

# **Academy–Community Partnerships: Challenges and Changes in Israeli Urban Regeneration Projects**

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## **Abstract**

Students worked with low-income Jaffa residents on a 3-year building renewal project as part of a multidisciplinary clinic operated through the collaboration of the Faculty of Law, the Department of Geography at the Faculty of Humanities, and the Faculty of Management at Tel-Aviv University. Alternative models in the legal and planning literature inspired clinic participants to seek more equal power relations between the actors in this project, thus serving as social change agents. In light of the clinic's primary task—teaching and training—the authors analyzed its potentials and limitations as an agent of social change, focusing on how to cultivate (a) an intimate relationship between students and residents, (b) constructive collaborations between disciplines, and (c) linkage between academic theoretical material and fieldwork. These measures are key for enabling students to develop an empowering approach toward residents and a critical, self-conscious professional identity.

## **Introduction**

**H**ow does a multidisciplinary community-based clinic work with an urban community to regenerate its deteriorating real estate? This article reports on research that analyzed a 3-year experience of students working with residents of the Jewish neighborhood Yaffo Gimel (“Jaffa C”) located in the mixed Jewish-Arab city in the south of Jaffa. What started as an initiative by Tel-Aviv University’s Legal Clinic to help residents with legal orders from the municipality continued as a joint work of a multidisciplinary clinic supported by three entities: planning (based in the Department of Geography, Faculty of Humanities), law (based in the Faculty of Law), and real estate (based in the Real Estate Institute, Faculty of Management). This clinic became involved in an urban regeneration project in which three additional actors played key roles: the limited-resource residents, the municipality, and the private developer that became involved later on.

Through this endeavor, the project became one of many local/global urban regeneration approaches aimed at reviving deteriorated urban districts. These approaches to remaking cities have a

long and continuous history, although the terminology has undergone constant revision (Lees, 2003). It started with postwar British reconstruction that was later termed redevelopment, regeneration, and renaissance—all describe “ways in which the ‘take’ on what to do with our cities have been subject to political and policy change over the past 60 years” (Butler, 2009, p. 130). Policy change may indicate failure to deal with the problem of urban stress and its manifestations in terms of crime and social dislocation or a new understanding of how urban and social problems have become entwined in new ways.

This article aims to take the next step in existing research on academic involvement with residents in urban regeneration projects by critically analyzing three aspects of this joint work. The first issue under examination was the relationship between university staff members and students with the residents, a community whose members are involved in the various stages of the project. Indeed, there are an abundance of academic activities in the community. However, studies have not analyzed these activities nor offered recommendations on how to make them sustainable (see Hart, Northmore, Gerhardt, & Rodriguez, 2009 and Golan-Agnon et al., 2005 for Israeli cases).

The second major issue we explored was the relationship between the two academic disciplinary entities (planning and law) and the implications of this relationship for the project. These two entities are specifically highlighted because the real estate institute took on more of an advisory role rather than focusing on active teaching. This is especially related to introducing issues of policy change and empowerment. Policy change has historically implied a new approach to social inequalities that ultimately leads to a better society. Most of the literature, however, has not addressed the practicalities of promoting such a goal, particularly the effects of such practicalities on residents. This article presents a unique perspective, identifying aspects of the practice that have empowerment potential in the community with the goal of assisting both cases: courses involving students and planning projects.

The third aspect we examined was the linkage between theory learned and discussed in class and its implications for practice. Thus, this study included a critical self-reflective inspection by the academy, offering practical recommendations to improve courses engaging students in the community.

The article begins with a brief review of the existing literature on the academy’s role as an agent of social change. It then provides

the necessary background for the project before discussion of the research methodology and analysis of the three main themes. The article ends with findings and discussion, as well as conclusions and recommendations intended to serve those who practice university–community engagement and those who practice planning with communities.

## **The Academy as an Agent of Community Change**

In this section, we explore the unique characteristics of clinical academic work as a training and research framework, highlighting its differences from the work of civil society organizations involved in an urban regeneration project when they seek to play a similar role as social agent of change. As a counter to theoretical criticism, with its elitist tendencies and distance from society, a vibrant debate exists in Israel and throughout the world on the issue of promoting academic social involvement in various areas, including urban regeneration. Between the positivist approach of research seeking to “discover” reality and new approaches such as participatory action research, which challenges the science/social activism dichotomy (Kesby, Kinson, & Pain, 2007), there are diverse forms of academic social involvement, including clinics with practices that are in many ways similar to those of civil society organizations. Moreover, they represent the most direct manifestation of the theory–practice dialectics.

Hart et al. (2009) found evidence of abundant academic activities in the community, in particular in planning and urban regeneration. However, they also noted the lack of studies analyzing these activities and offering recommendations on how to make them sustainable (see Golan-Agnon et al., 2005 for the Israeli experience). Offering another point of view, Katz, Dor-Haim, Matzliach, and Ya’acov (2007) asked how discourse could avoid being about the community and instead be more tuned into dialogue with it. They concluded that academia does not require its partners to be of equal status; decisions are not made jointly, but there are attempts at a more complete partnership. Wiewel, Gaffikin, and Morrissey (2000) also suggested the presence of inequality between residents and the academic actors involved in campus–community projects, arguing that although it cannot be completely avoided, we must be aware of it and acknowledge the differential interests of actors involved to ensure sustainable partnerships. What, then, are academia’s interests in such joint projects? Hart et al. (2009) argued that community partnership helps academia redefine itself and become more socially relevant. Katz et al.’s (2007) field study

showed that one of the benefits of community partnership for students and faculty is the opportunity for activism and research in areas unavailable to them, areas that “shattering the ivory tower image” can offer. Innovation is seen as an academic need with the potential to be satisfied by practice that involves contact with the community. However, Hart et al. (2009) warned that clinging to the research agenda or curriculum, or obeying the dictates of funders, may clash with the community’s interests. Collaboration with the community also provides opportunities for training the next generation of practitioners. According to Harlev and Choshen (2005), this is a key role of academia that differentiates it from civil society organizations. Golan-Agnon et al. (2005) posited that in clinics, key decisions are above all motivated by the students’ need to experience fieldwork, which takes precedence over the needs of the community.

In our analysis, we found that this academic need to educate and train entails both benefits and disadvantages for the community. The students are a significant human resource, contributing to the clinic’s self-reflection through class discussions and students’ papers. Civil society organizations rarely engage in this ongoing process of rethinking practice for internal critical evaluation. However, as suggested by the planning academic supervisor, the educational cause requires many resources, some of which may not be available for this type of use, to ensure a profound process of “bottom-up planning.” Moreover, as emphasized by the legal academic supervisor, clients sometimes do not want interns, but full-fledged legal or planning experts. Students can offer empowerment in that they share the clients’ ignorance, as opposed to holding the position of experts and exclusive bearers of knowledge. However, it is also possible that the more empowering the clinic’s approach becomes, the more it is perceived as forced on the clients against their own preference. Nevertheless, it is important to note that academia’s motivations of training and research are completely transparent, and the community is aware of them in a way that enables a relationship of give and take by both parties.

The inherent inequalities in power relations between the academy and the community reflect the broader political aspect of this partnership. Kahne and Westheimer (2001) suggested a conceptual distinction between change and charity as two ideological perspectives guiding curricula that combine social activism. Charity stresses the experience of giving and altruism, whereas social change promotes a meaningful relationship that acts to

weaken the sense of otherness that often separates the giver and receiver and prevents them from acting jointly for change.

Interestingly, Katz et al. (2007) found that senior academic leaders tend to talk in terms of *charity*, but faculty and students prefer using *change* terms. Golan-Agnon et al. (2005) found that several hours a week was not sufficient for students to form reliable relationships with members of the target community; the fragmented schedule of the academic year is another obstacle. In Katz et al.'s study (2007), the students reported that their daily activities tended to focus on urgent problems and the need to resolve them immediately, which often led them to miss the broader context.

Kahne and Westheimer (2001) argued that in order to make the most of the transformative potential of the academic experience and promote social reconstruction, critical theory and practice must be combined with ongoing discussion of student experiences. Golan-Agnon et al. (2005) suggested using these experiences as material for working through conflicts, but found that the professors' desire to maintain a high academic level clashed with the space occupied by dialogue. The solution proposed was to offer two teaching programs, one focused on theory and the other on practice. Katz et al. (2007) found that the more practically relevant the theoretical content, the greater the significance students attached to the course and to their activism. Similarly, Kahne and Westheimer (2001) argued that a process that integrates theory and personal experience can change students' understanding of disciplinary knowledge and encourage them to think outside the hegemonic box and find new solutions. Such activity is inevitably political, an aspect further explored in the analysis of the three issues presented in the beginning of this article. First, however, we describe the context of the neighborhood and clinic.

## **Yaffo Gimel and Academic Engagement**

Our intervention took place on a dead-end street at the very south of the mixed Jewish-Arab Jaffa. This small street—six residential buildings and one hill—contains almost the entire social-spatial-political (hi)story of Jaffa over the past decades, a reflection of Israeli planning's transformation from social-democratic policy to neoliberal policy, from modernism to postmodernism, and from public housing and national master plans to private ownership/resources and urban regeneration leading to gentrification processes.

The neighborhood community consists of a typical peripheral low-income population and a mix of old and new Jewish immigrants from North Africa, the Balkans, the former USSR, and Ethiopia; one Arab family from Galilee; and a few young families born and raised in Jaffa. The six residential buildings were built in the 1970s as public housing with the aim of Judaizing what is perceived as Arab Jaffa. Most of the earliest residents arrived after being displaced from their houses in Tel-Aviv's lower-income neighborhoods. During the 1980s and the 1990s, many of them managed to purchase their flats from Halamish, the governmental municipal company for housing, rehabilitation, and neighborhood renewal in Tel-Aviv–Jaffa. In 2007, after 13 years, the government decided to suspend the Neighborhood Upgrading Program in Tel-Aviv–Jaffa. Unlike adjacent buildings, our buildings had not been lucky enough to be renovated as part of this project.

In 2006, the municipality declared these buildings dangerous. The owners suddenly found themselves under court order to repair damaged property. At that time, the legal clinic at Tel-Aviv University was already engaged in the neighborhood, so it became involved in the new complex situation. After several years of legal action designed to delay and dismiss the orders but with no strong case, the legal clinic realized that the solution might be found in another field. The clinic looked to TAMA 38, a national outline plan approved in 2005, which was aimed at seismic strengthening of buildings; the plan also called for the addition of one or two floors, thereby promoting urban regeneration initiatives. At that point, the Department of Geography—specifically Planning for the Environment with Communities Laboratory (PECLAB)—became involved, as did the Real Estate Institute. For 3 years (2009–2011), a multidisciplinary clinic consisting of the fields of planning, law, and real estate worked together on teaching, studying, and working with the community. The teaching team included five women: two planning and law academic supervisors, one real estate academic advisor, and two in-field supervisors (an architect and a lawyer).

In those 3 years, we developed TAMA 38 in our buildings from a generic economic-planning perspective into a specific physical and social tailor-made plan that would add two floors and an elevator to the buildings, as well as extend the existing apartments with a room to serve as the legally mandated security room. One idea was to bring in a private entrepreneur who would implement the plan. Another suggestion was to dedicate these two new housing units to residential use by students of the nearby Academic College

of Tel-Aviv–Yaffo. The long (and ongoing) process included translating residents' needs and wishes into detailed architectural plans.

As part of the clinic's work, three graduate students prepared a social sustainability appendix for the plan and submitted it to the District Planning and Building Commission along with the plan. At the time, the plan was finally "approved subject to specific provisions" that required adding another floor on top of the original addition. This condition reopened the contract and sent us back to the negotiation stage. Meanwhile, the developer agreed to repair the buildings in order to solve the legal problem faced by owners as a trust-building act prior to signing the extended plan based on TAMA 38.

The planning process was long and complicated, as it involved multiple stakeholders, and most discussions tended to be oriented toward professionals in the relevant field. Throughout this prolonged struggle, we tried hard not only to interact with the residents, but also to use this process to empower the community. In classes, we dealt with a variety of questions: Is our involvement empowering or paralyzing the community? How can we give the community tools to decide for it? When and how do we take a stand or step back? These questions represent some of the dilemmas inherent in every social-planning act aimed at empowerment and strategic changes (*Fenster, 2009*) and were the focus of this investigation.

## Methods

This field research aimed to assess the impacts of the project on the community and students in terms of empowerment. Under this qualitative research design, in-depth interviews were held from August 2010 to September 2011, with 23 residents of the four buildings (25% of the residents) and 10 clinic members: six students (two law students and four planning students) and four supervisors. Other materials included students' papers (written as part of their academic tasks); protocols of classes, meetings, letters, e-mails, and residents' assemblies; planning papers and legal protocols; and newspaper and Internet articles. The quotations cited in this article are mainly from interviews with the students and supervisors and from students' papers, as they are most relevant for the three issues under examination. Findings related to this analysis follow.

## The Relationship Between Clinic Students and Community Members

In this section, we elaborate on the opportunities and obstacles we encountered during our 3 years of work with the community. Kahne and Westheimer (2001) proposed that in such projects, deep and close sentiments should develop between the students and the residents. Was this the case in Yaffo Gimel?

At the beginning of each academic year, the students expressed their fears of meeting with the “different” population, based on various stereotypes of the lower class residents. In their interviews at the end of the year, however, they spoke about the residents in more relative terms, as being “not all that different from the people I know.” Further, the consensus among the students and supervisors was that the potential for the relationship “was not exhausted” and that their acquaintance with the residents was not “personal and intimate enough.” The legal in-field supervisor summed it up by saying that “the students experienced a certain encounter which undoubtedly taught them much, but largely missed out on the more emotional aspect.”

This “missing out on the emotional aspect” occurred because few personal meetings took place at eye level in the residents’ homes. Instead, most meetings with the residents were in general assemblies of the four buildings. In some of these meetings, the plans were presented to the residents, or legal issues were discussed. Moreover, the various stages of the project dictated the nature of the activity. Tasks often involved formulating contracts or appendices, leading to long periods of disconnectedness from the community. Academic summer leaves disrupted continuity, and student turnover made it even more difficult to form relations. One student expressed, “The students need a whole semester just to get their bearings... [so there is] not enough energy to form a long-term personal relationship.”

The meaning that the students attached to their activities was affected by the extent of their involvement. “It is only one, not very significant part of their studies and life in general,” said the planning in-field supervisor. As described by a planning student, this promoted a task-oriented approach: “When we came there, we did so to complete a course-related task.” The residents concurred: “They were in the background, taking notes... asking some questions, looking over the contract.”

The students suggested that including another program as part of the curriculum, such as an internship or final project, would

allow them to dedicate more weekly hours to the project. They also recommended a special program for those students who continued with the project in their second year. To improve the existing program, they suggested that pairs of students maintain ongoing contact with at least some of the residents beyond the general assemblies and also during academic leaves. Accordingly, beyond the technical tasks dictated by the project, forming personal relationships would be designated in advance as an objective in its own right, enabling the students to prepare for it.

The students' limited relationships with the residents did not enable them to deconstruct their concept of the "disadvantaged population." A similar approach was reflected in the terminology used in the courts, planning commissions, and academic papers. "The defendants, most of whom are underprivileged, old and sick, welfare beneficiaries and new immigrants" (*State of Israel v. Boris Abramov & Co, 2009, p. 1*). The law students' summary work described "residents from disadvantaged sectors evacuated by the municipality from other urban areas and who had no other housing option." Additionally, "studies show that people of lower socioeconomic background are characterized by a low degree of control over their lives.... We also found the residents to be despaired and resigned to the existing situation" (*Ratner, Terem, & Haruvi, 2011, p. 17, 29*).

One planning student believed that the emphasis on "helping the weak" augmented the ability to "mobilize the students and the municipality in the neighborhood and devote the course to it." Critical discourse, however, reminds us how litigation reinforces the clients' sense of inferiority by expropriating their personal narratives and positioning them at the margins of the legal struggle (*Ziv, 2008*). The critical planning discourse has long recognized the way narratives can shape space and reproduce societal power relations (*Fenster, 2007*). Even in the field, outside the courts and planning institutions, we again risk expropriating the neighborhood's narrative.

The strengths perspective in social work (*Cohen, 2000*) proposes treating clients according to their own strengths rather than their pathologies and distresses. To do so, rhetoric often necessary to mobilize external support (in this case by the courts, municipality, and planning committees) must be kept separate from the internal rhetoric (i.e., the clinic). The students must also be encouraged to leave theory behind and face the actual community, rethink it in more relative terms, and discover its strengths. One planning student acknowledged that all he could say about the community was

couched in “slogans” and explained, “Any approach which would not involve personal relations on community and individual level would be patronizing.”

## **Interdisciplinary: The Relationship Between the Two Academic Units**

One of academia’s great advantages as an agent of change is in the availability of multiple disciplines to provide solutions for the community’s needs—in our case, planning and law. However, interdisciplinary integration, both in theory and in practice, is never easy, particularly when attempted in conjunction with training students in their chosen discipline. In order to elaborate on these issues, we offer a brief background on the parallel epistemological development of the disciplines of planning and law as agents of social change.

## **Critics on the Role of Modern Planning and Alternative Approaches**

The modern planning discipline emerged in the mid-19th century. Sandercock (1998) characterized the modernist planning paradigm in terms of rationalization of the decision-making process, with the planner’s authority derived from his or her knowledge and expertise. In recent decades, critical approaches have grown out of the crisis of modernity, which highlights the role of planning as an agent of social change. The first alternative was Davidoff’s (1965) advocacy model, which suggested recognizing the community’s right to take part in the planning process. This was followed by Aronstein’s (1969) participatory model, which suggested preliminary participation tools. In the 1980s, the planning literature referred to the idea of participation as a practical measure for enhancing plans’ feasibility and sustainability potential (Churchman & Alterman, 1997; Paul, 1986), as well as their sociopolitical potential, by balancing the influence of strong interest groups and real-locating power among stakeholders (Arnstein, 1969). However, as argued by Fainstein (2000), resource gaps are liable to exclude from the participatory process those who have been excluded in the first place. In a similar vein, Bailey (2010) claimed that participatory space is also shaped by the power relations around it and can be co-opted.

The 1970s and 1980s saw the continued development of approaches emphasizing the subjective dimension of space as a reflection of social power relations among individuals and com-

munities, and between them and the planning establishment, as well as the nature of planning as a hegemonic tool that constructed and reproduced societal power relations (*Yiftachel, 2006*). Grounded in this subjective conception of space, planning began to deal with the way memory, identity, and daily practices (uses of space) shape feelings like comfort, belonging, and commitment (*Fenster, 2007*), emphasizing the importance of local intuitive knowledge in informing alternative planning models. These models, including the participatory, transactive, or radical economic-political models, view planning as not merely a technical tool, but rather as laden with political and socioeconomic significance (*Fenster, 2009; Sandercock, 1998*).

In recent years, alternative community-based models have become more central in planning discourse. However, in the transition to planning practice, they must overcome barriers such as the time and resources required by community processes and the complex ethical issues involved (*Fainstein, 2000*). For example, although the term *empowerment* has become part of the government vocabulary, it is used interchangeably with *public participation*, even though participation in itself does not necessarily imply empowerment, and its transformative potential can easily be co-opted by local power relations (*Bailey, 2010*).

Israeli research reflects these trends. *Alfas and Portugali (2009)* argued that even today, the planning establishment assumes that planning is a professional-technical area where decision-making should be left to the experts. *Fenster (2009)* further noted that even when participation is explicitly referred to in formal planning procedures, the various types of knowledge involved are not equally powerful. Even alternatives proposed by civil society organizations are guided by the same modernist approach, which views planning as a government service rather than a mechanism for social change.

Inspired by *Laclau and Mouffe's (1985/2004)* radical model, positing that new discourse is possible only when the community recognizes subordinated relations as repressive and antagonism, should be considered as a legitimate alternative, *Fenster (2009)* suggested planning as a means for strategic rather than practical change. When the planning process enables such an approach, planning may facilitate social processes informed by greater awareness of power relations. If this happens, the planning process can become a democratic struggle for designing space—a daily political struggle emphasizing the power dimension in social and spatial relations.

## **Social Lawyering as Community Organizing and Empowerment**

Following the rise of the civil rights discourse in the 1950s, the legal discipline has become a key element in social struggles. The accompanying changes in legal discourse ran parallel to those discussed in the field of planning. At that time, legal discourse began exploring how the very act of litigation reinforced clients' sense of inferiority by expropriating their personal narratives, excluding them from the processes of problem definition and strategy selection, and generally marginalizing them. This realization led to a more critical view of legal processes as means of social change (Lobel, 2008) and for several decades now, critical theorists have been suggesting avenues of "radical" litigation (Aharoni & Feit, 2008; Ziv, 2008).

In the past 20 years, social change litigation has become more common in Israel, mainly among civil society organizations (Ziv, 2008). Critics of this trend argue that it repackages injustices in professional jargon, denying subaltern groups their most powerful means of resistance: the power to (illegally) challenge the existing order (Lobel, 2008; Svirski, 2009; Ziv, 2008). All alternatives suggested focusing on reconceptualizing the role of the professional, the clients, and their partnership. One alternative practice suggested in the 1990s, law and organization, placed lawyers in the role of community organizers, encouraging them to act with the community in search of local, nonlegal solutions (Ziv, 2008).

Eisenstadt and Mundlak (2008) argued that empowerment has become an umbrella term that needs to be defined as a process enabling a group to define itself and act so that its preferences are internalized by society. This kind of empowerment does not refer to the content of change but rather to how others can be engaged in promoting it. Like others, they warned that the paternalistic overtones of empowerment often make it another means for social control (see also Boehm & Staples, 2002; Friedman, 1992; Gore, 2003; Rubin & Rubin, 2001; Sadan, 1996).

## **Planning and Law in Practice: The Yaffo Gimel Project**

The clinical involvement in the Yaffo Gimel project was informed by the belief that radical approaches should be a major part of the academic training of future planners and lawyers, and that this training must include not only theoretical background but also immediate encounters with real-life people and situations.

The first major concern that the planning students encountered during the project's first year was the ambiguity of their role as opposed to the clarity of the legal profession's role.

The general public is [more] familiar with the legal language.... When it came to planning and social questions, things were not as clear—the information we sought to collect was not as concrete, direct and quantifiable as the legal information, and could therefore be misconceived as less essential. (Students of Planning summary work).

Planning students found the legal students' approach task-oriented rather than people-oriented but also found their own professional background too narrow to abandon, particularly in relation to the law students: "We go there as if we are planning students and they are law students. So I explain what I have been explained, but have I truly learned something about planning?"

In the course of their work, some students thought that the approach of "giving up the expert role" adopted by the clinic had made the students miss opportunities to learn from some concrete professional planning issues encountered in this project. However, as the interdisciplinary work became more cohesive, the students came to recognize its value, as shared by a law student:

At first I had this idea...that we were here to provide a solution for a legal problem.... With time... I began to feel that geography [students] placed much greater emphasis on the need to listen to the residents and empower them.

The legal in-field supervisor described the gap that existed in practice more than in theory:

If you read the theoretical writings on these things you see that issues are pretty similar, but...you [the planners] came with this idea of working with people... which made me reflect the entire time...whether this was the plan I wanted, or the plan the residents wanted.

The clinic's interdisciplinary approach thus contributed mainly to the exposure to multiple perspectives; a chance for critical reflection; and ultimately to a complementary, balanced relationship between the disciplines. As described by the legal in-field super-

visor, “In the academic world there’s this clear separation between disciplines....You have to understand that your discipline...may not be the most important...and that other things should also be considered. This is not something our students study on campus.” As suggested by Svirski (2009), the clinic’s multidisciplinary work may reduce the centrality of the professional and her tools so that she acknowledges her place among a range of social change agents. Thus, multidisciplinary clinical work contributes to the education of students as future professionals attentive to nonprofessional agendas and partners.

To conclude, even when seen as beneficial, interdisciplinary work was experienced as challenging by both students and supervisors, even to the point of taking up resources that could have been devoted to other ends. Moreover, it is possible that for students still struggling to establish their professional identity and status, this experience might have been too demanding.

### **The Links Between Theory, Practice, and Critical Awareness**

This section discusses the links between theoretical studies in classes and community activism in the field and its meanings for the students’ learning process as change agents. Kahne and Westheimer (2001) argued that in order to maximize the transformative potential of the academic experience, action must be combined with ongoing discussion of student experience and a critical study of the specific social issues involved. How well did the clinical framework meet this challenge?

“They sent us to the field to explain all the latest innovations to them...it was out of touch with reality,” said one planning student. Another was disappointed by the gap between models studied in the theoretical teaching part of the course and real life: “The entire issue of bottom-up planning was not realized in our field work.” He recommended that in the future, “it would perhaps be better to be involved in less urgent projects.” On the other hand, he was not at all sure whether theoretical models could be applied and suggested a little less “forcing theory on reality.”

Many students also pointed to the lack of background and tools for community empowerment, and they suggested that collaboration with a social work clinic and additional background in this area or involving the local worker in their fieldwork could have helped. The academic supervisors explained that the lessons were not designed to provide practical fieldwork tools but rather to

educate the students in a “social worldview” and understanding of structural social problems. Did this worldview indeed contribute to the students’ critical perspective on the specific social issues involved?

Although students in the clinic proved capable of formulating an eloquent critical stance toward the authorities in the defense statement submitted to court, in the interviews they seemed much less clear on questions of justice and legal versus moral or social responsibility. One planning student said, “You’re asking me now [who is responsible], and I say Halamish [the building and housing company], but we didn’t discuss the responsibility it has shirked, and who’s responsible for that.” In response to the same question, a legal student said, “It seems a very, very interesting question to me...I haven’t thought it through. But I think we did discuss it quite a bit...if only indirectly and in the background.”

According to the planning academic supervisor, “I don’t know whether it was discussed very deeply...although in the theoretical studies we did talk about...these concepts.” The legal academic supervisor also felt that although the lessons emphasized abstract concepts, not every lesson devoted time to discussing their practical application in Yaffo Gimel, and it seemed that the students did not have enough opportunities to formulate a critical approach in that specific context.

The legal in-field supervisor, who had been active in the neighborhood for several years, referred to early attempts to organize protests in the neighborhood or litigate in an attempt to demand that the government acknowledge its responsibility:

I remember that right at the beginning of the year [a planning student] suddenly asked [why we didn’t do it], and I answered heatedly that...we had already tried everything.... And this was a mistake on my part, because from his point of view he was here, starting everything from the top. And sometimes, even when you do feel that you have tried everything, why not rethink on what had failed three years ago?

## **Campus, Community, and... Capital?**

One of the key issues the clinic has dealt with, both in theory and in practice, over the last 2 years of activity is the option of joining forces with the private sector. The clinic arrived at that point after years of trying other solutions and struggles that failed

to produce results for the residents. How does theory meet practice around this issue, from the point of view of the clinic's students and supervisors?

In the papers submitted by law students, one student wrote: "The clinic, which in a certain sense abandons the public struggle for the right to housing, act as a social entrepreneur leading to social change through market forces, and in the process harnesses these forces to desirable social norms." This approach is akin to the community economic development (CED) model (*Aharoni & Feit, 2008*). However, CED involves emphasizing economic empowerment of the community and economic growth from within the community—an element missing in this project. Similarly, it was missing in the first attempt to apply the model in Israel through the Neighborhood Upgrading Program initiated in the late 1970s, and this is why Carmon (*1997*) believed that it failed. Critics continue to warn against the repercussions of market partnerships on the local community (*Moor, 2009*) and point to the limited potential of CED as an agent of societal change (*Cummings, 2001; McFarlane, 1999*). Was the clinic aware of these caveats?

In their interviews, the academic supervisors talk about the prices not discussed by the students. The planning academic supervisor said, "It is like...surrendering or accepting capitalism in its entirety... But I'm not sure that if everyone had started struggling it would have been resolved." With the advantage of historic perspective not shared by the students, she continued: "We have been acting in a neoliberal climate in this country for many years now, so that suggesting an alternative here seems a bit unreal... I'm not sure things can be changed by this kind of social struggle." In a similar vein, the legal academic supervisor said, "We are constantly trying to ventilate this tension... understand that we have now entered the neoliberal capitalist discourse, in a softened form." Indeed, by the 3rd year, a planning student referred to the tension between principles and practical solutions: "It wasn't so relevant that year, not part of the discourse... Because we joined in after the renovation, and were not so involved in what had gone on before."

How, then, should the clinic raise the residents' critical awareness, a recurrent theme in the literature as the first stage on the way to empowerment (e.g., *Sadan, 1996*)? In the legal discourse, it is argued that one of the socially-oriented lawyer's roles is to direct the marginalized community to identify oppression (*Ziv, 2008*). Discourse in the field of planning has suggested fostering antagonism as a legitimate alternative to the hegemonic discourse (*Fenster, 2009*). It has also recognized that joining forces with the private

sector is liable to repress critical awareness as “unfriendly” to investors (Aharoni & Feit, 2008). As the legal academic supervisor phrased it, “It wasn’t difficult to persuade the Yaffo Gimel residents to make that switch... from expecting the government to solve the problem to turning to the private contractor... It was hardly an issue.”

In sum, the supervisors sought to educate the students on their social worldview, whereas the students expected to acquire practical fieldwork tools. Students were left with a sense of injustice regarding the situation on the ground, but this reaction failed to coalesce into a critical stance even though the students had found real-life opportunities to which they could apply the critical concepts discussed in their studies. Students’ own lack of well-formed critical awareness prevented them from leading the residents to develop such awareness. Moreover, the new students joining the clinic each year were not as aware of past dilemmas or the cost of past decisions as their more experienced supervisors were.

## Discussion and Recommendations

This work contributes to the understanding of academic involvement with residents as a way of promoting urban regeneration projects by critically analyzing three aspects: (a) relationships between the students and the community, (b) interdisciplinary relationships between two academic entities (planning and law) and their implications for the project, and (c) links between theory (campus studies) and practice (fieldwork). The project analyzed in this article took place in Yaffo Gimel, a neighborhood whose story is representative of the Judaization of “mixed” cities in Israel using public housing and subsequent privatization. Its residents had experienced the first wave of urban regeneration (massive evacuation and construction), missed the second one of the Neighborhood Upgrading Program, and are now facing the third: market-based urban regeneration. Will the market solve their environmental deterioration problem, or will it exacerbate their lack of control over their environment? In this project, the clinic in effect acted as a third-sector organization, an agent seeking to change power relations between the actors. Inspired by alternative legal and planning models, the clinic sought to realize the market-based strategy and community-oriented approach simultaneously. How do we measure the success of this endeavor?

The project enabled the repair of structural problems that made the building unsafe, resulting in termination of the criminal proceedings against the flat owners. Moreover, should the expanded

TAMA 38 plan be implemented, this would improve the residents' quality of life by providing renovated buildings, expanded flats, and the addition of an elevator. However, the project also carries the potential for reducing quality of life by making the neighborhood more crowded. In the long term, it carries the risk of making these buildings unaffordable for the existing lower class residents (due to the expected increase in costs of rent for renters and maintenance for landlords), a well-known challenge in urban regeneration. These and other potential impacts on the residents were taken into consideration by the clinic, and some suggestions were made in the plan's Social Sustainability Appendix; however, time constraints prevented their implementation. The power to address and resolve the major problems was in the hands of the municipality and the state rather than the clinic.

In this particular project, two main factors restricted further empowerment of the residents. The first restriction was the urgency of the circumstances, as threats (legal and physical) to the community were too pressing to permit a process-oriented approach. In a study by Katz et al. (2007), many participants in academic service-learning courses reported a similar tendency to focus on solving immediate problems. The second restriction, which lies at the heart of this article, reflected the nature of the academy when it acts as an agent of change. Fenster's (2009) distinction between practical and strategic changes in planning may be useful at this point. In practical terms, the project had already brought significant relief to the residents, and it may be expected to bring about further major improvements in their physical environment and quality of life. The residents will continue to benefit from these improvements as long as they can afford them. Strategically, the clinic succeeded in balancing the power relations with the entrepreneur and his architects in the negotiations so that the community and its needs were at the heart of the planning process. However, the authority, initiative, and control, although on the side of the residents, were in the hands of the clinic, with members acting as representatives of the community. These forms of empowerment had not been further handed to the community, so this process of shifting power to the community remained limited. The students and the academic and in-field supervisors were well aware of this result being limited in light of the bottom-up planning theories learned in class.

Beyond their benefits to the community and apart from obstacles due to the project's urgency, clinics have some inherent limitations. A significant part of the clinics' resources are invested in teaching and learning, which may occur at the expense of invest-

ment in the community. As Golan-Agnon et al. (2005) expressed, the educational cause has the highest priority for members of academia. Given this context, we tried to analyze students' potentials and limitations as agents of change, addressing the discussed limitations, as follows.

## **Recommendations for Student Learning Outcomes**

First, we have found that the encounters with the residents enabled students to alter the image of “disadvantaged communities” they had previously held. Nevertheless, a significant relationship did not develop beyond that due to restricted opportunities for interaction, a challenge that Golan-Agnon et al. (2005) found to be common in similar courses. The students' perception of the residents as “people in need” did not change, and they continued to view themselves as the “supporters” of “dependent” community members. This relates to Kahne and Westheimer's (2001) conception of charity, a service-learning experience based on altruism and a sense of otherness, as opposed to the experience of acting jointly for change. To address this, we suggest fostering the strengths perspective from social work discourse (Cohen, 2000), focusing on the possibilities and capacities of the community rather than its problems and poverties. At the discourse level, we recommend separating the “disadvantaged community” rhetoric often required to recruit the support of external actors (in this case, the court and planning committees) from the rhetoric used within the clinic. Students should be encouraged to leave theory (e.g., of disadvantaged communities and power relations) behind and face the actual community to find that it is composed of people and relationships not so different from their own. At the level of practice, based on our student interviewees' insights and suggestions, we recommend setting the development of personal relationships as an objective in its own right, committing students to this in advance, and creating a consistent setting for interaction that is not strictly task-oriented.

## **Recommendations for Transdisciplinary Collaborations**

As for the second key issue, we found that the two components of the interdisciplinary clinic have different orientations. Although the lawyers' task-oriented approach risks disempowering the community, the planners' process-oriented approach alone could come at the expense of practical results, which are also essential to

empowerment. The constructive complementarity of the partnership benefitted the community greatly. We found that this more comprehensive collaborative framework contributed to mutual understanding among the students of the two disciplines and to the development of their critical, self-conscious professional identities. Finally, we found that interdisciplinary action can also promote the adoption of an approach currently neglected in the two disciplines, one that views the planner and lawyer as less central among other change agents as opposed to the exclusive bearers of knowledge, as Svirski (2009) suggested. That shift in the practitioner's perception has the potential to alter their relationship with clients, resulting in greater empowerment for clients.

### **Recommendations for Theory–Practice Links**

The linkage between theory and practice appeared to be central to the development of critical awareness among the students. Although the academic supervisors emphasized a social worldview in the theoretical part of the course, the students expected to acquire practical tools for working with the community and were sometimes disappointed by the gap between theoretical bottom-up models and the project's real-life top-down compromises. They did not have the opportunity to work through their worldview to arrive at a coherent critical awareness regarding the specific situation in which they were involved. To address this issue, we recommend dedicating time for discussion apart from theoretical teachings, as Golan-Agnon et al. (2005) suggested. This can be used not only to create an immediate link between broader social theories and the students' specific questions, but also to inform or involve the students in the faculty's perspectives, dilemmas, and real-time decision-making. The students also suggested that in order to experience real, in-depth bottom-up planning, the clinic should not get involved in urgent cases which do not allow time for such processes. At the same time, they were not sure whether the desired theoretical models could be optimally applied on the ground and suggested not "forcing" theory (process and expected results) on a reality for which it was inadequate.

### **Conclusion**

The impact of the project on the community must be evaluated in the general context of urban regeneration. The Yaffo Gimel project has the potential to achieve broad social impact by acting as a successful model for realizing the construction rights incorpo-

rated in urban regeneration plans through an economically sound entrepreneurial initiative coupled with community-centered planning work. In the words of the planning academic supervisor, this was a “groundbreaking project, also from the point of view of the planning institutions.” Moreover, the very act of submitting a social sustainability appendix to the plan directs the authorities’ attention to social considerations in planning, which may lead to the establishment of new formal criteria in future plans. Although written on the community’s behalf rather than with it and although it has no formal power to minimize the potential negative effects that it identifies, its existence reinforces the critical discourse on the privatization of urban planning, which can lead to negotiations between actors who are unequal in terms of knowledge and resources (see *Carmon, 1997; Eres & Carmon, 1996; Moor, 2009; Rotbard, 2005*). In the specific case described here, the clinic supported the residents, but its efforts could not replace state support in all cases. By themselves, even the most knowledgeable and well-connected clinics cannot generate mechanisms that will ensure affordable housing over the long term in this or in other urban regeneration projects. Increased public involvement is therefore essential to monitor urban regeneration processes and ensure socially oriented regulatory mechanisms.

For the students, our focus in this article, the significance of their experience in the clinic (whether they will work with private sector entrepreneurs, in planning or legal institutions, or with communities) lay in the exposure to the social complexities of the project and to the in-field encounter with communities. As for the academician, when one becomes an active actor while still maintaining the position of observer, there is the risk of losing one’s own critical awareness. Our position in this research was participatory, and we have come to the conclusion that the greatest benefit of this position lies in the opportunity to retrospectively examine the dilemmas encountered throughout the project and to formulate a critical perspective regarding our own activism. This process of self-reflection is crucial for students, supervisors, and researchers. The students, with their critical thoughts, participation in class discussions, and writing of papers as part of their academic tasks in the course, are a valuable human resource, an advantage of the academy over civil society organizations. We suggest capitalizing on this resource to carry out internal evaluations and actively encouraging students to critically reflect on their involvement. To this end, it is recommended that the students’ evaluation of the project include the voice of its target group: the community.

As we described, the academy has advantages and limitations when acting as an agent of change through community–academy partnership courses. We argued that dealing with the three main challenges discussed here is crucial for the fulfillment of the two objectives in such courses: the pedagogic (for the students) and the social (for the community). We conclude with three practical recommendations: (a) encourage a more intimate relationship between students and community members, (b) enhance constructive collaborations between disciplines, and (c) deepen the immediate link between academic material discussed in class and the students' activities in the field.

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