NEIGHBORHOOD

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A b s t r a c t

The essay provides a brief summary of selected publications about neighborhood/s by scholars in the social and behavioral sciences as well as by planners and architects. Neighborhoods have been part of the human mode of life since the dawn of civilization. In spite of the current decreasing importance of distance, following the accelerated development of telecommunication, it seems that neighborhoods will continue to exist in the next decades and to fulfill important social functions for many persons in at least some of their time on earth.

Introduction

The term neighborhood is rooted in the verb neighbor. "To neighbor" has a double meaning: (a) to live in vicinity, one of another; (b) to be friendly, to render mutual favors or assistance (Webster 1983). This double meaning expresses the essence of the neighborhood: Continuous physical proximity among people together with some social attitudes, such as friendliness, and/or special behaviors, such as mutual assistance. A neighborhood is always a part of a town or city, a part that is defined through an agreement among its residents, regular users and others in its vicinity regarding its borders and its special physical and social characteristics. Frequently, neighborhoods are not officially defined and not everybody agrees about the size and borders of a neighborhood or its special identity.

This essay is a brief summary of scientific and professional writings of the 20th century about neighborhood/s by scholars in the social and behavioral sciences and by planners and architects. Its last section is devoted to contemporary discussions that shape the research of neighborhoods at the beginning of the 21st century.

The Neighborhood Concept in the Social Sciences

Neighborhoods have been considered by many scholars as a basic pattern of social organization, which is universal and timeless. Cooley (1909) argued that the neighborhood is "a natural phenomenon" that exists wherever a group of people produces a dwelling place. Archeologists identified clusters of living that may be considered neighborhoods in kingdoms of the ancient world. The ancient neighborhoods were arranged by family or clan lines and later on, by religious or ethnic or professional lines. In modern times, the divisions are largely by cultural-ethnic origin and/or socio-economic status.

Neighborly relations among people who live in each other's vicinity, including intimate acquaintance and numerous interactions, were the normal way of life in rural communities prior

to the industrial era (Tonnies 1887). Sociologists of the early twentieth century, especially those from the Chicago school, claimed that such *primary relations* among neighbors are essential for maintaining the social order, because they create an effective informal control system (Cooley 1909; Park et al. 1925). According to this view, isolation from a neighborhood portends an individual's alienation, while disintegration of neighborhoods threatens the social order (Durkheim 1893).

The socio-economic process of urbanization, which followed the technological-economic process of industrialization, disrupted social cohesion in rural communities and entailed the creation of distressed neighborhoods in the industrial cities. Among the first to describe them were Fredric Engels (1844) who demarcated the physical structures and daily life in Manchester and Salford in the UK, and Jacobs Riis (1890) who illustrated depiction of New York City's slum neighborhoods. The urban way of life was considered by many writers as a source of evil. Wirth (1938) argued that the size, density and heterogeneity that characterize cities create changes that reduce primary relationships, including neighborly relationships, and increase loneliness and social deviance. Wirth represents the nostalgic yearning for healthy village life and the anti-urban tone that was prevalent among writers of his generation.

A kind of "neutral" description of neighborhoods was presented in the first half of the 20th century by the Chicago "ecological school", headed by Robert Park, Ernest Burges and R.D. McKenzie. They applied concepts and principles derived from plant and animal ecology to the analysis of human communities (Park et Al. 1925). Empirical sociological and anthropological studies of urban neighborhoods in the middle of that century portrayed a more diverse urban picture (Glass 1948; Janowitz 1952). Within large industrial cities the researchers found residential areas that were *Gemeinschaft*s by Tonnies's typology; the intimate spontaneous relationships between the neighbors in such areas were based on proximity as well as on kinship and/or ethnic identity and/or sharing a work place or other common denominator. Gans (1962) provided a vivid analysis of the life of Italian-Americans in a Bostonian neighborhood; he gave these people, who managed to preserve their special family life, peer groups and communal institutions within the modern city of Boston, the name of "urban villagers". Jacobs (1961) claimed that the traditional neighborhood such as the one described by Gans has lost its meaning and function in the modern big cities, where the lively street, the quarter (~100,000 residents) and the city as a whole are the relevant units. Suttles (1972) argued that in the modern city one can find various different types of neighborhoods, from the ones that are based on a form of organization that is almost a primary group, to expanded communities of "limited liability".

A special stream of research was devoted to the impact of architectural design on social attitudes and behavior in the neighborhood context. Researchers frequently found strong relationships between architectural design and social variables: proximity and planned paths seemed to influence close friendship (Festinger et al. 1950), while large project size and height of buildings were considered as causes of increased delinquency and crime (Newman 1972).

Later critics, who named this line of reasoning "physical determinism", claimed that these studies failed to control for important intermediate variables, especially those related to the socio-cultural and the socio-economic characteristics of the residents. Keller (1968) urged architects to tailor their design by the variety of socio-economic characteristics and cultural values of the users.

In response to the uni-directional view on the influence of the built environment on people, the school of man-environment research, consisting mainly of psychologists who cooperate with architects, emphasizes a two-way man-environment interaction. Their ecological approach to human interaction centered on understanding individuals in the context of their surroundings (Barker 1968) and allows for personal-subjective definitions of neighborhoods. According to this perspective, the neighborhood is considered as one of the contextual-ecological systems that a person is part of, including the nuclear family, peer group, and workplace (Bronfenbrenner 1979).

Thus, neighborhoods have been defined through consolidating both social and physical space, i.e., when physical boundaries, social networks, local facilities and special symbolic and emotional connotations are congruent in people's mind (Rappoport 1977). According to this approach, people relations with their neighborhood co-evolve through a process in which a space is transformed into a "place" – a setting with a specific meaning and value (Tuan 1974). Emotions and other psychological and social mechanisms (i.e. belonging and identification, sense of community and social capital) play a role in the development of a neighborhood and at the same time influence the lives of individuals; one is constantly affected by the other. For example, physical conditions and opportunities for social interaction in the neighborhood affect personal attitudes such as satisfaction and identification with the neighborhood, which in turn, play a role in residents' willing to be involved and improve their neighborhood. (Ahlbrandt 1984).

In addition to their social and psychological roles, urban neighborhoods often function as administrative units for various ends, including political organization and provision of social and commercial services. For census purposes, residential areas are divided into statistical units, the borders of which are frequently drawn by the boundaries of traditional neighborhoods. Social scientists have made intensive use of this statistical division, especially for developing empirical Social Area Analysis that concentrates on changes over time in residential areas (Shevky 1955; Abu-Lughod 1969).

Neighborhood change was a focus of interest of social scientists throughout the 20th century. The Chicago school invented the *invasion-succession model*, inspired by the world of plant and animals; "invasion" illustrates the entrance of a different social group – racially or ethnically or socioeconomically different – to a populated area, and the creation of competition and conflict within the invaded neighborhood that ends either by withdrawal of the invaders or by their triumph in the form of "succession" (Park et al. 1925). The study of neighborhood change flourished in the second half of the twentieth century. Taeuber and Taeuber (1965) produced a comprehensive study of racial neighborhood change in American cities. Several economists

added a considerable amount of supporting empirical evidence, especially for explaining neighborhood deterioration (Grigsby et al. 1987). A review of the neighborhood change literature of the time was provided by Schwirian (1983).

Another model of neighborhood change - *the life cycle model* - was suggested by Hoover and Vernon (1959), who identified five stages: development, transition, down-grading, thinning-out and renewal. These stages are related to the quantity and status of the residents, the intensity and kind of land use and the quality of housing. Not all neighborhoods go through each stage; some may skip one or stay indefinitely in another one.

The *political economy school* offers a different approach. They argue that the fate of a neighborhood is determined by the interests and the complex relationships among the political and economic public institutions the and strong actors in the business market (banks, developers and others). Most of these forces play from outside the borders of the neighborhood, and hence, the ability of local people to influence them is very limited (Molotch 1976).

Neighborhoods in the Eyes of Planners and Architects

Modern urban planning took its shape in the last quarter of the 19th century on the background of the socioeconomic movements of industrialization and urbanization. Large populations of workers and their families lived in extremely poor and crowded conditions in the industrial cities. The first planned neighborhoods in Europe were workers' neighborhoods, built by owners of industrial plants or by philanthropic organizations.

All the early city planning initiatives – The City Beautiful, The City Efficient and The Garden City – sought to make the city and its neighborhoods safe, sanitary, economically efficient and socially attractive. The leading idea was to use physical planning in order to create a socially better world. This central motive accompanies the efforts of architects and planners throughout the 20th century. Several critics say that this is a clear evidence that good intentions may sometimes lead to hell.

A prominent figure from the onset was Ebenzer Howard; his small-size book, *Garden City of Tomorrow* (1902), influenced urban planning in the 20th century more than any other publication. He advocated an urban environment that combines the advantages of the city, such as modern occupations and services, with those of the village – human scale and many local social contacts. His model covered the entire scale from the dwelling through the neighborhood to the region. Howard's ideas had a decisive impact on the New Towns movement, which gave rise in the middle of the 20th century to 30 new towns in Great Britain, a similar number in Israel, several *villes nouvellles* around Paris, others around Stockholm, as well as to a few new towns in the USA. Within each of these, some version of Howard's plan for the "ward" (his version of a neighborhood) was implemented. However, none of the many towns and neighborhoods that followed Howard's physical suggestions (at least partly) followed his social vision. As Hall (1988:87) put it: "They see him as a physical planner, ignoring the fact that his garden cities

were merely the vehicles for a progressive reconstruction of capitalist society into infinity of co-operative commonwealths".

In the US, a rather similar (physically) model for a Neighborhood Unit was suggested by Clarence Perry (1929). He suggested a design formula with specific guidelines for spatial distribution of residences, community services, roads, open spaces and businesses; he believed in using physical design tools for achieving a social vision of neighborliness and community building. A strong supporter of the concept of the Neighborhood Unit was the journalist-sociologist Louis Mumford (1954). He saw neighborhood planning as an opportunity and leverage for fostering feelings of belonging and for supporting amiable behavior among neighbors. He contributed to the idealization of the neighborhood as a framework for preserving positive social values and institutions in the modern city. This idealization was among the factors that convinced the American Public Health Association to adopt the Neighborhood Unit Model as the basis for planning residential environments. Subsequently, it was adopted by other professional organizations and public agencies and guided much of the post World-War-II construction of middle-class suburbs. All this happened in spite of the severe criticism of the model that had been prevalent since the 1940s. Social scientists disagreed with its premises and planners questioned its unintended consequences (Banerjee and Baer, 1984). Even though theoretically the model called for social mix and social integration, in practice, it encouraged segregation. An example is the early settlement in the neighborhoods of the new town of Radburn (New Jersey, US); in 1934 there were no blue-collar workers among the residents, and the realtors kept out Jews and Blacks as well (Schaffer 1982).

What was planned and built in the middle of the century in Europe was highly influenced by the architects of CIAM (*Les Congres Internationaux d'Architecture Modern*), an organization that was established in 1928 and lived for 30 years (Kallus and Law-Yone, 1997). These architects were deeply influenced by rigid socialistic concepts on the one hand and by new technical options opened through the industrial advancement on the other. They created the international style of architecture with the principles of minimalism (planning a house by the minimal needs of health and convenience of the residents), standardization (disregarding differences of culture, climate etc.) and separation of land uses. *Le Corbusier* was the most famous architect who promoted these concepts. Thousands of neighborhoods, which were built in Europe following World War II were influenced by these principles. However, many of their inhabitants disliked the minimal and standard blocks that the architects built for them; better-off households left them as soon as they could afford it. The unattractive design, together with severe maintenance problems, played a central role in the processes of social and physical deterioration and segregation, which characterized large residential areas of the post-World-War-II residential construction in European and other countries (see Ch 7 in Hall 1988).

An architectural school that opposes the standardization of international architecture as well as the typical design of neighborhoods-suburbs in the US is the *New Urbanism*. It developed in the 1980s, as an umbrella term that encompassed two design schemes: the TND (Traditional

Neighborhood Development, actually, back to the Neighborhood Unit concepts) and the TOD (Transit-Oriented Development). The common principles of these two are: small (compact) size that creates walkable distances (typically no more than a quarter of a mile from center to edge); clearly defined edges and centers; mixed land uses (residences, shops, schools, workplaces) and mixed "market segments"; priority to public buildings and spaces (Katz 1994). In some magic way, this design is expected not only to create a distinct physical unit but also social identity and community. Underneath the detailed design instructions of the New Urbanism lies the same old belief of architects that by means of a proper design of the physical environment we can create a better social world.

In addition to a common belief in *physical determinism*, most of the neighborhood models suggested by architects are characterized by disregard of the users' voice. For Le Corbusier this was obvious; he argued that planning is too important to let ignorant people be involved in it. Other architects continued the paternalistic approach without considering issues of residents' participation. One of the exceptions was the English architect John Turner (1976), the father of "housing as a verb" rather than a noun. He argued that when dwellers control the major decisions concerning the design, construction and management of their home and neighborhood, both the process and the environment produced stimulate individual and social well-being. Turner based his approach on his experience with communities in which there was mutual commitment and partnership between the members, mostly traditional communities. Is consideration of users' point of view in designing and managing the built environment applicable also to regular neighborhoods in urban Western societies?

A positive answer to this question evolved within a new breed of planners. In the middle of the 20th century, social scientists – sociologists, economists, human geographers and lawyers with social sensitivity - transformed the discipline/profession of Urban/City Planning. The sociologist Herbert Gans (1968) played a central role in this process of change; years later he phrased an important part of the transformation by saying that "America's major urban problems were poverty, scarcity of decent jobs, racism … more serious and wide-ranging than the land-use-related problems the city planners of the time were dealing with" (Gans 1991:IX). Scholars and practitioners of urban planning developed the ideas and practices of citizen participation in planning and community development (Arnstein 1969; Bratt and Rearden Forthcoming), of Advocacy Planning (Davidoff 1967), Progressive Planning (Angotti 1993) and Equity Planning (Krumholz and Forester 1990; Carmon and Fainstein Forthcoming). All these frameworks of thought and action devoted much of their work to urban neighborhoods of minorities and low-income households.

The different approaches of planners who had only architectural education vis-à-vis those who were widely exposed to the social sciences were clearly expressed in the development of programs for rehabilitating distressed neighborhoods (Carmon 1990). Three successive "generations" of urban/neighborhood renewal policies were identified and analyzed by Carmon (1999), policies that were implemented at about the same time in Western countries on both

sides of the Atlantic. The first generation – the era of the bulldozer, which was dominated by architects, by ideas of physical determinism and activities of slum clearance, started in the UK in 1930, in the US in 1937 (see also the law of 1949), in Canada in 1948 and in several European countries in the 1950s. The slum clearance projects, in spite of big differences among them, usually generated the same kind of criticism for hurting individuals and households, eliminating healthy communities, and in general, bringing about more negative than positive human and urban consequences (Wilmott and Young, 1957; Belash and Hausknecht 1967; Gibson and Langstaff 1982). In the second generation of policies, when urban planners with social sciences' education became influential, large-scale governmental programs for both social and physical neighborhood rehabilitation were adopted and citizen participation in planning became common; examples are Model Cities in the US (middle 1960's), Neighborhood Improvement Program in Canada (started 1973), Neighborhood Social Development in France (started 1981), and Project Renewal in Israel (started 1977). Despite the abundance of good will and large sums on money, the results were at best mixed: where implemented, these combinations of social and physical programs frequently benefited people (local residents) but not their neighborhoods, i.e., they could not change the negative image and the low status of the target neighborhoods. The third generation is related to the rise of the neo-liberal ideology in the 1970s-1990s and emphasizes economic considerations in neighborhood and urban regeneration. Public-private initiatives of planned gentrification that encouraged better-off households to enter low-income neighborhoods, usually in the city center, became popular in many large and smaller cities. Many of those have physically improved parts of old cities and neighborhoods, but were severely criticized for causing direct and indirect displacement of incumbent residents (Marcuse 1985; Smith 2002).

Neighborhood Research on the Brink of the 21st Century

We began this essay by saying that neighborhoods have been part of the human mode of life since the dawn of civilization. An ancient verse – *better is a neighbor that is near than a brother far off* (Proverbs 27:10) – illustrates the important social functions that neighborhoods and neighbors had in traditional societies. With the development of communication technologies people became much more mobile, their world widened considerably, and they became less dependent on physical proximity and on constant relationships. The decreasing importance of distance has been enhanced with the accelerated development of telecommunication in recent years. Do these changes mean that the time of neighborhoods as territories that combine physical and social closeness is over?

Our answer is that neighborhoods will continue to exist in the next decades and to fulfill important social functions for many persons in at least some of their time on earth. In general, those who are attached to their neighborhoods are people on the ends, on both ends of the life cycle – children and elderly, and on both ends of the social ladder – disadvantaged and well-to-do households. People whose mobility is limited, either because modern communication

technologies have not reached their environment, or because they are too young or too old or too poor to use the technologies, will continue to be dependent on their neighbors and neighborhoods as sources for fulfilling functional as well as social and emotional needs. In addition, research findings show that housing proximity is associated with the existence of important joint interests. This is very clear among minorities and immigrant groups, which tend to cluster geographically and create *urban enclaves*; in their enclaves they can support each other, defend and develop their specific social, economic and sometimes political interests; when they feel necessary, they can organize to fight contradicting interests (Abrahamson, 1996). This is also common among exclusive neighborhoods of affluent citizens who create *gated communities* (Blakely and Snyder 1997; Atkinson and Blandy 2005). Mobile middle-class households may not be inclined to be part of neighborhoods-communities, but where and when they feel a need to promote a local interest, and especially, when some changes in the social or physical environment is perceived as a threat to the value of their home, they too function as a community of interests on a local basis.

Thus, in recent years, research into "neighborhood effects" has become common; its point of departure is frequently an assertion that neighborhood characteristics play a significant role in shaping opportunities, quality of life and social norms of their residents, especially immigrants and low-income residents. The current renewed interest in these effects is traced back to the book *The Truly Disadvantaged* (Wilson 1987). Since its publication, an explosion of work has emerged testing the hypothesis that living in a neighborhood of concentrated poverty has negative effects on economic self-sufficiency, violence, drug-use, low-birth-weight, cognitive ability and more. Especially salient are the many studies devoted to evaluating the *Moving to Opportunity* housing mobility experiment (Briggs et al 2010). In general, the findings have been disappointing; the move to better neighborhoods has not been found as having considerable positive effect on self-sufficiency nor on physical health; yet, many claim that the failure was built into the implementation of the experiment and the research design (Sampson 2008). Disappointing results regarding impacts on labor market outcomes were reported also from Britain (van Ham and Manley 2010). However, research of other kinds of "effects" did find positive ones: health researchers have found significant positive impacts of neighborhood characteristics on individual physical and mental health (Diez Roux 2004), especially among children and adolescents (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). Kim and Kaplan (2004) showed how neighborhood design features, new urbanism style, have direct and indirect effect on residents' sense of community. When the physical design of a neighborhood (Bothwell et al 1998) and/or participation in neighborhood activity lead to development of social capital, especially "bridging" social capital, the range of opportunities for disadvantaged residents is increased (Gittell and Vidal 1998).

In the context of a globalizing world, researchers identified the two contrasting yet complementary components of the global and the glocal. Relevant examples are global marketing of neighborhoods to attract capital investment and residents of the creative class (Mele 2000), and building bottom-up organizations to counter the top-down controls of global

bodies. In general, it seems that the perceived importance of the local is gathering force in parallel with the global trend. Neighborhoods are sites for engagement of residents in the practice of planning their environment (Innes and Booher 2004) and for establishment of active citizenship (Brannan et al. 2006) aiming at democratize social relations and promoting social and environmental justice. In Europe, this orientation is implemented in local bodies through the "new localism" (Lowndes and Sullivan 2008), while the Community Development Corporations (CDC's) are continuing their activity across the in the US (Bratt 2006), and the Local Agenda 21 is spreading around the world (RIO+20, 2012). The outburst of protests in 2011, protests that occurred at about the same time in close to a thousand cities in 82 countries (Rogers 2011), is a demonstration of the current new relationships between local communities and global developments.

Because the local context of a neighborhood continues to play an important role in the life of many individuals and groups, social scientists will continue being engaged with understanding neighborhoods in the foreseeable future. Following Herbert Gans (2002), we suggest focusing on causal relations between space/place and society: the few but important ways in which a place – a neighborhood in our case – influences persons and collectivities, and the many ways in which collectivities turn places into social spaces and shape their uses.

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