

## ENGLISH ABSTRACTS

OF INTEREST: Scientific (refereed) articles: Theory and research

# Jerusalem versus the Central Government: The White Ridge Plan and the Struggle to Strengthen Urban Autonomy

Shira Rosenbaum and Nufar Avni

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### ABSTRACT

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In recent decades, cities around the world have been working to strengthen their autonomy, assuming extensive powers in areas that were once almost exclusively under the control of central governments. This trend stems from two main factors: first, the growing need for cities to address local challenges in a more flexible and efficient manner; and second, the failures of central governments to provide adequate responses to these challenges. Although the level of municipal autonomy in Israel remains low compared to other Western countries, in recent years a gradual strengthening of urban autonomy has become evident.

This study examines the conditions that enable municipal resistance to central government authority and the actual realization of autonomy in planning and environmental issues, through a case study of the White Ridge (Reches Lavan) development plan in Jerusalem. The research describes how the local government opposed the central government's plan to promote a new neighborhood on an open area on White Ridge, and instead proposed an independent planning alternative.

The findings indicate that urban autonomy is a dynamic process, dependent on shifting power relations and collaborations among various actors. Moreover, the study identifies two key factors that contributed to the strengthening of autonomy: (a) civil society organizations that succeeded in mobilizing the local government, and (b) a strong mayor who pursued an independent policy and stood up to the central government. In addition, the study identifies four main strategies for enhancing urban autonomy: acting within the formal scope of authority, cooperation, the use of symbolic capital, and resistance. Two patterns of municipal resistance were found: localized resistance, as in the case of the White Ridge plan, and broader resistance, expressed in the struggle to expand the powers of local governments.

**Keywords:** Urban autonomy, local government, central government, open space policy, civil society, Jerusalem

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