabai: So how?

Carmit Lubanov: So this should be referred to the Israeli government. The report is signed by the Ministry of Housing, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and the Ministry of Agriculture.

Gal Gabai: In the last few seconds, what can we do?

Carmit Lubanov: One of the things that disappointed us and it will also an answer to you is r that the inter-ministerial steering committee was set included not only respectable list of senior representatives of government ministries, but also representatives of civil society, representatives of two major environmental NGOs. We think that these kind of committees should be turned into representatives of who truly and professionally represent the community.

Gal Gabai: I am very grateful to you for this conversation. That's it, so far a "New order" is being made for today. Thank you for being with us, see you soon. You still see and hear us.

What is the role of civil society? What do you expect them to do?

Carmit Lubanov: Civil society is a critical role to our view. Organizations of our kind that deal not only with the principle of protection of nature , which is on itself a very important principle, but also how to provide appropriate and dignified environmental conditions that also cause connection of the community and the surrounding place. That's exactly what a civil society should do. To connect planning-welfare with protection of the environment.

Gal Gabai: Let's just say what the meaning of open public spaces means.

Carmit Lubanov: It has ecological functions of the permeable areas of groundwater, functions on climate change era, absorption of pollutants and Carbon oxides, and of course, planning welfare, recreational uses of the population.