

**Naomi Carmon**

President, Israel Sociological Association  
Faculty of Architecture and Town Planning  
Technion – Israel Institute of Technology, Haifa 32000, Israel  
Tel: +972-4-829 4075 fax: +972-4-829 4071 [Carmon@technion.ac.il](mailto:Carmon@technion.ac.il)

**A Mixed-Income Residential Area: A Success Story with Lessons****A b s t r a c t****ACSP conference, University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, October 2007**

Policy makers around the world confront the issue of how to promote successful and stable mixed-income residential areas. This paper presents findings and conclusions from a relatively successful case, which suggests a kind of compromise between those who support a free market of housing, in which most people choose to live among others “of their kind”, and those who favor planned social mix that is designed to promote diversity and equity.

The case is a public-private initiative to construct a large high-standard neighborhood, 2,500 housing units in 7-14 floor buildings, in the center of the existing distressed town of Or Yehuda in the metropolitan area of Tel-Aviv, Israel. This new area was built for and populated by middle to upper-middle-class families. A comprehensive research, using qualitative and quantitative methods, was conducted in the town 10 years after the better-off families came to live in this new neighborhood (empirical work by Yulia Zifflinger).

Among the findings: The boundaries between the old and new areas remain visible and the prices of apartments are clearly different. The two communities live side by side, and show a fairly high bonding social capital within each of them. In spite of the socio-economic disparities and the internal social bonding, bridging social capital between the two communities is gradually developing. It is supported by the physical design that located important social and public buildings on the road that goes between the old and new areas: The municipal hall, culture center, city library and conservatory, the sport hall and the one large pool in town, are all along this road. Even though most primary school students go to schools in their own area, both the junior-high and the high-school are integrated. Adults meet in the big commercial area that was built in the new neighborhood, and in the adjacent park. In their answers to detailed questionnaires, 20% of the adults in the old poor area reported having friends they visit from time to time in the new higher-class area. They also reported that 50%(!) of their children meet friends in the new neighborhood after school hours. In the recent local elections, 5 of the 11 political parties were composed of people from both communities.

A conclusion for sociological theory: Bonding social capital does not necessarily contradict bridging social capital. Preliminary planning implications: (a) Better-off households may be attracted to live in a neighborhood within a distressed area, providing that it is big enough to include its own primary school and the housing standards are high. (b) One way of achieving urban social diversity is planning for different income groups to settle side by side; this way seems more sustainable than settling them one within the other. (c) A clear position of the public agencies in favor of social integration, and construction of social and commercial services that cause the different residents to meet, while they do what they choose to do, seem to be very significant factors on the way from formal diversity towards developing bridging social capital. These conclusions should be subject to further research.

**Key words:** Mixed-Income Housing; Social Capital.