Chapter 4
Community Planning

Community planning is a practice that is engaged in by numerous disciplines: community work, urban planning, macro social work, architecture, urban geography, community psychology, environmental psychology, community psychiatry. A study of the practice of community planning in the various disciplines leads to the conclusion that despite their similar means, and the fact that they are influenced by the same social processes, almost no dialogue exists among the various professions engaged in community planning. The diversified activity, rather than contributing to an enrichment of this occupation, has led to a dispersal of the knowledge, has made it difficult to create a significant mass, and has interfered with efficient learning of lessons from experience.

In the domain of urban planning, since the early eighties it has been rare to find explicit reference to community planning, except where the issue is to shake free of it (Hague, 1982). In the United States in the sixties, community planning represented a reform in planning methods, but the political and professional expectations this aroused were frustrated. The planning was supposed to consider local needs and to involve the public, but large projects of urban renewal and war against poverty, which used community planning methods, failed. Furthermore, politicians did not achieve social quiet and a more efficient problem solving process by means of community planning (Needleman & Needleman, 1974). The Republican administration, from the time of Reagan on, curtailed public resources and dealt a fatal blow to the social legitimation of investing in the weak (Boyte et al., 1986, Phillips, 1990). However, despite the absence of community planning from the mainstream of planning in the United States in recent years, the documentation of the practice of planning indicates that during all these years there has

been significant – if also modest in resources and extent – community planning activity (Rubin & Rubin, 1992; Feldman & Stall, 1994).

In Israel the situation is different, mainly because the largest community planning project ever conducted – the Urban Renewal Project for the rehabilitation of poor neighborhoods – has had much more impressive results than in the United States. In Israel, however, community planning is almost never related to as a defined field of practice, and was never thought of this way in the past either. Traditionally, community workers and city planners who have participated together in this project define themselves as being engaged in community planning.

My choice of community planning as a context for empowerment processes stems, as I have said, from a desire not to impose disciplinary boundaries upon thought on empowerment. The interdisciplinary approach is more suitable for coping with the diversified knowledge and many conflicting wants which constitute the stormy reality that characterizes community intervention. I have chosen community empowerment as a context for two more reasons: firstly, because the principles of empowerment practice recommend *small* planning (Shumacher, 1973), as close as possible to the people who are living in the planned space and are influenced by the outcomes of the planning, and secondly, because of my personal preference to stay close to community work.

Community planning is a suitable context for a theoretical development of the concept of empowerment, because it is an interdisciplinary professional practice that declares its intent to work *small*, to create a community, and its interest in solving community problems. In principle, though, it is possible to analyze empowerment processes in completely different professional contexts as well.

However, the context is not only a framework. One of its properties is that it can become an important part of the

phenomenon itself. The ecological approach presumes that it is impossible to investigate a social situation in isolation from the texture in which it occurs (Altman & Rogoff, 1987). The context includes the environmental conditions which are the cause of the characteristic situations that define the phenomenon. A change in these conditions influences the entire social situation as well as private lives (Stokols, 1987; Saegert, 1987). Community planning, then, is an inseparable part of the social situations in which it intervenes. It is almost certain that a choice of a different practice would have led to a different discussion of empowerment and its meaning.

Community Planning in Community Work

In community work, planning is often discussed under several names: community planning, social planning, and neighborhood planning. In the literature these sometimes appear as synonyms (Lauffer, 1979), but it is also common to differentiate among them: community planning is planning in and with the community; social planning deals with more institutional change—allocation of resources and setting up services for the solution of general social problems (Rothman & Zald, 1985); neighborhood planning is an attempt to escape the vagueness of *community* to a concrete *neighborhood* (Checkoway, 1984; Rohe & Gates, 1985).

The plurality of names attests to dispersion and confusion. Attempts to define a special planning for community work have created divisions between planning and three other kinds of requisite skills—of participation, organization, and action. Planning received a technical meaning of information collecting, program planning, and evaluation (Rothman, 1979). Despite the importance of planning, some writers stress that it is not as *natural* for community workers as their other tasks, and that there exists a tension between community development and community organization, on the one hand, and community planning on the other hand (Morris, 1979). Community planning is considered to be less sensitive

to process than other fields of practice in community work (Tropman, 1984a). While the processes of community development and community organization demand that community workers possess skills in interpersonal communication and creation of dialogue, planning is perceived as an essentially intellectual skill (Gilbert & Specht, 1979). As a consequence, many community workers traditionally avoid engaging in community planning, mainly on grounds of alienation and lack of technical skill—sentiments which originate in the central texts of the profession. This is a mistake that neglects a whole spectrum of solutions and means which it indeed leaves in the hands of professional planners, most of whom (though not all) are not trained or interested in contending with social problems.

Community Planning in the Theories of Planning

In the domain of planning, community planning was a disputed issue even at the peak of its flourishing. Needleman & Needleman (1974) chose to call their book on community planning Guerrillas in the Bureaucracy, and defined it as the source of problematic relations with the employing organizations, as possessing disputed methods of action, and as impossible to implement because of its abrasive intensity and its tendency to arouse conflicts.

A prevalent approach in planning is to present community planning at times as a method in the framework of rational overall planning, and at times as a separate approach to planning. Theoretically, it is a type of comprehensive rational planning (Friedmann, 1987), but practically, the claim is that it opposes rational planning models. Some writers interpret this as an advantage, and others see this as a flaw (Burke, 1979; Mayer, 1986; Hague, 1982). The argument, in theories of planning, between those who negate community planning and those who affirm it, centers around its effectiveness as a means of achieving support for the planning and for quiescence in the planned environment. The writers in favor of

community planning refer to the good influence of residents' participation in the planning, and to the atmosphere of the planning and its effectiveness in the solution of problems in the field. Those who oppose it claim that the chaotic reality and the paucity of achievements overwhelm these advantages. This argument implicitly contains the explanation for the disappointment in community planning evident in the theories of planning. If the main issue is the success of the planning, then only achievement of support for the planning and for quiescence in the relevant environment can justify the planner's work in cooperation with the community. From this approach derive procedures and rituals of participation aimed not at bringing about social change and creating a community, but at achieving social agreement and consent. In this way community planning becomes a manipulation, a double message and a game within a game (Hasson, 1988; Atzmon, 1988). Apart from several exceptionally sensitive planners (Davidoff, 1973; Friedmann, 1973, 1987; Krumholz & Forester, 1990), this is generally the approach to community planning in theories of planning.

Community Planning Orientations in Urban Planning

While community planning, under this name, has been pushed to the margins of planning theories, something which may be called a *community planning* orientation has been emerging in urban planning. A number of writers emphasize that urban planning needs to be more political, more social, and more community-oriented. Politics, social problems, and interpersonal skills need to become more central in planning practice (Benveniste, 1972; Baum, 1980, 1986).

Phillips (1990) predicted that the nineties heralded a new political period in the United States. In his view, after years of *benevolent neglect* (p. 219) that had led to impoverishment of the middle class, homeless families, and people with mental disabilities. After the excessive individualism, the glorification of Mammon, and the disregard of community, a desire for

a new social and political approach that will divide wealth and power differently has emerged. Signs of this may also be found in the planning literature (e.g., Marris, 1987; Krumholz & Forester, 1990), where a trend to change urban planning itself are discernible. The planning process is described less as a technical, economic, and design activity, and more as political, social, and personal intervention. The direction is to see the planner's role as one of creating relationships and mutual understanding, dissolving uncertainty, and assisting self-empowerment.

Urban planning is not only a technique, but also a world-view with distinctive social goals of achieving better quality of life for the city's residents. Hence, planning is always a social political activity, and as such it always entails a tension between the mechanical, the efficient, and the standard, on the one hand, and the cultural, the social, and the historical, on the other. The question is not whether planning should or should not be rational, for there exists no single *rationality*, but many kinds of rationality, and these find expression in political world-views. It is important to understand that according to one – the conservative – world-view, social phenomena such as crime, unstable families, and unorganized communities are the cause of poverty, while according to another – the progressive – world-view, they are the outcome of poverty. The implications for planning are critical: in the conservative approach means and technologies are allocated in order to supervise the internal order in poor communities. For example, conservative researchers prefer to focus on the poor people's motivation to work, instead of acknowledging the humiliation involved in degrading work and miserable wages (Galbraith, 1992), and the existence of deep unemployment where the poor live. According to the progressive approach it is necessary to relate to the causes of poverty, and to seek more environmental, more equitable, and less individual solutions

Since ideologies influence the strategies of intervention in social issues, it is important to understand what sort of

rationality a particular theory of planning employs. One conclusion is that even adoption of the most rational approach cannot prevent the planner from relating to a social problem from a bias in one direction or another, or from accepting the unexamined axioms of others, and from planning unsuitable solutions on the basis of these. Logic always has a clearly political context. Since poverty is a political issue, the questions that have to be asked about it, as about any political issue, are: Who are the people who are included in the division of resources, and who remains outside? Who receives what, and what does this do to the people? Poverty is not an unfortunate accident which has befallen some individuals entangled in the mechanism of social mobility. On the contrary, poverty is an inevitable outcome of a political set of priorities and of economic activity. Hence, both the allocation of resources and the methods of contending with poverty are political-economic issues.

Planning, then, is political activity, and the planner is only one of the participants in it (Katz, 1989; Mueller, 1990). The planners, and they only, are committed to the planning process and the production of a comprehensive plan. The rest of the participants see the planning activity as only one of the options for political activity. Hence they will make use of planning only if it helps them control situations of uncertainty better (Marris, 1987).

Planning is one component in a complex social system in which the dominant processes are the political processes. The practice of planning, when it is at its best, may make a contribution of its own to the process. For example, planning can help relatively weak groups that participate in the planning process to achieve goals of their own (Hajer, 1989). Planning can provide an alternative rationale which can illuminate processes of social change and social action in a more positive and hope-inspiring light (Marris, 1987).

Another orientation in planning thought shifts the focus of planning from thought about form and design to thought about practice and meta-practice. Even if the planner has to

possess analytical skills, interpersonal skills are an important part of her professional practice—she also has to be able to hug somebody, to work with people who are different from her, and not to be arrogant (Forester, 1989). The planner's ethics, honesty, reliability, and the clarity of her communication require a humane and participatory approach. Supreme importance is accorded to processes of communication, language, and creation of reliable and shared meaning. The planning style recommended is democratic, based on broad participation, and engages simultaneously in design and negotiation. It emphasizes the empowerment of the participants in the planning as one of the goals of the planning process.

An explicit communitarian orientation has also emerged from planning theories and gained an important ideological status of its own. This orientation aims at the creation of an active democratic community. Writers in this vein express a longing for a community, and speak of the isolation and the exclusion that Foucault expresses in his writings as one of the most destructive by-products of urban planning and of modern life in general (Handler, 1990; Etzioni, 1992; Etzioni, 1995).

A community has both a local and a national importance. It supports social networks and facilitates relations between individuals and groups, but it is also a significant unit of analysis and action in the domains of social policy and economic development. It is a large enough unit to become a political force, and small enough to relate to the individual and to be accountable to him. On the basis of the connections between people as individuals and as groups, and between them and systems of rule and administration, services are founded, and social and cultural life develops. The opportunities for more skillful participation in politics created in the community help people acquire organizational skills and political understanding, and consolidate a sense of common purpose in their lives. The actual meaning of the recovery of the political community (Friedmann, 1987) is severance

of the household from disempowering service systems, and concentration on community values, The positive aspects of the community are presented as decolonization—severance of the household from exaggerated consumption; democratization—creation of equality within the household itself; and collective self-empowerment produced by means of interaction among the households themselves. By means of these processes, and with the assistance of planners who understand them, people – at least according to Friedmann – can create an organized political community.

These approaches, when they support active and socially involved planning in the advancement of weak groups (like Friedmann's and unlike the communitarians' [Etzioni, 1995]), come very close to the original meaning of community planning. The introduction of community planning principles in this way has contributed to an improvement of urban planning at those points where it is too standardized, total, inclusive, supervisory, and based on scientific technical specialization.

Definitions of Community Planning

So far I have deliberately avoided defining community planning, both because a single agreed definition does not exist, and because it was important firstly to present the current situation in the planning theories, in the framework of which both local planning and the concept of community undergo a metamorphosis, the meaning and orientations of which must be understood first of all.

A dichotomous discussion is generally employed to contend with issues that do not have an agreed solution, and that entail a moral dilemma. This is also the case with the series of dichotomies to be discussed here. The questions are: Which is preferable, and why: planning from above, or planning from below? (Lauffer, 1979) Regional planning or neighborhood planning? (Checkoway, 1984) Professional intervention focused on services or professional intervention focused on

people? (Briscoe, 1976) Directed professional intervention or undirected professional intervention? (York, 1984) An expert planner, who is distant from his client, or a reflective planner who is socially and emotionally involved in his practice? (Schon, 1983)

Planning from Above or Planning from Below

Planners who see planning as stemming from below are more interested in advocacy for people who are deprived of their rights, and believe more in participation than in the achievement of pre-defined goals. On the other hand, planners who see planning as management from above emphasize the achievement of specific goals and prefer a central planning , which in their view is more objective. These two approaches represent two levels of planning: local planning initiatives and supra-local initiatives that come from outside the community. Despite the differences between them, both kinds of planning are task-oriented, efficient, and adhere to a planned schedule, and are likely to transmit the same impatience with the process that characterizes most kinds of planning (Lauffer, 1979).

Decentralized Neighborhood Planning and Centralized Sub-Regional *Planning*

According to Checkoway (1984), we may distinguish between two kinds of planning in the community that originate in two different planning schools: planning that originates in community work is oriented towards neighborhood planning, and planning which originates in urban planning is oriented towards sub-regional planning. Neighborhood planning is directed from below and sub-regional planning is directed from above. This presentation seeks to remain neutral on the question of decentralization-centralization, but some writers explicitly prefer decentralized planning to centralized planning (Handler, 1990). The planner's independent judgment

and autonomy in the course of his activity in the community are an essential component of a professional practice that is interested in developing a community. Organizational centralization and the planner's lack of authority frustrate his effectiveness in these domains.

Project-Focused Planning and People-Focused Planning

Community planning may be divided into planning that focuses on service and projects and planning that focuses on people. People-focused community planning activates people in the planning process to develop a project by themselves, and is compatible with decentralized neighborhood planning from below. Briscoe (1976) maintains that both kinds of practice – the service-focused and the people-focused – are necessary, and complement one another. They represent more of a duality than a polarity. The two extremes are likely to represent different situations, different conditions, and different organizational structures that dictate a different diversity of work methods. However, we must not ignore the fact that they may also represent an ethical dilemma, when the planner has to choose whether to plan a project that has been dictated by the service that employs him even if he knows that the people it is meant for are interested in a different solution.

Directive and Non-directive Professional Intervention

At one end of the scale we find directive intervention, where the initiative for the planning is in the hands of the planner, the planning system, and other professionals, from the beginning of the process until its conclusion; at the other end is non-directive intervention—here the planner serves as a counselor and a companion in a planning process in which people are enabled to decide, plan, and carry out the project by themselves (York, 1984, 1990).

The assumption is that the more people do for themselves, with the assistance of professionals, the greater will be their chances of achieving a solution to social problems that is more suitable to their needs and their life-style (Mullender & Ward, 1990). This is an important therapeutic principle, which is relevant to all the professional practices involved in human change.

The key question is to what extent this principle is applied in practice, for on the level of declarations its importance has been known for decades. In order to examine this we again ask the DARE questions: Who Determines the planning goals? Who Acts in order to achieve the planning goals? Who Receives benefits from the planning activity? And who Evaluates the activity? The more the citizens and their organizations determine the goals, act to achieve them, enjoy the outcomes of the planning and evaluate to what extent the action was worthwhile, the more they direct themselves rather than being directed by others (Rubin & Rubin, 1992).

The Community as an Object or a Subject

The degree to which the professional intervention is directed has a further meaning. Directive community planning relates to the community as an object of the planning—a planned community. Non-directive community planning sees the community as a subject—the planning community (Freire, 1985). From the planner's viewpoint, the question of directiveness is a professional one, a question of style and perhaps also of ethics. From the community's viewpoint the important question is not professional or technical but rather a question of control: "How much do others control the processes occurring among us, and how much do we influence the making of decisions that affect our future, and the plans that determine our quality of life?" Thus, when you change your viewpoint, and shift from the professionals to the local people, the important questions change from professional questions into political questions (Marris, 1987).

The message that non-directive intervention conveys to people is one of transition from existing as an object to existing as a subject (Freire, 1985). As we will recall, people who are objects remain silent, and their interpretation of reality is not taken into account. People who are subjects are conscious of their situation; they participate actively in creating the reality, by means of their experiences in the world and their subjective interpretation of life in this world.

The *Expert* Planner and the *Reflective* Planner

Donald Schon (1983) conceptualized the difference between the two ends of this scale as stemming from different sources of satisfaction that professionals obtain from their practice and their connections with people. He differentiated between the *expert* and the *reflective* professional. The expert presents a total knowledge in planning and solutions despite his own uncertainty, while the reflective practitioner sees his uncertainty as a source of learning for himself and for others possessing relevant knowledge on the situation. While the expert keeps a professional distance and transmits warmth and sympathy in what he considers the requisite dosage, the reflective planner seeks an emotional and intellectual connection with people. The different styles influence people differently. The people who are in contact with the expert planner feel both the solace and the danger involved in the dependence and the unlimited trust that is required of them, while the people who are in contact with the reflective planner feel both the satisfaction and the anxiety resulting from the demand that they participate actively in a shared process of investigation.

The dichotomous discussion supports the conjecture that says that the planning style – be it service-focused or people-focused, directive or non-directive, centralized or decentralized – is an essential component for understanding empowering community planning, while the content of the planning is merely marginal from this perspective. In other words, even if

the substance of the planning is important for the solution of problems in the community, and is based on the community's needs, the planning style – the way the planning is carried out – will have a greater influence on the degree of empowerment that will be made possible through it. The substance of the planning alone, however important it may be to the community, does not ensure the suitable solution. The language that the professional uses, her attitude to people, and the amount of responsibility and authority that she delegates are principal variables in the question of professional empowerment, while the formal contents of the planning are only secondary. The project may engage in the renovation of residential buildings, or in the development of health services, in taking care of single-parent families or the mentally disabled; as positive and necessary as it may be, it still needs to be carried out through certain processes and in a certain style if it is to achieve empowerment.

A Definition of Community Planning

Community planning, then, is activity directed to effecting a social change that creates a community or reinforces an existing community. Community planning operates in a defined and limited environment and activates a process that emphasizes participation and mutual relations between the planner and the community, and among the people in it. There are various styles of community planning—it ranges on a scale between directive and non-directive planning; there is community planning which sees the community as a planned object, and that which sees the community as a planning subject; community planning may be based on centralized organization or it may be decentralized; community planning may give the planner defined authority to develop a certain solution in the community, or it may grant the planner autonomy to initiate a plan with the community.

However, only certain styles of community planning encourage empowerment. The positive connection between

the non-directive, decentralized, subjective, people-focused end of the scale of community planning and empowerment processes is almost self-evident; analogously, we may assume that the directive, centralized, objective end of the scale is disempowering. That is to say, community planning, like any professional practice, is not neutral towards empowerment. Community planners operate along a scale of empowerment-disempowerment, and it is impossible to engage in this domain without influencing (for better or for worse) the empowerment potential of the people and their community. In this chapter we have reinforced , in one more way, the claim that community empowerment cannot come about of itself—systematic strategies must be implemented in order to encourage it.