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Social Planning of Housing*

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ABSTRACT

A planner should be aware of alternative social goals of housing planning. For example: to encourage frequent contacts and manifest neighbourliness, or to plan for maximum privacy; to strive for ethnic integration through ethnically mixed housing or to let people live close to those who resemble themselves, as they usually prefer. The selection of social goals involves value judgements, but opinions differ about the question of whose values should be considered in this decision process.

Once the basic value judgements are made and the social goals selected, the planner looks for ways to realize the goals. This paper surveys sociological studies which define some of the relevant factors and provide guidance concerning social conditions in which physical planning can contribute to the realization of selected goals.

VALUE JUDGEMENTS

Should a planner try to manipulate social relations through housing planning? At first glance this seems to be a value-judgement question, the answer to which depends on one's opinion concerning the extent to which people's lives should be planned by others. However, we must look beyond this first impression. We have hard data to back the assumption that housing always has some impact on the social relations of its tenants. Thus the planner, whether intentionally or not, does affect social contact. The planner's value questions are therefore not whether to manipulate social relations, but what should be the goals of his manipulation, and who would choose these goals.

For illustration, let us consider two principal social questions related to housing planning.

Neighbourliness as a Planner's Goal. There is a consensus that the general meaning of 'neighbourliness' is: good relations among people who live close

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to each other. There is also general agreement that it is a reasonable planning goal. However, there is no consensus regarding the operational definition, the actual meaning of these 'good relations'. Some suggest that 'latent neighbourliness' is the best expression of good relations: positive attitudes towards neighbours, combined with mutual respect of the others' privacy; an external expression of the positive attitudes would appear only in a case of crises or emergency. Others claim that only 'manifest neighbourliness' is good enough for neighbours to live with, and this means frequent contacts among the residents for various purposes, from mutual help to common entertainment. Thus, a value judgement the planner must make, or ask someone to make, is the interpretation of 'good' relations which he will adopt as a social goal for a certain housing project.

Ethnic Heterogeneity as a Planner's Goal. Racial and ethnic segregation are considered contradictory to democratic values. Racial and ethnic segregation are described repeatedly in the literature as prime catalytic agents of negative attitudes, prejudice and tension among social groups, which in turn tend to bring about violent outbursts, crime and delinquency. For these reasons, most countries aim at ethnic integration within their nations.

Assuming that a housing planner can contribute by planning certain types of heterogeneous residential areas to the achievement of the national goal of ethnic integration,¹ he confronts a difficult choice among alternative value-loaded alternatives: Should he plan a heterogeneous neighbourhood in order to serve the national goal, or should he respect the value of individual freedom to decide next to whom one wants to live, and with whose children one wants one's own children to study in the neighbourhood school, even if the outcome is planning a homogeneous neighbourhood?

A Possible Conflict between Neighbourliness and Heterogeneity as Planner's Goals. According to a certain combination of social values, a planner may strive for both neighbourliness and heterogeneity in his planned housing project. However, social research has shown that neighbourliness develops more easily in a more homogeneous neighbourhood. So, which goal should the planner prefer? How much of each goal shall he sacrifice in order to achieve a certain level of both? This is another value judgement the housing planner faces.

Whose Goals? Whose Values? The above were presented as the planner's questions. However, although he is the one who should collect and use the

¹ I shall discuss this assumption in a following section.

answers in his planning, we did not assume that his own set of values should prescribe them.

There are several possible participants whose values may determine, or at least be considered, for determining the social goals of a housing project: the users of the houses, certain public agencies, the developers, and the planners. There are different opinions concerning the part each of these should take in the process.

There are planners who are inclined to take the whole burden on their own shoulders. They accept a very wide interpretation of the professional mandate provided them by society. They see themselves as social physicians. As such, they believe they can diagnose, and they can and must heal social maladies through physical planning. The well-known paper by Christopher Alexander, 'The City as a Mechanism for Sustaining Human Contact',² is a good example of this type of legitimation for a planner's interference with others' lives. The author diagnoses the autonomy-withdrawal syndrome, and sees himself as authorized to provide a 'medicine' in the shape of housing planning, which penetrates deeply into the private life of each family of residents and forces it into intimate contact with other residents of the neighbourhood.

There may also be a different way which leads to the same conclusion, namely, that the planner should be left to plan according to his personal social values. The argument is that residents are not forced into any particular housing project. The planner offers them a certain design, and they are free to choose a different project if they do not like his values and interpretations. However, there are two strong counter-arguments: first, very frequently, people (especially the poor) cannot afford to choose, and second, in many cases, people are not aware of the social implications of the physical structure, and it is not legitimate to take advantage of their ignorance.

According to a different point of view the basic social goals of housing planning should be determined by public agencies, preferably elected authorities, which are the best-known representatives of the public.

But there are also others who claim that the democratic ideology obliges the authorities and the planners to make every possible effort to discover the values and attitudes of the future users of the housing project, and adjust accordingly. This quest for citizen participation in planning can, in practice, be given many different interpretations, from indirect participation through structured questionnaires to open planning sessions and general votes. The realization of each involves many difficulties which are increased as the participation becomes more direct.

² C. Alexander, 'The City as a Mechanism for Sustaining Human Contact', in W. R. Ewald (ed.), *Environment for Men: The Next Fifty Years*, Indiana University Press, 1967.

However, even if we find appropriate ways for citizen participation,³ and personally I am convinced it is desirable and possible, a few open questions still remain.

In the case where the population was previously known and its opinion was checked and found to be different from that of other public representatives, then whose values should be adopted? For example, if the city council decides to build an ethnically mixed neighbourhood, and this decision suits the national policy in this matter, but the residents of the area oppose this decision, whose values should then be preferred?

In the case of an unknown target population, whose values should determine the social goals of the construction?

And last, but not least, in cases in which the target citizens or public agencies or other bodies participate in the decision making, what should be the planner's part? Should he serve as a technician only, one who executes others' goals and decisions, or should he in every case take an active role in the process of determining the project goals? Responsible professionals believe that the planner should be more than a technician. He should contribute to the decision process his knowledge of the alternative goals, their possible integration and the possible conflicts among them.⁴

SOCIAL RESEARCH FINDINGS AS GUIDES FOR REALIZING PLANNING GOALS

Once the relevant value decisions have been made, the planner should select suitable ways to realize the selected goals. Social research findings can provide him some guidance in his search for appropriate methods.

The Extent of the Expected Impact of Housing on Social Relations. There are planners who believe in architectural determinism. According to this approach architectural planning has a direct and deterministic impact on people's behaviour. This is a one-way process, in which the physical environment is the independent variable and the social behaviour is the dependent one. Bauer⁵ expressed it in the following words: 'The tenant's entire social life may hang on the smallest whim of the greenest drafts-

man.' Rosow⁶ wrote that 'In planned communities friendship groups are determined by two variables: proximity of neighbors and orientation of dwellings. People select their friends primarily from those who live nearby and those whom their home faces.'

If this architectural determinism is a real fact, it enlarges the role of the architect in society. It means that he controls the social as well as the physical environment. No wonder, then, that many architects tend to accept this approach. However, social research does not support this deterministic view. Indeed, most social researchers who deal with the subject find that the physical environment has various degrees of impact on social behaviour. But in all cases they emphasize that the physical factor is only one of several influential factors, and that its relative importance differs according to different social circumstances. Their conclusion is that the planner should be aware of the divergent social settings he is called to work within, and to expect differential extents and directions of impact, accordingly.

Impact on Neighbourliness. A well-known study by Festinger, Schachter and Back⁷ tested the spatial basis of social relations in a student housing project at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. They found that the closer the housing units the more social contacts took place between their occupants. They differentiated between physical distance (as measured by ruler distance) and functional distance (as measured by the distribution of apartments through the area, their paths and entrance directions), and found the latter to have a greater impact. They concluded that active friendly relationships depended to a considerable extent on passive contacts, while contacts, in turn, were determined by functional and physical distances between the students' apartments.

Merton⁸ showed that physical distance between dwelling units, and especially orientation of front doors, had a considerable impact on the social relations of Craftown's residents. Caplow and Forman,⁹ Kuper¹⁰ in Coventry (England), Whyte¹¹ in Park-Forest (USA), and Blake *et al.*¹² in a

⁶ I. Rosow, 'The Social Effects of the Physical Environment', *Journal of American Institute of Planning*, 1961, Vol. 27, pp. 127-33.

⁷ L. Festinger, S. Schachter and K. Back, *Social Pressures in Informal Groups: A Study of Human Factors in Housing*, New York: Harper, 1950.

⁸ R. K. Merton, 'The Social Psychology of Housing', in W. Dennis *et al.* (eds), *Current Trends in Social Psychology*, Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 1948, pp. 163-218.

⁹ T. Caplow and R. Forman, 'Neighbourhood Interaction in a Homogeneous Community', *American Sociological Review*, 1950, Vol. 15, pp. 357-66.

¹⁰ L. Kuper, 'Blueprint for Living Together', in L. Kuper (ed.), *Living in Towns*, London: The Cresset Press, 1953.

¹¹ W. H. Whyte, *The Organization Man*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956.

¹² R. R. Blake, C. C. Rhead, B. Wedge and J. S. Mouton, 'Housing Architecture and Social Interaction', *Sociometry*, 1956, Vol. 19, pp. 133-9.

³ In recent years many reports of citizen participation experiments have been published and the difficulties widely discussed. See, for example, H. B. C. Speigel, *Citizen Participation in Urban Development*, Washington, D.C.: NTL Institute for Applied Behavioral Science, 1968, and D. P. Moynihan, *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding: Community Action in the War on Poverty*, New York: Free Press, 1968.

⁴ For an elaboration of this idea, see H. J. Gans, 'From Urbanism to Planning', *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 1970, Vol. 36, pp. 223-5.

⁵ C. Bauer, 'Good Neighbourhoods', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 1945, Vol. 242, pp. 104-15.

study of friendship groups in the Armed Forces, also found various associations between spatial structure and social structure. Katz and Hill¹³ review a list of empirical research works which concluded that the closer the residences of unmarried couples, the higher the probability that they will get married. Williams *et al.*¹⁴ found that the warmth of active friendships is directly related to residential proximity. Yarosz and Bradley¹⁵ demonstrated associations between physical distance and sociometric choices. Ritter¹⁶ compared a sample of 242 pairs of houses and showed that path-access layout generated more mutual help among families with children and more shared leisure activity. Priest and Sawyer¹⁷ reported that students tend to know and like those who live close to them. Another project in student housing was administered by Case¹⁸ at Princeton University, in which he found significant evidence supporting his hypotheses concerning the impact of the buildings set-up on the social life of its residents.

It seems that there is an agreement between these numerous researchers concerning the remarkable impact of components of the built environment on the attitudes and behaviour of the people within it. However, their findings are not generalizable to all neighbourhoods because the studied areas cannot be considered as a representative sample of the various social combinations of residential areas. The majority of these studies were carried out in homogeneous neighbourhoods. The student housing studied was homogeneous from many points of view: race, religion, class of origin, level of education, age, and stage in family life. The other researched areas were also characterized by many of these homogeneous components.

Two principal conclusions relevant to planning can be based on these social research findings:

(a) The more homogeneous the group of residents, the higher the potential of neighbourliness.¹⁹

¹³ A. M. Katz and R. Hill, 'Residential Proximity and Marital Selection: A Review of Theory, Method and Fact', *Marriage and Family Living*, 1958, Vol. 20, pp. 27-35.

¹⁴ R. M. Williams *et al.*, *Friendships and Social Values in a Suburban Community*, Eugene, Oregon: University of Oregon Press, 1956.

¹⁵ E. J. Yarosz and H. Bradley, 'The Relationship Between Physical Distance and Sociometric Choices in Two Residence Halls', *International Journal of Sociometry and Sociality*, 1963, Vol. 3, pp. 42-55.

¹⁶ P. Ritter, *Planning for Man and Motor*, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1964.

¹⁷ R. F. Priest and J. Sawyer, 'Proximity and Peership: Bases Balance in Interpersonal Attraction', *American Journal of Sociology*, 1967, Vol. 72, pp. 631-49.

¹⁸ D. F. Case (Ed), *The Influence of Architecture on Patterns of Social Life*, Unpublished Junior Paper, Princeton University, Department of Sociology, 1967.

¹⁹ For discussions of this subject see also H. J. Gans, 'Planning and Social Life', *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 1961, Vol. 27, pp. 134-40. P. Willmott, *The Evolution of a Community*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963, and A. K. Tomel, 'Empirical Considerations in the Problem of Social Integration', *Sociological Inquiry*, 1969, Vol. 39, pp. 65-76. It should be noted that one disagreement with this common rule is found in

(b) The higher the homogeneity, the more impact the physical setting of the housing units has on the social relations between the residents. The meaning of both points from the planner's point of view is that through suitable planning he can achieve a high level of neighbourliness, providing that the dwelling population is sufficiently homogeneous.

Impact on Inter-ethnic Relations. Social policy makers are very interested in releasing inter-ethnic tension, which exists in almost all countries containing ethnic minorities. Housing segregation is usually considered as an obstacle in this context, and ethnically mixed housing, which forces contact between adults and children of different origin, is looked upon as a cure.²⁰ However, sociological studies of ethnically mixed neighbourhoods show that dwelling proximity does not always improve inter-ethnic relations.

The study of Hilltown by Merton, West and Jahoda²¹ showed that white residents who had previously had neighbouring experience with blacks were significantly more optimistic about future race relations in Hilltown than a group of white residents who had not had such experience. Two comprehensive studies regarding the impact of ethnically mixed public housing on inter-racial attitudes of the residents were administered by Deutsch and Collins²² and Wilner *et al.*²³ Both of them concluded that physical proximity released many of the white residents from their prejudice against blacks. Other American researches by Jahoda and West,²⁴ Irish,²⁵ Mear and Freedman,²⁶ and Pettigrew²⁷ came to similar conclusions. British studies by Daniel²⁸ and Rose *et al.*²⁹ also reported that whites who

T. Lee, 'Urban Neighborhood as a Socio-Spatial Schema', *Human Relations*, 1968, Vol. 21, pp. 241-66.

²⁰ See G. and E. Grier, *Equality and Beyond - Housing Segregation and the Goals of Great Society*, Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1966, and J. B. Cullingworth, *Problems of an Urban Society*, Vol. II: *The Social Content of Planning*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1973.

²¹ R. K. Merton, P. S. West and M. Jahoda, *The Dynamics of Race Relations in Hilltown*, New York: Columbia University, Bureau of Applied Social Research, 1949.

²² M. Deutsch and M. E. Collins, *Interracial Housing: A Psychological Evaluation of Social Experiment*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1951.

²³ D. M. Wilner, R. P. Walkey and S. W. Cook, 'Residential Proximity and Intergroup Relations in Public Housing Projects', *Journal of Social Issues*, 1952, Vol. 8, pp. 43-69, and D. M. Wilner and S. W. Cook, *Human Relations in Interracial Housing: A Study of Contact Hypothesis*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955.

²⁴ M. Jahoda and P. S. West, 'Race Relations in Public Housing', *Journal of Social Issues*, 1951, Vol. 7, Special Housing Issue.

²⁵ D. P. Irish, 'Reactions of Caucasian Residents to Japanese-American Neighbors', *Journal of Social Issues*, 1952, Vol. 8, pp. 10-17.

²⁶ B. Mear and E. Freedman, 'The Impact of Negro Neighbors on White House Owners', *Social Forces*, 1966, Vol. 45, pp. 11-19.

²⁷ I. F. Pettigrew, 'Racially Separate or Together', *Journal of Social Issues*, 1969, Vol. 25, pp. 43-69.

²⁸ W. W. Daniel, *Racial Discrimination in England*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968.

²⁹ E. J. B. Rose *et al.*, *Colour and Citizenship: A Report on British Race Relations*, London: Oxford University Press, 1969.

live close to coloured people tend to be more tolerant towards them than those who live far away from them.

However, Kramer (in Allport⁸⁰) and Winder⁸¹ found that hostility of whites towards blacks increased when blacks started to move close to, or into, white neighbourhoods. Fishman⁸² and Wolf⁸³ found that the most prejudiced whites were in some cases the ones who lived in all-black blocks, that is in very close contact with blacks, while the least prejudiced were those who lived in completely white blocks. Findings in the same direction were reported in an American nationwide study of integrated neighbourhoods by Bradburn *et al.*:⁸⁴ the whites living in areas with substantial numbers of blacks had a somewhat less favourable attitude towards blacks than those living in areas with only a small number of blacks.

This conflicting evidence is explained by the social scientists as resulting from the different social and economic characteristics of the neighbourhood in which these studies were administered. Thus, the general conclusion of the studies is that changes through time in social attitudes and contacts with minority groups in ethnically mixed neighbourhoods depend mainly on the social conditions in which the inter-ethnic meeting takes place.

Social conditions such as limited employment of certain types, or limited housing in certain price ranges, may cause one ethnic group to see the other as a dangerous competitor, and as a result strengthen negative inter-ethnic attitudes and behaviour. In addition, when the majority group considers its status or the value of its property to be threatened by the introduction of a minority group, one finds that physical proximity harms ethnic relations and increases tension between the groups.

On the other hand, there are social conditions which provide physical planning a good opportunity to improve ethnic interrelations. The first rule, with which almost all scholars agree, is that good inter-ethnic relations in an ethnically mixed neighbourhood can be expected only if the neighbourhood is homogeneous from the point of view of socio-economic status, or if contact is between lower status majority group members and a minority group of higher status. A second important condition is a social climate supporting inter-ethnic contacts. A reasonable way to create it is to

⁸⁰ G. W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1954.

⁸¹ A. E. Winder, 'White Attitudes toward Negro-White Interaction in an Area of Changing Racial Composition', *American Psychologist*, 1952, Vol. 7, pp. 330-1.

⁸² J. A. Fishman, 'Some Social and Psychological Determinants of Intergroup Relations in Changing Neighborhoods', *Social Forces*, 1961, Vol. 40, pp. 42-51.

⁸³ E. P. Wolf, 'Racial Transition in a Middle Class Area', *Journal of American Institute of Planners*, 1963, Vol. 24, pp. 217-22.

⁸⁴ N. M. Bradburn, S. Sudman and G. L. Gockel, *Side by Side: Integrated Neighborhoods in America*, Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971.

plan a neighbourhood in advance for mixed population (as was done in a few public housing projects). In this case the tenants are aware of the support of the authorities, who planned and built the housing, as well as of individuals who came to live in the area. In addition, there are no threats to status by unexpected neighbours. In such a positive background there is a good chance for the rising of common interests, such as paving a road or building another kindergarten, which usually fosters neighbours towards interaction and common activities. The emphasis of common interests may be considered as a third desirable condition to open the way for neighbourliness.

If the above social conditions exist, at least partly, and preferably with other supportive circumstances, then one may expect the physical setting to provide an important contribution to the shaping of positive inter-relationships among neighbours, to releasing inter-ethnic tension and to improving relations between individuals of different ethnic origin. Only within such social settings is there good reason for planners to look for appropriate physical distances and functional distances to open and shorten the ways for friendship among neighbours.

The Israeli Experience. Through public control of the absorption processes of mass immigration and the planning of some thirty new towns, Israeli officials and researchers had many opportunities to consider social aspects of housing planning and to experiment with them in the field. Although this 'natural laboratory' has not been well researched and documented, one can find numerous reports of housing experiences in urban areas. While there is no major research effort concerning the impact of housing design on neighbourliness, there are many studies of particular aspects of housing and inter-ethnic relations.

Inter-ethnic problems in Israel emerge primarily from the demographic and cultural differences between Israelis from Asian and African countries (usually named the eastern groups) and those of European origin (the western groups). While basically similar differences exist in other immigration countries, there is a major difference between Israel and other countries: it lies in the fact that the notion of 'One Nation' dominates the Israeli scene. Expressions of this notion can be seen in every sphere of life, and in housing as well. There are no all-western or all-eastern neighbourhoods in Israel, as there are all-white and all-black resident areas in the USA. The differences are between different ratios of the various groups in the neighbourhoods. In addition, in spite of the existence of stereotypes and social distance between the groups, no one in Israel has argued in public that anyone has been prevented from buying or renting a certain

dwelling unit only because he belongs to a certain origin group. That is to say, the previously mentioned desirable precondition of a social climate supporting inter-ethnic contacts is always there, at least in the normative and legislative spheres.

This may partly explain the typical Israeli finding that the frequency distribution of Socio-Economic Status (SES) of families in a neighbourhood has more impact on the nature of the neighbour relations than ethnic composition. Although low SES is more frequent in the eastern groups than in the western ones (see Klaff⁸⁶), there is no complete overlapping of SES and ethnic origin, and the researcher can usually measure the net impact of each one of them.

The best-documented finding in this context⁸⁷ is that the people with lowest SES (no schooling, very low income, temporary jobs, if at all) are usually disconnected from the social setting, no matter what physical or social environment they are in. This suggests that, for this type of resident, housing can serve only as one of the necessary means for physical improvement. It is only after crossing the line of minimal welfare that a person becomes open to benefit from other implications of the housing environment.

Focusing upon all other SES groups, experience in heterogeneous residential areas in Israel⁸⁷ provides additional relevant planning conclusions:

- (a) A heterogeneous neighbourhood should consist of several homogeneous units.
- (b) Each homogeneous unit should be large enough to prevent phenomena of social loneliness, but not so large as to become independent and disconnected from the other units.
- (c) Homogeneous units of a weaker ethnic or economic group should be scattered among stronger homogeneous groups.
- (d) The differences between the kinds of group should be moderated. For example: low-income families should be mixed with middle-income rather than high-income families; or, if ethnic origin is different, SES should be kept similar.

⁸⁶ V. Z. Klaff, 'Ethnic Segregation in Israel', *Demography*, 1973, Vol. 10, pp. 161-84.

⁸⁷ See A. Paldi, *Kiryat Malachi - Adjustment to Physical and Social Environment in Development Towns*, Ministry of Housing, Department of Social and Economic Research, Housing and Construction, 1965, No. 16 (Hebrew); A. Doron, *Ofalim - Social and Economic Development*, Ministry of Housing, Department of Social and Economic Research, Housing and Construction, 1969, No. 32 (Hebrew); and A. Doron and R. Abelson, *Shderot - Social and Economic Development*, Ministry of Housing, Department of Social and Economic Research, *Housing and Construction*, 1972, No. 36 (Hebrew).

⁸⁸ See especially Y. Ben-Yizhak et al., *Heterogeneous Neighbourhoods*, Sociological Service Company Ltd, prepared for the Ministry of Housing, Israel (Hebrew), 1974.

(e) It is desirable that in the neighbourhood as a whole there will be more families of the stronger than of the weaker group.

(f) Well-developed social services should be planned for a heterogeneous neighbourhood. At least three good reasons can be cited for that: first, it is necessary for the sake of the weaker group of families, which need more social services; second, it can serve as an important natural meeting place for all the different people of the heterogeneous area; and third, it may increase the prestige of the neighbourhood among the other neighbourhoods, thereby positively affecting its external and internal image, and the self-respect of its residents.

(g) A heterogeneous neighbourhood should be large - more than a thousand families, probably two or three thousand - in order to provide for two factors: first, to enable sufficient numbers of homogeneous units of reasonable size, as mentioned above; second, to support the desired public services.

The lesson of the Israeli experience is that legislative and normative support of integration are important but not sufficient conditions for successful integrated housing. Only careful planning of 'balanced' communities can achieve the goal.

SUMMARY

The main ideas suggested by this paper are:

- (a) A defined set of social goals for a housing project must be available to the planner before he can determine the size of the target neighbourhood and its desired public services, as well as the number and location of residential units of each type, price, and size. These factors will vary according to the numbers and characteristics of the different social groups one plans to attract to the project.
- (b) Selecting social goals is not a technical question. It is rather a question of value judgements, and opinions differ as to who should be the decision makers. However, it would seem useful for the planner to be one of the participants in the decision process.
- (c) Social Research can provide planners with a few planning techniques for realizing the selected social goals.