

## **A NEIGHBORHOOD PROGRAM THAT WORKS: ISRAEL'S PROJECT RENEWAL**

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Government-initiated neighborhood-targeted programs have frequently been in the focus of public attention since World War II. Limiting our survey to the American experience, salient landmarks are Urban Renewal, Model Cities and Block Grants for Community Development. Urban Renewal was sharply criticized during its time (Anderson, 1964; Gans, 1968). Even though thirty years later, one can observe impressive developments in what were once Urban Renewal areas, the social costs of evacuation, demolition, relocation, and a very long process of redevelopment are considered too high to justify its method. Model Cities, with all its good intentions, barely had a chance to prove its potential, and is generally evaluated as a non-success endeavor (Frieden and Kaplan, 1975). The more recent CDBG program, which transferred decision-making power from Washington to local mayors and their staffs, also came under attack when the latter were accused of not targeting grants to the problems and populations with which the program was designed to deal (McFarland, 1978).

The initiators of Israel's Project Renewal tried to learn some of the lessons of these national renewal programs. They first determined the order of priority of economic-urban goals vis-à-vis social-urban aims; the latter prevailed, and, as a consequence, only residential areas (not commercial or other) were selected for the Project, a decision that excluded some central city locations. In order to avoid the major social errors of Urban Renewal, Project Renewal's basic guideline of operation was rehabilitation without relocation of residents and without demolition of buildings. The "New Federalism" concept reflected in the CDBG approach was not accepted by the Israelis, who preferred Model Cities ideas, some of which were more in line with their own former approaches to problems of disadvantaged populations. Hence, the other guidelines formulated for Project Renewal were: to combine physical and social rehabilitation, i.e., to operate simultaneous programs in the areas of housing, physical infrastructure, education, health, welfare, employment, cultural and community services; to target public assistance by area need, thus making all the residents of a designated neighborhood eligible; and, last but not least--an alien notion in the centralistic regime of Israel--to encourage citizen participation in planning and implementation (Carmon and Hill, 1984).

Project Renewal was announced as a national program in 1976. Some 600 million US dollars were invested in its programs between 1979 (the year it started full-steam operation) and 1985. It gradually entered 84 distressed areas with 600,000 inhabitants, about 15 percent of the Israeli population. Five neighborhoods were selected for the project in Jerusalem, and five in Tel-Aviv; the selection included at least one poor area in each city and each development town in the country.

Evaluating national broad-aim projects which encompass many different programs and numerous participating organizations is a complex task, and evaluation studies usually relate to only one of the many facets of such projects. If the study is conducted by economists, it concentrates on economic efficiency (Irvin, 1978; Thompson, 1980); if by political scientists and those who follow their tradition, it emphasizes the process of planning and implementation (Thomas, 1981; Alterman, 1982); if by sociologists, psychologists or other behavioral scientists, the focus is usually on measuring outcomes, ignoring their costs and the ways in which they were incurred (Weiss, 1972; Finsterbusch, 1980). In contrast, the Integrated Evaluation Method (Carmon, Hill and Alterman, 1980; Alterman, Carmon and Hill, 1984) was designed to build on the strength of each of these different traditions and to integrate them into one effort, in order to provide better understanding of the causes of success and failure as well as more useful answers for decision makers. The developers of Integrated Evaluation were invited to conduct the comprehensive evaluation study of Project Renewal.

The field work of the evaluation study focused on ten carefully selected neighborhoods from among the seventy in which the Project was active when the research was begun in 1982. A team of twenty researchers devoted four years to data collection and analysis. Several research methods and tools were used: interviewing local informants, both public officials and active residents; structured observation; analysis of available documents; and a household survey of a representative sample of 150 residents in each of the ten neighborhoods.

A detailed description of the method and the field work appears elsewhere (Carmon, 1985); the following is just a comment regarding the dilemma of cause and effect. The question is how the given research construct can ascertain that certain outcomes found in the neighborhoods are due to Project Renewal and not to other processes occurring at the given locations during the relevant time period. Owing to difficulties in finding suitable control groups for large, complex units of analysis like neighborhoods, we had to forego the advantages of a semi-experimental research design. In order to overcome this limitation, we utilized various types of control (Rossi and Freeman, 1982). We collected "before" and "after" data on most topics,

using, whenever possible, time series, which compared trends in the period preceding the Project with those during the Project. For all subjects examined, we employed shadow control; that is, estimation of the net influence of the project with the aid of experts, in our case, a combination of our field researchers and reliable local informants. For over two years, each field researcher visited his/her neighborhood two to three times a week and established relationships with knowledgeable and reliable local residents and officials. This system, and the evaluation of the implementation process made possible by it (see the article by Rachelle Alterman in this volume), enabled us to make a small opening in the "black box" between inputs and outputs and helped us to follow the causal process. We did not always have "hard" data (quantitative data, which appear precise) on which to base our conclusions, but in most cases we obtained "good" data--data to which a high degree of validity and authenticity could be attributed.

In contrast to many other evaluations of social programs, where lack of implementation or poor implementation led to the conclusion that "nothing works" (Gibson and Prathes, 1977), Project Renewal did work; budgets were utilized, and the programs reached their target populations in the selected distressed neighborhoods, even though not without some budget displacements and other problems (Alterman with Hill, 1985). The current paper, based on a specific part of the study (Carmon, 1985), concentrates on research findings related to achievement of Project goals.

### **EVALUATION OF GOAL ACHIEVEMENTS**

There is no formal statement of Project Renewal goals. Through a long process and many meetings with decision makers as well as with neighborhood residents, the researchers constructed a set of project goals to be evaluated. They include two main goals and several sub-goals, as follows:

- a) To reduce social disparities between the haves and have-nots in Israeli society:
  - \* to improve physical living conditions in the neighborhoods;
  - \* to improve social living conditions in the neighborhoods;
  - \* to promote social mobility of individuals residing in the neighborhoods;
  - \* to provide residents opportunities for more control over their lives.
  
- b) To improve the image of the selected neighborhoods and prevent their future deterioration.

### **Improving Physical Living Conditions in the Neighborhoods**

Physical conditions in the neighborhoods were not all that bad before Project Renewal entered the scene. Each household had a hard construction dwelling unit with the usual amenities: a private kitchen, toilet, and a bathroom with clear running water and electricity. Forty-six percent of the households in the ten research areas owned their dwellings, and almost all the rest rented from public holding companies, i.e., they paid very low rents for secure tenure. However, compared to other residential areas in Israel in the late 1970s and early 1980s, density rates per room were high, numerous buildings looked unattractive on the outside, and many needed repairs on the inside. There were problems with water and sewage systems, there were not enough paved sidewalks in some locations, and street lighting and open spaces were frequently neglected.

Close to 50 percent of Project revenues were invested in programs for improving housing conditions and physical infrastructure in the neighborhoods. The following four housing programs accounted for most of this investment.

- ***Encouraging purchase of rented dwellings by their dwellers***--Some 10 percent of the households took advantage of the convenient terms offered and purchased their homes from the public holding companies. The average rate of owner-occupancy in the ten neighborhoods increased to 55 percent.
- ***External renovations***--The buildings of about one-third of the households, more than half of them occupied by renters, were externally renovated. At the beginning, the public holding companies did most of the work, with hardly any participation of tenants in either the planning or the financing and execution of the renovations. In 1982, the Do It Yourself External Renovation program was introduced, under which residents were encouraged either to obtain materials from the local Project manager and to do the work themselves, or to plan and choose their own executor and share the expenses fifty-fifty with the Project. In 1985, two-thirds of the renovations were of the Do It Yourself type, and evidence of higher satisfaction and longer sustainability was found in several places.
- ***Internal renovations***--Six percent of the dwellings in the neighborhoods were internally renovated, while their occupants remained in them. Three-quarters of the renovations were done in rented apartments, most of whose occupants were from the poorest groups. The other quarter were implemented by owner-occupants who received subsidized loans from the Project.

- **Self-help housing enlargement**--Close to 10 percent of the housing stock in Project neighborhoods was enlarged with Project assistance. Enlargements usually added 15-115 percent to apartment areas. Most big enlargements were executed in two-story buildings, but with the gradually increasing administrative and technical assistance made available by Project Renewal, big enlargements were also carried out in apartments in three and four story buildings. Most of these improvements were initiated by owner-occupants, planned by them or with their active participation, financed by them with the help of Project loans (not grants), and implemented while they were living in the dwellings, inspecting every step and sometimes doing some of the work with their own hands. This is why they were termed "self-help" enlargements.

By 1985, half of the households in the investigated neighborhoods benefited from at least one of these housing improvement programs, and this fact represents a great achievement. Each of the programs had some success in making living conditions more similar to those in "mainstream" residential areas in the country, and, as such, contributed to the goal of reducing disparities.

The self-help enlargement program was by far the most significant program. It was not the biggest, and certainly not among the most expensive ones, but it was evaluated as the one with the largest multiplier (economically speaking) and the longest lasting positive social impacts (Carmon and Oxman, 1986; Carmon and Gavriell, 1987). It brought about considerable gains for three groups of beneficiaries. The first was the enlargers, who received more pleasant and spacious dwellings for their households, increased family property for both present and future use, and gained experience in implementing an economic project that required long-range planning and bargaining with many public and private bodies (thus, it is also related to the project sub-goal of giving residents more control over their lives). The second beneficiary was the neighborhoods, the housing conditions of which were considerably improved, saw a reduction in out-migration of socially and economically "strong" households, those who could purchase their apartments from the public companies and enlarge them. (This involves a contribution to the achievement of the goal of improving the image of the selected neighborhoods and preventing future deterioration.) The third beneficiary was the State of Israel; for relatively small public investment it gained an improved housing stock that could be used over a longer period of time, thus extending utilization of existing physical infrastructure as well as public and social services.

It should also be noted that strong statistical association was found between personal evaluation of the Project's contribution to one's dwelling and satisfaction with housing conditions. The latter, in turn, explains satisfaction with the neighborhood and in the intention to continue living in it.

### **Improving Social Living Conditions in the Neighborhoods**

Project Renewal allocated over half of its resources to social services provided to the residents of its selected neighborhoods. The beneficiary rates were usually high, as reported by Table 1, based on three-year data collection in the ten research neighborhoods.

Allocation for improvement of *educational services* were particularly high, especially if one considers that only one-third of the education budget was invested in renovation and equipment of classes, while the rest went for educational activities. The evaluation study included a special sub-study of Project programs for elementary school students. This was, in fact, another stage in a series of comparative studies made of Israel's educational inputs, initiated by the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs (Minkowitz, Davis, and Baschi, 1977; Razel, 1978; Davis, Sprinzak, and Ossizon, 1982); it relied on the same questionnaire for school principals that was used by its predecessors. The earlier studies concluded that despite the formal policy of "positive discrimination" in schools with a large percentage of educationally deprived students, children in schools in middle and higher-status neighborhoods still enjoyed more educational inputs than those in poor neighborhoods. Our very detailed comparison showed the Project Renewal funding tipped the balance, so that the "positive discrimination" policy was indeed successfully implemented in Project neighborhoods. The schools in the research neighborhoods received more educational enrichment programs of numerous and varying types than did other schools with the same high rates of educationally deprived students who did not have the benefit of Project involvement. Moreover, Project research neighborhoods were found to offer more programs than schools in well-established neighborhoods with small numbers of educationally deprived students. The reader should note that this evaluation relates only to service provision and not to students' achievements, for which appropriate data were not available.

With the aid of Project Renewal, considerable change was achieved in the availability of *cultural and leisure time services*. In each of the studied neighborhoods, the Project funded the construction and/or renovation of buildings serving as community centers and public libraries, and in each one of them it added sports facilities. However, these physical improvements were not accompanied by comparable increases in cultural and social activity; patterns of spending leisure time did not change significantly.

Table 1

**Allocation for Social Services and Rates of Beneficiaries  
in the Research Neighborhoods, 1982-84**

Area of Project Activity	% of Budget*	% Beneficiaries of Relevant Age Group
<b>Education</b>	27.0	
Toddlers		25
Kindergarten Age		75
Elementary School Age		90
High School Age		40
"Alienated" Youth	1.5	
<b>Community Services</b>		
Cultural and Social Activities	20.0	20
Community Organization	0.2	minor
<b>Health</b>	2.5	minor
<b>Employment</b>	0.5	minor
<b>Personal Welfare</b>	3.0	minor
<b>Elderly</b>	3.5	35

\*The rest was allocated to housing and physical infrastructure.

As indicated by the table, the Project allocations for *health* and *individual welfare services* were quite limited, and therefore, no significant change was found in these areas. The only other field of social services on which the Project had a sizeable effect was *services to the elderly*, who constituted, on the average, 10 percent of the population. The greatest improvement for the elderly was in community services, including a slight increase in home services (household help, meals on wheels, and the like) and a higher increase in services outside the home, like new clubhouses and day centers. The primary beneficiaries were the healthier and independently functioning; only a very limited percentage of the disabled and ailing benefited from the increased services.

### **Promoting Social Mobility of Individuals Residing in the Neighborhoods**

Changes in personal status are effected through the channels of education, employment and/or politics.

*Adult education* was promoted somewhat by Project Renewal, through assistance to residents of the two extremes of the educational scale. The Project supported basic education; over twelve hundred participated in such classes in the ten neighborhoods studied; and the Project provided several dozen university students in each neighborhood with modest fellowships. For the first group, it was a real step ahead in their social status; for the second group it involved only limited financial aid, which probably did not have much impact on the basic decision to pursue higher education.

*Male employment* was not affected by the Project. Most males of working age, except for the disabled, were employed, the great majority as laborers, both skilled (41 percent) and unskilled (25 percent), and the Project supported only a few short training courses aimed at improving their occupational status. Unemployment was frequent among the women, and their situation was somewhat changed through the Project. As a matter of policy, the Project employed a few women in each neighborhood, most as paraprofessionals. Moreover, the Project had an impact on the motivation of women to work outside the home which went beyond the small increase in the number of employed women. We found significant differences between unemployed women who took part in Project activities and those who did not: 44 percent of the former group, in comparison to 29 percent of the latter, expressed a desire to work for money ( $P \leq .0001$ ). A reasonable hypothesis is that the opinions and attitudes transmitted in the course of the women's participation in various study and special interest groups generated greater motivation to work.

A third channel of social mobility is the *political channel*. We found that participation in bodies set up to make decisions on neighborhood matters provided an opportunity for the accumulation of



power resources for those residents who took part (Churchman, 1985). In each place there were a few (usually no more than 20) activists, who obtained positions of power in the neighborhood even at the local government level. Moreover, in the course of their participation, these residents learned the ropes of dealing with local and national institutions, a lesson that is likely to assist them in future contacts with any organization or workplace.

In summary, the findings show that Project Renewal promoted the social mobility of some of the residents and improved the chances for mobility of others. This was achieved by increasing formal and informal educational services, particularly for children but also somewhat for adults, by increasing the motivation to work among some of the participants in its programs, especially women, by altering attitudes toward political participation, and by offering a few opportunities for the accumulation of political power. These changes directly promoted the social status of a few—not many—residents, at least within the context of their own neighborhoods. In coming years, there may be further impacts, but it is doubtful whether it will be possible to measure them.

### **Providing Residents Opportunities for More Control Over Their Lives**

The possession of adequate economic and power resources is considered a precondition for controlling one's life. Residents of distressed neighborhoods frequently do not have enough resources, and they therefore tend to exhibit over-dependency and lack of personal initiative. The Project aimed at providing them with opportunities for more control over their lives. Although it did not open new higher-income opportunities for them, it did provide some possibilities for political participation and encourage self-help activities.

A Project innovation and a great achievement in this respect was the creation of a local steering committee in each neighborhood. It included 22 voting members, half of whom represented local, regional, and national authorities, and half neighborhood residents. Under the auspices of the steering committee, subcommittees were established to deal with special issues (pre-schoolers, the elderly, housing, and the like); these were also comprised of a combination of residents and professionals, and they were often chaired by residents.

According to Churchman (1985), "full partnership" in the design of programs was achieved in only three of the ten research neighborhoods, in four of them the residents had some impact, and in the other three, almost all decision-making power remained in the hands of officials. In each neighborhood, including those that reached high levels of partnership, only a small number of residents participated in the process. But when we add this modest achievement in advancing democracy to the more widespread activities of self-help housing

renovations and enlargements, and to the changes in women's motivation to work for pay discussed above, we may conclude that the Project had significant impact on encouraging people to take personal initiative and control over their lives. In addition, it seemed to influence the institutionalization of local groups, as well as the dissemination of new ideas about resident participation in planning and implementation.

### **Reduction of Social Disparities in Israeli Society**

The combined achievements of the above sub-goals were expected to contribute to the main goal of reducing social disparities in monetary and money-equivalent resources, in power resources, and in prestige between groups of haves and have-nots in Israeli society.

The most common measure relates to *monetary and money-equivalent resources*. With the exception of a very few cases, Project Renewal barely had an impact on household income from work, because it operated almost no employment programs. Neither did it affect the level of transfer payments (such as children's benefits and old-age pensions), which represent an important part of family income in the neighborhoods. It probably did lead to greater expenses in many homes, certainly for those who took out loans for housing improvement, but also for those who increased their consumption of paid-for social services. However, when one considers not only money but also family property and the services it utilizes, the conclusion is that the total resources held by many of the families increased as a result of Project Renewal activities. During its first five years of full operation, the Project spent, on the average, \$700 annually per household in the selected neighborhoods. Little of that was given as service-directed money (housing loans, school fellowships), less than 10 percent was spent on administration and planning, and the rest was invested in improving neighborhood services.

Looking at the distribution of benefits among the various socio-economic groups in the neighborhoods, it was found that both the "stronger" and the "weaker" groups benefitted. Improvements in formal education in the elementary schools, to which a prominent part of the budget was devoted, reached 90 percent of the children of the neighborhoods, and these children came from all groups. Exterior renovations were carried out mainly in buildings populated by renters, generally the "weaker" among the residents; loans for housing expansions were given primarily (though by no means exclusively) to "stronger" households with relatively greater resources. Additions to cultural and community services were also utilized more by the latter group than by the former, but here, too, there were special programs for "weaker" residents, such as the elderly.

Housing, physical infrastructure, and educational and cultural services in Project neighborhoods were rendered more similar to the services generally found in middle-class neighborhoods in Israel. This is particularly conspicuous in terms of housing, especially in small, low-rise buildings, which were enlarged and coated so as to resemble private homes in prestigious neighborhoods. The white stucco sprayed on many of the blockhouses also increased the visual similarity between the different types of neighborhoods. Some criticize this, saying that it involved only cosmetic treatment, and is therefore meaningless. However, cosmetic treatment is also valuable, as evident in the amount of time and effort people invest in it. This is particularly true with regard to housing, which serves as a central status symbol in modern society in which many traditional status symbols no longer exist.

Eschel and Peres (1973) found that acquiring an "Israeli" *lifestyle* had a direct effect on socioeconomic status. The lifestyle of the upper-middle class, which is generally that aspired to by those seeking social mobility, is that of modern Western society. Our research included no special investigation of the elements of lifestyle, but there was some evidence that the Project had a "Westernizing" and "modernizing" impact on families involved in its programs. The fairly extensive community activities generated by the Project highlighted the importance of attaining status in the community, and not only within the family. By increasing the social-cultural programs available in the neighborhoods, they encouraged people to spend more of their leisure time outside of the family. The cultural offerings such as physical fitness, pottery, Western music, or European theater, were often borrowed from higher-status groups and unfamiliar to the majority of the population of the neighborhoods. In some of the families there was a gradual change in women's self-image and in their status within the family and outside of it, a change related to going out of the house on their own, whether to work for pay or to participate in community activities. In addition, greater resemblance to higher-prestige neighborhoods emerged in the patterns of cultivation of the home and surroundings, sometimes through increased involvement with engineers and architects who accompanied Project Renewal.

The Project also had an impact, albeit weaker, on the distribution of *power resources*. The power (i.e., the ability to influence others) of a few residents of each neighborhood increased considerably as a result of their participation in the decision-making bodies of the Project, the steering committees and their subcommittees. Moreover, a sense of increased power became quite widespread, as indicated by the responses of 24 percent of the Household Survey interviewees, who reported that they felt they had the opportunity to influence Project activities in their neighborhood.

Very little if any change occurred in the amount of *prestige resources* of the residents of the neighborhoods affected by the Project. Material resources added by Project revenues were widely distributed amongst the population in the neighborhoods, as were the power resources. Thus, a large portion of the target population advanced, and this group mobility reduced the impression of personal advancement, as well as the rewards of prestige generally enjoyed by individuals as they advance. The finding that a project directed to the population of an area as a whole contributed more to group mobility than to individual mobility is not surprising. At the same time, it is no wonder that individuals whose situation had improved materially, and perhaps also in terms of power, were disappointed because they were not rewarded with more prestige. It may be that they were deprived of this benefit because they responded to the aim of the Project and continued living in their neighborhoods.

#### **Improving the Image of the Selected Neighborhoods and Preventing Their Future Deterioration**

The second main goal of Project Renewal was related less to people and more to places, i.e., to the neighborhoods as functioning urban units. Several indicators were used to measure changes in the status of the neighborhoods. One was the overall migration balance which was found to be stable, and another was the characteristics of in-migrants during the Project period, who were found to resemble "stronger" segments of the existing population. Still another indication was apartment prices in the free market. They rose considerably in the studied Project areas, as did prices throughout the country, but in relative terms they remained stable compared to similar dwellings in "better" neighborhoods in the same city. In a few places only, a comparison could be made between apartment prices in a Project neighborhood and those of similar units in a distressed residential area in the same city that was not part of the Project. In these few cases, it was found that prices in the Project areas had risen somewhat more than those in the comparable neighborhoods.

Subjective indicators also pointed to some positive impact. A multiple regression analysis of the findings of the Household Survey revealed that being beneficiaries of Project Renewal and having a positive attitude towards the Project were significant in explaining the variance in rates of residents who expressed satisfaction with their neighborhoods and the intent to continue residing in them in the foreseeable future. The image of most of the areas studied, as perceived by their residents, changed for the better during the Project period, and this improvement--usually slight--was credited to the Project. However, the neighborhoods' image did not change in the eyes

of most other city residents. Only residents of non-Project distressed areas changed their image of the Project neighborhoods for the better.

Thus, the Project did not bring revolutionary change to the status of its neighborhoods. Actually, there was no reason to expect this from a program that observed the principles of working with current low-status populations and avoiding relocation and gentrification. A realistic goal is the prevention of deterioration and achievement of stability at an acceptable level. An acceptable level is one at which there is a moderate gap between the living conditions in the neighborhood and those in middle-income areas, and the place is attractive enough to serve as a residential area, not only for the lowest-status group but also for working people with stable families. In order to establish relative stability of status, and assuming that the standard of living of the rest of the society is steadily rising, one must strive for a constant process of improvement in the neighborhoods. The findings of the evaluation study point in the desired direction: it seems that the Project had some success in advancing its goals and in establishing mechanisms to enhance a process of continuous improvements that may be expected to prevent future deterioration.

## CONCLUSION

In spite of the limitations of the current evaluation study, it seems reasonable to conclude that the modest achievements of Project Renewal can be considered a success, especially when compared to outcomes of previous neighborhood rehabilitation programs in Israel and in other countries. It was implemented, and it succeeded in improving the living conditions (services) of its target population. It also improved the target neighborhoods, at least to the point that prevented deterioration, i.e., it enabled them to keep their relative status in spite of rapid increase in the standard of living in better residential areas.

In order to be able to utilize and improve upon this experience in other places and later times, it is essential to analyze the factors behind the relative success. In another paper in this volume, Rachelle Alterman begins this analysis by pointing to the specific principles of operation of Project Renewal, which were based on lessons from former programs, especially the American Model Cities of the 1960s. Other explanations (Carmon, forthcoming) are related to securing wide public support and to selecting appropriate target neighborhoods, as well as to adopting a special strategy of public-individual partnership. Without ignoring differences of context and culture, this Israeli experience can be used to enhance the knowledge of the planning profession regarding neighborhood programs.

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