

Chapter 5 **Individual Empowerment Processes in the Context of Community Planning**

This chapter discusses the personal experiences of people in the course of community planning processes. In the interactive process that takes place among them and between them and the environment, they experience a transition to a situation of more control over their lives and environment, discover new insights and abilities, and contribute some of their knowledge, energy and talent to society.

The Importance of the Group in Individual Empowerment

When the individual empowerment process occurs in a man's or a woman's life, they begin to believe that they are capable of having better control over their lives; they understand their situation, and begin to act to improve their lives and their environment. All this and much more can be enabled in group frameworks. In a group people are accepted as equals; they express feelings and aspirations, learn about themselves and their environment, plan solutions, and act for their own good and for the good of the environment.

The social and political skills that are learned in the group are the ability to collaborate with others, to exercise interpersonal influence, to act politically, to fill a responsible role, to become committed to a cause, to make decisions and solve problems, to organize and perform complex organizational tasks, to develop a democratic leadership. Development of many skills reinforces people's belief in their ability and improves their self-confidence, and in this way the individual empowerment process is reinforced in the group, as well as receiving a meaning of doing for others

and changing the environment, which is what motivates the community empowerment process. The group is a mediating agency among the various levels of empowerment: it connects between the individual and the community empowerment processes, it connects among the individuals who participate in it and between them and the environment that is relevant to their lives. The attempts to conceptualize individual empowerment by means of various psychological criteria (see Chapter 2) have led me to the conclusion that the activity in a group, no less than the personality, determines whether the empowerment process will or will not take place in the person's life. A person whose circumstances and conditions have led her to participate in an empowerment-encouraging group has a better chance of becoming empowered than someone who has not participated in such a group. It may be claimed that the very fact of being willing to join a particular group is likely to be a function of a special kind of personality, as may the ability to persevere and to remain a part of the process. However, experience teaches that coincidence and fate also play a part in people's joining an empowering group, and in the way the opportunity for empowerment is created.

I was sitting on the balcony and I saw some people I knew walking with someone in the street. I asked "What's up?" and they called out "Come, come", so I left my paper, went downstairs and went with them (from a movie about community work).

Cooperation develops the personality. The individual who is a member of a group which helps to develop his political and social abilities becomes better equipped for action. A person's belief in his own ability to control his life and his environment becomes part of the active character that Carol Pateman calls *the democratic character* (1970). The same person who testified that he had joined a group by chance,

also testified about how much the activity in the group had influenced him:

I would not have been the person I am today if I hadn't gone through what I went through in the group.

Empowering community planning relates to all the people in the planning environment as candidates for empowerment in the organizational and group process that is developing in the locality. Some of the people will derive more from it than others. The conditions of empowerment depend on integration of environmental components with the individual's personality. However, group activity in the course of the planning is a necessary condition for empowerment. The next condition already depends on the individual himself: the greater the individual's investment in the group, the more successful is his empowerment process. That is to say, the criterion for the realization of individual empowerment is the level of the individual's activity in the group, and not the level of the assistance that the group provides him (Churchman, 1990a). Giving to others, responsibility for the task, and commitment to the group and the community, are important components in the individual empowerment process that occurs in a group (Maton & Rappaport, 1984).

Individual Empowerment and Concern for the Environment

A theory which integrates micro and macro levels in one explanation makes it possible to extend the perspective of time and space, and to integrate micro-psychological with macro-ecological processes. The global ecological problems facing humanity highlight the urgent need to create in people a sense of personal commitment and responsibility to concern themselves with a much broader environment than the one they are aware of. One of the claims made by ecologists is that people do not understand the connection between the solution

of problems in their immediate environment and potentially disastrous by-products in the broader environment. This implies that there is a global need to increase people's ability to care for an increasingly expanding environment.

I claim that processes of empowerment and disempowerment influence the way that people understand their environment and their degree of commitment to take responsibility for this environment. Disempowerment processes make people *feel small*, and imbue them with a sense of marginality and worthlessness to the point of alienation and indifference. People therefore feel that there is no connection between themselves and society, and they certainly have neither the will nor the ability to work for its well-being. Empowerment processes create the opposite affect—people feel that they can influence, they are willing to commit themselves and to take responsibility, and to play an active role in the world, because they know that their efforts are important and valuable.

The question that arises here is: What are the boundaries of a person's relevant environment? For what environment will a person be willing to take responsibility? The assumption that has guided me so far has been that the relevant environment of people at the beginning of their empowerment process is relatively narrow. The word *community*, and *community* planning, designate this narrow realm to the local and the familiar. But for the purpose of the present claim I want to burst through this assumption and to say that we, professionals, do not know enough about people's potential for concern, commitment, and responsibility, because we are more concerned with the limits of our own intervention than with the extent of the environment that is important to them. We consider the boundaries *objective*, while we gather data and information about people that of course also includes their *subjective* data. Disempowering planning does not consider *subjective* boundaries at all, precisely because they are subjective (Stokols, 1987).

Empowering planning avoids the use of the terms *objective* and *subjective* as distinguishing between *true* and *false*. The

empowering planner also relates to herself as a subjective person. She knows that the limits of planning intervention are in most cases determined by technical considerations, when the researcher decides that she possesses sufficient data to describe the situation in a credible and convincing way, or when the economic considerations dictate where and to what extent the intervention may be performed. The *balance* between the practitioner's interpretation and that of the local people does not represent a negotiation between equals who have arrived at an agreement on the limits of the environment that is relevant to both sides; rather, it is the practitioner's (or researcher's) own inner intellectual process, which is not necessarily more objective.

For these reasons, the empowering community planner knows that the limits of the environment that is relevant to the individual depend on what that individual perceives as influencing his life (Churchman & Ginsberg, 1984). This perception is dynamic and changing, and will change further as a result of the empowerment processes the person experiences. It may be said that a narrow perception of the environment attests not only to the limits of the environment that is perceived as relevant to life, but also to the person's social and personal situation. The more powerless people are, the narrower their world, and the more empowered they become, the more their world expands.

My claim is that for the sake of survival in the world, and not only for the sake of the quality of our lives as a society and a community, we must aspire to the empowerment of as many people and communities as possible, because the more empowered people are, the more capable they are of caring for a broader environment.

Bateson (1979) claims that mind and nature, which are our thinking about the environment and the real environment in which we think, are interwoven. We understand the environment as an extension of ourselves, and we act within it according to our perception of ourselves and of what we have chosen to do. In other words, we act in relation to the

environment by means of the definition that we have given this environment. That is to say, there is a close connection between how a person thinks about the environment and her ability to act within this environment. “By survival, I mean [...] in negative terms, [...] the avoidance of the death of the largest system about which we can care [...] We cannot care much about the inevitable survival of systems larger than our own ecology” (Bateson, 1979, pp. 243-244).

Individual Empowerment Broadens Awareness of the Environment

It may be assumed that empowerment of the individual broadens the environment she is aware of. Development of a critical self-consciousness broadens the individual’s sense of responsibility for the environment’s survival. The added knowledge, information and ability that the empowerment process provides also lead to responsibility for the survival of a much broader environment than before the empowerment process.

I feel that I walk more erect now and so the distance I can see to has grown and broadened (an activist on the founding of a service for children with developmental disabilities).

At first I knew only my street, I hardly knew what there was in the city. Today I know the entire city, including the industrial zone (an activist on the founding of a service for children with developmental disabilities).

At first only my own and my friends’ problems interested me, today I understand problems connected with the entire city, the difference between different parts of the city, and how important the school is for all the kids in the neighborhoods around here” (an activist on the struggle against a decision to close down a high school).

The empowerment process gives the local environmental knowledge a new context—an intellectual understanding of the social situation, which encourages a sense of greater control of the environment and an ability *to feel at home* in the world (Howard, 1993). The importance of the process is that it awakens a sense of responsibility towards what is included in the *home*. People have testified that they are aware of a more comprehensive and complex environment, and at the same time have a better understanding of their place in it and of its importance in their lives. They are therefore also willing to care for its survival.

Activists in neighborhoods I have worked in, and one of the boys in the struggle over the school as well, have told me that they feel wiser. Wisdom is the integration of environmental knowledge with a social understanding and an inner sense of ability. Heskin (1991) speaks about *organic intellectuals*, local leaders who have the ability to narrate and to theorize the empowerment experience for others. These people are important for the community empowerment processes because they give the community a reflection of the process it has gone through. Heskin believes that the presence of organic intellectuals in a community is a coincidence. I see the process of environmental broadening and individual empowerment as the source from which the organic intellectual grows. The understanding of the social world and the ability to explain it to others and to conduct the continuation of the empowerment process at a higher level is an outcome of integrated individual and community empowerment processes. The developing sense of responsibility for the environment and of feeling at home in the world, which leads people to take responsibility for an increasingly broader environment, leads some of the participants in the process to discover abilities of intellectual learning and leadership. The way from here to concern for the well-being of the world as a global ecological system depends on the circumstances that will shape the continued development of people as leaders of environments that are relevant to their lives.

Awareness of Environment Encourages Individual Empowerment

One could also formulate an assumption which says that awareness of a broader environment advances individual empowerment processes. That is to say, the environment is a means of encouraging empowerment. The creation of a spiral of mutual influence between individual empowerment and the environment is a professional task—it is possible to develop a learning style and a way of getting to know the environment that will enhance people's sense of control and their real ability to influence the environment. The knowledge itself empowers, but what is fundamentally empowering is the ability to absorb knowledge in an active and critical manner. Getting to know an environment which on the face of it is already familiar to us often means a deepening, and not only a broadening, of the knowledge of the environment. The most empowering materials are those that are taken from the immediate environment for the purpose of critical and analytical observation. People who have learned for the first time how to make a geographical map of their area have been astounded by the new knowledge that they have acquired about the place where they have lived all their lives. This is an active understanding of the individual's world, which signifies the beginnings of the empowerment process (Freire, 1970; Marcus, 1995).

The boys and girls who participated in the struggle for the survival of their high school got to know the political environment relevant to their struggle – the local authorities, the national institutions, and the legislative authority – in the very course of their struggle. They met with people on all administrative and political levels and learned to understand the roles of officials in the education system, members of the Israeli parliament's Education Committee and the teachers' trade union. No Civics class could have let them absorb this knowledge and arrive at an active and critical acquaintance

with it as much as the action they initiated and conducted did.

The parents who founded a service for their disabled children testified that in order for them to be able to survive they need to continue to develop connections with institutions and organizations in their city and in the relevant national institutions. The process of actively getting to know the environment nourished their empowerment, as well as the frustrations and the difficulties they grapple with. It is the organization that they set up, and not their children's problem, that has made them experts on the subject of their children's special problems. They testify that before the organization was set up they only knew about the problems through the individual child. Today they know much more about it through the shared knowledge that has accumulated in their community organization.

Every social entity (an individual, a community, or an organization) organizes its social environment in the same way that it organizes its internal actions (Morgan, 1986). This is yet another interpretation of the connection between the inner process and the environment, this time implying the real ability to care for the environment's survival by means of organizing. The ability to shape the environment according to the inner interpretation is evidence of considerable power, because other factors wanting to do the same are also active in the environment. Although it is customary to assume that a social environment is created through a mutual interpretation by the bodies participating in it, I claim that *mutual interpretation* is indeed such only when all the participants have an equal ability to contribute to it. When we acknowledge that there are individuals and groups in the society whose powerlessness prevents their participation in the mutual interpretation which creates their society, we must also acknowledge our social obligation to enable them to become more involved in the environment so that it will also include their interpretation, that is to say, that it will suit them as well. The *mutual* interpretation, then, has a rich

potential of conflict and of organizational outflanking which promises an advantage to the interpretations of participants possessing organizational and strategic advantages.

In the most general sense, then, we may say that the broadening of the environment in which the person is interested is an expression of her progress in the empowerment process. The limitation that defines the environment as the one *in which the person is interested* is necessary, on the assumption of the difference among people. People are different in their preferences of substance and value, and in the point of departure from which they start out on the empowerment process. Hence, the broadening of a person's attitude to the environment means a broadening of the attitude to the environment which is important to that person.

It seems appropriate to conclude this section with a personal interpretation by Clare Cooper Marcus, who integrates the psychological with the ecological in words that are both beautiful and powerful:

Part of a deep sadness we carry with us as a species is the barely conscious loss of a loving relationship with the world around us. While we may be quite aware of a lack of community in our lives, we are less conscious of how much we grieve at some deep level for that close connection with nature we once experienced in an earlier period of our history, or, perhaps, in our own personal childhoods (1995, p. 287).

Further Signs of Individual Empowerment

Signs of individual empowerment are proofs of the realization of the empowerment process in the context of community planning. These signs are based on overt criteria, testimonies about which may be obtained from people who have been participants in processes of individual empowerment. Individual empowerment processes that occur in the context of community planning are part of a shared experience, and

it is important that they meet the shared evaluation of all the participants in the process. I therefore quote people's stories about these process in their own words, so as to accord more authenticity to the processed knowledge.

I wish to discuss a number of further signs of individual empowerment that have been revealed at community planning processes. There is nothing final or exhaustive in this list: the individual empowerment process certainly becomes realized in many other ways. However, for planners to be able to understand their significance, and to encourage their occurrence, it is important to analyze several distinctive signs of the process. Apart from feelings of anger and dissonance, which are a distinctive sign of the beginnings of the path, and the critical consciousness which is one of the peaks of the individual empowerment process, we must not seek a fixed pattern or a developmental sequence which can *order* the signs. It is important only to acknowledge that in the individual empowerment process several sub-processes occur, some of them more personal and some more social. Some are common to all the participants, and others are idiosyncratic.

Feelings of Anger and Dissonance

Testimonies about dissonance between a person's inner feelings and the accepted social interpretation of his situation are commonplace among people who have experienced empowerment. The feelings of dissonance are a kind of emotional prelude that heralds the beginning of the process. They include: constructive internal dialogue that people report having conducted with themselves for years (Kieffer, 1983); a vague sense of dissonance which some writers call *navigating a line of fault* (Lengerman & Niebrugge-Brentley, 1988), and others call *lack of fit* (Germain, 1979) or *the problem that does not have a name* (Friedan, 1963). In some of the people these feelings crystallize into a more defined consciousness. Generally, the change occurs in the wake of an event that

makes perceptible the sense of injustice that the people had felt until then as a feeling of vague pain that has accompanied their lives.

In the struggle for the school, the students tell about how they felt when they heard about the decision to close the school, about how amazed they were that they had been able to develop ideas which they hadn't been aware they had. One of them recalled feelings which he had been conscious of but which had not been formulated or expressed aloud because they did not have a goal:

I told them, why should they suddenly close this school. Our neighborhoods deserve a high school like any other district in the city. On top of all the other problems here in the neighborhood, if there isn't a high school here that children can go to after primary school, what will be done with them? They'll end up in the street, in crime.

Anger is a sign of inner consciousness that begins crystallizing around a sense of dissonance. For some of the people, the anger appears in the wake of a feeling of dissonance and after prolonged inner soul-searching. Other people describe joining a group spontaneously, and tell about how in the course of their participation in it, anger awakened in them together with a new social awareness.

Mutual Help and a Sense of Self-Worth

Anyone who has experienced joining a group with the aim of receiving assistance and has discovered that she was also capable of offering help knows what people feel at the beginning of the path to empowerment (Rappaport, 1985). Likewise, anyone who has experienced joining a group for other reasons and in the course of participation has discovered the ability to fill a useful role, also comes out gaining personally. This lesson is the essence of self-help groups, but is also learned in other groups and organizations

in which participation accords the participant an opportunity to accept responsibility and to take part in a planned change effort. The mutual group experience is the essence of the attraction of task groups and social action groups of all kinds, because it operates against the sense of marginality and worthlessness that are the root of powerlessness.

People who participated in community planning processes testify to the sense of self-worth that accompanies the group effort:

I feel that I'm helping and am willing to help in any way, because the feeling is that something important is happening and that I'm a part of it (a girl student who participated in the struggle against the closing of the school).

I have a reason to get up in the morning. I'm useful to myself and to others, I don't have as much time for housework as I used to, but my day is devoted to an important cause (one of the women activists involved in creating a service for children with developmental disabilities).

Filling a Socially Valuable Role, and Leadership

Active participation in a group creates an opportunity to take part in an equitable process in which people experience different social relations and ways of decision making to those they were accustomed to until then. The kind of group and the nature of its tasks are less relevant to this change than the opportunity to act together and solve common problems, which are important political skills. The transition from helplessness to self-efficacy is a political one even when it is personal. Filling a socially valuable role constitutes an important means of emerging from the sense of marginality and lack of self-esteem, because it prepares a person for much more than an improvement in one's inner feelings. Participation in a supportive framework enables people to break the vicious circle of marginality and low self-image

by means of the confirmation and the sense of worth that stem from filling a responsible position and from helping others.

It is important to make clear what a socially valuable role is, and to distinguish between this and leadership. A socially valuable role is any role that is accompanied by authority and responsibility. Groups interested in empowerment need to ensure that rank-and-file members fill important roles in the group. If this is not done, the group the conventional concepts of power, patronage and social status and ceases to encourage the empowerment of its members. Heskin (1991) describes two different periods in the life of a community organization, one in which the organization's leadership was open and provided opportunities of participation and influence to all its members, and a period of a different leadership which closed itself in and played the role of a patron who functions as a middleperson between the organization's members and influential people outside it. In the second period, the organization became disempowering. He claims that this cycle is characteristic of community organizations—they create and lose community through the character of their leadership.

The group's leadership, then, is an outcome of individual empowerment and also has an important role in the encouragement of individual empowerment. An open leadership can delegate authority in the group and allocate additional socially valuable roles. The more open the group is, the more motivation grows among its members to take responsibility for group tasks, and the more roles there will be which members can take upon themselves.

One important leadership role is that of the *network center*. While the role of the *spokesman* leader is generally given to men, the role of the *network center* in the organization is generally filled by women. Centerwomen play a key role in network formation and consciousness shaping, in the establishment of social relationships and of the members' confidence in the leadership and the organization's aims (Sacks, 1988).

In several studies it has been observed that women created an organization, caused members to feel they were part of the common effort, did the routine work that the organization's existence depended upon, while the men represented the organization—were public speakers, representatives and confrontational negotiators (Sacks, 1988; Stoecker, 1989; Markusen, 1989). "Women are organizers and men are leaders" (Reinharz, 1984).

In the struggle for the school, students describe how, at a demonstration of the entire school outside City Hall, they were called inside to conduct negotiations. Since they feared that the demonstration would disperse because the students who remained outside would start leaving if they remained without their leadership, one of the girl leaders took it upon herself to remain with the students and to try to keep them there for several hours. She remembered this role as especially difficult and important, and was proud that she had filled it successfully. Is it a coincidence that the same gender division that is described in the literature on empowerment also appears here, at the school, between girls and boys?

Here are the words of another girl, who filled positions of maintenance and organization with great enthusiasm, because she felt that her help was appreciated and important for the effort:

I came home and said to my mother: Mother, they want to close our school, you have to come to the Parents' Committee. We need you. My mother's a busy woman, she manages a wedding parlor, but I persuaded her and she joined the committee.

I was willing to do whatever was needed. I'm not good at speaking or making speeches in front of people. I'm not such a good student. But I did a lot of things that needed doing, I brought benches, I collected money from students for transportation, everything that was needed. The main

thing is for us to succeed, and that they don't close the school.

The brief life-span of community groups teaches that positions of organization maintenance are critical for its survival. Then the entire leadership potential of the members is not exploited, groups cannot perform complex tasks that require perseverance, such as resource mobilization, for example. It is actually tasks like these that offer empowering activity and allocation of valuable roles to many of the group's members. Hence, it is also important for groups that engage in short-term tasks not to disintegrate after a single task. The success of the task itself, however important, is not more important than the benefits that the group can provide to its members if it continues to exist.

This is a different approach to leadership and to group organization than the one which differentiates between a formal and an informal leadership. We have here two kinds of organizational leadership that are essential to the building and the survival of the organization. The role of the network center is an intra-organizational role, and the role of the spokesperson is a more external, representative role.

Jane Baker Miller (1983) explains that beside the conception of power as the exercise of control over others, there exists a feminine definition of power which sees it as the ability to change, to move something from one point to another, a change which can be effected together with others and not at the expense of others. According to her view, the conception of power as producing a change together with others encourages empowerment, and the conception of personal power as taking control over others is disempowering.

Learning and Practicing Social Skills

Women who fill roles of network centers and men who fill roles of spokesmen use different social skills. It may be noticed how at the beginning of their participation in groups there

are members who have difficulties in speaking in front of an audience, in thinking on their feet, in formulating their thoughts and expressing them in public. The skill of public speaking is one of the especially impressive abilities that people testify to having acquired in an empowering group.

At the start I didn't say a word. I only sat and listened. All pantomime. After a lot of time I started speaking in the group, and now I have no problem, I participate like all the others (from the film *Encounters of the Community Kind* about a group of activists in Yehud).

The ability to speak in front of an audience is considered a quality of leadership. In the individual empowerment process that takes place in a community framework, all the participants acquire this ability, at first by watching others and afterwards by active practice of their own. In this way the group provides an opportunity to learn a skill to which society attributes a very high social value. According to Freire, powerless people are in effect voiceless, they lack the ability to express themselves and their world in a creative way and by choice. From this perspective, the value of speaking in public is important and demonstrates the personal as political—to learn to speak for yourself is to make your imprint on the environment and to see yourself as a leader.

Development of a Critical Consciousness

A critical consciousness is the ability to think and to criticize that comes together with the permission to express yourself. The transition from having no voice to speaking in front of an audience is both a physical and a mental change. Whereas isolation is paralysis and silence, social belonging connects with upright bearing and action. The person begins being busy, much more busy than she was in the past, and at the same time much more free. The development of consciousness has a connection with self-realization, which people expressed

in terms of a feeling that their lives were fuller than they had been previously, before their participation in the group.

In the individual empowerment process a person increasingly feels that he understands his life from a social perspective, that it is his right to give a name to this understanding. This is the process of self-definition that is contained in the development of consciousness (Van der Berg & Cooper, 1986). It is the change from a situation in which others are the possessors of the language and the definitions, while the person is an object that they explain and define as they see fit. In certain senses, the connection between powerlessness and illiteracy (Freire, 1970) is similar to that between power and knowledge (Foucault, 1980).

Development of consciousness, then, is a process of learning—of emergence from illiteracy. The critical consciousness which is created in the empowerment process is an interpretation of the person's situation and of the situation of the world he lives in. People feel that they think more and understand more than they did before they joined the community activity.

Empowerment, then, is a process of expressing criticism. A person evaluates the society he lives in and acts to change what he considers requires improvement. The principal tool for the achievement of consciousness is learning, through dialogue, how to think, how to express thoughts aloud, how to formulate them and to influence the world through them.

A boy recounts how he assembled all the students in the school hall and spoke to them about the decision to close the school and about the need to oppose it. He describes his amazement about himself in this situation. His first feeling was an instinctive opposition to the decision, which he and his schoolmates saw as an injustice. Afterwards, in talks they held to plan the continuation of the struggle, and while giving

explanations to the students, they continued developing their claim and crystallized their position:

I don't know a lot about integration, but if the school has to close because we don't have social integration, that means that integration has to happen when they bring students from stronger districts in the city to our school, and not the other way around.

That is to say, he and his friends started objecting to the reasons for closing the school that had been put forward by City Hall officials, and in this way they crystallized their social world-view, while developing a rationale for why their school should remain open.

Empowerment is a transition from a situation of passivity to a situation of activity and initiative. Critical consciousness develops side-by-side with learning and with the ability to speak. The ability to think, to understand, and to be critical develops together with the right that a person receives, or takes, to express herself.

Praxis

Praxis is a way of learning that integrates activity and thinking about activity. In this method, the critical conscious is integrated into the social activity, and is not separated from it. "From the perspective of planning, the separation from political practice is not permissible. [...] Critique unrelated to action is a respectable, bourgeois practice that is tolerated precisely because it is irrelevant (Friedmann, 1987, p. 268).

The empowerment process is a process of learning while doing, which is shared by all the learners, including the community planner, who in this context is simultaneously a teacher and a learner. The professionals are partners in the praxis process and also change in the course of it, but they should be warned not to expect that all the people in the group will undergo a change process and a raising of

consciousness of the kind that they do. Dialogue means mutuality and acceptance of diversity. On the other hand, they should not set the standard too low and be content with preaching consciousness raising. The feminists, for example had a tendency for years to be content with consciousness-raising groups. There were writers who said that empowerment means a better understanding by women of their powerlessness and of the systematic forces that oppress them, and that neither success nor failure in the struggle were the important aspect of empowerment (Bookman, 1988). Paulo Freire, too, admitted that he had thought this way for years, but changed his mind, since change processes cannot be realized only on the basis of consciousness raising, with no actual doing (1985).

In my experience, people have undergone a significant change in their lives when they have actually participated and been supported by others in their new participatory ability. Foucault's claim that disciplinary power influences people's body – physique – is corroborated here. In order to emerge from a physical sensation of lack of control to a situation of control, something real has to happen to a person, something that is not limited to mental processes alone. Action that is accompanied by knowledge is what nourishes the new consciousness and creates the commitment to go on with the process.

Community planning as a method does not sufficiently emphasize the role of the teacher. Despite the great amount of time that the planner devotes to education, there is no investment in his skills in this domain. Because the learning occurs through dialogue, and because there is no insistence on distance as there is between the traditional teacher and the student at school, and because the group of learners is also an action group, this kind of teaching requires special training (Friedmann, 1973).

Restoration of Respect

Individual empowerment is a process of restoring people's lost dignity. Two concepts of equality are accepted in a democracy: equality of respect and equality of rights. Some writers claim that the struggle for equal rights became more bitter when people despaired of achieving the right for respect (Heskin, 1991). Other writers point out that in the course of their struggle, powerless and dependent groups emphasize gaining respect and autonomy more than justice (Jordan, 1993). People with mental disabilities who have been released from closed institutions are an especially humiliated and oppressed group, and in their empowerment process advocacy is integrated with empowerment, with the aim of ensuring a minimum of respect towards them in their new environment (Rose & Black, 1985).

With the development of the empowerment process, respect is already self-respect which has been acquired with the commitment to take responsibility and to continue bearing it even in difficult conditions of struggle:

The Chairman of the Parents' committee claimed that he was making time for activism at the school because he felt responsible for the fate of the school and the future of the community, which needed a school with an acceptable standard. He is aware of the fact that his role wins him respect and responsibility which are not his lot as an ordinary citizen (the struggle against the closing of the school).

Students at the school reported a sense of pride and self-confidence, which were reinforced by the respect and appreciation they received from various systems outside the school: reporters, public representatives and decision makers on the local and the national levels. These students were particularly gratified by the appreciation they have received since the struggle from students of other schools,

who in the past used to look down on their school because of its low scholastic level. They feel that their struggle against the closing of the school had brought them city-wide respect, among their peers and among adults.

People repeatedly testify to a sense of self-respect and of respect from those around them that they have gained in the course of empowering social action (Boyte, 1984). Activists admit that their commitment to continue acting stems from a moral obligation that they owe the community. In slump periods in the community planning process, time and energy resources diminish, and stress is created due to the failure to achieve goals in time. In such periods, part of the motivation to keep going and to preserve what has already been achieved is the will to ensure that the respect that has been restored will not be lost again.

Commitment to Devote Time to the Process and Access to Resources of Time

The individual empowerment process demands a great investment of time from the individual. Generally it is customary to calculate time in a planning project only as the costs to the investors and the professionals, and to ignore the investment of time by other participants in the process (Churchman, 1990a). We will discuss this aspect here.

Poor men and women who display a will, a motivation, and an ability to participate in a community process invest a very important resource, because many of them have very little spare time. Access to surplus time over subsistence requirements is an important source of social power (Friedmann, 1992). Without spare time one cannot get involved in group activity, participate in setting up an organization, or struggle for rights in any other way. Community planners often report low attendance by people in planning processes, and ascribe this to apathy and lack of awareness. Beside these simplistic explanations, we should

remember that even people who do have spare time are selective in their use of it, and will not invest efforts in processes that are not relevant to them.

The goals of community planning, then, should appear worthwhile to people if they are to be willing to devote the necessary time to the process. But even in order to take the first step, to take interest in the planning, there needs to be a minimal access to time resources, which at times are very difficult to obtain. The poorer that people are, the more they work in jobs that demand more time, and the more difficult it is for them to control their spare time. This situation is one of the social barriers to their empowerment (Heskin, 1991). A situation that is familiar to anyone who works among poor people is that people cannot commit themselves to making an appointment in the middle of the week. People require a certain control of their work days and their lives even in order to participate in an evening meeting, and certainly in order to activate and run an organization.

Another important domain of access to time is a certain degree of autonomy in the work place, which, for example, allows for access to the telephone during working hours, or a possibility of taking a few hours off in the course of work for the purpose of community activism without endangering one's job. Many of the institutions (City Hall, schools, government offices) with which groups in a community negotiate and have other contacts with are open for business only during the day, that is, during the activists' working hours.

Women as a group have much less access to surplus time than men do, and this is more true for poor, ethnic, traditional minority groups in Western society (Green, 1996). For women whose husbands forbid them to leave the house, involvement in community activity means real physical danger, just as in oppressive regimes.

The discussion of time resources highlights a problem of the weakest groups living in weak environments. The severe shortage in all resources blocks their chances of empowerment. Empowering community planning demands

special deployment in order to act among groups that are unable to obtain even a minimum of resources (Cohen, 1994).