

# The Profession of Urban Planning and its Societal Mandate

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Chapter 1

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# The Profession of Urban Planning and its Societal Mandate<sup>1</sup>

Modern urban planning is over a hundred years old, yet, there is still no internal agreement about its mission and little external recognition of its societal role. This opening essay is intended to contribute to promoting agreement among planners regarding their societal responsibility, a step that in turn may enhance the external recognition of the planning profession and its mandate.

The first part of the essay presents the meaning of the term profession and then applies it to urban planning. In defining the role of urban planning, the second part suggests *planning with/for people* as a guiding principle and *Planning to Enhance Quality of Life for All in the Built Environment* as a proposed mission. This phrase reconnects planning to places, requires reference to both process and outcomes, and provides both an action orientation and a value orientation. A recommendation to strengthen the link between research and practice in urban planning stands at the heart of the third part; it is presented as a crucial condition for improving planning outcomes and another necessary step towards reaching a publicly-recognized societal mandate for the profession of urban planning.

This essay may be viewed as a personal statement. It is based on findings, ideas and arguments that were raised by others and by myself, all analyzed and interpreted through my own prism, which has been evolving from the time I first attended classes at the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at MIT--some 40 years ago. Since then I have been a planning scholar, a planning educator and a planning consultant, mainly in Israel but also in the United States, and I have had the opportunity to travel and talk to, and with, colleagues and practitioners on four continents. These are my observations and conclusions regarding the knowledge field and the profession of urban planning.

## Is Urban Planning a Profession?

In order to answer this question, we must first analyze the meaning of the term profession. A "profession"<sup>1</sup> is a special kind of community of persons who share the

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1 This paper was prepared for the book on PLANNING AS IF PEOPLE MATTERED, edited by Naomi Carmon and Susan Fainstein.

2 Etymology: *profession-* (s. of *professio*) the taking of the vows of a religious order. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/profession>. In modern times, the same term means taking the vows of a professional order.

same special kind of occupation. Occupations whose practitioners assume responsibility for the affairs of others and provide a service that is indispensable for the public good are granted the standing of a profession (Kultgen 1988). Being recognized by the broader society as the sole or primary provider of this indispensable service, or, in other words, having a mandate from the society to provide services in a specific field (medicine, law, engineering), is a basic attribute of a profession. Another trait of professions is their organization through professional communities (Goode 1957). A professional community is characterized by three communal-organizational attributes: (a) It develops and maintains an elaborate training program; newcomers to the community have to study for several years, acquire deep, comprehensive knowledge of the theory and practice of the occupation. Along with absorbing its special professional values, they have to pass formal examinations before being allowed to practice what they have learned. (b) It creates a code of conduct, or professional ethics, which includes at least three distinct elements: responsibility towards colleagues within the profession, responsibility towards those who use the services of the profession, and responsibility towards society at large. (c) It establishes professional institutions to oversee proper training and proper conduct of its members and to censure or punish those who transgress.

Defining an occupation as a profession is not a binary matter of either 'yes' or 'no'. The various professions are part of a continuum, with medicine, which conforms to practically all the above noted characteristics of a profession, at one end, and barbers, who maintain very few of the attributes of a profession, if any at all, at the other. Between these, one finds distributed along the continuum all the other occupations. Because professionals carry out work that is considered interesting, and for which they are usually well remunerated, occupations seek to progress toward professionalization. They develop a distinct body of knowledge and obligatory training programs with requirements for entry and graduation, create codes of professional ethics, establish institutions for internal inspection and lobby legislators to approve laws that will grant them exclusivity in their work. In this manner, through the years, many occupations (social work, for example) have succeeded in advancing themselves along the professional continuum.

Let's now turn back to the question of whether urban planning is a profession, or at least a vocation in a process of professionalization. The answer appears to be positive. For more than a hundred years there have been university programs to train urban

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planners, many of which are subject to an accreditation process. Gradually, a theoretical and practical body of knowledge has formed, which is distinct and has its particular objectives, although based on knowledge from other disciplines. Associations of professional planners have been established and processes of professional certification are now institutionalized. Planners' associations usually have an elaborate ethical code (e.g. the APA code, AICP 2009) and issues of planning ethics play an important part in theoretical and professional debates. Hence, the communal-organizational conditions required of a profession are already in place among the community of planners. Planners, however, still lack a crucial element of a profession: a societal mandate to work in a specific field in which they are regarded as the primary (although not necessarily exclusive) experts. At this moment in time, at the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century, planners still lack internal agreement as to their specific field of work, and this dispute may well be a major reason for the lack of public recognition of their mandate and their discrete contribution to society.

It is quite simple to explain why it is difficult to attain professional distinction for urban planning. This field encompasses theoretical and methodological contributions from many sources, and the line between planning and other disciplines - including the various social sciences, geography and architecture – is frequently unclear. Moreover, all human beings are involved in planning, be it planning their week, their career or their leisure time. And, most important, urban planning is done not only by planners but by several other practitioners: policy makers, architects, surveyors, engineers, developers, and more. Yet, it is both possible and desirable to define the unique role and mission of planners, as presented below.

### **The Mission of Urban Planning, its Societal Mandate and its Values**

The mission of each profession is tied to its societal mandate. Society gives physicians a mandate to care for health, and teachers are responsible for schooling education; what is the mandate we ask for as urban planners?

For decades, the noble but vague concern of the public interest has served as the flag of urban planning. There have been numerous attempts to translate it into more concrete terms, one of which may be found currently (in 2011) in the “About Planning” section of the American Planning Association’s website. This section explains “What is planning?” as follows:

Planning, also called urban planning or city and regional planning, is a dynamic profession that works to improve the welfare of people and their communities by creating more convenient, equitable, healthful, efficient, and attractive places for present and future generations.

Planning enables civic leaders, businesses, and citizens to play a meaningful role in creating communities that enrich people's lives.

Good planning helps create communities that offer better choices for where and how people live. Planning helps communities to envision their future. It helps them find the right balance of new development and essential services, environmental protection, and innovative change.

All the three statements are related to the term “people,” to people’s lives and welfare. In support of this concern, a suggested guiding principle for urban planning is ***working for and with people***. Several figures at the forefront of urban planning in recent decades, like Herbert Gans in the US and Patsy Healey in the UK, have been among those to argue for “people-sensitive planning” (Gans 1968, 1991; Healey 1990;).

Given this, I would suggest adopting ***Planning to Enhance Quality of Life for All in the Built Environment*** as the mission and the domain of expertise of urban planning. This phrase expresses both the practical-instrumental role and the value orientation of the profession. The exact meaning of “planning”, “quality of life” and “for all” should be discussed first within the profession and then with those who are expected to use the work and products of planning. Yet, on the face of it, this phrase broadcasts the essence of the profession. Let us look more deeply into the meaning of the suggested components:

- (a) ***Planning***, as a ***process of communication*** with those who are affected by the plans and those who have an impact on them ***and integration*** of this communication with the vocational knowledge and techniques that are required for producing a plan for the future.
- (b) ***Quality of life*** indicating the aggregation of the ***outcomes*** of planning, the various components of quality of life in the built environment like housing, transportation, community development, environmental protection and many more; in addition, using this term requires planners to refer both to the “objective” criteria and the “subjective” perception of the outcomes.
- (c) ***For all*** – as the composite of several meanings: first, planning is about making the various components that comprise a good quality of life ***accessible to all***

**and affordable by all** individuals as well as specific, relevant groups of people. Second, planning must consider not only the interests of the current generation but **also the well-being of future generations**. Even though the emphasis here is on individuals and groups, the *all* is inherently related **also to some kind of a 'common good'** (in Friedmann's [2000: 465] sense of the term).

- (d) **The built environment**, which includes cities, towns and their regional surrounding, **reconnecting planning to places** (for a recent discussion of a "place-based development strategy aimed at both economic and social goals" see the European Barca Report, 2009).

A number of advantages may be attributed to this suggested formulation of the planners' mission. First, it is grounded in what planners actually study and do. Second, it clarifies that planning is about processes -- which involve communication with all relevant publics -- and about outcomes, defined as the components of urban quality of life. Third, it emphasizes the *uniqueness of urban planning vis-à-vis* others who are involved in the development of the built environment, from architects and engineers to elected officials and developers. That uniqueness is inherent in its comprehensiveness, encompassing as it does the various components of the quality of life in urban areas, with their social, economic, spatial and environmental aspects; in its integrative approach, integrating all the above into the complex of urban development; and above all, in the inseparable connection between what planners do and their value commitment. The suggested formulation clarifies that planning is committed to a specific value orientation.

That value orientation is expressed above in "for all". It places emphasis on *social equity* in urban planning, on the importance of ensuring that the components that will result in an improved quality of life are universally accessible and affordable. This requires special attention to the needs and preferences of less affluent groups and considers also the interests of future generations. Thus, concern for environmental impacts is also part of the value system of planners.

In practice, however, planning has its dark side (Yiftachel 1998); evils have been perpetrated under the auspices of professional planning, especially toward disadvantaged groups, including indigenous populations, and certainly toward the natural environment. This does not imply that planning is inherently bad or that society would be better off without planning. It does imply that a more formal adoption of a mission statement with a clear value orientation is of utmost importance and that

continuous procedures of evaluation should be implemented in order to ensure that values are part of the day-to-day work of planners. The process of planning and its outcomes should be evaluated using the criterion of “who pays and who benefits?” with special attention to unintended consequences. This criterion must be applied when selecting between alternatives as well as for ex-post evaluation. Needless to say, this is not the sole selection criterion, but it should be a leading one, an important contribution of urban planners to the discussion of public policies, one that should come to be expected when planners are involved.

While in other fields there may be a separation between scholars who deal with theory and research as a means to understanding the world and social actors whose work is value-related and context-related (Castells 1998: 359), urban planners, including planning scholars, are always social actors. John Friedmann (2000: 461) talks about the problem of young people in higher education who are being trained in a narrow body of knowledge and skills, in isolation from larger, vital value-related questions of our world. This cannot or at least should not happen in a school of urban planning. Planning is always directed towards some kind of “the good city” (ibid.), some kind of a vision that carries the connotation of value.

### **Social Equity as a Leading Value in Urban Planning**

As a proposed leading value, social equity—the planning version of social justice—deserves further discussion. The discussion below is divided into three parts: the first focuses on the point of view of planners, while the other two treat claims that are often raised by those who see the world mostly from an economic point of view. In a world in which economic considerations and the struggle for economic growth take center stage, it seems especially important to discuss common economic assumptions.

*The central position of social equity in urban planning* - The rise of modern urban planning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was motivated by a desire to correct the evils of the industrial city (Hall 1988: 7) and to create a better, more just world. Some fifty years ago, Melvin Webber (1963) restarted the discussion and suggested the following three roles for planners, as “agents in the service of city’s people”: (a) to extend access to opportunity—assure that the distribution of the benefits and the costs among the city’s publics is consciously intended and democratically warranted; (b) to integrate larger wholes—comprehending the city as a complex social system, whereupon each of its components lies in reciprocal causal relations with all others; (c) to expand freedom in

a pluralistic society—cultural diversity is an intrinsic characteristic of the societies we are part of; planning in a democratic society should be seen as a process by which the community seeks to increase the individual's opportunities to choose for her/himself, including the freedom to choose to be different. Webber described a range of planners' roles, but the commitment to people, to the various publics in the city and the freedom of choice for all, was to be preeminent amongst them. Since then, social equity is probably the most commonly mentioned value in the planning discourse. In their essay for this book, Norman Fainstein and Susan Fainstein reach a conclusion that coincides with my own: If planners wish to promote a better world, social equity ought to be the number one value in urban planning; when it clashes with the values of diversity and democracy, planners are called upon to prefer equity (Fainstein and Fainstein 2011, last paragraph in their essay).

*The special position of social justice in determining human behavior* - According to mainstream economic thought, human behavior is motivated by one's desire to maximize one's utility, to extract the maximum amount of benefits. I suggest that a better starting point is the assumption that most human beings, most of the time, consider the moral implications of their desires before they set out to accomplish them, an assumption that contradicts the conventional concept of "rational" behavior. The conventional concept is negated not only by sociologists but also by behavioral economists, including Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, the Nobel laureate. Arieli (2008, especially ch. 4), another renowned behavioral economist, supports the claim that moral commitments and social norms, which stem from socialization within certain social groups, explain much of human behavior. Thus, for example, people persist in speaking truthfully or giving charity not because it necessarily pays off, but because that is what a "good person" (or a "good Christian") does. Hence, behaving justly, i.e., in accordance with their own definition of justice, is one of the fundamental building blocks of human behavior.

*The dilemma of social equity versus economic efficiency* - There is a common claim that social equity and economic efficiency are always in competition, so that if one increases the other must decrease. Moreover, it is also often argued that a moderate increase in social equity inevitably causes a substantial loss of economic efficiency. Given this premise, and since economic growth is important to societies, the argument goes, policy makers should forsake equity to promote growth. In contrast to this premise, the claim here is that deliberate policy and planning can result in relatively small reductions in efficiency when social justice is promoted. *In some cases planning*



*can even bring about simultaneous increases in social equity and economic efficiency.* This approach is not so foreign, even to economists. Okun (1975) explored it years ago. Michael Bruno, the chief economist of the World Bank said that “there is no intrinsic tradeoff between long-run aggregate economic growth and overall equity; policies aimed at helping the poor accumulate productive assets---especially policies to improve schooling, health, and nutrition---are important instruments for achieving higher growth” (Bruno et al. 1999). EU economists have said it loudly and clearly as well: “the European Union’s economic evolution for the last sixty years ... has been characterized by a higher efficiency level (growth in productivity, in the labor occupation degree), which favored the reduction of inequalities related to incomes through the redistribution process” (Socol et al. 2008). This line of thought has found its way even to the *American Economic Review*. Based on a theoretical model and empirical data from 56 countries, researchers found a significant negative correlation between economic growth and social inequality, in other words, around the world, when inequality increases, growth declines (Persson & Tabellini 1994; see also Alesina and Rodrik 1994). Banerjee and Duflo (2003) analyzed the methodological difficulties in measuring the aggregate relationships between inequality and growth and recommended a more microeconomic approach. Their recommendation was implemented by Banerjee et al. (2001) and Panizza (2002), who used detailed regional data and found a highly significant negative correlation between inequality and growth in India as well as in the United States. The conclusion derived from these findings is that at least in democratic regimes, increasing social equity, i.e., decreasing inequality between the “haves” and “have-nots”, does not prevent economic growth but rather is essential for securing it.

Hence, in addition to the intrinsic value of social equity, this conclusion, along with the idea that justice-based behavior toward others is a cornerstone of human behavior (each group with its own definition of justice), justify the selection of social equity as the leader among the professional values of planners.

Having a clear societal mission and a value commitment serves the public good and is an indispensable characteristic of a profession. Next we turn to discussing another prominent characteristic, the knowledge base of the profession.

## **Knowledge in Urban Planning: Linking Research and Practice**

The point of departure for this discussion is two assumptions: first, a considerable part of the knowledge in urban planning is based on, and will continue to be based on, empirical research (empirical research is a way of gaining knowledge by means of direct observation or experience); second, a stronger link between empirical research and professional practice in urban planning is highly desirable, both to improve planning processes and outcomes and to enhance the field's status as a profession. The experience of other professions would seem to support the second assumption. To see this, one need only look at the success of professions that based their practices on evidence from empirical research, be it medicine or electrical engineering, and compare it to the failure of large planning initiatives that were implemented without prior empirical investigation, from the Soviet experience to the Urban Renewal programs that displaced millions in Western countries.

In recent decades, the volume of research in urban studies and urban planning has grown significantly; professors and professionals have access to an immense amount of new information along with research findings and conclusions. "Intellectual capital" in urban planning is being built (Sanyal 2000). Does this imply that many research projects are designed to solve urban problems or that planning practitioners are using research-based findings and conclusions? It would seem that the answer to both questions is negative and that there is little progress in connecting research and practice in urban planning (Friedmann 1987; Palermo and Ponzini 2010).

The difficulty of linking research and practice is inherent in all professions and this issue is widely recognized and discussed. As a result, several professions have devoted considerable attention to strengthening this link by raising requirements for evidence-based practice (EBP). Most notably, medicine (Sackett et al. 1996; Montori and Guyatt 2008) and the health sciences (Murray and Lopez 1996), including pharmacology (Mayo-Smith 1997) and nursing (DiCenso et al. 1998), have introduced EBP requirements, but the same is true for other professions, including management (Pfeffer & Sutton 2006) and public administration (Sanderson 2002), psychology (APA Presidential Task Force 2006), education (Slavin 2002), and social work (Matthew et al. 2003). Some initial attention is now being given to EBP in urban planning, as will be detailed below.

EBP does not mean relying exclusively on randomized and rigorously matched experiments and on sophisticated statistical tests. It is certainly true that more and

more of these experiments are being conducted and there are researchers who call for using them alone, while defining “expert opinion” as the least valuable basis for professional decision-making. Still, a large share of those who write about EBP, even in medicine, advocate “integrating individual clinical expertise with the best available external clinical evidence from systematic research” when it comes to guiding practitioners (Sacket et al. 1996, cited by more than 5,000 authors). Moreover, in parallel with the evidence-based movement, a narrative-based medicine is being developed, based on the assumption that there are “limits of objectivity in clinical method” and “there is an art to medicine as well as an objective empirical science” (Greenhalgh 1999: 323).

The reservations mentioned in the last paragraph are certainly relevant when considering the merits of evidence-based practice in urban planning. In addition, much can be learned from the introduction of EBP into the field of program evaluation, which seems to have the potential to parallel in certain ways the likely introduction of EBP into urban planning. Toward that end, Vedung (2010)’s description of the historical development of EBP in program evaluation is particularly useful:

Four waves have deposited sediments, which form present-day evaluative activities. The *scientific wave* entailed that academics should test, through two-group experimentation, appropriate means to reach externally set, admittedly subjective, goals. Public decision-makers were then supposed to roll out the most effective means. Faith in scientific evaluation eroded in the early 1970s. It has since been argued that evaluation should be participatory and non-experimental, with information being elicited from users, operators, managers and other stakeholders through discussions. In this way, the *dialogue-oriented wave* entered the scene. Then the *neo-liberal wave* from around 1980 pushed for market orientation. Deregulation, privatization, contracting-out, efficiency and customer influence became key phrases. Evaluation as accountability, value for money and customer satisfaction was recommended. Under the slogan ‘What matters is what works’ the *evidence-based wave* implies a renaissance for scientific experimentation. (Vedung 2010: 263)

In the urban field, the objection to so-called “objective research” is probably wider and has deeper roots, and therefore, in contrast to developments in other professions, the combination of the term “evidence-based” with “urban planning” is still rare. Yet, some beginnings can be found. Faludi and Waterhout (2006) took the initiative of “introducing evidence-based planning”. In an article that opens a series of papers on the subject, they present three revealing observations: (a) The essence of evidence-based planning is not new; actually, it has been with us since antiquity, when the Romans conducted a

general census (*according to the Bible, a census was conducted 1500 years earlier, when Moses commanded counting the Sons of Israel.*), and reached its culmination in the modernist period, when professionals tended to believe in scientific and technical progress and instrumental rationality. (b) The re-entry of an evidence-based approach into planning did not come from the field itself but rather from external sources; in fact it came from British policy makers and European Union spatial planning organizations. (c) Faludi and Waterhout conclude that evidence-based planning is “one of the important trends of this century” (ibid.: 4).

U.S.-based researchers have joined the discussion more recently, trying to answer the question: “Is there a role for evidence-based practice in urban planning and policy?” (Krizek, Forysth and Slotterback 2009). The bottom line of their paper is that in view of frequent failures in achieving the stated goals of plans, and without ignoring the limitations and special challenges related to EBP, they recommend adding it to the list of common sources of knowledge used by planning practitioners.

Their line of thought goes the same direction as my own conclusion. I believe that planning practice, its process and its outcomes, can be significantly improved by more extensive use of systematic empirical research. I also believe that evidence-based research in urban planning may encompass a variety of systematic research methods, including the narrative tradition in planning. Moreover, where a variety of research methods reach similar, practice-oriented conclusions, the reliability of those conclusions is enhanced

The path to integrating evidence-based research into planning practice requires researchers and practitioners to reach out to each other. Given the current state of the art in urban planning, the main burden should fall on the shoulders of researchers. They can contribute to the required integration by:

- (a) Selecting research questions that focus on practical problems;
- (b) Studying outcomes, not only processes;
- (c) Emphasizing the search for “what works”;
- (d) Providing the necessary service of meta-analysis, i.e., combining and evaluating the results of many studies that address a set of related questions/problems;
- (e) Using all the above to create lists of “best procedures”, “best policies” and “best practices”; these are lists of practical recommendations, which represent the best currently available research-based findings and conclusions, which can then be

used by practitioners; they should be updated along with the advancement of systematic research.

All this may sound like a proposal to turn planning research publications into cookbooks, but that is not at all my intention. There are and there should always be theory and history studies that gradually build the foundations of planning; in fact, many may have implications for planning practice, but by their very nature they do not lead to suggestions for “best practices”. Moreover, empirical studies in planning, be it action research, case studies or semi-experimental evaluations, are based (unlike cookbooks) on analysis and explanation, and the request for practical recommendations is not meant to replace analysis but complement it.

It seems that oftentimes planning researchers either try to avoid practical issues that may disturb their “clean” analysis or hesitate to take on the responsibility of advising practitioners. Of course, every case has its specific characteristics and is different from all others, but this does not mean that there are no common denominators or no good, evidence-based practices that can and should be derived from systematic research and then taken into consideration by those working in the field (I wish we could replace “best” by “good” or “appropriate”, but the term “best practices” has become rooted in the commonly accepted terminology of many professions).

Table 1 draws on my own research to illustrate several of the above suggestions regarding ways of tying research to practice. It focuses on practical questions in a defined area, housing and urban regeneration, highlighting “what works”; it uses studies with a variety of systematic research methods; and it presents evidence-based and practice-oriented recommendations in the form of “best policies” and “best practices.” Elaborating on one “best practice” in the table (the second one) may clarify the idea. In my studies I found, as did empirical studies conducted in different cultures, using various research methods, that housing demolition, which goes hand-in-hand with forcing households out of their homes, is usually bad for the people, for the environment and for the urban architectural fabric. On the basis of these findings, the recommendation to a planning practitioner is: check your case, consider alternatives and make your planning decisions bearing in mind the evidence-based conclusions regarding the unintended consequences of housing demolition.

**Table 1: “What Works” in Housing and Urban Renewal**

The statements in the table are based on studies that were conducted over a period of 35 years, using a variety of research methods. The table draws on my studies only (studies that were published in accessible English publications), but partly similar conclusions and recommendations were proposed by others, including contributors to this book; see essays by Galster, by Keating, by Fainstein and Fainstein, and by Vale.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Evidence-Based Best Policies</b></p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Evidence-Based Best Practices</b> related to policies on the left and grounded in the same studies</p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/>
Preventive Planning <sup>(8)</sup>	Identify neighborhoods on the verge of deterioration and encourage “incumbent upgrading” <sup>(8)</sup>
A gradual and “soft” approach to housing and neighborhood improvement <sup>(1) (4)</sup>	Wherever possible, plan for gradual regeneration of old neighborhoods rather than demolition and redevelopment <sup>(1) (4)</sup>
Prevent segregation of the lower classes in re-planned residential areas <sup>(3) (5) (6) (7)</sup>	Plan for side by side homogeneous clusters of residents within a heterogeneous residential area, and add joint social services <sup>(3) (5) (6) (7)</sup>
Work simultaneously for social equity and economic growth and efficiency <sup>(2) (4)</sup>	Encourage user-controlled upgrading of housing in distressed neighborhoods, and thus promote simultaneously: better housing and housing maintenance, place attachment and the motivation to work that increases the income of the households <sup>(2) (4)</sup>
Regeneration through partnerships <sup>(1) (2) (7)</sup>	Public-Private-Partnerships (PPPs), Public-Civic PartnershipsPCPs and Public-Private-Civic-Partnerships (PPCPs) <sup>(1) (2) (7)</sup>
Differential intervention in different deteriorated residential areas <sup>(1) (4)</sup>	Poor neighborhoods in “hot demand areas” need different intervention compared with “less-viable” areas <sup>(1) (4)</sup>

(1) Literature survey and historical analysis of “waves” of urban renewal policies in Western countries (Carmon 1999);

(2) A series of empirical studies of user-controlled housing updates, based mainly on interviews with households (Carmon and Oxman 1986; Carmon and Gavrieli 1987; Carmon 2002b);

(3) A critical review of research literature (in sociology and in urban planning) regarding neighborliness and ethnically mixed housing (Carmon 1976);

(4) An empirical social-architectural-economic-organizational study of 10 case studies, 10 distressed neighborhoods selected for Project Renewal (Carmon 1997);

- (5) A quasi-experimental study with rigorous statistical analysis of 50 Project Renewal neighborhoods, compared with carefully selected control group of neighborhoods (Carmon and Baron, 1994);
- (6) A household survey on inter-ethnic relations in a peripheral rural region (Yiftachel and Carmon 1997);
- (7) A longitudinal study using a variety of research methods to investigate the process and outcomes of adding middle-income neighborhood to a small low-income town (Carmon 2006; Zifflinger 2005).
- (8) The same research methods mention in (2) above (Carmon 1998; Carmon 2002a)

Hence, the general recommendation for planning researchers, especially those conducting empirical studies, is to try to end their reports by answering the question “*so what?*” from the point of view of planning practice. If they do so, their conclusions can be considered and possibly adopted by practitioners who encounter cases of similar type. Moreover, at some point in time a scholar is able to collect their answers and make a meta-analysis of studies, which may significantly enhance our common knowledge and so can be used to draw “the best, currently-available” procedures, policies and practices. In parallel, the general recommendation to planning practitioners is to search for research on the type of plan they are developing and make educated use of its findings and inferences.

### **In Conclusion**

A majority of the rapid changes in technology, demography, economic structure and socio-cultural settings that are occurring in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are taking place in urban environments, environments that are expected to absorb and support these changes. Under these circumstances, society needs a body of knowledge and a group of carriers of this knowledge, who have a holistic view of the many components involved in the planning of the built environment and who can assimilate and integrate them into complex development processes. The societal mandate to create this body of knowledge and train professionals who can cultivate and implement it may be granted to urban planners, though not exclusively. For that to happen, planners have to take additional steps in their progress towards becoming a publicly recognized profession.

“Whether planning is a profession is a matter of some dispute: a recent outside opinion suggests it isn’t yet but may make it very soon” (Marcuse 1976). Thirty-five years after these words were published, it is still a matter of dispute and it is unclear whether planning is about to make it. This essay supports advancement towards

professionalization as something beneficial to planners and to the societies in which they live. The way forward involves three processes that were detailed above:

- Working towards an accepted definition of planning expertise, which requires first internal agreement and then public recognition; here the proposal is to adopt *Planning to Enhance Quality of Life for All in the Built Environment* as both the mission statement and the domain of expertise of urban planning.
- Renewing the commitment to values by planners, those “professional values” that according to Rein (1969) are one of the basic sources of legitimacy of planning; *Social Equity* with relation to present and future generations is offered here as a leading value, along with several justifications for selecting it.
- Strengthening research and the connection between research and practice; here we call for critically summarizing issue-related or problem-related research findings and suggesting guidelines not only for additional research but also for practice, in the form of “best policies”, “best procedures” and “best practices”, which represent the best available research-based evidence of a certain time.

Pursuing these proposals does not mean that the ultimate goal is an institutionalized profession which is exclusively responsible for urban development. In my judgment, such a goal is both unattainable and undesirable. Planning is, by its very nature, a field and a profession that works with other fields/disciplines and professions. Moreover, in countries that experienced advanced institutionalization of the planning profession (for example, the British Town and Country Planning Act 1947), planning seemed to be reduced to procedural-technical activities and in the process, it lost its spirit and its connections with the publics for which it works (Upton 2010). Hence, what may be both attainable and desirable, if planners move along the above-mentioned lines, is a stronger sense of purpose and a more identifiable and coherent collection of procedures and practices; a collection which is constantly developed by researchers and practitioners, which is used by members of the profession and which is respected by the society they are part of and for whom they choose to work.

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