


# From Co-existence to Shared Society: A Paradigm Shift in Intercommunity Peacebuilding Among Jews and Arabs in Israel

Ran Kuttner <sup>1,2</sup>

1 Peace and Conflict Management Studies, University of Haifa, Haifa, Israel

2 Academic Advisor, Givat Haviva, Menashe, Israel

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## Correspondence

Ran Kuttner, Peace and Conflict Management Studies, University of Haifa, Haifa, Israel; e-mail: kuttneran@gmail.com.

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## Abstract

The discourse regarding Jewish–Arab intercommunity peacebuilding processes is undergoing major changes in recent years, gradually shifting from “coexistence” as the desired outcome to “shared society.” This article suggests that this transition portrays a paradigm shift that should be acknowledged and taken into account by peacebuilding activists and conflict specialists. The first section describes various common understandings of this shift in the context of Jewish–Arab relations in Israel. Section two will describe the underpinnings of the paradigm shift from individualistic to relational understanding of the self and argue that this shift is consistent with the wish for transition to “shared society” and to develop more dialogic frameworks of groups’ shared living. Section three will present a case study, the work of Givat Haviva, emphasizing the relational premises that can be found in its methodology to cultivate a shared society among Jews and Arabs in Israel.

## Transitions: From Coexistence to Shared Society in Israeli Peacebuilding Efforts

The discourse regarding Jewish–Arab intercommunity peacebuilding processes is undergoing major changes in recent years, gradually shifting from “coexistence” as the desired outcome to “shared society.” This shift derives from a disappointment in the vision of coexistence, realizing that this is a thin, unsatisfactory vision of a cohesive society (Salomon & Issawi, 2009). The shift holds a quest, I suggest, to cultivate a more dialogic perception of human interaction, in which groups and individuals partake in an ongoing process of co-constructing their joint reality, joint future, and even their joint identity. In this article, I offer a conceptual clarification of this shift, suggesting that it is consistent of a paradigm shift from more traditional approaches to human interaction and to conflict transformation that see the parties primarily as separately designated entities whose interests are to be satisfied, to a relational mindset that holds a different perception of human interbeing and from which different approaches for conflict transformation derive. Prominent scholars have been advocating for over two decades for relational approaches to conflict resolution (e.g., Bush & Folger, 1994, 2005; Winslade & Monk, 2000, 2008), but the relational underpinnings presented in this article are somewhat different, offering a dialogic model of relational interaction and doing so while constructing a relational, dialogic understanding of shared society and intervention strategies consistent with the theoretical underpinnings designed to help construct a shared society through the cultivation of a relational, dialogic mindset.

Various typologies exist in Israeli scholarship regarding shared society, as will be presented below. However, the theoretical foundations of this concept are yet to be explored for a better understanding of the paradigm shift that is called for with the transition from co-existence to shared society. This article will present such theoretical foundations, alongside a case study where efforts to develop practices consistent with these foundations are taking place. The underlying assumption of this article is that such theoretical clarity is important to underpin efforts and further development of practices toward shared society.

Historically, the discourse on Jewish–Arab relations in Israel was focused on coexistence and practices were directed toward coexistence efforts, aiming at helping Jews and Arabs find more amicable ways to live side by side in Israel (Kahanoff, 2010, 2016). “Coexistence” was a term used mainly by Jews who were striving to engage in a dialog with the Arabs, to familiarize the Jewish communities with the culture and traditions of neighboring Arab communities, and reduce stereotypes and animosity between the two groups. The idea was close in spirit to the American notion of “separate but equal” and was founded on the principles of Contact Theory, which claimed that it is possible to reduce intergroup tension by setting the terms for positive contact between the groups’ members. By creating an equal-status environment that works on relationships that involve closeness and intimacy, participants come together and reduce their animosity (Amir, 1969, 1976; Pettigrew, 1998).

In the 1990s such coexistence efforts based on contact theory started to be criticized by thinkers who claimed that there was a need to raise and confront questions of structural inequality and rejected the wish to avoid tough political issues and the weakening of separate groups’ identities (Abu-Nimer, 1999, 2001, 2004; Halabi, 2000). Contact theory-based encounters were perceived by these critics as a form of manipulation, whose aim was to maintain the power structure with no critical reflection or willingness to reconsider majority–minority power relations and inequality. This manipulation was perceived as the false consciousness of the Jewish left that refused to see the inherent repression that existed in Israeli society toward its Arab citizens.

That repression and structural inequality gave rise to new terminology, and to new intergroup facilitation models, which stressed that before aspiring for “coexistence,” the focus should be on the Arab minority’s “existence,” on better life conditions and civil rights. For example, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the confrontation-model became popular. According to this model for bringing Arabs and Jews together, the intergroup dynamics in the encounters represent the relations between the two groups in the unequal and unfair Israeli social realm, and the encounter portrays a meeting between two identities that are entangled in power relations with unequal status and unequal access to resources (Halabi, 2000). Participants are empowered to express their in-group identities, and the tensions or confrontation that arise in the encounters between Jews and Arabs are used to help participants understand the social dynamics in order to develop a critical stance toward them. Structural inequalities are brought to participants’ attention, and the political sphere remains in the focus of the conversations, rather than putting effort into setting the terms for the intimate, interpersonal level exchange. In this model, participants’ socially constructed national identities are reinforced, and the conflict between these well-defined identities is the center of attention. This empowers Arabs to voice their identity and encourages Jews to reflect on the social inequality or violence in which they take part.

At present in Israel, there exist diverse definitions of the goals of encounters; the continuum ranges from confrontation between collective, given social–political identities that emphasize separateness, to relationship-based processes that emphasize common human ground and strive toward coexistence (Kahanoff, 2016). However, as part of the rebellion against contact theory-based engagements, and rooted in a critique of both the contact based and the confrontation models, a new synthesis has become more popular in recent years, advocating for the notions of “shared citizenship” and “shared living.” These concepts hold both a response to processes of exclusion and alienation of Arabs from the public sphere, to which contact theory-based interactions gave limited attention, and a wish to engage in a

dialog based on collective efforts to come together and find *modus vivendi* in the Israeli society. These new types of efforts have come with the intention of developing a civil definition of Israeli citizenship, rather than ethnic or religious definitions. For example, in an important report following the tragic events of the killing of 13 Arab–Israeli citizens by Israeli police in a large demonstration in the Galilee in 2000, a committee made recommendations for the education system, focused on education for shared living, while defining partnership as follows<sup>1</sup>: “The concept of partnership holds few complementary meanings: equality among the partners, mutual respect and legitimacy, recognition in the right to exist, nationally and culturally, of each side, positive and fair relations through empathic and sensitive dialog. A sense of mutual responsibility and shared quest for peace.” (Salomon & Issawi, 2009, p. 5). This perspective addresses the social exclusion of Arabs differently than the Confrontation model or the Contact Theory model. The shift from coexistence to shared citizenship/living manifests a shift from a separatist or distinctive to integrative conception of citizenship, with the quest to avoid the naiveté of contact that does not strive for structural change, and a vision of foundational change in the power relations between the Jewish majority and Arab minority.

The shared-society perspective, as mentioned, is gradually taking hold, and it is becoming increasingly popular. In the coming pages, I will claim that the change in perception incorporates a more paradigm-oriented shift regarding partnership and the sharing of life in Israel, and that, in order to cultivate the mindset and practices of shared society, there is a need to realize this paradigm shift. Without a clear vision of its philosophical underpinnings, it will be difficult for the promise embedded in the concept of shared society to take hold.

## The Relational Paradigm and the Dialogic Foundations of Shared Society

### Philosophical Foundations

There is a growing tendency in recent decades toward questioning the notion of the “self” as viewed within a 25-century tradition of Western philosophy. The Aristotelian framework, the foundation of Western thought and logic, is a philosophical system based on the category of the “substance,” seeing each object as having an inner core—an ontological entity that expresses its essential characteristics. Knowing an object’s essence, according to Aristotelian thought, entails exposing its self-identity, and its unchanging, inherent, and essential characteristics. These characteristics are not affected by, and are thus independent of, outside variables such as the characteristics of other objects. Knowing the object, according to the common Western view, means knowing what these independent, untouched, and unchanged essential characteristics are.

From this perspective derives an understanding of the human self in individualistic terms, that is—as striving to cement one’s independence through familiarization with one’s inner, independent, and unaffected core. Emanuel Kant, for example, opens his famous article “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment” with the following definition: “Enlightenment is man’s emergence from his own self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is one’s inability to use one’s own understanding without the guidance of another. This immaturity is self-incurred if its cause is not lack of understanding, but lack of resolution and courage to use it without the guidance of another. The motto of enlightenment is therefore: *Sapere aude!* Have courage to use your own understanding” (Kant, 1794). This is a view of human nature that emphasizes separateness, autonomy, individuality, and self-interestedness. Twentieth century thought is characterized by an ongoing tendency to question these underpinnings, offering alternative understandings of the self, of entities situated and defined in separation and in distinctness from their set or relations and the contexts in which they perform.

<sup>1</sup>It is important to note that “shared” and “partnership” are of a similar verb in Hebrew.

This tendency is found in twentieth century thought at large, which involves ontological questioning of Aristotelian metaphysics and Cartesian philosophy regarding the human agent, the subject, or the self.<sup>2</sup> Critically summing the social effect of individualistic worldviews and values on the American society as they see it, Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton (1996) claim that

In times of economic prosperity... Americans have imagined individualism as a self-sufficient moral and political guide. In times of social adversity such as the present, they are tempted to say that it is up to individuals to look after their own interests. Yet many of us have felt, in times both of prosperity and of adversity, that there is something missing in the individualistic set of values, that individualism alone does not allow persons to understand certain basic realities of their lives, especially their interdependence with others. These realities become more salient as individual effort alone proves inadequate to meet the demands of living. (p. ix)

The tendency to question and seek alternatives to the Aristotelian metaphysics and individualistic perspective also infiltrates the theory and practice of dispute resolution and peacebuilding, as will be described shortly, and offers models for conflict transformation that should be noted by conflict specialists.

### Relational Relatedness

The relational view of the self contains a shift of focus outwards from the individual to the domain of relatedness: The self is perceived as an emergent, ever-changing, product of one's interaction, constructed within interactions, while its values and vision are an ongoing construction in the emergent flow of interactions (rather than set values and perceptions one imposes on the world). Our realities are shaped through our experiences and interactions with others. Social constructionism questions the taken-for-granted assumption that the individual person, the individual action, or the individual "thought" is the obvious unit of analysis for those wanting to understand the social world, emphasizing instead patterns of interactions, and relational processes out of which we construct our individuality. Gergen (2009) argues against the dominant way of thinking in the Western world, which is based on a conception of man as a bound being. Relationships are no longer perceived as a phenomenon which may occur temporarily when two autonomous individuals converge; rather, relationship precedes the concept of the self, as from it and within it the self emerges: "...all intelligible action is born, sustained, and/or extinguished within the ongoing process of relationship. From this standpoint there is no isolated self or fully private experience. Rather we exist in a world of co-constitution. We are always already emerging from relationship" (Gergen, 2009, p. xv).

Social constructionists aim to remove meaning from the head of the individual and locate it within the ways in which people "go on together" or interact (Gergen, 1999). Social understanding, he explains, is not a matter of penetrating the privacy of the other's subjectivity, but rather a relational achievement that depends on coordinating action. There is a need to coordinate meaning, realizing that meaning emerges only through and within relatedness, through interacting. Meaning is not the possession of individuals, of separate persons, but rather "an emergent property of coordinated action" (Gergen, 1999, p. 145). There is a need to shift from talking and thinking about the world to what Shotter calls witness thinking, being aware of meaning as it unfolds, and affecting the flow of processes from within our living involvement with them (Shotter, 2006).

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<sup>2</sup>Nietzsche, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Foucault, and Deleuze are prominent thinkers who suggested criticism on common understandings of the self. Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, and Post-Structuralism are central schools in the creation of the intellectual shift, each of them with its unique criticism of the governing western underpinnings and common concept of "self."

## Relationality in Conflict Resolution Scholarship

The questioning of the self as a separate, independent, and fixed entity can be found also in current Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) literature. The Transformative Approach to mediation was the first to challenge the governing paradigm to understanding the human self and the goals of the mediation process in the name of a relational alternative. Bush and Folger (1994, 2005) claimed that the mediator's vision for the process should not be the satisfactions of separately defined individuals' and group's interests and needs, but rather the transformation of parties' conflict interaction through experiencing both their separateness (empowerment of self) and their connectedness (recognition of others). According to the relational worldview offered by Bush and Folger (1994), individuals are "seen as both separate and connected, both individuated and similar. . . to some degree autonomous, self-aware, and self-interested but also to some degree connected, sensitive, and responsive to others" (p. 242). Awareness of agency and connection is the essence of human consciousness, the core of our identity as human beings, they claim; conflict, "alienates [the parties] from their sense of their own strength and their sense of connection to others, thereby disrupting and undermining the interaction between them as human beings," (Bush & Folger, 2005, p. 46), and the parties' abilities to exercise their relational nature involves experiencing both separateness and connectedness, strength of self, and responsiveness to others.

The narrative approach to mediation, as presented by Cobb (1994) and by Winslade and Monk (2000, 2008), offers a framework that also challenges foundational assumptions that underlie Western philosophy and challenges both mediators and parties to cultivate a less common view of the Self. Winslade and Monk (2000) also emphasize the fact that the manner in which the self is understood has a foundational effect on how mediators understand the mediation process, and on their actions in practice. Following postmodern philosophy, they criticize the idea of the self as possessing a separate, permanent inner core; instead, emphasizing that a shift is required from the parties' firm, fixed, and well-constructed view to a vision of the self as constructed within social and discursive patterns. Criticizing the more traditional, individualistically oriented models of negotiation and conflict-interaction, Winslade and Monk (2000) assert that "Problem-solving and interest-based approaches emphasize the individual as an independent, stable, unitary, self-motivating, and self-regulating identity. . . [while] through the postmodern lens, identity is not fixed, nor is it carried around by the individual largely unchanged from one context to another" (pp. 44–45). The narrative approach proposes that people live their lives according to stories rather than according to inner drives or interests, stories that are relationally formed within the social discourse in which they partake. People establish coherence for themselves through their constructed stories, and during conflict, these stories hold much divisiveness ("us/them," "good/bad") and create "victims" and "victimizers." In order to transform conflict interaction, according to the narrative approach, the conflict stories need to be deconstructed or destabilized so that an alternative, joint story can be constructed.

Both the transformative approach and the narrative approach offer a vision of transformation different from the foundations of relationality offered in this article. While the transformative approach empowers participants' sense of agency and the strengthening of self, this sense of empowerment is not consistent with the effort to perceive the co-construction of identity through human interaction. The transformative approach is not designed to cultivate relational awareness as described in this article.<sup>3</sup> Also, the narrative approach, with its view of the social identity as a construct with which people enter their encounter, offers a focus on people's interaction which is different from the emphasis on the joint meaning-making in situ, through dialog, that the dialog-oriented relational approach discussed here emphasizes.

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<sup>3</sup>For more on the limitations of the transformative approach with regard to the development of relational perception of the self, see Seul (1999) and Kuttner (2006).

## Dialog as a Relational Practice

It is important to note at this point that the notion of dialog is relational, and that dialogic interaction is consistent with the relational underpinnings needed for the cultivation of a shared society. Prominent dialog scholars across a number of intellectual disciplines present the concept of dialog as a relational practice and provide the dialogic experience an interpretation consistent with the ontological questioning of the self as a separately held entity.

Martin Buber, for example, offers an alternative to the more consensual western perspective that sees the individuals as separate, independent entities that engage each other. While according to Kantian philosophy, a thing can be known in itself only when separated from its relations, Buberian metaphysics argues the opposite, having at its starting point the idea that only the relation grants the things their independent existence and that only in dialog this idea is realized. He suggests that in dialog this interdependency is realized.

Buber makes a radical claim that in dialog the relation as a primary and foundational experience is echoed—one in which the nature of humans and of the world is understood. He draws a distinction between two modes of conversations—indeed, between two different qualities of human interaction: “I-Thou” and “I-It,” the former manifesting dialogic relations. While the I-It relation is characterized seeing the “it” as bounded by others, as an object perceived with cold indifference, the I-Thou is a dialogic relation, acknowledging that “Through the ‘Thou’ a man becomes ‘I’” (Buber, 1923, p. 28), meaning that only in the presence of the I-Thou primary relation can the self be wholly apprehended. In dialog, people understand that only within the scope of that relation does the “I” become a person in its full sense, thus fulfilling his humanness.

The realm of the “Thou” overcomes the disconnection embedded in the relation with an object and includes a different focus.<sup>4</sup> This mindset is also the mindset that characterizes the dynamics of shared society. What is essential for Buber is not what goes on within the minds of the partners in a relationship but what happens between them. He is unalterably opposed to the wish to focus on the separate psyches of the participants (Buber, 2002).

Similar to Buber’s view, David Bohm presents a view of dialog different from the more common perception of interaction as an exchange between opinionated, bounded people. According to Bohm (1996), the etymology of dialog is “a *stream of meaning* flowing among and through us and between us” (p. 6). Bohm draws a distinction between the dialogic state and the state of trading information among human beings, where each person guards the foundational assumptions with which one arrives: “They are more like discussions—or perhaps trade-offs or negotiations—than dialogs. The people who take part are not really open to questioning their fundamental assumptions. They are trading off minor points. . . but the whole question of two different systems is not being seriously discussed. You can’t talk about *that*—nothing will ever change that” (Bohm, 1996, p. 7). The state of trading information is akin to the interest-based negotiation model, where bounded individuals share their interests and exchange ideas on how to create value, and of interaction that coexistence efforts can suffice with but that shared society efforts wish to transform. The interest-based approach to conflict resolution takes, at its starting point, the autonomous, independent self and focuses attention on each agent’s interests in separation. The interest-based approach follows a tradition that posits the “other” as an outer-bounded self with whom one interacts by situating oneself in separation from, understanding human dynamics as separately situated individuals who interact by exchanging ideas. This view is the basis of the common understanding of conversation and negotiation.

An interest-based approach to negotiation encourages going beyond one’s positions to explore one’s interests and needs; one of its foundations is the assumption that by exploring interests and concerns

<sup>4</sup>“The relating I and the addressed Thou, which reveals itself, may meet and this mutual ‘relation’ (*Beziehung*) is ‘encounter’ (*Begegnung*). Buber highlights that in the sphere of the ‘between’ (*zwischen*) as the humanizing factor in human society, institutions are too much ‘outside’, whereas feelings are too much ‘inside’” (Meir, 2006, 121).

each side can develop better understanding of their own, as well as their counterpart's, point of view (Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 1991; Moore, 1986; Susskind & Field, 1996). Another foundational assumption is that through the creation of an exchange, in which parties try to meet as many interests and concerns of all sides, they will be able to find mutually agreed upon solutions (Lewicki, Saunders, & Minton, 1985) and create value (Mnookin, Peppet, & Tulumello, 2000). However, even when negotiation manuals claim to adopt relational emphases, Greenhalgh and Lewicki (2003) stress the teaching of negotiation, "was a convenient simplification, because considering 'the party' as a single generic actor allowed scholars to apply all of their individualistically oriented theory to the intra-group, inter-group, intra-organizational, and international levels (p. 27)."

As opposed to the trading information or negotiation state, the dialogic state, according to Bohm, calls for a different epistemology: Dialog requires talking about and changing *that*, that is, a re-examination of the assumptions and perceptions with which the participants arrive. A re-examination that undermines foundational assumptions—not only regarding content—but also regarding the perception of the parties as "two different systems." In advanced phases of shared society efforts, such re-examination ought to take place.

While presenting his dialogic view of human understanding and thinking, Charles Taylor (1991) draws a distinction between "monologic acts" (single-agent acts) and "dialogic acts"; the latter not emerging, he explains, from the common epistemological tradition. Within a "monologic act," one fails to capture that "the self neither preexists all conversation, as in the old monological view; nor does it arise from an introjection of the interlocutor; but it arises within conversation, because this kind of dialogical action by its very nature marks a place for the new locator who is being inducted into it" (p. 312). Once again, the dialogic state is emphasized as questioning the more common, Aristotelian, sense of self, and this kind of questioning on the societal level, among social groups, is needed for the cultivation of shared society.

Taylor articulates what can be seen as a relational vision for transforming adversity and social fragmentation into dialog: A vision of shifting from an introjected "I," which has to find its own voice, to gradual awareness of the process of how it arises within conversation, a process of "gradually finding one's own voice as an interlocutor" (Taylor, 1991, p. 313).<sup>5</sup> This—by definition—cannot be an inquiry made by individuals as it is a shared social process that will provide new meaning to the notion of shared society, and to the strategies and skills needed for its gradual cultivation. This is consistent with Taylor's earlier, seminal work *Source of the Self* (1989), in which he described the philosophy and the manner in which we perceive the world and ourselves:

... we naturally come to think that we have selves the way we have heads or arms, and inner depths the way we have hearts or livers, as a matter of hard, interpretation-free fact. Distinctions of locale, like inside and outside, seem to be discovered like facts about ourselves, and not to be relative to the particular way, among other possible ways, we construe ourselves... Something in the nature of our experience of ourselves seems to make the current localization almost irresistible, beyond challenge (p. 122).

The relational, dialog-driven approach to human interaction presented in this article challenges this almost-natural way of thinking and makes this current localization resistible. This dialog-driven approach also sets new challenges to theoreticians and practitioners who aim at transforming social fragmentation to shared society.

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<sup>5</sup>These philosophical underpinnings can be found in communication studies, where conversation analysis (CA) studies practice talk-in-interaction, a research tradition whose underlying philosophical commitments are highly resonant with a dialogic perspective and the relational premises, viewing all communicative behaviors as social action that makes meaning rather than a medium for the transmission of information. Similar to Buber's perspective and following a Wittgensteinian central premise, CA study focuses on how people interact rather than on what's going in their mind. For more on how ethnomethodological conversation analysis (CA) is explicating practices of talk using relational interaction as presented in this article, see Glenn and Kuttner (2013).

These perspectives are merely examples of writings on dialog that offer a relational vision of human interaction and interbeing.<sup>6</sup> They lead to a different vision for transforming adversity and polarization into dialog and the cultivation of new awareness of the shared space, which is different from both the more common interest-based approach and also from the focus of the transformative and narrative approaches: A vision of shifting from an introjected “I,” who has to find his own voice, to gradual awareness of the process that takes place in the shared space, from which and within which the sense of self rises and can be found. This vision of relationality and dialog takes as its starting point the joint action taking place in concrete situations, the co-construction in the dialogic space in situ from which the private agents relationally emerge, rather than focusing on individuals’ acts and identities separately from that emergence, or co-constructed reality.

With these theoretical emphases in mind, the notion of shared society as a relational space can be discussed, and the paradigm shift from coexistence to shared society clarified.

### **A Relational, Dialog-Driven, Approach to Shared Society**

In light of the above clarification of the notion of dialog as a relational mindset and practice, it is understandable that peacebuilding and conflict transformation efforts that aim at cultivating dialog ought to help groups and individuals transform the mindset that refrains from entering a practice of co-constructing the reality in which one, by definition, coexists rather than exists. This is a practice that aims at helping cultivate awareness of the shared space in which parties—whether individuals or groups who fortify their inner fixed, coherent and consistent group identity—are supported in an effort to open up to a more inclusive, systemic approach. An approach in which the gestalt of the group’s reality (its joint region, its country, perhaps its mixed city) is engaged in a dialogic process of co-construction of its characteristics, together rather than in separation. In other words, it requires the gradual cultivation of a mindset of a shared society different from an approach that aims at identifying and satisfying the needs and interests of each party or group, as is the focus of the interest-based approach to negotiation and conflict resolution. A Relational, Dialog-Driven, Approach to Shared Society requires a mindset in which the seemingly separated groups partake in an ongoing process of co-construction of their shared reality, while building the capacity to do so jointly and while being reflective of this process, thus developing awareness of the relational means by which they continuously define the shared space, as partners.

Following the description of the relational underpinnings, this section aims at analyzing the shift from coexistence to shared society as consistent with the zeitgeist, influenced by the spirit of the times and manifesting a discontent from the results of coexistence efforts. The notion of coexistence has as its starting point the desired respect for each side’s existence in separation, defining itself in itself and for itself, thus making an effort to have its own secured sense of identity, ethos or narrative. Living side-by-side, with each having gained that appreciated sense of unified identity, is at the peak of an individualistically based perspective of intergroup peacebuilding and conflict transformation. Coexistence has at its starting point the belief that each group has the right and capability to define its being in solitude and in separation from “the other” (“the other” being a separately defined group that at best is independent to define its character and social environment). The disappointment from this vision, I suggest, is the realization that this is a thin, unsatisfactory vision of social cohesion, as it perpetuates fragmentation and provides legitimacy to a retreat from an effort to work on the shared identity. Instead, with shared society, the aim is at a vision in which groups and individuals partake in an ongoing dialogic process of co-constructing their joint reality, joint future, and even their joint identity.

Shared society, I suggest, offers a paradigm shift and lays out a challenge to conflict specialists and peacebuilders that should not be overlooked: In order to help groups, individuals and even nations

<sup>6</sup>For further reading on dialog as a relational practice, see Kuttner (2012).



(for example in the EU construct) develop a sense of shared society, there is a need to cultivate a relational mindset, and to develop the capacity to let go of the firmly held sense of separately defined identities, cultivating a more complex sense of interdependence instead. Following this rationale, a shared space is to be seen as a space in which parties share equal responsibility for its well-being, with a systemic approach that sees the whole prior to drawing a dividing line and entrenching in secured, self-sustaining images of freedom and independence. This removes the sense of only partial responsibility to the well-being of the bounded sense of a group's territory; it involves the co-creation of the social conditions that serve all of its members, with the awareness that one is void of the luxury to develop one's well-being separately from, and while in ignorance of, the well-being of the alleged "other," the seemingly separately designated group for which one has no responsibility (McNamee & Gergen, 1998). A relational mindset and a mindset of shared society embeds, I suggest, the recognition in interdependence rather than dependence; it involves awareness of how images of the other are formed in relation to one's images of self, and how one's identity or sense of self are formed always in relation to one's images of otherness. I suggest that a relational mindset and apprehension of shared society involves joint and ongoing learning processes with awareness of the ongoing interdependent co-construction of both "self" and "other" in situ. This view of relational dynamics requires a different sense of listening and attentiveness: Being aware of the means by which one filters the other and brings assumptions, constructs, of who the other is, which stand in the way of relating and evolving in mutuality.

Relational understanding of shared society brings new and thorough understanding of the notions of inclusivity and social cohesion. This understanding requires the cultivating of relational awareness, awareness of the ongoing co-arising and co-evolution of the sense of self and of one's feelings and thoughts in the present moment in relation to the occurrences in the shared space. This cultivation necessitates the capacity to bring vulnerability, humility, and even insecurity (in the sense of overly secured, bounded sense of self) to the shared, interdependent space; it requires sincere willingness to explore and reveal a complex situation with fresh eyes, and interest in re-viewing the circumstances in situ. Relational awareness, I suggest, is manifested in qualities such as co-construction, co-evolution, joint action, joint meaning making, coordinated meaning, adaptive change and emerging proposition, thus transforming the individualistic mindset.

### **Toward a Relational Definition of Shared Society**

Shared society is a term that has been developed extensively in recent years. For example, the Club De Madrid, the world's largest, independent group of democratic political leaders,<sup>7</sup> has developed a vision and goal of constructing shared societies worldwide, "based on the promotion and protection of all human rights, as well as on nondiscrimination, tolerance, respect for diversity, equality of opportunity, solidarity, security and participation of all people including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons" (Club de Madrid, 2006, p. 6). Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May, for example, speaks of a vision of a shared society in terms of "working for everyone," and "tackling some of the burning injustices that undermine the solidarity of our society" (May, 2007). However, theoretical foundations of the concept of shared society are missing from these descriptions, which may as well refer to providing equal opportunities, sharing resources, taking care for each group and its needs and interests; as important as it is, this does not necessitate the paradigm shift toward dialog and a relational vision of a shared society as outlined above. With a clear understanding of the relational mindset that underlies the notion of human shared living, it becomes easier to develop strategies and practices to help, among other things, to cultivate the values described by the Club de Madrid, but also to go beyond that in order to overcome social fragmentation and alienation. As the work of Givat Haviva demonstrates in the coming section, it

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<sup>7</sup>[www.clubmadrid.org](http://www.clubmadrid.org).

is possible to take a step forward in implementing relational underpinnings in order to help transform separate living into a vision of shared society.

## Building a Shared Society in Israel: Givat Haviva's Case

In this section, I use Givat Haviva as a case study and present various programs that have been developed in recent years at Givat Haviva to illustrate how the relational premises can be implemented in the development of intervention programs. I will also demonstrate how they are exercised in practice, in efforts to build new foundations for a shared society in Israel.

### Givat Haviva: Background

Givat Haviva is a nonprofit organization founded in 1949 as the national education center of the Kibbutz Federation in Israel. As a foundation for building a shared future and shared society, it is dedicated to promoting mutual responsibility, civic equality, and cooperation between divided groups in Israel—critical elements of a sustainable and thriving Israeli democracy. To this end, the Center for a Shared Society at Givat Haviva serves as a catalyst in activating divided communities to work together toward achieving their common goals, while engaging in a process of interaction, support, and empowerment. This is done through facilitating cross-community projects; leading training and capacity building activities; convening seminars, workshops, and conferences to cultivate concrete ideas that foster change; and translating these ideas into action. A leader in its field in Israel, Givat Haviva, is a recipient of the UNESCO Prize for Peace Education for its longstanding work in promoting Jewish–Arab dialog and reconciliation.<sup>8</sup>

The Center for Shared Society at Givat Haviva “aims to build an inclusive, socially cohesive society in Israel by engaging divided communities in collective action toward the advancement of a sustainable, thriving Israeli democracy based on mutual responsibility, civic equality and a shared vision of the future.”<sup>9</sup> From a relational point of view, the main emphases in this vision are *collective action*, *mutual responsibility*, and *shared vision*: They set a profound challenge aiming at building capacity to work together—not only for the execution of separately defined goals or interests—but for engaging in a dialog on core, foundational constructs of identity, and sense of self. A construct of shared living is aimed for through an ongoing process of collective, joint action, while sharing the responsibility, for the common good and sense of well-being of everyone. Instead of each side looking out for oneself and for its interests, or even each side looking for the well-being of the “other,” Jews and Arabs are jointly constructing the idea of the good (as an ongoing, everlasting, joint process), and making an ongoing joint effort to fulfill and materialize it in practice.

### “Our Region”: A Relationally Oriented Educational Program

A good opening example of Givat Haviva's relationally oriented shared-society programs is its new education program, titled “Mentikatna” (Maayan & Atamni, 2015), which is the Arabic word for “our region.” By developing regional thinking and the mindset of a shared region, “the program aspires to foster, within these communities, a common affinity to the region, in order to create an alternative climate/environment of equality and solidarity” (Maayan & Atamni, 2015, p. 1).

The program aims at training teachers to teach their pupils about their mixed region, to help them become familiar with the complex human, geographical, and cultural landscape of the Wadi A'ra area that consists of Jewish and Arab populations. Through the cultivation of regional thinking that sees the

<sup>8</sup><http://www.givathaviva.org/index.php?dir=site&page=content&cs=3000>.

<sup>9</sup>See Givat Haviva's Center for Shared Society, at [www.givathaviva.org](http://www.givathaviva.org).

region as a “shared yard,” and while engaging in questions of active citizenship—encouraging them to be active participants in shaping their environment—the program aspires for teachers and pupils to collectively take action and affect processes in the region. Participants learn to develop a shared sentiment of belonging, to construct a regional identity, and to be active citizens together. With this powerful shared identity, they learn to deal with tough questions of inequality, of strong and weak populations, and of access to resources, while taking part in joint civil projects that involve tapping regional resources, thus building a more just and equal tomorrow in the region. Joint regional thinking allows the pupils to explore and understand a complex, multicultural environment that is grasped as manageable rather than alienating: While focusing on the state as a whole is too wide for developing active citizenship that affects change, and while concentrating on the town or village is too narrow, and does not allow an entry to the multicultural landscape, regional thinking explored jointly by Jewish and Arab educators and later pupils, allows shared concern for environmental issues that pupils can contain and be empowered to address. Thus, they are experiencing their ability to affect change. Regional environmental issues become the shared concern of pupils, and the students share an interest to take action and improve their livelihood. Within the scope of this constructed regional identity, and with the joint excitement of active citizenship, it is then easier to surface, manage, and even resolve tough issues regarding Jewish–Arab inequality and power imbalances—while doing so dialogically without withdrawal to separate spaces and fragmentations where Jewish and Arab identities are in confrontation.

The program puts the emphasis in its final phase on the construction of shared public space: Through experiential learning, the shared active citizenship materializes to joint, Jewish–Arab action to improve the livelihood in the region by engaging in a project that strengthens the sense of shared public space in the region.

In an evaluation (Avrahami-Marom, 2017a), both qualitative and quantitative, performed after a joint Jewish–Arab training program for geography teachers from neighboring municipalities, which focused on regional geography and social and ecological issues, while acquiring skills for joint Jewish–Arab learning on these regional issues—participants in the program reported high increase in their sense of shared region, and with their capability to help students cultivate a similar mindset and acquire similar skills. An evaluation tool that measures changes in the sense of joint region was developed, evaluating the participants’ attitudes before and after the course with respect to (a) emotional bond to the region, which includes their sense of belonging and the extent to which the joint region is part of their identity, subsequently affected by occurrences within it; (b) knowledge of the region and its residents (with emphasis on the population from the other population); (c) access to regional resources, which includes one’s perception of every group’s accessibility, and their perception of the level of involvement each group has and should have in regional planning processes; (d) and capability and opportunity to partake in joint processes to affect the region, which captures the extent to which one believes they have the tools to influence regional processes (e.g., decisions regarding an expansion of a village or decisions regarding nature trails, or development of new sports facilities, etc.).

An increase, at times a high increase, was measured on all of these variables after the training program. Teachers demonstrated in their reports a very high increase in the level of conviction that such a program can lead to substantial changes in how pupils perceive their joint region, and also that the program will lead to an increased sense of belonging, familiarity with the mosaic of populations that construct the region, accessibility to resources, belief in their ability to affect the region and bring change on issues that matter, and belief that they have the tools to do so while collaborating and developing a sense of partnership with their neighboring communities of all populations.<sup>10</sup> These reports by the teachers manifest a

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<sup>10</sup>Following the training program, “Mentikatna” was implemented among these teachers’ pupils, with pupils from both municipalities studying together. After getting to know each other, and a preliminary introduction to the different cultures, pupils continued working in a small group format (groups of four: two Jews and two Arabs) mapping and photographing places in the region they liked, and working on a joint product that markets the region by reporting on its richness and diversity while emphasizing its uniqueness.

change they have already been experiencing themselves in their capability, not only to collaborate, but also in their ability to co-construct their reality and to develop an increased sense of partnership and shared responsibility with regard to their social realm.

### Shared Communities: A Relational Model for Advancing Toward a Shared Society

Givat Haviva's flagship program Shared Communities is another example of a relationally oriented shared society program. The Shared Communities Program is a 4-year intervention program that builds structured, mutually beneficial cooperation between pairs of neighboring Jewish and Arab communities that are divided by the increasing tensions and mutual alienation that threaten the democratic fabric of Israel today. This initiative is based on the belief that shared communities are the building blocks of the national project of creating a shared society.

The intervention model in this program is based on a three-level typology developed at Givat Haviva which helps draw a 4-year path in which Givat Haviva serves as the integrator and facilitator of various joint initiatives among the communities, aiming at cultivating a spirit of partnership amongst them. Various typologies exist in Israeli scholarship regarding shared living or the practice of shared society building: Shatil, for example, has a four-level typology, the most advanced titled "strategic partnership" or "core partnership" (Roval-Lipshitz, 2006). Sikkuy draw in their working model a distinction between "collaboration" and the more advanced stage of "partnerships" (Sabag et al., 2014). Yet none of these typologies delve into the theoretical foundations, or offer a relational model as presented here. Givat Haviva's typology consists of the following: "participation", "collaboration," and "partnership":



Participation

Collaboration

Partnership

The three levels—participation, collaboration, and partnership—demonstrate three developmental stages from a relational point of view. It will be impossible in the scope of this article to describe all the variables and characteristics of the three levels and to provide an in-depth analysis of the differences between them from a relational perspective. However, it is important to note that the transition toward partnership expresses the overcoming of a mindset that is nonrelational or characterized by individualistic manifestations.

#### *The Early Stages*

Givat Haviva's definition of participation is as follows: Participation in a partnership that another is leading, with the joint work being random, periodical, and limited in time for the resolution of ad hoc problems. Participants arrive at agreements on a predetermined set of goals with the help of agreed-upon forums in which partial sharing of knowledge, information, and resources is taking place. Forums are designed to get a better perspective on a problem and its possible resolution, and for the construction of a social sphere that leads to better relationships and which entails regathering when needed. From a relational point of view, this stage demonstrates a predetermined and separately formulated sense of each of the groups, bringing to the shared space and maintaining a well secured sense of what the problems to tackle are and of their interests and priorities. Satisfaction of well-defined interests is the focus and joint exploration or co-evolution is not the emphasis.

Collaboration is defined as follows: Participants, or rather collaborators, lead together a joint project or a number of initiatives simultaneously, while identifying and satisfying separately defined interests, joint interests, and priorities. The decisions on the work plan and the projects' goals and characteristics are taken together, while pushing the limits of their respective organizations and creating a more meaningful sense of dependency for the satisfaction of interests. The joint dependency leads to the

strengthening of ties and the formation of a platform for ongoing collaboration, with partial interest and capacity in developing new joint initiatives, joint learning, and a change in practices and perspectives. From a relational point of view, there is progression toward joint decision making and reflecting on one's boundaries: Thus giving room for dependency, yet still for the satisfaction of their separately defined interests. There is also progression toward joint learning, a step toward co-evolution and joint meaning making.

In the entry phase to a new partnership, part of the diagnosis made by Givat Haviva through its preliminary assessment includes identifying the participants' stage of engagement, and their ripeness to engage in more advanced levels of engagement (for further discussion on ripeness, see Zartman, 2001; Schiff, 2014). Sincere empathy and respect for where they are situated on this continuum should be demonstrated.<sup>11</sup>

Givat Haviva's intervention model starts with identifying and mapping interests defined separately, entering a process in which each side brings to the table its interests. Acknowledgment of these needs and interests, and work toward their satisfaction, is paramount in order to build trust and conviction in the added values of the partnership, and much of Givat Haviva's effort in the early stage is to do just that. Beyond joint interests, which is also a foundational premise in the interest-based approach—participants develop the capacity to construct new shared interests; interests of the partnership as a partnership, an entity that stands on its own, that needs to be maintained and sustained, a system in which, and through which, each one's interests are defined and redefined anew.

Indeed, in this stage, the work with the participants has a lot in common with coexistence projects. However, as joint teams work together toward affecting their reality, a spirit of collective action is gradually being developed, thus going beyond the old models of coexistence encounters. The program in its early stages has many characteristics in common also with contact theory models: People coming together and practicing working together around their separately identified interests, their jointly framed shared interests, and their common goals. The aim is to transit from in-group interests to joint interests, and later to a shared vision of the common space. However, the model does not lean only on contact premises; it strives for preparing participants for structural change and shifts in mindset, thus looking to a more relationally based interaction. In addition, it is a systemic approach from which joint interests are elicited and co-constructed.

For example, an economic-development committee of a partnership between a Jewish and an Arab municipality may find its drive and will to *participate* in the program in its early evolutionary stage through the calculation of the self-interests of each of the municipalities, that is—"what do we (my municipality) gain from it financially," or—"how are our economic interests served through any designated program." In a later, more advanced *collaborative* stage, the question may be framed differently. For example—"how is the well-being of all citizens in the region served through the project at hand?" This adopts a more regional view of the common good, regardless of the designation into in-group interests.

This may lead in a later stage toward a reflective stance and critical analysis of power relations and structural inequality. However, as Givat Haviva aims for the engagement around political dilemmas and tough issues to be dialogic rather than confrontational or monologic, it begins merely by setting the stage for these dialogs—bringing the tough issues to the forefront only in the later stage when they can be contained, and the conflicts managed constructively, through dialog and with relational awareness in the common, shared space.

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<sup>11</sup>What may at first seem as more advanced level of engagement by Jewish participants, less shielded with regard to their sense of in-group identity, may be confusing: The alleged openness is targeted for contact-based engagement, in which the privileged Jewish starting point is taken for granted; however, there will usually be less readiness for critical examination of that exact starting point, or openness for structural changes that may be perceived as a threat to the hegemonies Jewish standpoint.

### **Partnership**

Givat Haviva's definition of *partnership* is as follows: Profound connection in vision, core goals, and values; joint construction of a system, or long-term reform, in which all participants contribute to the change of the system and arrive at agreements regarding the means by which it is possible to change—radically and for the long term—old working patterns; in conjunction with adapting services, resources, institutes, and norms; and while developing new ways for coping with social problems. The partners develop and enforce upon themselves the tasks in need of addressing to maintain and continuously develop the partnership while creating joint meaning and joint social capital, and while constructing vital systems for identifying, surfacing, managing, and resolving conflicts.

The profound connection digs deep to foundational premises and to the sense of being that assists participants in this later stage to refrain from withdrawing to a separate, fortified sense of distinct identity in the flow of interaction. Indeed, there is room for voicing differences and empowering group narratives, although these arise from and within the interaction, when addressed compassionately in the realm of the shared space; in which the sharing of vision, core goals, and values serve as the glue and cement, the holding space, for the dialog on differences. This is no longer merely the meeting space of separately identified—usually ad hoc—interests, of different agendas in which each party makes optimal use of the meeting to create value for one's own community, and which are calculated and addressed without a holistic perspective that takes into account the complexity of the regional considerations at a more systemic level.

The notion of joint construction of a system and long-term reform reinforce the co-construction of sustainable system; a structure that stands on its own and in which the parts partake, seeing the primacy of the communal-based institution as the shared space within which participants inter-act. The possibility of radically changing old patterns is a derivative of the capability to deconstruct mental constructs, and habitual ways of being that derive from a fixed sense of self and other, co-constructing in mutuality a new sense of going about together; for example, seeing an environmental challenge as a regional challenge rather than a challenge a municipality needs to face with its known, well-defined capacity. The ability to adapt to new realities requires the transformation of one's habitual grasping of self and other, and of seemingly given, forced-upon constructs of objective reality. The internal-reinforcement and responsibility are a result of motivation building, a motivation that recognizes and sees as a priority the maintaining and sustaining of the partnership in its profound, dialogic stance (i.e., making meaning together and sensitively refraining from the withdrawal to separate sense of self that stands in opposition to the other) and which characterizes poor conflict management. Developing the capacity and skills to manage conflicts from a relational standpoint requires the identification and raising of common and naturally occurring withdrawals from the dialogic space to the entrenchment in in-group identities, situated in opposition rather than dialogically complement to one another. Good, highly capable, conflict management systems are aware of the tendency to polarize, dichotomize, and exclude and are capable of transforming this human tendency to relational awareness and inclusive, interdependent, response-able dialog.

In this more advanced stage, the maintenance and improvement of the partnership becomes the center of attention, participants discovering its core through it. For example, in the economic-development committee of a partnership between a Jewish and an Arab municipality described above, partners in this stage may find the drive—when gradually cultivating the mindset of *partnership* and with a growing sense of shared ownership and responsibility for the joint region—to enter a dialog where the committee may be focused on ideas such as “Who are we as a partnership?” “What is our shared vision for this region?” and even more—“How is our sense of who we are revisited through and within the interaction?,” or “How can our partnership define itself anew through economic-development projects that push our boundaries, our sense of who we are, and help us thrive?” When asking this more advanced set of questions, participants are no longer avoiding structural imbalance, restructuring power relations, and revisiting inequality. Moreover, while gradually experiencing profound changes in Jewish–Arab dynamics and

cultivating a relational sense of co-construction of their joint reality, they are now able to raise and manage constructively these tough issues that usually are highly challenging to address in Jewish–Arab encounters.

### ***Program Content and Lessons Learned***

Givat Haviva's first established partnership between a pair of communities—the Jewish town of Pardes Hanna-Karkur (population—32,000) and the neighboring Arab village of Kafr Kara (population—17,000) was in 2010. Since then, four other partnerships have been established, most recently toward the end of 2016 the fifth, between the Jewish Regional Council of Lev-Hasharon (population—14,000) and the city of Qalansawe (population of 22,000).

In the program, Israeli citizens and local leadership are engaged across divides through the creation of intercommunity alliances, mechanisms, and frameworks that facilitate joint action around common values, projects, and goals. The program adopts a holistic, inclusive approach to its activities, whereby all members of the community are engaged in various circles: Community-based programs that apply directly to the citizens; educational programs run via the formal school system and informal education; and at the municipal level, in which mayors and high officials work in ongoing joint committees (e.g., environmental committee, arts committee, economic development, planning committee, etc.) on mutually agreed-upon projects. In each of the circles, the three different stages are identified and addressed, helping participants become collaborators and partners. Participants are constantly encouraged throughout the program, in every circle, to co-construct their shared space and joint reality together. Yet, in each stage that is translated to different dynamics, with different levels of trust and rapport; at every stage, their co-construction efforts take into account a vision of shared society and partnership, although this vision evolves and gains new meaning as the process progresses. For example, on the municipal level, the facilitators will design the process and pose challenges to the teams on the committees in accordance with where they are at, helping in the early stage identify shared interests and design projects with levels of participation that meet participants' expectations, and to push their boundaries and reflect on the entire structure of the committee with the goal of helping cultivate a new joint perspective in the later stage. Complementary to the intercommunity work in the paired communities, Givat Haviva also facilitates regional forums by bringing together key Jewish and Arab players from throughout Wadi A'ra to forge cooperation on a regional level among municipalities, businesses, and nonprofit organizations.

The rationale behind focusing on the three circles of community, municipality, and education in the partnerships is the wish to be sensitive to different basic needs and goals for Jewish–Arab relations usually expressed, in general, by these two groups. While Jews in general are more focused on relationship building and on getting recognition from the Arab communities (recognition for its right to have a Jewish nationality in Israel and thus developing a sense of security and reassurance), the Arab participants' quest is to see more activities that advance more just allocation of resources, equality, and justice (Halabi, 2000; Kahanoff, 2016). The program is structured in a way that helps address both: While the community-based activities are in their basis oriented more toward contact, people-to-people projects that enhance relationship building and familiarity, the municipal circle is more structured around developing new shared infrastructures, constructed on basis of equality and mutual accessibility to power and national resources. The education circle is focused on developing human resources that embrace, from childhood, the idea of shared living and shared society, as described above, alongside other educational programs that bring together students and educators in various formats with different developmental goals in mind.

Experience shows that moving from the level of participation to the level of collaboration requires time and ongoing positive experiences, and that the shift toward the level of true partnership sets challenges that can bare sporadic fruits after some time only if targeted with clear intention and determination. As the program progresses, participants experience glimpses of shared living encounters, alongside

frustration from their absence in the short term. Gradually, these experiences may become more frequent and continuous. For example, in an evaluation that was performed at the end of the first year of the shared communities program between Megiddo Regional Council and Ma'ale Iron Local Council, both qualitative and quantitative (Avrahami-Marom, 2016), 21 participants, both male and female, from the partnership's steering committee and working groups (eight from Ma'ale Iron and 13 from Megiddo were surveyed), and 16 were interviewed (six and five, respectively, from each community, in addition to five Givat Haviva personnel). Participants reported that they were satisfied with the coordination among the municipalities, and with the level of trust among them. They were also highly satisfied with regard to the mutual respect demonstrated by everyone. In addition, their level of commitment to the program was shown to be very high. When asked whether the members of the other municipality cared only for their own interests, the data show that almost everyone (over 90%) disagreed. This overall satisfaction demonstrates, as the interviews also showed, a gradual shift toward collaboration among participants. The second year's evaluation (Avrahami-Marom, 2017b) shows that, while participants (or rather, collaborators) in the program experienced an increase in the level of trust and maintained high level of mutual respect, there was a decrease in satisfaction in the level of coordination and an increased sense of communication-failures, and what they perceived as attempts from the other side to impose one's opinion. Surprisingly, alongside the increase in the level of trust they felt toward the participants from the other municipality in general, there has been a decrease with regard to their feelings of being able to count on the other group's participants, those from the other municipality who serve together with them on the same committee.

Taken together with what was reported when asked the qualitative questions, a lesson learned is that the decrease in satisfaction in the second year may have to do with the different levels of expectation they had for each year: While in the first year, they entered the program with a mindset of participation and having low expectations regarding the dynamics in the shared realm, and therefore, they were positively surprised of the accomplishments in the first year, at the end of the second year, their evaluation already incorporates expectations to fortify collaborative working relations on an ongoing basis—and even aspirations for the partnership they may have already sporadically experienced at this stage. The answer to the question what does it mean to be able to count on the other group's participants varies: While at the end of the first year, it is associated with demonstrations of respect and somewhat low expectations with regard to coordination, being able to count stands for different things at the end of the second year and includes aspirations for more than what participants sufficed with in the first year. Reports demonstrate that alongside sporadic experiences of partnership, disappointment from its absence in other instances in the early stages of the intervention program (the first 2 years) is emphasized. There is an increased ability to articulate and envision true partnership, but with feelings of frustration that the current, third year of intervention, should address.

## Discussion

The concepts of relational awareness, interdependence, co-evolution, coordinated meaning, etc. are not strange to current conflict-resolution scholarship and dialog practices (Gergen, 1999), but they set a real threat in the current Middle-Eastern reality, where each side strives for independence rather than interdependence, wanting to define itself on its own for its own purposes, and shielding itself from the other (Bar-Tal, Halperin, & Oren, 2010). The "other" is grasped as posing an existential threat to one's group.

In order for the concept of shared society to take hold, it should challenge this shielding and fortification. The clarification of the concept of shared society, and the manner in which certain practices consistent with the mentioned theoretical underpinnings are developed and implemented as demonstrated above, can help peacebuilding efforts overcome barriers for setting the conditions for true partnership.



Alongside the more concrete set of goals that participants bring to the shared society/shared communities program on the content level, it is important to have a clear vision and intervention strategy on the process level that supports the gradual shift from participation through collaboration to partnership. The conceptual clarifications and demonstrated practical implications described in this article offer practitioners avenues to transform alienating images of the “other” to true partnership.

## Further Research

With these theoretical understandings, this article highlights important direction for future inquiries that focus attention on a paradigm shift that can be found in many disciplines, the shift from individualistic to a relational understanding of the self and of matter. The article points at new directions for interdisciplinary research and for cross-fertilization between disciplines, for further exploration of what can be learned from relational developments in other fields (such as psychology, communication, physics, brain research, political science, etc.) for the advancement of shared society on both the theoretical and practical levels. In addition, future research should be directed toward further development of efficient strategies and interventions that are well-received by participants and have a positive effect with regard to the cultivation of relational awareness. Empirical study is also needed to evaluate the various strategies and measure changes in relational awareness, to help examine and learn what can be beneficial in the specific context in which shared society programs are designed.

A more detailed analysis of each of the levels is needed, specifying how different variables are manifested in each state (e.g., how is “personal commitment” manifested in the participation/collaboration/partnership level). Theoretical research that examines the developmental considerations is also needed: If each of the levels is seen as a stage in need of transformation to the next, it is important to clarify what conditions should be met in order to progress to the more developed stage on each variable.

Also, on the conceptual level, it is important to further develop the linkage between relational premises and the development of a civil definition of Israeli citizenship and to explore how relational foundations can help the discourse on ethnicity and religion be more constructive and dialogic. The issues of ethnicity and religion are sensitive and tend to be divisive, to draw firm boundaries and contrast between two separated, firm ideologies. From a relational point of view, cultivation of awareness is needed, in an effort to transform this individualistically held sense of religious identity and of ethnicity; the discourse on ethnic identity and even the discourse on religious identity can be challenged in new and fascinating ways through relational premises.

In addition, conversation analysis studies of Jewish–Arab dialogs can help identify barriers to cultivation of relational dynamics, using conversational analysis to examine relational moves in interaction (see Glenn & Kuttner, 2013). Research on different styles of facilitation, along the lines of similar scholarship in mediation (see, for example, Kressel & Wall, 2012), is also needed.

## Conclusion

In recent years, as mentioned, the concept of “shared society” is gaining popularity. In this article, I showed that the transition toward shared society can be explained in various ways, and suggested that this shift incorporates the seeds of a paradigm shift that is worth noting. The various explanations regarding the nature of the shift and what it embeds, for example, Club De Madrid’s understanding of the term or the relational understanding described in this article, or the rights-based advocacy for equality among certain Arab thinkers in Israel, are not mutually exclusive; there is no right or better explanation, but rather an accumulation of reasons that all play a role in this social change. Understanding the variety of explanations is important if one wishes to support this transition on the ground, as each explanation requires attention and action to help address what is called for in the efforts to build a shared

society. Moreover, since the embeddedness of shared society involves a paradigm shift, a lack of clear vision of its underpinnings will make it difficult to construct a shared society. In other words, conflict specialists and peace-builders that see the transition from coexistence to shared society as a desired transition, who wish to help set the conditions for this transition on the ground and to help develop a shared society in practice, ought to be familiar with the variety of aspects that compose the notion of shared society. They ought to delve into its underpinnings in order to be able to act accordingly and to help it materialize. If a profound shift is sought, and the cultivation of true partnership stands as a vision, the unique and profound challenge of transforming adversity and conflict into relationality and dialog consistent with the zeitgeist ought to be understood and addressed. This transition portrays a profound transformation in mindset and approach—not only toward the end results of peacebuilding efforts—but in how the human self is, and human interactions are, realized.

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**Ran Kuttner** is an Associate Professor of Dispute Resolution (expert track) at the University of Haifa, where he teaches at the International Graduate Program in Peace and Conflict Management Studies. He also serves as an academic advisor to Givat Haviva, an organization that aims at building a shared society and dialogue among Jews and Arabs in Israel. Prior to his return to Israel, he was an Associate Professor of Negotiation and Dispute Resolution at the Werner Institute, Creighton University (USA) and preceding his arrival at Creighton, he was a Visiting Scholar at the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School for three years. He is a certified mediator and mediation teacher in Israel and consults to organizations and community mediation centers that work towards a more dialogic Israeli society in implementing collaborative conflict engagement approaches. He teaches courses on dialogue, negotiation, mediation, group facilitation, leadership and conflict resolution, and peacebuilding strategies.