

PROJECT RENEWAL:

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ISSUES AND ACTORS

A Center for Jewish Community Studies Staff Report

Daniel J. Elazar, President  
Gerald B. Bubis, Fellow  
Moshe Hazani, Fellow  
Hillel Frisch, Research Associate

Teveith 5740 - January 1980

CR8

LEHMAN  
HN  
761  
.I84  
P76

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION	1
	The Urgency of Implementing Project Renewal	3
	The Problem of Magnitude	6
	"Substandard" Housing	13
II.	NEIGHBORHOODS AND THEIR PLACE IN PROJECT RENEWAL	16
	An Overview of Project Renewal Neighborhoods	17
III.	THE ASHKENAZI - SEPHARDI GAP: IS IT RELEVANT IN PROJECT RENEWAL	24
IV.	THE CONDITION OF STATE/LOCAL RELATIONS	32
	Breakthrough for Local Government?	36
V.	DOMINANT POSITION OF THE MINISTRY OF CONSTRUCTION AND HOUSING	39
	The Twelve Neighborhoods	42
VI.	PARALLEL PROJECTS: THE EXAMPLE OF PROJECT REVAHIA HINUHIT	45
VII.	THE ROLE OF THE JEWISH AGENCY	47
VIII.	THE ROLE OF THE DIASPORA COMMUNITIES	51
	Project Renewal and Future Israel-Diaspora Relations	54
	Project Renewal and Israeli Political Issues	57
IX.	A FINAL WORD	59
	APPENDIX. JERUSALEM LETTER - NO. 15: Nov. 30, 1978: Who Creates the Slums? by Moshe Hazani	67

## FIGURES

Figure 1:	Organizational Chart of Project Renewal	2
Figure 2:	Flowchart of Project Renewal from Planning to Implementation	33
Figure 3:	Israeli Neighborhoods Adopted by Keren Hayesod Communities	53

## TABLES

Table 1:	Jewish Employed Persons by Occupation and Continent of Birth	27
Table 2:	Household, by Deciles of New Income per Standard Person	29
Table 3:	30 Neighborhoods: Major Elements of Concern	48-49

## I. INTRODUCTION

Project Renewal was publicly proposed by Prime Minister Begin in June 1977 only a month after his stunning electoral victory. Many claim that the Project, whose objective he stated was "to do away with all the disadvantaged neighborhoods in Israel within 5 years," was in effect a gift to a major element in his constituency, the residents of those neighborhoods.

Whatever its importance in the internal politics of the Likud, Begin did focus attention on a legitimate and distressing national problem. However, his time frame for the solution he proposed belied both the complexity and the magnitude of the problem. Success in such an all-encompassing endeavor certainly requires a great measure of both time and coordination. In this connection, Begin's proposal may have raised the hopes of residents too high, as well as placed an unrealistic time constraint on the planners. Nevertheless, his speech triggered a series of efforts to translate a not very specific proposal into concrete plans and those plans into action. In the process, Project Renewal was set in motion.

A major feature of Project Renewal is its organization as a multi-dimensional partnership involving the government of Israel, the Jewish Agency, the local authorities in Israel, the diaspora Jewish communities, and the neighborhoods which are to be the focus of the project (Figure 1). In previous efforts, diaspora

# Organizational Chart of Project Renewal

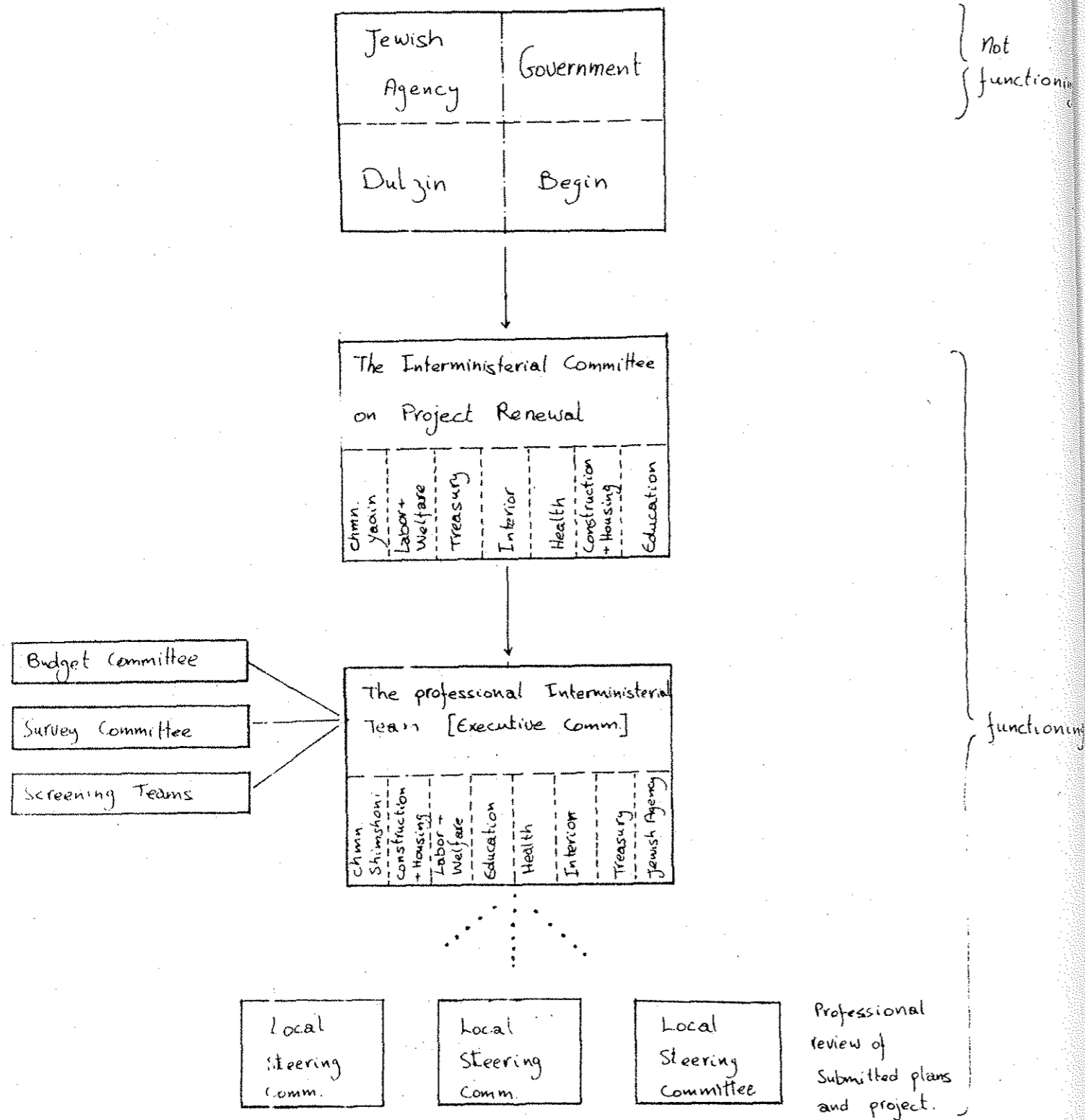


Figure 1

Jewry was expected to provide the funds which were disbursed through the Jewish Agency while the government of Israel was solely responsible for program implementation. Project Renewal was presented to the diaspora leadership and adopted by them on the very different premise of joint control and extensive diaspora involvement in all of its aspects. In the past, direct links between the Jewish Agency and the local authorities were forbidden by the government, even in connection with Jewish Agency-funded projects in local communities. Project Renewal requires and formalizes such ties. Statism and centralization have been endemic in Israel; Project Renewal is designed to place great emphasis on neighborhood (i.e. citizen) involvement and local planning and management of each project. For all of these reasons, reaching beyond the Project's vital substantive goals, Project Renewal takes on a special importance in shaping the future relationships between the government and people of Israel, and diaspora Jewry and the institutions it has developed to work with Israel.

## The Urgency of Implementing Project Renewal

A number of developments that have taken place in Israel in the last two years have made the implementation of Project Renewal a much more urgent matter than it was when first proposed. Inflation has run amok, approaching nearly 100% this year, and what was once a housing surplus has turned into an acute housing shortage. A recent Bank of Israel report estimated that while 2

years ago the price of an apartment equalled 5 years' average salary, today it stands at 10 years, meaning that apartments have become twice as expensive in real terms. The effects on the majority of the Project Renewal population are two-fold:

- 1) The tendency for disparities in wealth to increase during times of inflation has aggravated social tensions,
  - 2) The cost of new housing for young couples or increasing apartment space for large families has become prohibitive.
- As an indication of this, government officials concede that public housing efforts, at least in the major metropolitan areas, are not sufficient to close the gap between the price of an apartment and the potential purchaser's capital.

The shortage of public housing for young couples in or close to their original neighborhoods has resulted in a number of well-attended demonstrations in such cities and neighborhoods as Bet Dagon, Kfar Shalem, Hatikvah (in Tel Aviv), and Musrara (in Jerusalem). While these disturbances reflect the gravity of the situation, they are also cause for hope in their own way. The demonstrations have been organized and coordinated under the direction of local leaders, reflecting to grass-roots activity in the neighborhoods. The demand by young couples for housing in the neighborhoods where they were raised is proof of healthy local patriotism and close family ties. Significantly, the disturbances were demonstrative -- burning tires, blocked traffic, rallies -- and not destructive, i.e. looting, riots, violence.

This demand for housing in local neighborhoods, in fact a

long-standing one, is also a retort to the oft-repeated but unrealistic official reaction: namely that young couples seeking housing should go to the development towns. While there are undoubtedly reasons to encourage movement to development towns, the question may be raised as to whether urging a well-rooted, albeit disadvantaged, urban community to move to even more problematic, isolated and disadvantaged towns, where earning a living is a problem and public amenities are fewer, is likely to serve their or the state's needs. Meanwhile, for the first time in Israel's history, there are indications that, unable to buy apartments in the central areas, more middle-class Israelis are moving out to development towns, from which they commute to their professional jobs in the city. According to Labor and Welfare Minister Israel Katz 4500 predominantly young families have been absorbed in development towns. The current year's target is 2500 (source: Jerusalem Post, Oct. 9, 1979). Thus the question can be posed: Why not capitalize on the positive characteristics of the community and its neighborhood? This is exactly where Project Renewal has a major role to play.

The urgency of Project Renewal in this regard has to be evaluated in light of the new potential for yerida (leaving Israel to settle elsewhere) on the part of residents of disadvantaged neighborhoods, more and more of whom are now able to mobilize the resources and are sophisticated enough to seek to better their fortunes elsewhere.

The Problem of Magnitude

While those close to the neighborhoods want Project Renewal to proceed at full pace, there are many more distant voices calling for its halt. A coalition of forces including Treasury officials, economists and bankers feel that the project should be postponed for reasons unrelated to renewal. Project Renewal is a huge undertaking by Israeli standards -- both with regard to expenditures and to manpower requirements. Each will have a significant inflationary effect, which could continue for a relatively long period. These critics also emphasize that once public jobs are created (as is planned to provide the human services associated with the project), they are terminated only with considerable difficulty.

As a result of the coincidence of the Israel-Egypt peace treaty, the inauguration of the project was followed by plans for the military redeployment in the Negev, which in itself is expected to contribute significantly to inflationary pressures. Project Renewal, then, seems destined to undergo critical examination within Israeli government circles for some time. Most other projects, once approved, have only the operational questions to be solved by those implementing the plans. In the case of Project Renewal, however, it seems likely that the political battle will continue until there emerges some sort of compromise position between those calling for an all-out effort and those lobbying for postponement or a reduction in scope.

A manifestation of this political struggle can be seen in Yadin's recent attempt to add 32 Project Renewal local coordinators to his staff. The parliamentary subcommittee on budget changes denied his request, claiming that there was no justification for adding 32 more posts to the civil service. Yadin won out only after he had appeared before the Finance Committee to appeal the decision.

When Project Renewal was first presented to world Jewry the common reaction was one of skepticism and even bewilderment. Since much of the tone of the presentation duplicated earlier campaigns to aid Israel's disadvantaged population, many wondered where their money had gone all the previous years. They were told of the problems of the disadvantaged neighborhoods. But much of what had been achieved in these neighborhoods over the years was overlooked -- and many of the services already provided to them disregarded in order to make the point that more needs to be done.

Project Renewal has been presented as a large-scale plan to deal with 5 major problems. They are:

- Large families -- overcrowded housing
- Sub-standard housing
- Educational Standards
- Inadequate communal facilities
- Low-income and uncertain employment.

Data released by the Ministry of Housing when Project Renewal was first inaugurated, clearly show that the above conditions

exist primarily in deteriorated areas of the larger urban centers or development towns, in well-defined neighborhoods identified by both professionals and the public at large as problem areas. In development towns these problem conditions sometimes characterize the town as a whole.

Evidence demonstrates that these neighborhoods face additional problems that necessitate consideration; in particular, those problems resulting from increasing deviant behavior.

Crime: In surveys and interviews conducted in Shehunat Hatikvah (Tel Aviv), Banit (Lod), Jesse Cohen (Holon) and Ramat Hashikman (Ramat Gan) crime was listed as the number one problem. In Banit where 65% of the population live in sub-standard housing as defined by the Israeli government this finding is especially significant. Crime is a major problem in many other neighborhoods and development towns -- proportionately worse in the big urban areas and most serious in Tel Aviv and adjacent cities.

A sense of relative deprivation, and general alienation from Israeli society, as evidenced perhaps by delinquency in payment of utility bills and taxes, and evasion of army service, are no less worrisome problems. Many senior army officers have noted publicly the widespread and growing draft evasion amongst youth of these neighborhoods included in the project. Statistics as to the magnitude of the problem are, if available, confidential. However, the I.D.F. has recently made special attempts to conscript problem youth from the neighborhoods. It is important to remember that evasion from army service or failure to

complete army service in good standing is likely to have a negative impact on a young person for the rest of his life. Those lacking a sound primary school education and proof of army service are often excluded from the legitimate job market and become candidates for underworld activities.

Caution however should be exercised in generalizing about any given neighborhood. While crime is of great concern in these four neighborhoods and certainly in at least 6 others of the present 65 so far designated, in neighborhoods such as the Bucharim Quarter or Beth-Israel in Jerusalem, it is practically non-existent. It should be noted, though, that on the average the renewal neighborhoods "house" more criminals and suffer more crime than normal neighborhoods in Israel. In not one of these neighborhoods, however, is the problem nearly as grave as in the larger urban areas of the United States.

The concern for crime is not so much the result of suffering its direct consequences as it is of living under the negative image it creates in the neighborhoods. Often residents are keenly aware that they reside in excellently located areas, which shall be sufficiently attractive to retain the "better" elements, were it not for this negative image.

Unemployment: Predictably, a number of the neighborhoods surveyed (e.g., Morasha in Jerusalem, Neveh Israel in Herzliya) show high figures for youths aged 17-24 who are neither in the army nor in school. While these figures range from 20 to 25%, they are exaggerated. Many of those surveyed do not wish to

reveal either illegal or untaxed employment. Traditional programs of vocational guidance have evidently failed to attract many youngsters in the neighborhood. A noteworthy program in Morasha aims to capitalize on skills often acquired through marginal jobs. Seed money is being provided to young men for the purpose of setting up small service-oriented businesses. Underlying the project is the goal to include them in work undertaken under the aegis of Project Renewal.

Literacy: Many reports originating from the neighborhoods show a high percentage of adults who are either illiterate in their native languages and/or in Hebrew. A substantial percentage of senior citizens aged 65 or over (up to 40% in certain neighborhoods) could not speak Hebrew. Many adults never attended school. Standard adult educational programs within the framework of an earlier project have attempted to reach these people with only limited success. The problem is inextricably linked to psychological and cultural factors. Husbands working during the day are too tired at night or simply not sufficiently motivated to pursue education. They will frequently discourage their wives from attending classes for traditional reasons. Indirect, "disguised" ways of educating women, for example, while at the laundry club, could provide some solution. In any event, adult education must be one of the priorities of Project Renewal, and it should be provided as much as possible within the neighborhood and conform to the daily routine of those residents involved.

The language barrier many of the older residents face is a

particularly sensitive issue, and one already hampering efforts to mobilize residents behind the project. Few social or community workers speak North African Arabic, Hungarian, Romanian, or Yemenite dialects. This dilemma must be addressed if residential participation is to become more than merely a slogan and if tensions due to misunderstandings are to be avoided. It should be noted that the local steering committees have already designated a number of projects for the training of paraprofessionals from within the neighborhoods. Knowledge of the language and cultural background of the people with whom the paraprofessional is to work, should be a major criterion in project hiring practices.

In the area of youth-oriented education, especially where inter-generational differences between parents and children are relatively small, Project Renewal hopes to incorporate the Ministry of Education's Project Revacha Hinudat (Educational Achievement) and expand upon it. (See Project Revacha) Failure to do so effectively until today reflects the potentiality of Project Renewal as well as the problematic nature of coordinating educational needs. The persistence of an educational gap is suggested by the data. While only 6.8% of Israeli-born sons of African-Asian origin above the age of 14 have 13-15 years of schooling (post-secondary), 22.4% of European-American origin do so. The ratio is roughly the same for African-Asians who emigrated to Israel before 1954 and their European counterparts. The gap persists then despite substantial improvements in absolute terms.

The education gap is most severe in development towns and the neighborhoods included in Project Renewal. In veteran localities for example over 70% of children attend primary schools whose student body is more than 50% described as "disadvantaged," as compared to 23% in veteran towns.

Housing: The housing problem is particularly acute and complex. The severe housing shortage primarily in urban areas reflects the transition of the first sabra generation from youth to young adulthood. On the other hand in many aging neighborhoods, dwellings will be expanded for households that will soon begin to shrink in size as children move out.

A strategy must also be developed for the problems of rented housing. In both urban areas and development towns the percentage of rented dwellings (for the most part managed either by Amidar, the Ministry of Housing Company, or Amigur, the Jewish Agency Real Estate firm) far exceeds the state average. Amidar and Amigur combined, manage 125,000 apartments almost exclusively in development towns and disadvantaged urban neighborhoods. This figure represents 55% of the total rented and keymoney dwellings in the country and over 15% of the country's present housing stock. Forty-seven percent of development town dwellings are rented compared to a national average of less than 30%. It is estimated that a similar ratio exists for the urban disadvantaged neighborhoods. Data suggest a positive correlation between low income neighborhoods and higher percentages of rented apartments. Rental of keymoney flats in highly inflationary economies is

rarely a successful proposition. Lack of ownership reduces the incentive of the dweller to maintain his apartment and therefore to invest in his neighborhood. For Project Renewal, this necessitates not only coordination with two additional agencies but even more importantly, combatting the traditional apathy of apartment renters.

The encouragement of apartment ownership could end in overcoming apathy by affording residents a financial stake in their neighborhoods. This type of policy was advocated by Mayor Shitrit of Yavneh in planning for his neighborhood. This strategy is not without pitfalls. It is important to note that both Amidar and Amigur do not encourage home-ownership. This attitude may stem in part from Amidar's experience with apartment ownership during the 1960's which was generally unsuccessful. Mortgage payments, which were very high relative to earned income, were often not paid in full, and when they were, owners found themselves incapable of undertaking the necessary maintenance, repairs, or expansions as families grew. It is partially as a result of these experiences that apartments planned for ownership by future dwellers in Project Renewal should be heavily subsidized.

#### "Substandard" Housing

While the project links both, substandard housing and overcrowding are two distinct problems. Israel Kimhi touched upon this problem when he cautioned that care must be taken to preserve

the "special character and quality of Jerusalem's older areas" and in addition, that physical destruction and relocation must be avoided as much as possible in order that the existing social fabric be kept. Our worry in this regard stems from a conception exemplified by Mr. Kimhi's comment on the clearance of "temporary housing units (such as asbestonim)." According to the statistics provided in the "Guidesheet to Workshop Participants on Distressed Neighborhoods," exactly half of the thirty priority neighborhoods reflect a substandard housing figure which well exceeds that for overcrowding. A few of the more blatant examples are the Mahabara in Bat Yam -- 100% substandard, 3.6% overcrowded; Schuna Aleph in Eilat -- 50/7.9; Banit/Memshalti in Lod -- 67/12.5; Migdal in Ashkelon -- 63/31.5; Givat Katzenelson in Nahariya -- 100/10.7; Neve Sharett in Tel Aviv -- 20/4.5; and Mercaz Hayeshuv in Yehud -- 40/5.6. These figures suggest that what is considered substandard by official Israeli standards may be regarded as adequate by the people who inhabit these buildings. On the other hand, in some areas there is apparent overcrowding despite a lack of "substandard" housing -- a blatant example of this being the Hatikva section of Tel Aviv -- 13/34. In Jerusalem, Ir Ganim Gimmel registers only 20% substandard housing but 31.6% overcrowding. In Katamon Chet and Tet this contrast is reflected in 14% substandard housing as opposed to 24.4% overcrowding.

It is not unusual for a discrepancy to be between official specifications for standard housing based on "objective" measures and the extent to which certain housing units are rendered

liveable by their residents. For example, while asbestonim housing units were originally intended to be temporary and are rightfully regarded as problematic, one must consider that many families have built onto these homes and have succeeded in transforming them into liveable housing structures, although they remain technically "substandard." Some of our studies show that these modified asbestonim produce better neighborhoods than the buildings on pillars which we find in many of the distressed neighborhoods under discussion. Indeed, mass transfers from the former to the latter have actually created sound problems despite the ostensible improvement in housing standards. Additionally, we must be sensitive to the needs of the elderly citizens of these neighborhoods and remember that for them any move would imply a reduction in their independence. Clearly, blanket plans involving mass clearance determined by statistical criteria should be avoided. Social and housing considerations must be carefully weighed separately in each neighborhood in order that one not be sacrificed for the other. Particular attention must be paid to the inherent social complications of new housing and the uprooting of residents. This reflection in the fact that in some neighborhoods, housing otherwise up to standard by one set of criteria, is badly overcrowded. This usually reflects the housing of a large family in a standard size Israeli apartment which, while technically up to par, creates social tensions which far outweigh normal housing quality issues. The most critical conclusion that must be drawn from these statistics is the need

to evaluate the social situation in each neighborhood separately and on its own merit.

## II. NEIGHBORHOODS AND THEIR PLACE IN PROJECT RENEWAL

Project Renewal in its conception and in its execution revolves around the local shchuna (neighborhood). The neighborhood is a major factor in the life of Israelis. In most cases, it contains within it basic local services and serves as the basis for the residents' friendship networks. Unlike the situation in the United States, where the term "neighborhood" is usually applied to districts of tens of thousands of people, Israeli neighborhoods are small, ranging in size from a few hundred to a rarely achieved maximum of 10,000 residents.

It is to the credit of the initiators of Project Renewal that they proposed a national project broad in scope, yet tailored to each neighborhood's needs. It might have been much easier to plan to renovate the country by providing each community with a standardized set of improvements. The planners realized, however, that this approach would not have succeeded in practice. Instead, the approach adopted by Project Renewal recognizes the vital importance of the shchuna and the uniqueness of each neighborhood.

Though neighborhoods vary in age, location, institutional development, income level, etc., one aspect seems common to all: residents of each have a strong sense of community and pride for

Professor Alex Weingrod, noted anthropologist and Fellow of the Jerusalem Institute for Federal Studies, stresses that there is a positive correlation between the homogeneity of a neighborhood and its capacity for development. Success in some Beersheva and Ashdod neighborhood communities can be ascribed to their socio-cultural homogeneity based on shared country-of-origin and religious behavior.

Another stabilizing characteristic of the Israeli neighborhood is the continued prevalence of familial ties beyond the nuclear family. In an overwhelming number of cases, grown children with families of their own prefer to remain in the same neighborhood, if not the same building, as their parents. An American social worker in Or Yehuda noted that families have often refused to leave their dilapidated dwellings for new apartments, in order to preserve the family unit. Separation of families breaks the support system and weakens the community. Neighborhoods with extended families seem to be more successful at maintaining schools, synagogues, and other local institutions which provide the foundations for a strong community.

### An Overview of Project Renewal Neighborhoods

The 65 neighborhoods designated so far for Project Renewal fall into three main categories.

1) Development Towns: Some neighborhoods are located in

development towns which have not proven economically viable. These towns successfully accomplished important national objectives in the 1950s when they were founded. At that time the state was particularly interested in population dispersal (a matter that remains a public policy concern but now receives less attention as a priority goal). There was an impetus to populate remote areas with Jews to assure greater security along the borders. Waves of immigrants were sent to these towns -- 20 totally new ones and 10 rehabilitated old cities. Those goals were well-served for that time. Now, however, the answer of the 1950s has created an array of economic and social problems particular to development towns. Most of these revolve around the limited economic and educational opportunities available locally, their relative isolation from the best Israel has to offer, and their inability to attract a proper population mix as a result. Missions visiting these towns are often surprised -- they expect to see slums on the American model or like those in the larger cities of Israel. However, these neighborhoods, while relatively impoverished, are most definitely functional. The future of each depends upon the overall future of the towns in which it is located. Funds from Project Renewal are needed to improve both physical and social living standards and to bring the towns themselves from a situation of stasis to one of vitality and growth.

2) Older urban neighborhoods: There are a number of urban neighborhoods which have never received comprehensive treatment

by any governmental body (See section on Ministry of Housing). Jerusalem's Musrara, also called Morasha, is a telling example. Currently it is one of the most physically dilapidated neighborhoods among those so far designated for Project Renewal. The neighborhood was abandoned just before 1948. At the end of the War of Independence, it was left right on the border between Israel and Jordan by its middle-class Arab occupants. During the mass aliyah, it was resettled, by Jews, principally from Morocco. For lack of any suitable housing, entire families occupied single rooms in Musrara. This overcrowding of the neighborhood plus its location on the border led to its neglect and consequent physical deterioration. This neglect continued even after Jerusalem was reunited, as governmental priorities shifted to building new neighborhoods on the peripheries of Jewish Jerusalem. Attempts were made to provide social services; indeed lack of public investment in the physical renewal of the neighborhood relative to the investment in social services is deserving of particular notice. Clearly, even the best of social services provided to families living in hovels will have limited effectiveness. There is evidence that the public authorities chose to allow Musrara to deteriorate because the long-range plans were to rebuild it as a small business district or more affluent neighborhood. However, over the years there has developed a great measure of solidarity among the residents of Musrara. They know that they live in a prime area in close proximity to the town center, one whose value as real estate is rising. They saw what happened in Yemin Moshe,

once a similarly dilapidated neighborhood on the pre-1967 border which was taken over and cleared for other uses. The original occupants were bought out at very modest prices and the area made available for the most expensive housing in Jerusalem, whereby land values increased exponentially. They do not want to move to another, newer neighborhood. Furthermore, they will not allow outsiders to purchase dilapidated buildings and convert them for their own uses. In the words of Prof. Weingrod, the authorities would have to revamp Musrara "over bodies." The residents are fiercely devoted to their community. They want better housing. They want better services. But most of all they want to remain where they are.

3) Deteriorating Failures of Earlier Renewal Efforts: A number of neighborhoods constructed by the Housing Ministry in the years after 1960 to relieve the substandard living conditions of the maabarot have already deteriorated and require aid. The urban resettlement neighborhood of the 1960s consisted of apartment units in blocks consisting of several large buildings. The apartment was of fixed dimensions and often rented. Expansion was impossible. Large buildings of too many stories, standardized small apartments housing families with many children, offered little or no improvement over what had gone before. Mistakes that reproduced the same substandard conditions in less than 20 years must be rectified by the present planners. Significantly, similar ex-maabarot, inhabited by the same kind of people, which escaped redevelopment in the 1960s are now flourishing as a

result of the improvements which their residents undertook on their own, often over the objections of the authorities. Now the erstwhile "desirable" newer housing is slated for improvement. These neighborhoods were rebuilt around old Arab houses and government-constructed shacks or tents from the maabara days. Those structures were low and horizontal, enabling residents to refurbish them and build additions as their families grew. Married children were able to settle close to their parents. Ownership of a home, no matter how humble, encourages residents to invest more energy and money in the property while also preserving the family unit.

Two prominent examples illustrate the results of government policy in the 50's. In Or Yehuda, Jews brought from Iraq during the mass migration were placed randomly in two camps of tents and huts, Shikun A and Shikun B. Shikun A remained without government help. The residents improved their dwelling units either by adding rooms gradually in the early 1960's or by building entirely new houses in the period of greater affluence following the 1967 war. The area today is composed of "villas" -- free-standing homes, what Israelis call the ultimate in housing for the Israeli. Its residents have great neighborhood pride and move only if necessary and the houses command good prices on the market. A sad contrast is Shikun B. It was selected for redevelopment by Amidar, the state housing company. As a result, it was leveled and rebuilt in the standard "box on pillars" pattern. Today it is a slum in the full sense of the word, the center of crime, drugs

and prostitution in town. Its residents try to get out if they can. In sum, the 1960s solution has become the 1970s bastion of delinquency.

In Jerusalem's Katamonim a similar situation exists. The six neighborhoods first constructed consists of 4-family dwelling units. Across the street a high-rise apartment building was constructed. In the ensuing years the smaller dwelling units were expanded by individual families according to their needs. The larger structures were neglected and attracted a transient population. The Katamon Het and Tet were built -- a series of even larger apartment buildings -- to correct the situation. Today this neighborhood, built in the 1960s appears on the list of Project Renewal neighborhoods. Katamon Alef-Vav do not.

Thus Project Renewal has a dual task: to improve the project neighborhoods and to do so in such a way as to avoid the problems of the last effort.

The idea of citizen participation is integral to the Project. In the 1978 Jewish Agency Assembly it was stated that "local citizens were to take an active part in the planning and implementation of the Project." The concept was applied zealously by the government office coordinating the project.\* In an attempt to live up to the goal of "planning emanating from the neighborhoods and for the neighborhoods" the office charged local social

---

\*Daniel Shimshoni was appointed by Deputy Prime Minister Yadin to coordinate the project and co-chair the Professional Interministerial Team.

workers and residents with the task of drawing up rough comprehensive plans. Following professional appraisal, these plans would be sent back to the neighborhood and revised, and then finally approved.

This laudable goal can generate its own problems. Neighborhood people often lack sufficient expertise to draw up plans. In addition, placing the onus of decision-making upon neighborhood committees (to be distinguished from the local steering committee where neighborhood representatives account for 3 to 5 of the 18 to 23 members) frequently aggravates an already overheated atmosphere. The relatively small size of the neighborhoods often serves only to magnify the problem. Most of the neighborhood committees that were organized in anticipation of the start of Project Renewal have become battlegrounds for communal conflicts. In almost all the neighborhoods studied, the mandates of these neighborhood representatives in the local steering committees have been seriously questioned by at least part of the respective neighborhood populations.

Nevertheless the very establishment of neighborhood committees is an achievement in its own right. Several committee chairmen have emerged as eloquent spokesmen for their communities. Many committees have compiled a list of priorities for those projects approved for their neighborhoods.

While citizen participation in the decision-making process has its disabilities, the necessity for mobilization of the community to preserve projects that are currently being undertaken

is universally acknowledged. Limited participation in preservation and maintenance activities already exists (Amigur in Ashkelon, Tarbut Hadiyur in various shikunim, block associations in Ramat Gan). Much of the Project's ultimate success is contingent on effectively mobilizing citizens. Most of this type of mobilization has yet to be realized.

III. THE ASHKENAZI-SEPHARDI GAP:  
IS IT RELEVANT IN PROJECT RENEWAL?

The concept Sephardi, especially in the context of the social gap is highly problematic. Sephardi is a cultural-religious term which includes people and communities which in no way can be regarded as socially disadvantaged. This is especially true of the Sephardim from the Balkan communities, Syria and Egypt. It is true for a sizeable segment of Iraqi Jewry. Even among the Jewish populations of Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria -- the so-called North African "hard core," only a limited number remain disadvantaged. The term African-Asian, used by official Israeli sources and many sociological studies, while a far more accurate term in appraising the problem, nevertheless includes many of those who are well-integrated into the Israeli economy and society.

Aggregate statistics present two contrasting pictures. Owing to the highly political and emotional overtones of the topic, when one facet is presented, usually it is to the exclusion

of the other. Yet both must be considered. The first picture profiles the majority of Sephardim in Israel, the second deals predominantly with the minority.

Most Sephardim resent using the term Sephardi synonymously with disadvantaged. Their resentment is fully justified. The average Sephardi is either in small business, a skilled worker, a technician, clerical worker, or housewife. In short, they belong along with many Ashkenazim, to Israel's lower middle and middle class majority. Most do not live in sub-standard housing nor below the poverty line. A few are among the country's truly wealthy. On the other hand, it is indeed true that Sephardim are only an albeit growing minority of those at the top, and a majority of those at the bottom.

The occupational profile of Jewish employed show that a majority of African-Asian origin or birth are either clerical or skilled workers. Nevertheless differences persist. Among Israeli-born of European-American origin 14.5% of those employed are scientific and academic workers compared to 2.1% of Israeli-born of African-Asian origin. The gap is far less great in the "other professional, technical, and related workers": 24.3 to 11.3 amongst the African-Asian Israeli born. A word of caution: the above two groups represent two different age structures. A substantial percentage (approximately 40%) of the Israeli-born "European Americans" are above the age of 30. Amongst Asian-African origin Israelis, the percentage is much smaller (approximately 20%), the latter mainly being the offspring of parents who came

to Israel during the mass immigration waves between 1949-1954. Despite this qualification the above two statistics reflect the "real" gap. (See Table 1)

In the early 1970's, Weingrod and Gurevitch researched nearly 2000 persons identified as being members of the Israeli elites and found that while Sephardim already accounted for 50% of the population, they comprised only 10% of the elite.\* While the situation has improved since then, the general pattern remains. Still, because many Sephardim avoid public life, these and other studies underestimate the percentage of prosperous and wealthy Sephardim in the country.

Most of the Ashkenazim who fall into the "deprived" category are older immigrants who simply failed to progress. The one important exception is a high, but unknown percentage of ultra-Orthodox Ashkenazi families who are economically disadvantaged by choice, as it were. With large families, many of them suffer from overcrowded living conditions equal in severity to their deprived Sephardi counterparts. In Jerusalem, at least, many suffer from sub-standard housing as well. The inclusion of the Beth-Israel and Shmuel HaNavi neighborhoods in Jerusalem, within Project Renewal (added on in 1979), both populated in large measure by such families, is recognition of their presence in the disadvantaged group.

\*Alex Weingrod and Michael Gurevitch, "Who are the Israeli Elites?" Jewish Journal of Sociology, 19(1), 1977, pp. 67-77.

Jewish employed persons by occupation and continent of birth  
1977

	Gap among Israeli born (1) ↔ (2)		Inter-generational occupational mobility among Asia-Africans (2) ↔ (3)
	father born in:		immigrated till 1947
	(1) Europe - America	(2) Asia-Africa	(3) born in Asia-Africa
Scientific and academic workers	14.5	2.1	(1.4)*
Other professional & technical workers	24.3	11.3	6.4
Administrators & Managers	6.8	1.2	6.9
Clerical & related	20.9	26.5	16.1
Sales workers	4.7	5.9	13.8
Service workers	5.5	10.7	19.3
Agricultural workers	6.4	4.7	(3.2)*
Skilled workers	15.3	31.6	25.7
Unskilled workers	1.6	5.8	7.3

\*estimated figures ( )

To compare the present gap see columns (1) and (2)

To compare inter-generational gap see columns (2) and (3)

TABLE 1

All told, while only 30 percent of all Sephardim are disadvantaged, some 90 percent of the disadvantaged are Sephardim (see Table 2). On the average approximately 80% of neighborhood populations are Sephardi. Thus most of the 300,000 persons located in Project Renewal neighborhoods are Sephardim. At the same time, the neighborhood focus means that any Ashkenazim will also be included.

In light of the above, planners and others involved in Project Renewal, including community residents themselves, have done well in avoiding any reference to the so-called Ashkenazi-Sephardi "gap." Highlighting the gap as a means of rallying support for Project Renewal could only have negative effects upon the project itself in the following ways:

- 1) By countering efforts being made by Israeli educators and the Sephardim themselves to correct distorted images; belaboring the gap minimizes the significant contributions of the Sephardi population to Israeli society.
- 2) By relating to neighborhood problems in terms of an Ashkenazi-Sephardi gap one tends to distort reality. While the disadvantaged neighborhoods have Sephardi majorities, the Sephardi disadvantaged are a minority not only in the Sephardi population at large, but often in the neighborhoods themselves. While there are no fixed criteria to establish disadvantage, just as there is no one definition of the term, few would dispute that economically, at least, sub-standard housing and overcrowding are two key variables. Even

Household, by deciles of net income per standard person

1975-1976

Average persons per household	Decile				
	1	2	3	.....	10
	4.7	4.6	4.1		2.5

Born*	1	2	3	.....	10
Asia-Africa	67%	53%	48%		6%
Europe-America	22%	36%	37%		70%
Israel	11%	11%	15%		24%

\*Jewish households

Years of schooling	1	2	3	.....	10
0-8	75%	72.5%	58.4%		10.5%
16+	2%	4.2%	5.2%		32.7%

TABLE 2

\*American Statistical Abstract 1978

treating the two variables as mutually exclusive (which they clearly are not), we find that only in 7 out of the first 29 neighborhoods in Project Renewal (excluding Ma'abara in Bat Yam) do more than 50% live in unsuitable housing. Our field experience has revealed that many dwellings defined as substandard actually house families who are by no means disadvantaged and who see their homes as better than the standard Israeli apartment.

- 3) By defeating one of the main aims of Project Renewal; that is, the upgrading of the neighborhoods' image. Highlighting the correlations between Sephardi, being disadvantaged and living in a state of poverty, will inevitably perpetuate the stigma project planners hope to eliminate in the neighborhoods.
- 4) By undermining the neighborhood framework of the project as a whole which deliberately does not distinguish between Sephardim and Ashkenazim.
- 5) By undermining Israel's basic and longstanding policy of avoiding dealing with social issues on an ascriptive basis.
- 6) By thwarting the "territorialization" of Israeli democracy (i.e. the transition from an ideologically or culturally based polity to a territorially based one).

This is not to say that Project Renewal can or should avoid dealing with the various cultural groups altogether. As various approved projects demonstrate, planners are trying to capitalize on the positive elements of communal identification. They are as

yet unsure of how to utilize communal ties for the purposes of mobilizing local residents behind the project. At a recent meeting in Kiryat Anavim, sponsored by the government's coordinating office for Project Renewal, there was a consensus that communal ties were a positive factor. It was emphasized that frequently those families who integrated best into mainstream Israeli life were those who maintained traditional extended family ties and participated in their communal and religious activities. However, all were aware of the potential problems of communal mobilization -- primarily, the danger of unleashing latent conflict among the various communities within the neighborhood population. Alienation might also occur among those in the neighborhood removed from or without a strong ethnic identification, including many of the younger generation.

In fact, the Sephardi-Ashkenazi issue remains a latent one in Israeli society as a whole and one that is growing in intensity. It is fair to say that, despite statistical realities and the planners' intentions, the issue hovers around Project Renewal and will influence the project in certain ways on a continuing basis. The issue was involved in the project's inception and is encountered sub rosa in various forms. Following accepted norms, neighborhood groups, many of which developed in the wake of Project Renewal's inauguration, have generally avoided ascriptive references in their public pronouncements, concentrating instead on functional issues. But the issue remains a real one for them even so. The Ohel group, which emerged in the Katamonim as an

internal cultural self-help body and then expanded into a social activist movement in Jerusalem, is a good example of this. While it studiously avoids the usage of communal labels or emphasizing the Ashkenazi-Sephardi gap on one level, in confrontations with officialdom, its members are far less constrained and the issue is expressed in the most explicit terms, often with verbal violence. (The Appendix presents a sharp view of the conflict as it effects urban redevelopment prepared by Moshe Hazani, Fellow of the Jerusalem Center and the country's leading expert in the subject.)

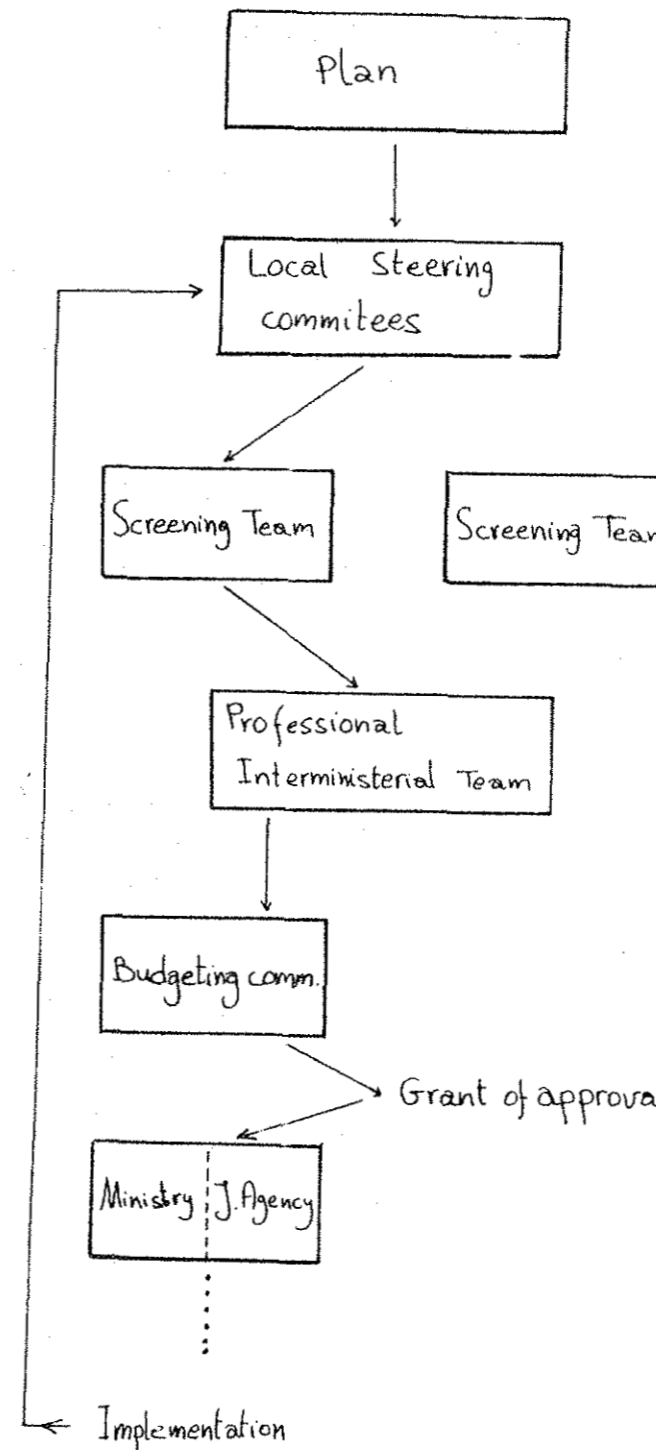
IV. THE CONDITION OF STATE/LOCAL RELATIONS

For all the lip service paid to neighborhood participation, the Ministries and local government (municipalities and local councils) remain the chief actors in the project (see Figure 2). As of now 27 of the 37 municipalities in Israel and 19 local councils out of a total of 114 are involved.

Local/state relations in Israel are best described as highly integrated "partnerships" with strong central direction. The basic elements of this type of relationship are:

- 1) Heavy funding from the central government. The share of the state government in the local budget reaches an average 85%, with local taxation accounting for the rest. In fact, the local share has been on the decline for nearly 20 years.
- 2) Cooperation in the delivery of services, with the local

Flowchart of Project Renewal  
from planning to implementation



Plans/projects drawn up by steering committee and/or workgroups on particular problem [senior citizens, housing, etc]

Plan/project receives local approval.

Screening Teams composed of members from the Professional Interministerial Team review plans/projects. [The Team broke up into two screening teams to expedite approvals.]

Allots overall budget. Finds financial sponsor and Ministry responsible for implementation and supervision.

Ministry itemizes budget. Jewish Agency outlines stages of implementation. Project/plan sent back to local steering and to coordinators supervising actual implementation in the field.

FIGURE 2

authorities playing the larger role in the process. Two major services, those of education and welfare, form the bulk of this partnership.

Education: One variant of this partnership is to be found in the fields of elementary and secondary education. Israel does not have independent school boards. Instead, the municipal authorities handle whatever tasks are devolved upon them in school matters, generally through a municipal department of education with a professional head and sometimes with a vice-mayor for education and then education committee of the council. The state Ministry of Education directly funds teachers' salaries and most elementary and middle school operating costs with a growing number of supplementary services funded by the localities, usually with state aid. High schools are nominally under local or private control but with the introduction of free secondary education, the state is assuming more direct responsibility in that field as well. Teachers are certified and employed by the Ministry of Education. Principals are chosen locally from an approved list and, in turn, have a principal role in choosing their teachers.

The local authorities are responsible for providing and maintaining school buildings and equipment (including texts, based upon ministry lists), managing the schools, and registering and enrolling the students, and for virtually all ancillary and enrichment programs beginning with a pre-kindergarten education. They also have direct control over almost all high schools in the country. Thus, the local departments of education are in a

position to direct local educational affairs, and, since the ancillary and enrichment services are becoming an ever larger part of every school's program, their influence is expanding.

Welfare is formally a cooperative state-local service in which the localities operate welfare programs funded in whole or in part by the Ministry of Welfare. The operation of welfare programs is similar to that of grant-in-aid programs in other countries. The localities have responsibility for determining who is eligible under criteria promulgated by the Ministry of Welfare. They create the packages of welfare benefits to be given to any individual or family on the basis of the various programs provided by law, and they furnish the social services needed to assist the family in rehabilitation or adjustment to its condition.

Local Functions: There are a number of functions that are purely local, among them garbage collection, libraries, and parks. With the exception of the first, which tends to be provided at a reasonable level by localities around the country, these vary from locality to locality. Israel's local park systems are relatively undeveloped, partly because this kind of amenity requires a sophisticated population for its support. Much the same is true for libraries although diaspora assistance through the Jewish Agency has provided library buildings in many communities. In both cases, capital expenditures and operating funds are mobilized largely from outside the community, from overseas contributors and the state government via the Ministry

of Education.

Breakthrough for Local Government?

One of the major problems of Israeli public affairs is the overcentralization of government in the country. Project Renewal may provide, among its ancillary benefits, an opportunity to strengthen local government in Israel. There is a growing recognition that the only way to plan and coordinate the local projects effectively is through the local government institutions already in place. There is a commitment to this effect on the part of the state and national bodies involved in the Project, even if at times it seems to be a commitment in principle with too many exceptions in practice. More than that, as more begins to actually happen, it is becoming ever more apparent that whatever its drawbacks, there is no reasonable alternative to involving the institutionalized organs of local government. In fact, the Israeli press, not always the source most friendly to local government, has in this case been relentless in driving this point home in article after article on Project Renewal as a whole and its local manifestations.

In theory, at least, the battle for strong local government involvement appears to have been won. The mayor is chairman of the steering committee and municipal department heads form a key segment of its composition. In practice, however, the mayors must struggle daily with an independent Ministry of Housing, the

state-national coordinating structure, and frustrated neighborhood constituencies. In the Israeli way, every decision in principle must be renegotiated in practice at every step of the way.

The mayor, as local chief executive, is responsible for the delivery of almost all public services. He is the closest address when his constituents are in need and consequently their closest target in times of wrath. The advantage is that the mayor and his municipal department heads are close at hand and are politically accountable as well, a further incentive for them to do a better job than representatives of a state bureaucracy that has proved itself to be notably unresponsive.

Another point worthy of consideration in this regard concerns the composition of local government. As it stands now, local government is the only arena in the country where Sephardim play a role proportionate to their numbers. Over half of the 47 mayors whose towns are currently included in the project are of Sephardic background and Sephardis overwhelmingly predominate in the local councils of most of the development towns involved.

While residents can successfully pressure the local council for action, their ability to get results from the Housing Ministry, the Deputy Prime Minister's committee, or Jewish Agency is limited. The reason is primarily financial. The local council is almost wholly dependent on the central government for funding. Although the figure varies significantly from municipality to municipality, on the average only 15% of the annual budget local

is funded by local taxes; the other 85% comes from the Ministries of Interior, Education, and Labor and Welfare. Because of regular delays in transferring those funds, the local authorities constantly must borrow from the banks to maintain services, at high interest rates. As chronic debtors, local councils are constantly struggling with day-to-day administrative problems. Lack of financial independence from the central government leaves local councils vulnerable to the whims of greater powers. In the event that any of the outside actors refuse to play their role, the municipality is unable to take independent action. The one organ with the greatest vested interest in the Project, then, must sit and wait until the misunderstanding or inefficiency is resolved. While some of the mayors have political leverage which they can use to partially correct these disadvantages, it is all too often the weakest municipalities such as the development towns that lack such leverage. The problem is compounded because coordinating institutions at the top suffers from the same problem. Project Renewal does not have a budget independent of the various ministries and the Jewish Agency.

Among the most promising factors, however, is the emergence of a new breed of young, strong, and competent mayors -- Mayors Shitrit of Yavneh and Dayan of Ashkelon are two examples of the new, educated talent that has joined the ranks of local government. While at first they considered circumventing Project Renewal, they have since decided to work within its structure.

As a means of offsetting their relative powerlessness, local

councils, especially in the smaller development towns, have fostered a close relationship with an already sympathetic press. While favorable to the local councils, journalists have not overlooked some of the negative features of local government, including the lack of specific professional expertise necessary for evaluating projects. Shimshoni hoped that regional ministerial representatives would in part provide this service. Another problem is that the fault of local governments is their search for quick or visible results -- they tend to advocate building over social organization and short-term over long-term projects for the purpose of political gain. As one article in Ma'ariv pointed out, this tendency has on occasion resulted in delay of project implementation.

#### V. DOMINANT POSITION OF THE MINISTRY OF CONSTRUCTION AND HOUSING

In its 17 years as an independent ministry, the Housing Ministry has been one of the most powerful forces in Israeli life. Its functions are wide-ranging. First, it has been responsible for the construction of all public housing. Second, it plans and builds whole towns from the ground up; a task assumed while still a department of the Labor Ministry in the 50s; when it constructed the development towns referred to above. Third, it runs a subsidized housing plan for young couples and large families. Fourth, it operates its own construction companies (Amidar and Shikun vePituah). In fact,

the Housing Ministry has much experience, though not altogether successful, in the field of urban renewal. It was the sole actor in the field until the advent of Project Renewal.

Renewal was one of the prime areas of interest of the newly founded ministry in 1962. It became increasingly evident at that time that the focus on development towns in the 1950s directed attention and resources away from disadvantaged neighborhoods in Israel's main urban areas.\* Compounding this neglect, these neighborhoods had to absorb many people who left the development towns, discouraged by lack of work opportunities and feelings of isolation.

Yosef Almogi, then Minister of Housing, inaugurated a plan similar in scope to the Project Renewal of today. The plan encompassed 77,000 families (about 300,000 people). Almogi called for the establishment of an inter-ministerial committee. A law promulgated in 1965 set up the "Agency for Clearance and Construction," with local government and residents formally represented. From the first it was clear, however, that this was to be primarily a Ministry of Housing project. The plan was a dismal failure. In only one big city neighborhood, Kfar Shalem in Tel Aviv, was any work undertaken. The residents were moved to multiunit apartment blocks. Fifteen years later, Kfar Shalem appears once

---

\*It is estimated that only 2% of the Housing budget in the 1950s went to urban disadvantaged neighborhoods (excluding removal from transient camps -- ma'abarot) and 25% to development towns. Source: Israel Builds: 1977 (Hebrew), Ministry of Construction and Housing, Jerusalem, 1978.

again on the list, this time slated for renewal instead of clearance. Due to the resistance of the local neighborhood residents, plans for clearance in other areas never got off the drawing boards. In light of that experience, today's authorities are giving greater consideration to community loyalty, which is one of the reasons that the present Project Renewal has a neighborhood focus.

Accompanying this major failure, however, was the continued success of other efforts to reduce sub-standard housing. The ministry's self-help schemes for young couples and large families enabled many to improve their living conditions. The joint municipal/Ministry of Housing companies set up in 5 cities (Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Haifa, Lod, Petach Tikvah) in the early 60s, originally for urban clearance, gradually adopted a more successful renewal approach. This approach, combined with the enthusiastic participation of many families, resulted in the dramatic reduction of sub-standard housing (from 115,000 in 1969, or 18% of all families in the country, to 45,000 in 1978, or 8% of all families).

There is evidence that the Ministry did its best work where it was least heavy handed. With rising incomes, many families were able to save enough money to buy apartments, even with relatively little government assistance. In fact, Ministry of Housing statistics clearly indicate that the most significant declines in the percentage of sub-standard housing came in those years of proportionately smaller amounts of housing aid.

For now, however, the period of growth and affluence has ended and families in similar situations no longer have the same means to improve their living conditions.

#### The Twelve Neighborhoods

One of the facts of life which Project Renewal has had to confront is that the Ministry began its own renewal project in 12 neighborhoods before the national project was called into existence.\* These neighborhoods (which had been designated by the Agency for "clearance and construction" as early as 1969) are also among the 160 neighborhoods slated for renewal today.

Intending to add 19 more neighborhoods to the original 12, in 1978, the Ministry set up regional steering committees to deal with the neighborhoods in their own areas. Projects in the neighborhoods proceeded according to plans drawn up by the Ministry's planning unit. The regional steering committees charged with the task of supervising work in the neighborhoods included only Ministry of Housing officials. In three neighborhoods, however, the relevant steering committees also included representatives of other government ministries. No representation, on the other hand, was accorded to local government officials, Jewish Agency officials, or to local residents.

This state of affairs did not change with the inception of

---

\*Source: State Comptroller's Report (29) 1979. (Hebrew)

Project Renewal. The steering committees continued to operate independently of the Project Renewal office. Local physical project coordinators were hired without authorization from the Project Renewal interministerial committee. Comprehensive plans were drawn up in 5 neighborhoods and one-year projects defined for 19 others, again independent of any Project Renewal involvement.

To make matters more confusing, the Ministry of Housing was the only government agency with a budget for renewal in 1978. It disbursed 5 million dollars (80 million lirot) that year and committed over \$13 million (IL 240 m.) more. It was practically the only institutional actor in the neighborhoods in 1979 as well. While only a handful of Jewish Agency projects authorized by the Interministerial Committee had gotten beyond the planning stage before late 1979, the Ministry of Housing was busy all along spending the one billion (approximately 35 million dollars) it had budgeted for Project Renewal for that year. Again just as in 1978, it acted completely independently of the Project Renewal structure and did so in at least 20 neighborhoods.\*

---

\*According to a recent Ministry of Housing interim report nearly 15 million dollars (IL 318 million at current prices) was spent in 30 neighborhoods since 1976. Contracts totalling approximately 25 million dollars were signed in 1979 -- and much of the work has already begun in several neighborhoods included in the Project.

This reality reduces the Ministry's incentive to come into the Project Renewal framework which would mean a concomitant reduction of its ability to act unilaterally. There is a natural tendency in all governments toward interagency competition under the best of circumstances. In this case there is the added dimension of having to develop a new pattern of sharing authority and power between the Israel government and the Jewish Agency as representative of the whole Jewish people, a need that is not yet fully accepted in government quarters, coming as it does after a generation of "statism" in which the intoxications of restored state sovereignty made it conventional wisdom that a "real" state government shares authority with nobody and power only on a very unequal basis. Finally, as always, there are the special personal and interpersonal factors that shape the realities of organizational life. In this case, they do not function to encourage an openness to surrendering real power on the part of the Housing Ministry.

Indications are that the Ministry is finally ready to agree in principle to integrate into the emerging overall project, this after strenuous negotiation. But much has yet to be negotiated regarding how it will do so. Of the 120 individual projects that have received the approval of the Interministerial Committee, several are housing projects which the Ministry will implement unilaterally. Two such projects approved in August are in Yavneh

and Kiryat Malachi. These are towns which were among the 12 neighborhoods designated for renewal by the Ministry in 1976. If these signs reflect future tendencies, then the individual elements of Project Renewal might well be divided among the different partners rather than shared. It remains to be seen how this will affect the achievement of its goals, namely, to implement neighborhood-based plans combining social services, housing, and infrastructural needs. This requires one Project Renewal, not two.

#### VI. PARALLEL PROJECTS: THE EXAMPLE OF PROJECT REVAHIA HINUCHIT

Project Renewal is not being implemented in a vacuum. It is not only the successor to other urban redevelopment projects but is one of several parallel but generally uncoordinated efforts to deal with the problems of the disadvantaged. Project Revahia Hinuchit (Educational Affluence) of the Education Ministry is a good example of an existing parallel effort that will have to be coordinated with Project Renewal.

Project "Revaha Hinuchit" was first made operational in 1975 in 21 urban neighborhoods and villages. The project, guided by principles laid down by the Prime Minister's Committee on disadvantaged youth in 1973, now operates in 76 localities. It includes 62 of the 65 neighborhoods so far designated in Project Renewal. The aims of the comprehensive project are four-fold:

-- Improvement in educational attainment

- Increasing the numbers of those going on to college
- Decreasing drop-out rates
- Improving the students' self-image, and image of the community in which they live.

The organizational structure of Project Revaḥa is similar to the one drawn up for Project Renewal. A local steering committee operating on the town level is charged with supervising and coordinating the various centers and their activities. Functional subcommittees specializing in infant, primary and high school, extra-curricular, and adult education, exist in most of the 76 localities. Members include supervisors from the Ministry, local council (government) officials, local teachers, local public officials from other fields and minimally, professionals and businessmen. A key member is the coordinator in charge of the day-to-day activities.

Judging from the composition of 26 local steering committees it seems that one aim of Project Revaḥa has already been realized. Namely that of placing the project in the hands of locals. Over 50% of committee members are from the area. Another implicit objective of the Project, to place decision-making amongst those of origins similar to the populations they serve, was also likewise achieved. Fourteen of the 26 coordinators sampled were of African-Asian origin.

The plethora of activities within the framework of the project varied from town to town. A sample list would be beyond the scope of the paper. For the steering committee the chief

problem was one of coordination -- preventing duplication of efforts by the various schools and voluntary organizations, etc. This problem is being rendered even more acute as Project Renewal moves into high gear. In many neighborhoods, subcommittees on education have been set up within the framework of Project Renewal operating independently of the Project Revaḥa steering committee. Often members sit on both committees. While it is true that the Ministry of Education member on the Interministerial Committee does have veto power over educational projects sent up for final approval -- this power is insufficient in itself to prevent duplication in the field. With over 30 educational projects in 17 neighborhoods already authorized and many more awaiting approval, greater coordination is urgently called for.

#### VII. THE ROLE OF THE JEWISH AGENCY

The Jewish Agency is formally a co-equal partner in the planning and implementation of Project Renewal in its capacity of representative of the Jewish people. Its representatives co-chair the Interministerial Committee, the Project's overall policy-making body and the Professional Interministerial team. Acting in the capacity of liaison of the diaspora Jewish communities, the Jewish Agency's first duty was to pair these communities with the 30 neighborhoods designated in 1978 (see Table 3). A few diaspora communities were mistakenly paired with neighborhoods not on the list. The Agency was, it seems, at fault for

**30 NEIGHBORHOODS: MAJOR ELEMENTS OF CONCERN**  
(Compared to National Average)

Name of Neighborhood	Population	Sub-standard housing, %	Overcrowded units, %	% with no more than 9th grade education	% Persons in families with welfare assistance
Tel-Hanan (Nesher)	4,000	18.0	6.7	54.9	4.7
Amidar (Or Yehuda)	4,800	35.0	12.2	75.1	6.4
Amishav (Petah Tikva)	4,000	24.0	20.5	64.7	6.0
Kibbutz Galuyot (Qiryat Malachi)	3,600	31.0	12.5	65.1	6.4
Ramat Shikma (Ramat Gan)	6,000	19.0	15.5	65.2	4.6
Old City (Ramla)	7,000	58.0	55.4	73.1	12.0
Ramat Eliyahu (Rishon LeZion)	6,000	12.0	13.5	57.9	3.6
Hatikvah (Tel Aviv)	15,800	13.0	34.0	78.6	12.0
Neve-Eliezer (Tel Aviv)	6,300	18.0	17.0	71.4	8.1
Neve-Sharett (Tel Aviv)	3,000	20.0	4.5	45.6	3.3
Yafo Dalet (Tel Aviv)	3,500	14.0	5.1	57.5	3.4
Shikun Dalet (Tiberias)	3,200	12.0	30.9	71.0	17.8
Shchunot Ramban/Bialik (Tirat Ha-Carmel)	2,000	37.0	7.7	58.2	6.3
Mercas Ha-Yishuv (Yahud)	1,250	40.0	5.6	56.6	2.5
Shchunat Ha-Holot (Yavne)	3,800	20.0	22.0	75.6	7.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>134,900</b>				

**30 NEIGHBORHOODS: MAJOR ELEMENTS OF CONCERN**  
(Compared to National Average)

Name of Neighborhood	Population	Sub-standard housing, %	Overcrowded units, %	% with no more than 9th grade education	% Persons in families with welfare assistance
Israel's National Average		5.6	6.2	44.1	2.7
Migdal (Ashkelon)	3,650	63.0	31.5	64.4	10.5
Ma'abara (Bat Yam)	500	100.0	3.6	42.9	3.0
Shchuna Dalet (Beersheba)	12,000	19.0	17.1	64.0	5.5
Shchuna Gimmel (Beersheba)	5,800	12.0	17.0	52.8	4.1
Shchuna Alef (Eilat)	1,600	50.0	7.9	48.7	2.8
Neve Yoseph (Haifa)	3,000	8.0	1.3	28.0	0.4
Neve Yisrael (Herzliya)	3,000	14.0	11.6	58.0	5.6
Shchunat Jesse Cohen (Holon)	8,000	19.0	10.9	62.4	3.5
Ir Ganim Gimmel (Jerusalem)	2,500	20.0	31.6	51.6	3.8
Katamon Het & Tet (Jerusalem)	8,500	14.0	24.4	52.5	10.0
Morasha (Jerusalem)	3,300	32.0	37.2	67.1	6.3
Shikun Yosephthal & Kaplan (Kefar Saba)	2,700	78.5	22.2	71.4	6.0
Banit (Lod)	2,300	67.0	12.5	52.7	3.2
Neve Zayit (Lod)	1,800	33.0	12.5	52.7	3.2
Givat Katzenelson (Nahariah)	2,000	10.0	10.7	61.9	8.0

TABLE 3

Prepared by Mr. J. H. ...  
 ...  
 ...

failing to coordinate with the United Israel Appeal-Keren Hayesod on the one hand and with the Interministerial Committee on the other. In an effort to improve coordination, Eliezer Rafaeli was appointed as Director of Project Renewal in the Jewish Agency. One of his first acts was to direct Jewish Agency representatives to sit on local steering committees and encourage initiation of social service projects. It was agreed that social service projects would be under the aegis of the Jewish Agency.

Project Renewal brings the Jewish Agency into more active involvement in the urban sector of Israeli society, parallel to its once massive involvement in the rural sector. Presently the Jewish Agency is only marginally involved in this sector through its rental and maintenance company, Amigur.\*

Attempting to assume a more central role in urban renewal, the Jewish Agency mailed a circular to local councils (including some not among the

---

\*Amigur, the Jewish Agency Housing Management Company, was established in 1972 for the purpose of providing adequate accommodations on a permanent basis for new and veteran immigrants by renting apartments (owned by the U.I.A.) at subsidized rates. The company manages 44,000 apartments in 14 towns, 5 of which have been included in Project Renewal to date. Amigur's activities run the whole gamut of services from general and preventative maintenance to renovations, enlargements and infrastructure development. In the last few years Amigur has increasingly become active in community work through the hiring of community workers, training staff in community relations, setting up youth clubs in shelters and laundry hideaways, etc. This function though remains minimal in relation to their other activities. The company is involved in 11 Project Renewal projects to date in Ashdod and Kiryat Ata.

65 designated neighborhoods) proposing projects contingent upon the Agency's acquisition of the project's property. As a result of this effort, the process of the Project was immediately halted while the Ministry of Housing negotiated with the Agency.

According to Rafaeli, the Agency's planning function is, on the human services level, to insure that neighborhood organizations maintain the programs initiated by Project Renewal, and on the political level, to assure that resident participation on the local steering committees is not bypassed by high-ranking local officials.

Given the limited accomplishments of Project Renewal to date, the Jewish Agency's committed sum of IL 175 million (\$7 million) reflects its optimism that the project will succeed. Yet this sum is small compared to the \$160 million reportedly pledged for the Project and the many millions originally expected to be disbursed after the project's initiation in 1978.\*

#### VIII. THE ROLE OF THE DIASPORA COMMUNITIES

In many ways the involvement of diaspora communities in the neighborhoods with which they have been paired has been the most

---

\*The figures given at the 1978 Assembly held in Jerusalem show that \$6 million was planned to be spent in the first year on social projects followed by \$10 million more in the second. For infrastructure projects which the Jewish Agency was to partially finance, the figures cited were \$30 million for the first year and \$34 million for the second.

successful aspect of Project Renewal to date. Thus far 36 neighborhoods have been paired with North American communities. Four are joint projects involving both Keren Hayesod and U.J.A. communities, and nine are exclusively Keren Hayesod undertakings. (Figure 3) 15 Keren Hayesod communities in all are presently participating.

The nature and scope of this involvement varies from neighborhood to neighborhood. The most intensive relationship exists between the British community and Ashkelon. Originally committed to providing \$25 million for the project, the British have doubled this commitment with the inclusion of the Shimshon neighborhood. This massive commitment led the British community to commission a joint Israel-British planning team whose major task was to help formulate cooperative projects and a general plan under the scrutiny of the neighborhood steering committee. The committee was chaired by Eli Dayan, Ashkelon's mayor. Frequent visits are made by British Project Renewal leaders to Ashkelon. British students came to Ashkelon to teach English and British dentists have committed themselves to provide dental services to the neighborhoods on a regular basis.

Other communities such as Los Angeles which has adopted Morasha (Musara) in Jerusalem and Boston which has adopted Neve Israel in Horzliya, have sent teams to report in depth about the problems facing the neighborhoods and the prospects of overcoming them. San Francisco has been intimately involved in every aspect of Project Renewal in its adopted community. San Diego hired a

ISRAELI NEIGHBORHOODS ADOPTED BY KEREN HAYESOD COMMUNITIES

<u>City</u>	<u>Neighborhood</u>	<u>Adopting Community</u>
Ashkelon	Migdal & Shimshon	Great Britain
Beersheva	Schunat Gimmel	Argentina
	Schunat Dalet	Germany
Eilat	Schunat Aleph	European Fund
Holon	Jesse Cohen	Venezuela and Wilmington*
Jerusalem	Katemon Het and Tet	Switzerland, Colombia, Holland, Italy, Brussels (Belgium)
	Kiryat Menahem & Ir Ganim	Toronto and Baltimore*
	Kiryat Hayovel	Toronto
Tel Aviv	Hatikvah	Mexico and New York*
	Yaffo Gimmel	Australia
	Yaffo Dalet	Western Canada
Yavneh	Schunat Halolot	Antwerp (Belgium)
Yerucham		Canada (Montreal)*
	day care center	N.W. Indiana

\*Joint projects of U.J.A. and Keren Hayesod communities.

FIGURE 3

San Diegan Hebrew-speaking social worker to reside in Kiryat Malachai for a year, to report on the progress of projects already agreed upon by San Diego leaders and the local steering committee, and awaiting approval by the Interministerial Committee. However, one municipality, confident of its capacity to mobilize its own planning, resources and voluntary organizations, hopes to limit its relationship to a financial commitment. Finally, at least one community has hired an Israeli planning expert to report back to the respective diaspora community (Or Yehuda), in addition to making its own intensive periodic visits to the neighborhood.

Also noteworthy are the hundreds of groups who have visited Project Renewal neighborhoods. In fact many residents of the better-known neighborhoods (Schunot Hatikva, Ramot Hashikma, the Katamonim) have complained about the huge stream of sightseers in their neighborhoods prompting the U.J.A. to send out guidelines asking groups to arrange their visits ahead of time -- the intention being in part to reduce their numbers.

#### Project Renewal and Future Israel-Diaspora Relations

In the numerous public relations drives promoting Project Renewal, the Project is presented as offering "new opportunities for forging new bonds" between the diaspora and Israel. One enthusiastic activist from San Francisco wrote on her recent visit to Tel-Hanan: "As the memory of the Holocaust fades, the last

generation of survivors will soon disappear. New bonds and new memories must be forged. Our creative Jewish future must be stressed. Project Renewal will provide such opportunity."

The project might also spark the interest of young professionals and other Jews in the diaspora who have not responded to previous less direct, but more emotional calls for aid. Furthermore, the project could set the parameters of an altered relationship between the diaspora and Israel based on a better utilization of the diaspora's resources on behalf of Israel. In an illuminating article appearing recently in the Jerusalem Center's Viewpoints,\* Gerald BUBIS, a Center Fellow, showed that in the future diaspora communities will have a larger proportion of professionals vis-a-vis businessmen. In other words, there will be less money to give but more expertise to offer. A fundamental change of relationship from that of "signing checks" to involvement in policy and implementation in Israel might well be what is needed. Project Renewal offers ample opportunities for a type of involvement that never existed before the Project came into existence.

These opportunities are not without problematic consequences.

The first and foremost is that concerning Israel's image. Diaspora Jews who for years have been presented with a sweetened,

---

\*Gerald B. Bubis, Fundraising After Peace, CJCS Viewpoints #2, February 1979.

perhaps even heroic picture of Israeli life, will now be exposed to its seamiest aspects. The diaspora's view of Israel will be rocked from one extreme to another; its innocence may be overwhelmed by an unhealthy cynicism. Already reports to hometowns written by local diaspora Project Renewal activists bare some ugly truths. One visitor from the town sponsoring Lod relates how young teenagers terrorized an old couple, expelling them from their home in order to use their beds for the night. Other missions have been given a clear picture of the local drug scene. Stories that can rank with the worst in the local newspapers "back home," are a far cry from the traditional feature stories on kibbutz and moshav life. In sum, diaspora Jews may be getting a picture of Israel just as unbalanced (or possibly more so) as what they have been presented until now. Familiarity, indeed, could breed contempt.

The dangers of a changing social image of Israel comes at a time when other images of Israel are changing for the worse. No one can doubt that we are witnessing the gradual transition from a view of Israel as an embattled democracy to one of an inflexible occupier. Another positive image being discarded with much negative impact on Israelis themselves has to do with Israel's economy and technological know-how. In the 60's Israel was a favorite example of "miracle economies," a country economists considered worthy of emulation. Israel was considered one of the most effective exporters of technology suitable for the underdeveloped countries. Today Israel is chastised for living beyond

its means, for maintaining too large a public sector, and for low productivity, brought about by a work force that strikes much too often and works much too little.

The danger, then, of Project Renewal is that it may discourage volunteers, who generally have lower frustration levels than those professionally involved in an enterprise. Interested, but only marginally involved people might lose sight of the Israeli ideal embodied by the establishment and development of the state.

#### Project Renewal and Israeli Political Issues

Project Renewal was conceived as a humanitarian effort but inevitably it has been drawn into the vortex of Israeli politics if only because Project Renewal does not operate in a vacuum. Both the renewal itself and the magnitude of the project are inherently political issues with state-wide consequences. Various groups are presently attempting to pit support of Project Renewal against settlement on the West Bank. Posters plastered on the public billboards in Jerusalem read: "100 billion for West Bank settlement, 100 billion in food subsidies recently withdrawn," signed by people of the neighborhoods. And only last month, Moshav Elazar, a West Bank settlement, was picketed by a group of Musrara residents. The group, led by Charlie Biton, the former Black Panther leader and current Communist member of Knesset, hoped to publicize what they saw as a "trade-off" of financing settlements to the detriment of funding disadvantaged

neighborhoods. Others have criticized the project as diverting funds from other necessary purposes. Moreover, the government is manipulating its activities in the project to gain at least some political advantage. Community-to-community relations might well expand into undesirable political relationships and alliances.

Involvement by diaspora Jewry may mean then, involvement in internal politics in ways which diaspora Jews are not interested in pursuing and are not competent to pursue. The problem here is one of controlling the level and nature of this involvement, particularly since such political involvement may weaken consensus and consequently support, for Israel in the diaspora itself.

The politicization of Project Renewal will not only continue but deepen in nearly direct proportion to the government's inability to keep its original promises. Presently the ability of the government to commit itself as planned is very much in doubt. Neighborhood residents whose vested interests in the Project are clear will certainly seek to recruit aid from any potential allies. Pitting new settlements against social causes, such as Project Renewal, in erroneously simplistic but highly effective political language could win the hearts of more than just those diaspora activists in Project Renewal. Diaspora Jews may get a distorted view not only of the good and bad of Israeli society but of the relative magnitude and importance of the various problems it faces. There is then a danger in lobbying and pressuring for the narrow interests of urban renewal, despite its significance, at the expense of equal if not more important issues.

An additional problem is that of building a new relationship on a project where the chance of failure is high and that of great success relatively low. Urban renewal programs the world over boast of few "successes." The "great society" programs in the 1960's and Israel's own attempts at grandiose renewal projects during that time offer instructive lessons. Already diaspora community activists are disappointed in what they consider to be exceedingly slow progress. Meanwhile professional planners caution against "blueprint" urban renewal, advocating "feedback" planning over a 20 year period. Daniel Shimshoni, Yadin's Project Renewal coordinator, talks of a generation of project renewal while the publicity campaigns call it a 6 year project. Though Project Renewal might well have been conceived as a short-term plan for action, urban renewal is essentially an on-going process. It remains to be seen whether diaspora communities will be able to remain involved throughout the Project and even if they do, whether they will be satisfied with the final results.

#### IX. A FINAL WORD\*

Participation is a shibboleth. Realities force answers to hard questions when focused on a case by case basis in answering what the word "participation" means to all who use the word. Project Renewal has generated a number of such phrases; those

---

\*This section was written by Professor Gerald B. Bubis, a Fellow of the Center.

responsible for its implementation must now act in such a way as to give meaning to them. The Board of Governors of the Jewish Agency, the interministerial committee charged with the responsibility of delineating policy guidelines, and the Israeli cabinet have each spent many hours trying to define the respective roles of the various participants. In each instance there were and remain sharp differences arising from differing perceptions of what participation of diaspora Jewry was to entail. The positions staked out by the various participants indicated that Project Renewal faces grave complications in the period ahead. The issues are serious ones and as is often the case in complex inter-organizational relationships, there is no one correct answer to the problems which arise.

One of the key abiding concerns is the place and use of power. Forces within the government, perhaps best personified by David Levy, the Minister of Housing, argue that as a sovereign government, Israel cannot accept interference and involvement beyond fundraising and "giving" by non-Israelis, e.g. diaspora Jewry. Consultation should result when and if the government asks for it, but co-direction by Jewish Agency personnel, as representatives of diaspora Jewry, and monitoring and evaluating by individuals and/or groups representing diaspora Jewry are inappropriate roles to be played by non-governmental authorities in this view.

Diaspora Jewry, on the other hand, was promised a partnership and their understanding of that term plus legal restrictions

set by the American tax laws require involvement in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluating process. In turn, many Americans feel the Jewish Agency by itself is an insufficient diaspora presence and want relationships developed which not only can involve "twinning" communities in some on-going and non-superficial way, but also provide some independent mechanism which can monitor and evaluate progress and process in a manner which helps all parties involved in Project Renewal. This latter intention is not well received at the higher echelons of Project Renewal, in either the Agency or government, and in some instances this is because of semantic misunderstandings. Others resist and resent this intended monitoring and evaluating, feeling it would be an intrusion upon their own integrity and autonomy.

Other complications are at work on the state plane. Long-term fiscal commitments for moving Sinai installations to the Negev may strip the government of vitally needed resources for matching purposes and indeed may create a shortage of labor and supplies which Project Renewal would need by that same time. There may be a positive serendipity as a result, for the truly lasting structural and social changes needed to deal with the non-physical aspects of Project Renewal will take much more time than the relatively short period needed to build or remodel buildings.

That issue aside, the very funding processes of the government foretell the possibility of grave and great complications. Ministries (which, it must be remembered, have a far greater

autonomy in Israel than in America) control their own budgets in a jealous and zealous way. Project Renewal funds will not reside in one centrally controlled government treasury, but will be found within the budgets of a number of ministries. After agreement is reached on the need for fund dispersal there still may be many blocks to actually expending the funds if even one of the ministries does not agree with the decision.

Yet another complication arises because of the relative fragility of the position of the Deputy Prime Minister, whose office is charged with coordinating the government's roles in Project Renewal. Coalitional infighting and other realities complicate his office's ability to harness the, at times, disparately evolving and uncoordinated approaches being mooted or applied in Project Renewal.

On the local plane, beginning experiences indicate that the ability and strength of a given mayor may be the single most important variable in predicting success of a project. The degree of political acumen and comprehensive understanding needed to appreciate the complexities and gravity of what is being undertaken through Project Renewal varies widely from community to community. As pointed out in the last memo, the matter of trust on the local plane may be the additional secret weapon in overcoming the imponderables in the planning and implementation process.

The Jewish Agency has its own difficulties. It faces pressures from government and local authorities even as the state

government will have pressures from the Agency and local authorities. The Agency, however, also has to answer to diaspora Jewry. As each Israeli community is "twinned" with a diaspora community, that diaspora community brings its own expectations to bear in highly diverse ways. Their need and desire for involvement is well-intentioned and desirable. However, there is not yet a consensus as to how that involvement would best serve the goals of Project Renewal. It is possible that, pending some approach upon which diaspora leadership agrees, each community will establish direct relationships on the local plane and by-pass the Agency staff and structure inadvertently or, in some cases, by design.

In sum, it is not yet clear whether Project Renewal can be the great social instrument it is intended to be, or an awakened undisciplined and uncoordinated series of expectations and efforts which by virtue of the complications touched upon above doom most efforts to minimal success, at best, or massive failure, at worst.

All concerned must be more devoted than ever to overcoming the semantic difficulties. They must set in motion, on a beginning level, some demonstration programs so as to handle the heavily increased set of expectations residents now have. At the same time, these demonstrations will enable them to learn through experience what approaches have the highest likelihood of success.

Some specific strategies seem indicated. In the diaspora,

the fundraising approaches need complete redesigning. The least important part of Project Renewal may prove to be buildings. Sophisticated givers must be helped to understand that the strengths which exist in many of the designated neighborhoods have made possible their readiness to participate in Project Renewal. In most of the neighborhoods there are healthy, coping people living in good quarters alongside those needing renewal. Missions and givers must thus be helped to look at more subtle needs and not expect a neighborhood necessarily to be completely disintegrated physically and spiritually before being considered in need of assistance. Careful and honest briefings and more focused interpretive materials will help deal with this problem.

UJA, in turn, can deal with more than raising funds, for much that can be done in Project Renewal needs volunteers matched with self-help projects instead of solely a massive infusion of dollars. UJA campus and young leadership missions might do much more for Project Renewal by recruiting volunteers than by raising dollars.

Local diaspora communities in turn have a responsibility to remember that contributions without expectations for some kind of matching formula from neighborhood and community residents are probably doomed to failure. Local community participation means much more than a part in the decision-making process. Volunteers from twinned communities should be recruited to be matched with neighborhood residents so that much of the renewal process is conducted along Maimonidean lines with as high a level of

self-help as is realistically possible. Painting houses, restoring or developing mini-parks, clearing empty lots, building curbs, and much more can be done by residents and volunteer teams from diaspora in a spirit of cooperation and expectation which is different from the too frequently noted phenomenon of waiting for the government to do something for rather than with the residents.

It is agreed by all that the ultimate success for Project Renewal will rest upon the line workers in each of the neighborhoods. The reality in Israel is that the human services infrastructure is a weak one. Immediate and extensive attention must be paid to strengthening this infrastructure through extensive educational efforts. Para-professional programs undoubtedly will be needed in most communities and training opportunities for them in social work, health, recreation, etc., will be needed almost immediately. Community councils will need help through adult education efforts on how to conduct business, function as representatives, and the like.

Monitoring and evaluating remains problematic. The reality is that diaspora communities will probably come to demand it as they come to appreciate the complex and problematic nature of Project Renewal. If no truly independent and coordinated system is instituted soon, there is high likelihood that a whole series of individually contracted arrangements will arise which, while understandable, will present yet another set of problems. UJA, UIA, and Keren Hayesod have the power to insist on this process.

It is not yet clear if their leadership senses the urgency with which it is needed. The resistance will be great. The payoffs to the insistence will be even greater.

Under the best of circumstances Project Renewal faces difficulties because of the complexity of the problems it has taken upon itself to solve. Patience and rigorous questioning must go hand in hand. Ever increasing clarity of what is real and what is rhetoric must also be sought. A continuing presence of interested and committed thinkers and doers is imperative for the dangers are great.

A Jerusalem Post editorial of January 30, 1979, sums it up best:

The upshot [of all the political complications], however, has been the establishment by the Cabinet of a cumbersome, perhaps unworkable, organization scaffolding for Project Renewal that is in some way supposed to bridge the conflict between [David] Levy and the [Jewish] Agency.

If it could be left at that, with only bickering the consequence, little would be lost. But the danger is that not the politicians, but the nation's poor will pay the real price for the failure of Project Renewal.

APPENDIX

Jerusalem Letter - No. 15: November 30, 1978

Who Creates the Slums?

by

Moshe Hazani

In the beginning, there was the preconception. And this preconception was sacred and stood apart from reality, and apart even from the truth. And whenever it encountered actual facts, these were swept aside so that the preconceived notion could continue on its reckless path.

And this is the preconception: There are two camps in this country. One comes from countries that are modern, industrious, competitive, energetic and enlightened. The other comes from countries which are traditional, feudalistic, primitive and that have yet to see the light of progress. The first camp is learned, diligent and inventive. The second is boorish, indolent, passive and fatalistic. The first is strong and rich while the second is weak and poor. The first is white. The second is black.

This is the prevailing sociological opinion in this country -- the outlook of Archie Bunker. And the formulation above shocks you -- not because most of you do not think that way, but rather because I've chosen to cast aside the usual euphemisms

("weaker strata," "immigrants from Asia and Africa," etc.) and tell it like it is -- the way it is spoken of, both on the Ashkenazic streets and on the non-Ashkenazic streets.

This preconception is even to be found in sociology textbooks about Israeli society. The so-called scientists in their ivory towers seek not only to fortify their own positions but are also concerned with furthering this notion and fostering its dissemination. Open the books and see it with your own eyes.

Herein lies the great tragedy. The various welfare agencies cause great damage to those who come to them in need of assistance. Although these agencies are sometimes supportive, more often than not they harm rather than help. And the suspicion arises that these agencies were created to further the interests of the strong and the rich rather than those of the poor, because the latter are certainly not aided by them.

Let us look at some concrete examples. Nowhere do we witness the damage done by welfare agencies to those needing their help more so than in the matter of housing. We are well aware of the mishaps and failures of building carried out under public auspices and have often cried out against slum clearance which creates new slums in place of the old ones -- slums very often worse than the ones they were meant to replace.

However, the message has still not gotten across that, in essence, the system of public building by dictate from on high, through the aegis of centralized bureaucracies, is at the root of the problem. This problem will not be solved by improving the

methods of centralized control, but rather by stopping them altogether and turning them over to the local authorities -- namely, the residents themselves.

"Alas, who will help these wretched, oppressed people? They themselves?" This is the typical reaction that I hear when the subject is discussed. Why do people respond this way? Their response is in keeping with the preconception described above -- that these wretched, downtrodden people are also stupid, lazy, and lacking in all initiative and, without the aid of the "white man," will go to ruin. There is no greater error.

I have been doing research in poor neighborhoods in Israel for the past ten years during which I was constantly in the field and came to know, at first hand, the internal workings of the neighborhoods. In the course of my work, I found incontrovertible evidence which totally disproves the preconceptions discussed above.

In every case in which the residents of poor neighborhoods were left to their own devices, and no efforts to "assist" them were made, the neighborhoods were, in the course of time, gradually renovated until they were turned into model success stories. On the other hand, in every instance in which attempts were made to assist the residents and place them into housing projects, the problems worsened until reaching a stage beyond hope of repair.

I said "in every case" and I exaggerated. I should have said "in almost every case" for there are some exceptions. However, it is precisely these exceptions which teach us the hidden

dangers of coercion from above on the lives of the residents.

For example, a Yemenite community was evacuated against its will from a neighborhood to which it was very attached. However, because this community happened to be particularly cohesive and strong, it escaped being pressured into tenements and received instead new one-story housing. This is one example of successful relocation. But this proves that, had this community not stood up for its rights and dignity, they would have been forced into tenements -- this indeed was the original plan -- and we all know what happens to tenements.

In the course of my work, I've examined dozens of localities, among them renovated areas that became slums as well as formerly rundown areas that were turned into show places. I will not exhaust the reader with descriptions of these areas, some of which are known to the community as nests of crime and neglect. The Katamon area in Jerusalem, for example, was synonymous at one time with social abandonment and neglect. Today it is a show place, peaceful, tranquil, and humane. However, precisely that area of Katamon, Katamon Tet, which was renovated as a result of a dictate from above, remains a rundown slum. What was meant as a solution to the problem turned out to be nothing of the kind. Even here, it must be noted, the situation is now improving thanks to the initiative of the local residents themselves.

It is difficult to find a building in Katamon today -- with the exception of Katamon Tet -- which has not undergone rebuilding. It is difficult to believe, in passing through this area,

that the homes one sees today were once tiny hovels. However, when one looks at pictures of the original structures, the changes are immediately evident. One of these original buildings contained four tiny apartments, all entered through a common hall. One of the ground floor apartments was then doubled in size, and a garden planted around it, and it now can be entered directly by a door from the courtyard. The other apartments remain unchanged. We can imagine what Katamon must have looked like in the days when all the apartments were like this. That is, tiny rooms whose total area was no more than forty square meters containing a small cooking area and a detached toilet without a bathtub.

Another house which can be seen today was originally basically like the one described above except that it was longer, had two entrances and had eight apartments. The extensive renovations undertaken are immediately obvious to any observer. Countless other examples of expansion, redecoration and renovation like this are to be found among this "wretched" populace.

Lest it be said that it is only those residents of the ground floors who are able to carry out such improvements, we can find many examples of expansion by those living in upper stories as well. When there is cooperation among the tenants of a building, as there is in many cases, originally miniscule dwellings can be turned into grand homes. Those who question the veracity of what I've written are advised to visit the house standing opposite Denmark School in Jerusalem. However, they had better hurry, because very soon the trees will obscure the decorated verandas,

and they will not believe that these "welfare cases" accomplished what they did without the assistance of any governmental body. It was done with their own hands and through the cooperative efforts of the tenants.

The examples mentioned above, which could be multiplied many times over were it not for the limitations of space, should be compared to the block tenements of Katamon Tet. On Shimon Bar Yochai Street, one sees all too well the government's answer to the problem of housing -- a grossly ugly, ill-kept tenement which creates a condition much worse than the one it was meant to alleviate. This is the creation of our welfare state.

There is a valley in the Kiryat Yovel area, in the bottom of which were built asbestos houses, usually referred to as the "asbestonim." In the course of time, small, primitive houses were built around the asbestonim. The neighborhood continued to develop until it was decided to solve the problem of the asbestonim.

It is true that many of the asbestonim are abandoned, and many are run-down and in a terrible state of disrepair. However, there is also the house of the Ben Dayan family, a neat, well-kept home in excellent condition. The Ben Dayans are satisfied with their housing, and would like to add on to it "if only they will let us." They have lived there for seventeen years and are content. And like them, there are others who live in the asbestonim albeit the fear of evacuation notices hovering over them.

Near the asbestonim stands a fine looking two story home. Who built this lovely building for the "primitives?" The answer is "the primitives built it for themselves!" What is today a fine home not too long resembled archeological ruins. In this very area, one can find house after house, expanded, restored, redecorated, and renovated -- all as a result of the labors and initiative of the residents themselves.

There are, of course, less elaborate examples than those described above, but they are nonetheless dear to their owners and they did not cost the government a cent in taxes. As opposed to these shining examples of self-improvement, we see the horrible block tenements of Stern Street, the monsters of Kiryat Yovel. The forced evacuees of lovely little abodes have been herded into tenements like those on Stern and this neighborhood is being transformed into a symbol of wretched, filthy, grotesque low grade housing.

These are the solutions which the agencies concerned with housing recommend to us.