

Final Report: Senior research stay at Hebrew University of Jerusalem,  
Geography Department

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During my research stay at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem I experienced how sustainable development resonates in teaching and research at the Department of Geography and in particular the Advanced School for Environmental Studies led by Eran Feitelson and located on the Mount Scopus Campus.

In contrast to security issues, which are high up the political and media agenda in Israel, it is much more difficult to sensitize policymakers and the public to environmental problems and the issue of climate change. I learned that the Advanced School for Environmental Studies in particular contributes in important ways to sustainability knowledge, higher education and policy consultation. Their research focuses on amongst other topics water governance and peaceful cooperation; vulnerability to climate change and climate adaptation; climate and conflict; urban governance and social inclusiveness; the promotion of renewable energy; and sustainable planning.

Upon my arrival at the Hebrew University, Amit Tubi who continued to be my major point of contact, gave me a tour of the Mount Scopus Campus including of the lovely Botanical Garden. He provided insights into the historical development of the HUJI, and brought me in touch with colleagues and students. Over the three weeks at the HUJI, I had opportunity to meet colleagues and PhD students working on topics related to local governance, social inclusiveness and urban development, climate adaptation, environmental issues and renewable energy policy. I received information about current research areas, applied and basic research projects and teaching activities. Various linkages exist between the work of the colleagues at the Geography Department HUJI and environmental governance research pursued at the Environmental Policy Research Centre and other FU Departments. Such linkages concern theoretical and methodological approaches as well as research topics. The two universities have a shared interest in climate governance, low-carbon development in

countries with rapidly emerging markets, renewable energy policy, and the role entrepreneurship and subnational levels play in environmental governance. Itay Fishhendler introduced me to his recent work on solar energy and security issues in the Gaza strip. I also met guest researcher David Sonnenfeld, State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry who conducted environmental studies in Thailand. Eran Feitelson and Gillad Rosen introduced me to their PhD groups. As I also shared the room with two PhD students I learned a lot about doctoral studies at the HUJI: the work in progress on the research designs for the dissertations, the day-to-day challenge of academic work, and I realized that it is quite difficult for the PhD students to plan for a longer leave, with many of them having family, children and jobs.

I also had contact with Josef van Wijk who studies renewable energy compensation in Israel, Yinnfon Geva who researches urban development and community involvement. The postdoctoral researcher Thounaojam Somokanta, and I discussed his study about a dam controversy in Manipur and my research work in India.

Yael Barash Harman, a PhD student of Prof Eran Fietelson and Christian Thauer, and I share an interest in Indian environmental politics. Yael has an impressive background, both as a young researcher and entrepreneur in India. I found her work extremely interesting and we identified areas of mutual interest regarding environmental policy in India's states. Yael's thesis deals with the incentives for environmental investment in India's state of Gujarat.

In the second week, I gave a lecture about green-growth policies from an international comparative perspective, including of a case study about low-carbon policies in India. Considering the target group which consisted of human geography students, I updated and enlarged the data set for the presentation, shedding more light on demographic, economic and energy factors. I gave a one-hour presentation followed by a vibrant interesting discussion about the factors shaping environmental governance and green-growth policies. After the class, I received a couple of emails and arranged follow-up meetings with five students.

As indicated above, life in Israel is marked by conflict and security concerns. To refresh my knowledge I read Martin Bunton's excellent book: *The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: A Very Short Introduction*, which reduces the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to a modern territorial conflict. For my daily news I chose to read the *Haaretz* and the *Jerusalem Post*. Israel's famous writer and Peace Now founder Amos Oz passed away during my stay in December 2018 I got the audio version of his

autobiographic book *A Tale of Love and Darkness* and started to listen to it during my stay in Jerusalem.

In my free time I walked around the old city and the new center, visited the museums, including the impressive World Holocaust Remembrance Center - Yad Vashem.

During the first week, I stayed at the YMCA and met Dr. George E. Assousa a YMCA board member. He introduced me to Israeli-Palestinian collaboration activities organized by the YMCA. In the second week I moved to the Belgium House, a nice guesthouse at Edmond J. Safra in Giv'at Ram, another lovely HUJI campus. From Giv'at Ram I commuted to Mount Scopus campus using the Hebrew University Shuttle, which is very comfortable. Alternative bus lines are the 68, which takes a longer route through Jerusalem, and the 42.

On many occasions, I got lost in the confusing architecture of the Mount Scopus Campus, which gave me opportunity to get in touch with students and professors when asking for directions. In the evenings at the Edmond J. Safra Campus I sometimes strolled to the cafeteria of the National Library for dinner. On the way back to the Belgium Guest House, I had nice encounters with the wildlife on campus. I observed Golden Jackals hunting the campus cats and saw three porcupines.

Overall the most important take-away from my stay at the Hebrew University is that it has a very kind and inviting atmosphere and I had very interesting and inspiring interactions with students and academic staff. My short stay at the HUJI will have an impact on my teaching activities; making me shift more attention to the Middle East region and Israel in particular and encouraging me to study the way conflicts shape potential environmental governance and cooperation. I am looking forward to meeting HUJI students and professors at the upcoming Spring Campus.

