



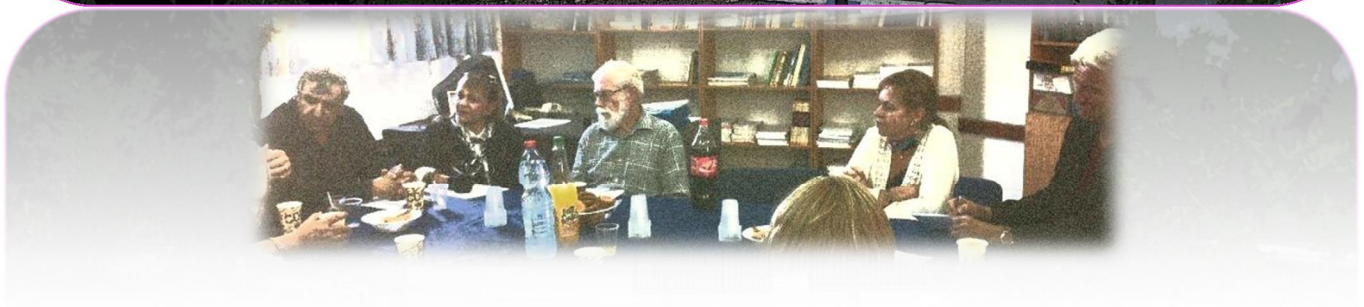
ISRAELI LEARNING CITIES INITIATIVE

# THE DIALOGUES

RECOMMENDATIONS

APRIL 2013

Jan Gejel



## The strategic Israeli initiative revisited



We carried through a long visit in 2011 to establish international dialogues around the establishment of the Israeli role model learning city of Modi'in.

Modi'in is a brand new city in Israel, located right at the center of the country between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and between the Northern and Southern regions of the country.

The strategic plan is to take the city's now 80.000 inhabitants to around 250.000 and to take the city from a place where people live to a place where they live *and work*.

The city is in all aspects a young city, with an average age of 32.

The idea is to include learning city visions and practices into all dimensions of a new city.

Modi'in is the role model learning city for Israel and for the national initiative of learning cities. Not a role model in the narrow sense, like a learning city to be copied by others, but in the sense of a *hub*, an *experimentarium*, a *resource center* and a *accumulative knowledge and inspiration center* for the upcoming learning communities and cities in Israel.

The role model project is strongly supported by the Municipality of Modi'in.

The resource center role is strongly supported by two national organisations, the *Union of Local Authorities in Israel* and the *Israeli Adult Education Association*.

The visit in April 2013 aimed to establish a number of dialogues with very different stakeholders in different parts of Israel to allow the monitoring of the present strategic step: taking the national learning cities from Modi'in to a number of new learning cities across the country.

Part of the visit therefore included celebrating the second Israeli learning city of Ra'anana in the central part of Israel, and establishing dialogues with potential new learning cities in the northern part of the country, characterized by co-existence between Jewish and Arab communities.

The overall aim of the visit was to discuss this second phase of the national initiative and in particular to discuss the challenges linked to taking the initiative from *a role model city* and to *a network of learning cities*.

There are vital challenges linked to such a step, as it requires strong visions, leadership and coordination, but in particular strong inspiration and resource allocation actions.

The Israeli Learning Cities Initiative is a top-down initiative with considerable policy support, and therefore the creator of the initiative, Dr. Orna Mager, is extremely focused on how to balance the top-down initiative against strong community activities directly involving different groups of citizens. Also in this field Modi'in will be the role-model, not telling what to do in new learning cities, but offering inspiration on how to work together in the local communities.

The Israeli Learning City Initiative is deeply linked to and inspired by the European Xploit project as well as by various global learning cities platforms, such as Pascal and the emerging UNESCO learning cities network initiative.

It is a clear value in the common understanding of the initiative among Israeli stakeholders that the Israeli initiative must be linked strongly to international platforms, networks and dialogues.

It is precisely the mission of the Advisory Board to offer a strong bridge between the Israeli initiative and the European and global platforms.

The aim of this small report is not to go into details of describing organizational structures or infrastructures of collaboration, which must be delivered by the Israeli initiative itself, but to offer clear and hopefully useful recommendations to the Israeli stakeholders in support of their successful learning cities program. It is at the same time the aim to allow global discussion forums some insight into the Israeli initiative.

## Modi'in the role model



Although linked to settlements more than 2000 years old, Modi'in is a brand new city, not even 20 years old, and a result of a national policy initiative. Some years ago Dr. Orna Mager created the vision of making this new city the first learning city in Israel.

The idea was to integrate learning city principles and values into all aspects of the community life to benefit the citizens and to offer Israel a *laboratory* for developing learning communities and cities.

Orna Mager mobilized considerable policy support, and the local government including the Mayor offers full support to the learning city mission.

The development of the city as a learning city was constantly in interaction and dialogue with especially European learning communities initiatives and platforms, such as the Xploit project funded by the European Commission, but also with global resources such as the Pascal Observatory.

The initiative in Modi'in has managed to balance the top-down initiative against a long line of local initiatives directly created by or involving groups of citizens and in the fields of adult learning, cultural and social activities.

The local government seems to have a strong understanding of offering citizens open spaces and resources for learning and working together and to respect the basic principles of empowerment of citizens.

The Modi'in Learning City Initiative is still in its first phases, but it is already quite obvious to the visitor that many of the key criteria, principles and values in learning communities are at work in Modi'in.

The initiative seems favored by a considerable interest from both local organisations and groups of citizens.

One of the most important learning city missions in Modi'in is to establish a strong *entrepreneurship culture and mentality* among the citizens and among the many young people in the city in particular.

The city needs to develop from a city where people live to a city with a dynamic economic activity - an attractive place to work and to establish different forms of businesses and services.

Already now the city counts numerous incubator environments, especially for young people, offering support for the establishment of small enterprises and other initiatives. Some of them seem quite successful.

One of the drivers of the Learning City of Modi'in is clearly the need to develop innovative economies and make it attractive for people to work in the city.

The city is establishing communities of industry around the city, but further efforts are needed to promote the city as a city of economic growth, naturally linked to fields of innovation.

Entrepreneurship in Modi'in has the capacity to widen the scope of what is called entrepreneurship, in fact very much in line with the new conceptions of entrepreneurship promoted by the European Union and organisations as the OECD

and the World Bank: *the ability of citizens and young people to follow their ideas and turn them into reality.*

*Fostering entrepreneurship mentality should permeate all educational, learning, social and cultural activities in Modi'in: from kindergarten to retirement. This is a challenge to Modi'in: establishing new partnerships between the different sectors to foster entrepreneurial mentality among all citizens.*

During the many dialogues in April 2013 a strong vision was developed:

- From a city with incubators to a city as incubator.

Modi'in is already and will be even more a city with a diversity of incubators, but from a learning city point of view the city has the capacity to develop into an incubator city!

Not simply a city with many incubators, but an incubator city.

This means *learning community entrepreneurship* at city level.

In other words, Modi'in could be a laboratory for learning communities, making it attractive for local citizens, citizens from other communities in Israel as well for an international audience to come to Modi'in to learn about learning communities, to develop learning communities initiatives and to establish new and innovative learning community businesses. This could lead to an interesting future economic activity for the city and would definitely contribute to putting Modi'in on the global learning cities map and agendas!

Such activities fit well into the already existing plans of establishing the Modi'in Learning Cities Centre - see below.

## The new learning cities and regions - the challenges and drivers



Based on the national support from the *Union of Local Authorities in Israel* and the *Israeli Adult Education Association*, and based also on considerable and direct support from the Municipality of Modi'in, Dr. Orna Mager was missioned to use the Modi'in case as a platform for establishing a network of learning communities, cities and regions across Israel.

During the visit we participated in the celebration of the second learning city in Israel, the City of Ra'anana in central Israel, and several local governments and cities in Israel have declared their interest in joining the new network of learning cities.

A considerable part of the dialogues during the visit was obviously focused on the challenges linked to this national network of learning cities!

This big step offers numerous challenges, opportunities and threats at the same time.

The new learning cities in Israel are totally different from Modi'in. Most of them are old cities with old traditions based on cultural diversity and with extremely different economic, social and cultural profiles: from wealthy cities looking for innovation in the global world to communities with basic educational and social problems.

Obviously, the major challenge is to guide these very different communities towards finding their way to being a learning city, based on strong empowerment of stakeholders and citizens, and based on their specific needs and interests.

This is why it is useful to change the role of Modi'in in the emerging national network: not a role-model in the traditional sense, but rather a resource and support center for the national network.

This is precisely what seems to be happening when the Modi'in Learning Cities Centre is established: the focus is then not on how to export the Modi'in model, but on creating the needed national resources to support and mentor the diversity of communities involved in the national network.

This strategy calls for a strong center with a strong and independent budget!

*More about this later...*

One of the key challenges to the emerging learning communities, and to the new Learning Cities Centre in Modi'in, will be to identify one or more drivers in the different communities: which are the challenge(s) in the community that will offer a common platform for working together and create new community infrastructures in the communities? Which are challenge(s) that can bring organisations and people together, to make them join forces and to make them create the community's learning city mission?

Such drivers are needed and they can be very different, as can be studied on [www.learningcommunities.eu](http://www.learningcommunities.eu).

The new Israeli learning communities offer a great variety of drivers, from basic adult education to the dynamics of religious and cultural co-existence.

It is most urgent that the coordination of the new network of learning communities is extremely sensitive to the different drivers and to how to mobilize local organisations and citizens around those drivers.

The Modi'in Learning Cities Centre will have to use considerable resources to dialogue with, guide and support the various directions in the different new learning communities. On size does NOT fit all, and especially not in Israel...

This brings us to some reflections on how to support the first steps in the new communities.

## Israeli learning cities network didactics: theory and practice



“No shortcuts to community capacity building” (Martin Yarnit, UK) - this might be the motto for the new learning cities network in Israel.

*What does it mean?*

It means that top-down initiatives, political frameworking and declarations must be followed by a strong and well-designed balance between political support and empowerment of local citizens from all social, economic and cultural backgrounds.

The first steps are crucial: local community workers must be empowered to address and involve local organisations and citizens, to explain the benefits of

community initiatives and to facilitate local citizens' direct involvement in the learning community.

This is what we along the dialogues called *learning cities network didactics*. In practical terms this includes:

- › Designing strong support activities for a team of community stakeholders from different sectors in the new learning communities to develop mutual understanding of the principles, values and practices of a learning community
- › Designing strong support activities for a team of community workers to empower them to mobilize and facilitate the direct involvement of local groups of citizens working together to meet their needs
- › Basing these activities and support measures on a learning process in which the local activities are directly involved as real life material and missions: learning through community action
- › Following these teams along the many first steps, perhaps for 12 or 24 months
- › Organizing learning sessions at network (national) level through which policy makers and community workers can share experience and learn from each other
- › Encourage strong story-telling from the local communities to make visible what happens in a learning community

In short, top-down initiatives should be followed by community processes through which all involved organisations and individuals learn to be a learning community by taking concrete action and reflecting on the actions. These challenges should be managed and coordinated by the new Modi'in Learning Cities Centre, and the Centre should be prepared to offer the needed resources.

## The Modi'in Learning Cities Centre



In this report we refer to the Modi'in Learning Cities Centre.

The center is not yet a reality, but is under construction as the key support structure for the national learning cities network.

Taking the Israeli Learning Cities Initiative from Modi'in to a national network of learning cities explains the need for such a coordinating center: the task is no longer a local one, but a national one, and the perspectives are global.

The center is expected to be located in Modi'in for obvious reasons, and its basic mission is to support and coordinate the network of new learning communities, cities and regions in Israel.

The mission of the center is, however, far from being simply a coordinating one. The center will be a knowledge center in Israel on learning cities, it will offer resources to support the establishment and learning processes of the new learning cities, it will provide documentation and collect evidence, it will establish ongoing dialogues with policy makers, international networks and experts, etc.

*We do not hesitate to say: the quality and the capacity of this center is likely to determine the success of the national Israeli Learning Cities Initiative.*

Let us try to list some of the important tasks to be managed by the new center:

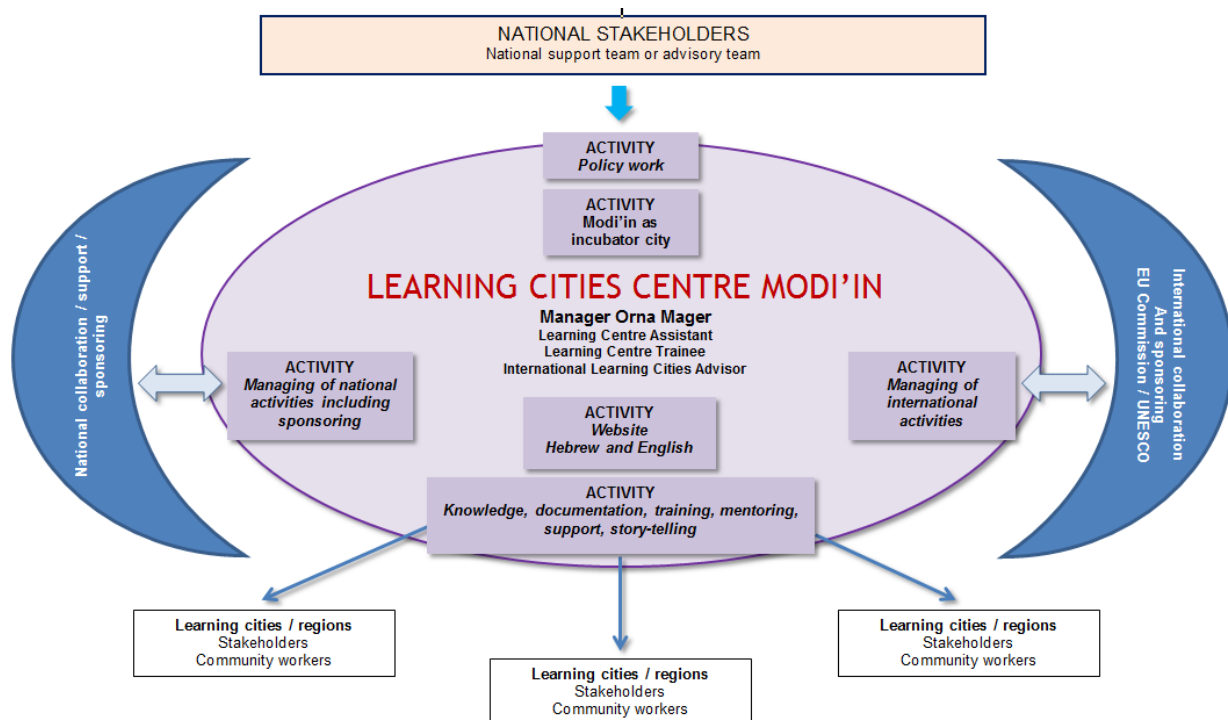
- › Work for policy commitment in Israel at all levels
- › Build documentation and support structures

- › Design and implement empowerment processes for local stakeholders and community workers
- › Facilitate the mutual learning between the local community workers
- › Coordinate international dialogues with other countries, the European Commission and its initiatives, with Pascal and UNESCO, etc.
- › Organize local, national and international learning cities events in Modi'in and take part in such events in other countries
- › Promote strong entrepreneurial activities in the learning cities, especially among young people
- › Create new visions for the Israeli learning communities
- › Evaluate the performance of the learning cities in connection with the basic quality criteria for learning communities and based on clear success criteria

A special challenge might be to develop Modi'in and the Center into an attractive incubator of learning communities for a national and international audience: practice city entrepreneurship by building accommodation resources for visitors and young entrepreneurs (innovative hotels, work and study conditions and cultural opportunities), to ensure also the physical and financial platform for the Modi'in Center.

*The vision could be that the Modi'in Learning Cities Center is an attractive meeting place for an international audience and for young entrepreneurs from for example 2015.*

During the dialogues we developed this draft model of the center:



One of the most important threats to such a center will be the lack of or weak financing.

A national center like this should not be exclusively financed by local resources, but by major national stakeholders. The reasons for this are obvious:

- › The center will serve innovation across Israel and will be an incubator of initiative and new ideas for the country at large, and for young people in particular
- › The center will help empower many citizens to create new opportunities in their communities, including social innovation and co-existence

- › The center will attract an international audience to Israel, and will place Israel as an interesting partner in the future international networks
- › The center will promote an alternative image of Israel to what is known from the media and offer Israeli communities, organisations and citizens to work directly with people and organisations from other countries, especially from Europe

These are some of reasons that the new center should be financed by strong stakeholders, such as:

- › National public organisations
- › Cities members of the learning cities network
- › Major private companies
- › Ministries concerned with innovation, entrepreneurship and education
- › Major organisations concerned with promoting the image and branding of Israel

A strong long-term (5 years) combined funding model is recommended, such as for example four major stakeholders each financing 25% of the center budget. The center should be requested to produce annual reports documenting the activities and making the benefits of the center visible, and the center should be missioned to step by step developing the capacity to contribute to the budget through own economic activities.

It can be estimated that the needed budget investments will be very small compared to the potential benefits of the initiative to the Israeli society.

*Volunteering is considered a strong option in local community work, but not at the level of a national center with international ambitions.*

## How can the Israeli initiative succeed?

*Recommendations Recommendations Recommendations Recommendations Recommendations*



Based on the many dialogues during the visits in 2011 and 2013, and taking into consideration the present transformation phase from local to national and international, we would like to present some *policy recommendations*, addressing directly the level of decision-makers and professionals responsible for the national initiative:

### Direct involvement

Ensure direct and authentic involvement of citizens and community organisations as early in the process as possible and invite them to help shaping the contours of their learning community

### Empowerment of gate-keepers

Support, help and facilitate the work of local community workers: they are the people who can mobilize the community; let them grow, feel proud and perhaps even make a career of their community work (learning community entrepreneurship)

### Serious debates on the roles of public authorities

Public authorities should empower themselves to be learning community players by reflecting on the changing roles of public authorities; as Dr. Orna Mager says: think city, not municipality



#### Strong coordination at inter-city level

It is wise to exploit the learning community resources between learning communities, cities and regions; inter-city learning and sharing can create substantial resources also if the cities are very different

#### Considerable resources should be raised (ambitions vs. resources)

A direct resource recommendation: ensure strong funding of the Modi'in Learning Cities Center in support of its national and international ambitions - or, alternatively, adjust the ambitions to the available funding; avoid unproductive competition between the learning communities

#### The strengths and threats of volunteering

Promote volunteering in the communities, not in the national framework structures; the right balance between professionalism and volunteering is crucial to learning communities; volunteering can be linked to entrepreneurship and job creation

#### Private sector

It is urgent to the learning cities and to the Modi'in Learning Cities Centre to involve the private sector: as sponsors, but also as collaborators and community players; the changed roles of the private sector is important to any learning community

#### Strong and solid international documentation

Ensure qualified documentation activities in the new Center, as such documentation activities will foster stronger interaction between the Israeli initiatives and international stakeholders and networks and create an audience for the Israeli initiative

#### Strong and solid international collaboration, European Commission in particular

Invest considerable resources in international cooperation in the new Center: learning from the international dialogues and creating an international audience for the Israeli initiatives and the new Center, including the economic aspects of such activities

#### English website: telling the stories, creating an audience

An English website should be established as soon as possible, documenting and telling the stories of the Israeli learning cities initiatives and describing the new Modi'in Learning Cities Centre; it is crucial to tell the stories of the community activities and to involve the citizens in the story-telling; the English website should be developed and maintained in dialogue with qualified international stakeholders, as they are the target groups of the website

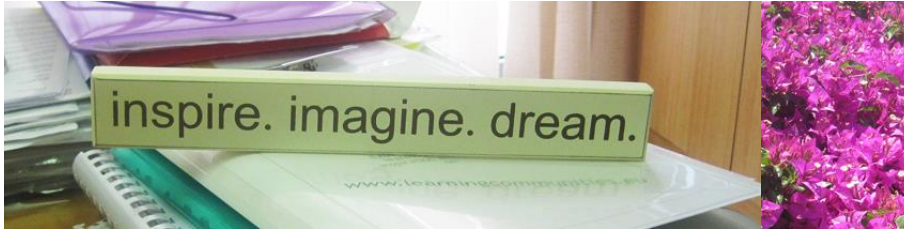
Example: [www.LearningCitiesInIsrael.com](http://www.LearningCitiesInIsrael.com)

This website will represent a very strong step for the Israeli initiatives on the international scene

#### Maintain consultancy

The international consultancy dialogues, such as the visits to Israel, are important to the progression and success of the Israeli initiatives; it is recommended to invite stakeholders in Israel to provide a solid budget for the Modi'in Learning Cities Centre to maintain these dialogues

## Special Israeli Learning Cities resources



It is important for the Israeli stakeholders involved in the creation of the Modi'in Learning Cities Centre to be aware of specific Israeli resources that can be invested in these national initiatives, and we invite the Israeli stakeholders to reflect on the value and potentials of these resources.

The special Israeli resources are many, but allow us to point to some of the resources debated during the recent visit:

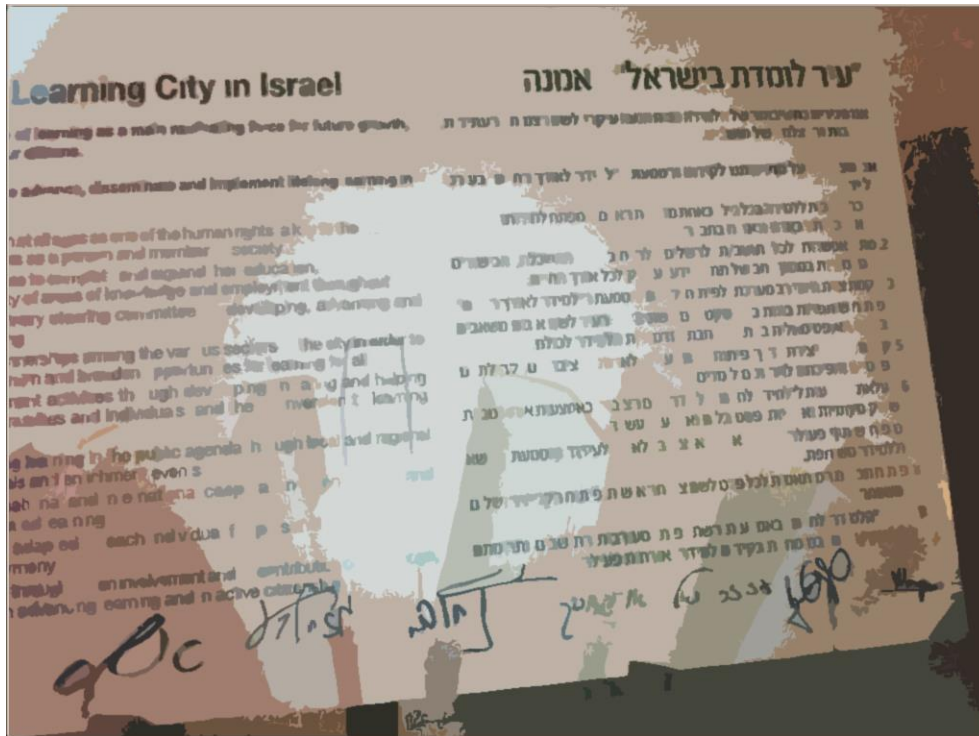
- › Israeli communities and citizens demonstrate a very high level of English language, which is crucial to all kinds of international cooperation and to the exchange of experience between Israeli communities and for instance European communities
- › Israel, including all its cultures, is the story-telling community *par excellence*, and this should be exploited to tell about the community initiatives and to involve all kinds of citizens directly in the story-telling; Israel might promote strong and valuable learning through story-telling approaches, also to an international audience; this might be a strong asset to the Israeli Learning Cities didactics
- › The constant state of conflicts (political, religious, cultural) in the Israeli community can be exploited as a culture of permanent reflection and questioning, opening up to valuable learning resources, and this resource includes the diversity of multi-cultural learning embedded in everyday life of most Israeli citizens
- › One of the major innovative learning methods in the future will be learning by gamification; the Israeli culture can through its story-telling and entrepreneurial mentalities become an important and special laboratory for experimenting with this new learning approach; gamification is extremely relevant to community learning: learning at all educational levels, including non-formal learning, by linking the learning to authentic community missions



- › *Modi'in symbolic driver*: symbolic drivers of learning communities and innovation can be extremely powerful; Modi'in has, as a new city in a very old culture, the opportunity to exploit its position in Israel as a city of mediation: mediating between policies, cultures, religions, generations, antagonist cities such as Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, etc. Modi'in can create a strong and powerful allegory of mediation based on its learning community strategies and aspirations and ambitions
- › *Israel symbolic driver*: what is true at national level for Modi'in as a symbolic driver is also true for Israel as a community in the global game: powerful symbolic drivers can be created from a nation with extreme conflicts all of a sudden appearing on the international scene in a new form: as promoter of

learning communities finding new mutual micro-structural platforms of learning and working together as an alternative to the macro-structural political, religious and cultural conflicting dominating the media interface of the country

*Exploiting these special resources in a clever way will not only benefit the Israeli communities and learners, but will help profiling the Israeli Learning Cities Initiative as a special and attractive global laboratory.*



## Learning communities and people involved in the visit



*We are doing our best, but it will be a long journey...*

### Tel-Aviv - Israeli Union of Local Authorities

Shlomo Dolbery - CEO

Dr. Ramzi Halabi- Organizational consultant

Dafna Nof - Head of guiding Department

Ziv Bar - Manager of educational Department

### Modi'in - Modi'in Municipality

Haim Bibas - Mayor

Yoram Carmon - CEO

Moish Levi - Deputy Mayor

Dana Hetetz - Legal Advisor

Shevi Deri - Deputy CEO

Elad Shimonovitz - Spokesperson

Dana Deko - Mayor's assistant

Uri Sharf- Director of Entrepreneur Institution

Noa Vinic - Manager of Community Department

Michaela Cohen - Manager of Young Adults' Center

Yoela Tavor - Manager of Social Affair Department

Thanks to all of  
you for your most  
valuable  
contributions!



### Holon - Israel Adult Education Association

Asher Levi - Chairperson

Board Members

### Ra'anana Municipality

Nahum Hofri - Mayor

Uri Orbach - Minister of Senior Citizen Ministry, Israeli Parliament

Board Members

### Arabic Sector - Abu Snan

Dr. Najib Saab - Director of Al-Huda College

Halil Ganaiem- Lectures - Sachnin College

### Tseela Organization (Improvement Team)

Haim Haiat - Chairperson

Inbal Turkenits - Manager

Yoram Levi - Organizational Consultant

The visit to the Israeli Learning Cities Initiative was organized by Dr. Orna Mager and co-financed by the **Municipality of Modi'in**, the **European Xploit project** and the **Aarhus Social and Healthcare College Denmark** (coordinator of the European Xploit project).

We thank these stakeholders for making this important dialogue possible.

*The dialogues will need new funding resources in the future to sustain and take further these dialogues.*

OM / MM / JG



## *Letter of Support to Dr. Orna Mager*

### To Israeli decision-makers

Based on my long-standing work with learning communities and learning cities, adult education and the innovation of learning in general, and based on years of collaboration with numerous countries, communities and international organisations, I would like to express my deepest respect for the learning cities achievements in Israel of Dr. Orna Mager from Modi'in.

I have no doubt that the work of Orna Mager should be counted among the efforts that can make a difference to communities, cultures and countries and can create authentic change for many citizens.

Orna Mager has strived for years to make her initiatives and ideas a reality, and it is obvious to many international learning cities stakeholders and experts that she is in the process of achieving more than most others in this complicated field.

The perspectives for the initiatives in Israel created by Dr. Orna Mager are excellent and promising, and many learning cities stakeholders will pay attention to her work in the future.

I hereby strongly recommend, for professional reasons only, Israeli decision-makers to continue to support Dr. Orna Mager's local, national and international initiatives, and to ensure that her missions are readily supported by organizational, moral and financial resources, allowing her to continue and complete her outstanding work for learning cities - for the benefit of both the Israeli community and the international dialogues.

I am at your disposal for in-depths explanations of the value of Dr. Orna Mager's work and achievements.

Denmark, 29<sup>th</sup> of April 2013

*Jan Gejel*

Coordinator of the Advisory Board for the Israeli Learning Cities Initiative  
Senior European Project Manager

