



Building Community: Raising of Social capital as a platform for Strengthening Communitarianism

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Rationale

Israeli society, like many other western societies, has gone through profound societal changes as a result of changes in state policy in the fields of education and social services. The gradual demise of the welfare state, eventually forced local authorities, businesses and non governmental organizations (NGO's) into fields of activity until recently under the jurisdiction of the Israeli central government . The Second Lebanese war in 2006 served to deepen these roles. It demonstrated the disconnection between different components within the community and the difference in the way each community coped with the situation.

The current harsh organizational and financial conditions of most local authorities in Israel and especially the ones located in peripheral areas such as the North of the country however, do not provide enough support for community initiatives. These communities lack trust and mutual support between the different components of the community.

The enormous challenge is to strengthen communal foundations through building and strengthening communal assets, social capital, active partnerships, commitment and community involvement between its components: Government agencies, the business sector, non- profit organizations and community members. that will assure the creation of vital, healthy, strong communities.

***Shdemot - Center for Community Leadership** is a division of Oranim Academic College of Education. It is devoted to Social and Educational Action with communities in Israel and around the world. **The Department for Community of Shdemot** strengthens communal foundations of Israeli society, center and periphery, local and regional authorities, through building and strengthening communal assets, social capital and active partnership, commitment and community involvement.

Communitarianism – the Aim of the Community and its Strength.

Shdemot's community building model aims at establishing a framework of cooperation and working relations between voluntary resident leadership and the formal municipality leadership. The community building process clarifies the definition and division of responsibilities between the different bodies operating within the municipal arena, thus solving problematic issues and enables efficient and appropriate execution of community work.

The model is based on the differentiation between *community* and *Communitarianism*. It is the difference between the *Community* which refers to the structural framework and *Communitarianism* which constitutes its content:

Community is defined here as voluntary, geographically based groups, which includes a variety of governmental, volunteer and establishment- organizations. It is a social system with agreed upon communication channels in different aspects of life between its components. The communities is the public sphere for identification, express and gain a sense of meaning for individuals and different groups, through the implementation of its *Communitarianism*.

Communitarianism is the content of the *community*; It is the ability and the of the community members to create and agree on the general social collective values, believes and wishes which express themselves in normative collective behaviors which:

- Is implemented by a structure of social networks.
- Is based on general trust and reciprocity between its members and between them and their institutions.
- Answers the needs of individuals, groups and institutions.
- Expressed itself through a voluntarily implement role in the public life.
- Allows individuals to feel a sense of commitment, belonging and meaning.

Community as a structural framework relates to a number of components:

- **Community Players:** (1) Government agencies, (2) the business sector, (3) non-

profit organizations and (4) community members.

- **Community Functions:** (1) production and consumption, (2) membership, (3) societal control, (4) social participations and (5) mutual support.
- **Community borderline/bounds:** there are few aspects through which the community defines its borderlines and defines who is in and who is out: (1) geographical (2) Symbolic (3) of autonomy (4) of time.

Social Capital - the Essence of the Community

Available to the community are a ray of asset, referred to as capital, that it may utilize to realize its potential for the creation and strengthening of communitarianism:

- **Physical capital** – financial resources, public buildings, infrastructures.
- **Organizational capital** – organizational culture, traditions, cooperation level and government outputs.
- **Human capital** – education level, skill, qualifications.
- **Social capital** – interpersonal relationships and the extent to which they are used.

The community building process bases itself on the above assets of community in order to empower and increase the social capital inventory in the community. This would mean that all aspects of community life and activities such as; physical building, working with youth or elderly, the environment, security and so on, are perceived as opportunities for the community to enhance the level of communitarianism and in effect, influence the array of connections between community members. Community building is therefore dedicated to supply competencies and apparatus for the development of social capital.

The community building models perceives **social capital as the goal of our actions** and all the others assets in the community serve and present themselves as opportunities for the development of dimensions of social capital and to influence the array of connections in the community.

Social capital constitutes dimensions for examining all stages of activity:

- **Defining the problem** – Identify the obstacles in to the networks; define the kinds of social capitals that could encourage the relationships.
- **Operation methods** – creating frameworks for meetings.
- **Benchmarks of success** – relates to measures for the progress of the relationships between the different partners: extantion, quality of the connections, and the extent to which they are used.

Shdemot's Community Building Model - Strengthening Community Networks

The Community building process is aimed at strengthening the basis of the community self identity as a whole. This collective identity, express its uniqueness and self pride by supporting the growth of social capital and developing social networks based on partnerships between different components in the community. The process invites familiarity, learning and joint activities of the various players by creating opportunities for experiences in a range of joint initiatives that promote basic aspects of mutual trust between partners.

The community building process is based on "*pedagogy of identity*", an educational process designed to enhance mutual social trust between community members. This trust expresses the identity of the community and its uniqueness through the creation of "**CHAVUROT – MESSIMA**" (ITIMATE MISSION TEAMS).

"**CHAVUROT -MESSIMA**"(ITIMATE MISSION TEAMS) are the basic component for the strengthening of *pedagogy of identity*.

ITIMATE MISSION TEAMS is a group framework based on close relations, sharing, and intimacy together while carrying out of a joint mission as members of a group.

ITIMATE MISSION TEAMS is based on the integration between primary and secondary characteristics that constitute firstly a primary group consisting of face to face relations

between group members that are comprehensive, multi-dimensional, and inclusive. Added to this, similar to a secondary group, members of the group have additional goals for realization over and above the relations themselves. The commitment of the group members to the collective mission at hand and the inter-personal relations is high, intimate and complete. The collective mission and the relations constitute both goals and means to achieve those goals at the same time.

The activity is based on the creation of *intimate mission team* amidst community functionaries, heads of volunteer initiatives, residents and so on.

The process establishes, networks between many components and factors from within the social fabric of the community and aims to create leadership groups from within elected public officials, municipal functionaries, organizational heads, NGO's and residents with the capacity for leadership.

All activities and resources are geared to influence the quality of the relations between members of the community. Activities as varied as; garbage removal, cultural events, the establishment of a school, economic development, demographic growth are all perceived as opportunities for enriching social networks.

Community building is carried out by means of training processes, accompaniment, consultations and personal practice of this leadership for the purpose of developing partnerships, initiatives, and enlistment of residents. Social and volunteers organizations are encouraged to invite the public to take part in the community building process.

During community building process the different parts of the community: members, organizations and agencies, will experience positive experiences of deep relations, sharing and mutual responsibility. They will increase their sense of mutuality and trust between their parts and will raise the level of belonging, commitment and meaning between themselves. This experience will empower their trust, commitment and increase their motivation to establish and sustain such a system of relations in their community in the future. Participation in a community *intimate mission team* serves to realize the uniqueness of the community and is an avenue to invite members of the community to experience a "*moments of truth*".

The main objective behind the model is to develop an autonomous community based on its strength and assets. The model provides a platform that strengthens frayed community

infrastructure and intensifies local residents' belief in their ability to take active responsibility over their lives, their surroundings and the future of their community in general.

The process of community building is based on a number of principles:

- **Volunteerism:** community building is directed first and foremost toward enabling the components of the community to raise and encourage the motivation for volunteerism.
- **Volunteerism "for" to volunteering "with"** – taking the small percentage of sporadic volunteer activities and turning them into a systematic perception that involves most of the community residents. That is, working for the benefit of the residents with the emphasis on **with** the residents”.
- **A discourse of *rights* becomes a discourse of *identity*:** from an organization with an interest to a communitarian social group. Moving from discourse of rights (a debate) to discourse of identity (a dialogue).
- Relativity of the components of **local identities** – realization of communitarianism is based on components of local identity. It is derived from value systems, practiced norms and symbolisms and leads to components of local discourse.
- **Strengthening abilities, assets and opportunities** – realizing the different embodied community potential (mainly: physical capital, organizational capital, human capital and social capital)
- **Pedagogy as a course of action** – dealing with personal and group identity components – community as a conscious concept demands dealing with; basic personal and group perceptions and assumption, shared values, a personal and community definition of vision and designing community identity.
- **Collective team spirit** – the realization of community is based on interpersonal and group processes that strengthen one's feeling of belonging, commitment and meaning. The goal is to create social networks that express themselves by **Intimate mission teams**.
- **Strengthening social capital** – realizing social capital expresses itself by realizing the potential of relations between players in the community
- **Social Networks** – Social capital is expressed by the creation of networks in the community between entrepreneurs, NGO's, private parties, official and governmental bodies from various fields in order to design a broad community outlook, a vision for future course of action and ways of realization or that vision in areas such as;

education, environment, culture, security, welfare. Each community differs in the strengths and density levels of its networks.

- **From cooperation and participation to partnership** – expanding the linkage between the different factors to full partnerships in local initiatives, from planning through implementation.
- **From clients to partners** – creating a reality where full and equal cooperation between the formal establishment and residents takes place. Residents are given a feeling of autonomy and influence as well as encouraged to reveal long-term lay leadership while viewing the establishment as a full partner for local initiatives. This would serve to increase levels of trust through joint action.

Intervention Stages

Stage	Action	Outcome
Contact	The local authority commits itself to a multi-year process	The head of the local authority's vision
Preparation	Asset mapping/Big community event	Diagnosis, recommendations and interest groups
Training and Leadership	Formation of a steering team from the authority, volunteer organizations and residents.	Initiatives for recruiting volunteers
Experience	Running the initiatives, recruiting human capital as volunteers	Leadership, networks and partnerships
Organization and Establishment	Development of organizational platforms within the local authority and the organizations for volunteer initiatives	Limits between the players and a supportive organizational structure
Implementation	Multi-year community master plan Division of work, authority and responsibility	The voluntary union creates social capital

Outcomes of the Community Building Process

	Local Authority	Citizens' Organizations	Community Leadership
Main Target	To allow the creation of space for the community alongside the Government	To upgrade the civil volunteers' activities to include operation within the community	To develop a community lifestyle through volunteer programs that create social networks
Knowledge and Tools	Professional knowledge for cooperation with residents	Improvement of tools for recruiting and maintaining volunteers through social networks	Consolidation of social capital principles as a standard for community initiative
Outcomes	Building of partnerships. Defining the limits between government and public action	Broadening of aims: from providing services and correcting injustices to the implementation of community principles by activating volunteers	An expression of rights becomes an expression of identity. Human capital implemented as social capital
Organizational Aspect	Organizational platform to support community initiatives	Organizational platform to support community initiatives	Social networks within the framework of volunteer initiatives
Legitimacy, Diploma	Community seal of approval	Community seal of approval	Membership in the community

Implementing the Model

The model has been implemented in several peripheral communities in Israel. The implementation led to the establishment of dozens of community projects, to 100% increase in the number of active volunteers and the discovery of a new type of volunteer – middle aged with a professional background, typically not active on the municipal level. Community leaders were encouraged to initiate, lead and manage community projects, coalitions of volunteers were formed to address various subject fields and networks of volunteers began working together on community projects.