Planning from 'Below' in Israel: Reflections on the Public Interest

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The purpose of this paper is to analyze the transformations that have taken place in planning discourse in the last two centuries in the West and in Israel. The paper focuses on the importance given to the public interest in what is termed "planning from 'above'" and "planning from 'below'." As argued in the paper, this analysis provides a useful context for a new line of thinking that distinguishes between planning for practical changes and 'planning' for strategic changes. This distinction, it is argued, helps to explore a critical perspective of planning from 'below' and the role of public interest in it.

Keywords: Planning-from-below, public interest, Bedouin, practical changes, strategic changes, modernization.

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The paper begins with a historical analysis of the development of modernist planning epistemology both in the Western world in general and in Israel in particular, especially in regard to the principles of Zionist ideology, which had a tremendous effect on shaping Israeli territories and spaces. After analyzing the development of modernist planning, I move on to discuss alternative approaches to modern planning that were formulated as a reaction to its controlling, discriminative and oppressive nature.[2]

Obviously, the history of planning in Israel and its ideological implications can be analyzed from different perspectives, representing various ideological approaches that range from conservative to more critical. In this paper, I present a more critical

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view of the history of planning in Israel and of some of its current developments. Following that, I suggest a new line of thinking regarding 'planning from below'. It is the distinction between planning for practical changes and 'planning' for strategic changes. This distinction illustrates the differences between the current planning actions *(planning for practical changes)* and those that emphasize a more radical, democratic and pluralistic approach outside the hegemony *('planning' for strategic changes)*. I then move on to discuss similar trends in Israel with a focus on the work of organizations such as *Bimkom-Planners for Planning Rights*, which was established in the 1990s. After analyzing Bimkom's approach and activities, I conclude by emphasizing how this new distinction between *planning for practical changes* and *'planning' for strategic changes* provides insight into Bimkom's planning rights activities for the Bedouin in the village of Kasr al-Sir.

PLANNING FROM 'ABOVE': MODERNIST PLANNING THINKING AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST

The beginning of modernist planning thinking can be traced back to the mid-18th century when European cities became crowded, filthy and full of diseases as a result of the industrial revolution and the vast labor migration from rural to urban areas. In the face of such conditions, the primary goal of urban planning was to benefit the public by fighting against bad hygiene and the spread of diseases and health problems in the cities. Perhaps for this reason, early principles of the modern city – formulated already in 1775 – included order, uniformity, homogenization and the multiplication of patterns of urban structures, with the strong belief that these principles best served the public interest for equality and a better quality of life (Bauman, 2002). Indeed, these principles determined the development of urban spaces both in European cities – then the cores of the empires – and in the colonies overseas where modernist planners reshaped cities using a rational, comprehensive method as the main tool of planning. This strategy emphasized the 'scientific', quantitative, professional, democratic[3] and neutral character of modernist planning (Sharon, 2006).

The same principles of modernist planning influenced the design of urban spaces in Palestine at the beginning of the 20th century. Two main driving forces, the British Mandate and the Zionist movement, impacted the formulation of modernist spaces and places using both the public interest argument to promote their interests. The British as a lubricated modernist empire had tremendous influence on both the physical design of Palestine and also on the articulation and formulation of the formal planning system, planning hierarchies and planning administrations. They had such a strong impact on establishing planning legislation (with the 1936 Planning Order) that it still functions in the Israeli legal system today as the 1965 Israeli Planning and Building Law. The British incorporated principles of liberal de-

mocracy into planning by emphasizing the importance of the benefit of the public and the improvement of its quality of life with these planning schemes.

As a modernist movement, the Zionists adopted the modernist planning principles to ensure the Jewish presence in Palestine. For example, they rejected the 'old' (Palestinian) landscape, declaring that the old-style buildings were not appropriate and were even dangerous for the public to live in (Paz, 1998; Goren, 2006). Its ideology mandated instead a vast construction of public housing in the 1950s – buildings of equal shape and size that were designed to serve what the state perceived as the needs of the public and the newly arrived immigrants. In addition, however, this planning also served the needs of the state to Judaize its empty territories (Kallush and Law-Yone, 2001). Some of these principles reflect modernist planning views on what is good for the public, which usually entails the destruction of old structures in favor of new ones in the name of the public interest (Sandercock, 1998). Thus the two colonial ideologies, Modernism and Zionism, have used the same discourses of equality, democracy and the (Jewish) public interest to convert the 'empty'[4] land of Palestine into a modernized Jewish territory.

The use of the public interest discourse in planning becomes more problematic after the 1948 war which had two simultaneous but contrasting consequences: the establishment of the independent Jewish state of Israel and the Nakba – the disaster – of the Palestinian people and the destruction of their living spaces. This contrast between 'independence' and 'disaster' emphasizes even more the controversial use of the public interest in planning. It poses a major question: who is the public whose interests are included and excluded in planning? Indeed, in its first few years the State of Israel continued the process of modernization in a way that clearly emphasizes whose interest was taken into consideration. This was mainly expressed in the provision of housing and employment for the large influx of Jews at the expense of the destruction of old Palestinian towns and villages. The large influx of Jewish immigrants, refugees from Eastern Europe and Arab countries, consisted of 2.5 times the number of the Jewish population already living in Palestine at that time (from 600,000 to 1.5 million from 1948-1953). This presented a challenge to the Israeli planning apparatus to provide housing, employment, infrastructure and services for the newcomers. The bureaucrats of the young state had to deal with this tremendous influx of Jewish refugees and first moved them into existing housing and infrastructures in the deserted Palestinian towns and villages. This act fulfilled both the Jewish immigrants' basic needs for shelter but also served as a mechanism to Judaize 'empty' spaces. The next stage was the establishment of the 'development towns' *(Ayarot Pituach)*, for which the slogan of the public interest for housing and infrastructure was used again. In reality, however, development towns became not only an individual solution for housing but also a tool to Judaize peripheral areas of the country, especially in the Negev and the Galilee (Sharon, 2006).

PLANNING AS CONTROL AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST

The results of the modernization of spaces and territories in Israel for the fulfillment of the (Jewish) public needs and interests emphasize the role of control in planning, not only because of how space is ordered but even more fundamentally in how the forces in power assume the liberty to decide what is good for the public without involving the pubic in such decisions. The strategy of 'planning from below' arose as a protest against this kind of paternalism.

It must be clarified though that this paternalistic nature of planning had its effects on Jewish as well as Arab groups. Numerous studies have examined the effects of the modernization schemes on the Mizrachim (Tzfadia and Yiftachel, 2004) or the Ethiopians, as I elaborate later in the section (Kaplan, 1997; Fenster, 1998; Yona and Shenhav, 2005). But for the Palestinians who stayed in the country after 1948, the effects of modernization were cruder, and there was little concern for their public interest. This resulted in Palestinians being constantly pushed out of their lands by both massive land confiscation and regular inequalities in the provision of services and infrastructure.[5]

One of the crude examples of conflicting interests and the use of the modernization slogan to serve the state's interests is the case of the Bedouin in the Negev. The state did not acknowledge their land claims, and offered to concentrate them in a small number of towns, each with large populations, so that several tribes would live together in one town. The state used the argument of modernization and the provision of housing and modernized infrastructure, which they claimed would serve the Bedouin's interests as citizens of Israel. But the Bedouin themselves have had different ideas of their own public interest. Having historically lived in places that reflect their traditions and norms, their perception of their needs and interests entailed living in a village-like habitation rather than a town, and living on lands they claim as they own rather than on the lands of other tribes. Lastly, they wish to live in a tribally based village and not concentrated together with other tribes, as is the case in the towns the state built for them.[6] All of these interests in fact contradict the state's interests. The Government, on the other hand, offers the Bedouin financial settlements on individual and tribal bases in addition to a Land Title Settlement procedure. Although the situation has changed since the 1970s and the state now offers the Bedouin developed plots in the planned towns, the Bedouin continue to refuse these 'generous' offers because they do not meet their own needs and interests. Again, the official excuse for state refusal to accept their interests uses a modernist rhetoric. It argues that the traditional dispersion of the Bedouin is very costly in terms of infrastructure and services and it is difficult to provide them with modernized habitation when they are not concentrated in a limited number of areas. This argument relies on a double standard, because the state does encourage such dispersion for Jewish settlers in the 'dispersed ranches' (Hebrew: Chavot Bodedim) schemes, as these schemes serve the state's interests to populate 'empty lands'. This example illustrates very clearly the tricky nature of planning and its use as a form of

political control in the name of public interests.

It should be emphasized that this clash of interests is quite common with Jewish groups as well. The Ethiopian community has experienced similar "oversight" by modernist planners in the name of their interests. Upon their arrival to Israel, two Master Plans (1985, 1991) were prepared that supposedly reflected their needs and interests as perceived by the planners, but in fact, these plans overlooked the 'real' needs of the community by not acknowledging their special lifestyle, employment patterns, family structure and power relations (for elaboration, see Fenster, 1998). Here too, modernist planning became a means of control not intentionally but because of the planners' strong belief that they know what is best for the Ethiopian public interest. This included the provision of housing mortgages only in specific towns and cities in which there were only a few numbers of Ethiopians in order to prevent their concentration. Again, the planners thought that this would serve their interest in the long run in terms of a quick integration with the public at large, but in fact it contrasts with their own communal interests to live in extended family units. As in the case of the Bedouin, the modernist planners did not ask the Ethiopians about their interests, but instead imposed supposedly appropriate schemes that, at the end of the day, did not provide them with a real option for choosing where and how to live.

We can see how modernist planning thinking on the public interest manifests hegemonic and paternalistic principles in its determination to know what is best for everyone, and its effect is to homogenize perceptions of communities and individuals. This criticism is not to undermine the role and the authority of the sovereign to ensure the provision of equal rights and services for the various social groups in Israel (both majority and minority groups). Rather it intends to emphasize the fact that acting on behalf of communities both Jewish (Ethiopians) and Arab (Bedouin) and using the rhetoric of planning to improve what is perceived as their well-being leads to the reality that planning becomes a means of social and political control instead of a tool to promote equality and quality of life. It is therefore necessary to identify the fine line where planning moves from reform to oppression and abuses the needs and interests of individuals and communities, and where the difference between 'reasonable exigencies of social order' and sinister expressions of repression, exploitation and oppression occur within planning schemes (Yiftachel, 2000). Thus, while some view the 1950s as the 'golden age' of planning in Israel, of a positive and central agent of progressive transformation, others highlight the increasing state hegemonic and oppressive power behind planning, which sometimes causes the reproduction and the deepening of inter-group inequalities (Yiftachel, 2000).

However, these dynamics of planning as reform and planning as oppression are not static. They change because of the expansion of global networks, the increasing awareness of civil society principles and the changing role of the state in planning and development. These changes leave more room for the voices of resistance 'from below' that are beginning to be heard, both via NGO's and other forms of organi-

zations or via 'grassroots' protest and resistance groups emerging from individual and communities that are negatively affected by planning and development. These changes occur in many countries all over the world and are reflected in the formulation of alternative thinking in planning that has become a part of the criticism of modernist planning and its rational comprehensive model.

ALTERNATIVE THINKING – PLANNING FROM 'BELOW'

The 1960s marked a change in political and civil discourse in the US and Europe. The rise of the civil rights movement led to the increased awareness of public interest and this trend affected the planning discourse as well. This was expressed in the formulation of a series of planning approaches that put more emphasis on the role of communities and individuals in the planning process, which challenged modernist planning and the rational comprehensive model. These alternative approaches put more emphasis on local knowledge and planning 'from below' in the different planning stages. The rationale behind these traditions has been to create a different body of knowledge representing the community needs and interests assumed necessary for the planning process, with the hope of balancing power relations between communities and the state and also within the communities themselves. While Sandercock (1998) includes within this category some of the more famous planning traditions such as advocacy planning, the radical political and economy approach, the equity planning model and so on, Fainstein (2000) highlights the communicative model as representing this new line of thinking. What follows is a brief review of some of the traditions that put emphasis on communities' needs and interests.

One of the most famous approaches to changing planning thinking in the 1960s was the *advocacy planning approach* developed by Davidoff (1965), and this approach is still dominant. The idea is based on the legal practice of advocacy, whereby planners work as advocates for disadvantaged communities and produce plans that will meet their needs. Davidoff suggested incorporating several plans as part of the planning procedure rather than one master plan, each of which should represent different group's needs and interests. The public, argues Davidoff, should be more involved in the planning process and the planner should serve as an advocate of the different groups involved. Here the planner is still the ultimate knower while s/he represents the community in negotiations with the authorities.

Other alternative planning approaches base their theoretical grounds on Marxism. For example, *the radical political and economy planning approach,* formulated mainly by Harvey (1973) and Castells (1976), criticizes the rational comprehensive planning as a tool of the capitalist state to control spaces and territories. Planning in capitalist societies, they argue, is both necessary and impossible. This is because urban planning is mostly based on zoning and other regulatory mechanisms whose role is to balance between competing factions of capital and between capital and

citizens through a mixture of repression, cooptation, and integration. While this model suggests a critique of modernist planning, it has not provided any new definition of or methodology for planning.

Another line of thinking in planning, *the equity planning model,* was influenced by the new discourse of equal rights to citizens. This model focuses on urban inequalities, and emphasizes a close collaboration of planners and politicians in order to bridge the gaps of these inequalities. The planner, however, is still the key actor, the 'knower'.

Later in the 1980s, *the radical planning model* emerged, representing a mixture of advocacy, feminist critique and the civil rights movement. This model has been engaged with multiple critical discourses about social transformation. It emerged from the critique of existing unequal relations and distributions of power, opportunity, and resources. The goal of this model has been to empower the disempowered while recognizing the heterogeneity of communities and the role of the planners as alleviating existing inequalities.

However, one of the most influential alternative models has been the *communicative action model*, perhaps because it is based on the political philosophical approaches of American pragmatism and the theory of communicative rationality as worked out by Jurgen Habermas (Fainstein, 2000). These two rather contrasting approaches provide a guide for action to planners and suggest that the planner's primary role is to listen to people's stories and to assist in forging a consensus among different viewpoints (Fainstein, 2000). Moreover, the communicative action model emphasizes a mutual learning process between the planners and individuals and communities. It is perceived as 'transactive,' or as a life time dialogue emphasizing human worth and reciprocity rather than providing technocratic leadership (Friedman, 1973). It targets reaching consensus as the main goal of the planning process. Forester (1989; 1999), Healey (1992; 1997), and Innes (1995) have used this approach in order to create the necessary link between professional and local knowledge as an expression of equality and democracy in the planning process. The communicative action model, together with some of the ideas of the radical planning model, can be associated with the new 'epistemology of multiplicity' (Sandercock, 1998), which acknowledges 'local knowledge', that of hearing and listening to the 'voices of the borderline' (i.e., women and people of color, people of different national, ethnic and cultural origins) in the planning process. It presents a more qualitative and interpretative inquiry of the public (whether communal or individual) rather than emphasizing logical deductive analysis, and it seeks to understand the unique and the contextual rather than making general propositions about a mythical, abstract planner.

The Radicalization and Democratization of 'Planning from Below'

In this section I intend to suggest a new line of thinking regarding planning from below and the ways in which public interests and needs can become part of the planning process. This new line of thinking is inspired by the work of Laclau and Mouffe (1985/2004). Their analysis of radical and pluralistic democracy helps me to distinguish between planning for practical changes and 'planning'[7] for strategic changes. I draw this distinction from two sources: the study of gender and development and the distinction made in this literature between practical gender needs and strategic gender needs (Molinoux, 1985; Moser, 1993; Levy, 1996). This distinction puts the emphasis on whether planning and development interventions meet the practical daily needs of women and families that are usually related to infrastructure and services, or whether planning intervention meet the strategic needs of women, which include social and political structural changes.

I use these distinctions to illustrate how planning interventions for public interests could have different effects on individuals and communities. Interventions for both practical changes and strategic changes may be initiated in the name of democracy and equality and for the benefit of public interests, but the former speaks on behalf of the pubic interest and the latter comes from the public itself so each results in a different impact on the public.

Planning for practical changes refers to an activity that aims to meet the practical needs of individual and communities with regard to their daily life, such as infrastructure and services. This is part of the rhetoric of modernization in planning, which is to provide such facilities in order to increase people's well-being and quality of life. Planning for practical changes usually refers to the official initiations of planning by the state or municipalities as part of their services to their citizens. Although top-down in nature, it can also use various means of community involvement in planning procedures; for example, the recent promotion of public participation in planning procedures, the endorsement of transparency in planning procedures, and the inclusion of the local knowledge of communities and individuals in planning procedures. Such planning procedures can be initiated by the state, municipalities or even entrepreneurs, or can refer to the activities of NGOs such as Bimkom, which, as elaborated later, promote ideas of democracy, equality and justice in planning. However, my argument is that these procedures work to ensure practical needs in the name of equality and democracy and, despite their transparent nature, they aim for practical changes and the oversight of strategic changes in planning. Thus, even the rhetoric of participation[8] is conditional and derives from the way the hegemony interprets it. If the authorities want, there will be participation; if the authorities are unwilling to perform participation, they will make sure that it becomes meaningless. Thus, planning for practical changes doesn't perceive planning as a mechanism for social and structural changes but still accepts the modernist terminology of planning as a service that the state makes available for its citizens. Accordingly, *planning for practical changes* interprets equality, justice, liberty and human dignity from within

the hegemonic perspective as fulfilling practical needs. These procedures could have great achievements but these are consensual achievements, where practical changes become an end in themselves and not a means to achieve greater empowerment.

'Planning' for strategic changes perceives planning processes as social, articulated and contingent and therefore more fluid and flowing, and they have political and social outcomes as well as planning ones. It perceives the planning process as a means to achieve social and political structural changes inside the community (between women and men) and between the community and the authorities. Let me explain this line of thinking with the ideas of Laclau and Mouffe (1985/2004), who base their theoretical interpretation on the Gramscian explanation of hegemony. They perceive hegemony as a process in which perceptions and social practices that meet the interests of certain social groups become dominant and are therefore seen as a 'natural order'. A perception, belief or value becomes hegemonic when it infiltrates into various social structures and institutions and is accepted by most social groups -- including those outside the hegemony. Laclau and Mouffe suggest a way of understanding social relations that is different from the Marxist deterministic one. They deny the notion of 'status' as the sole factor that clarifies social structures and power relations. Instead, they suggest the use of hegemony, historical block, articulation and contingency. The last two are crucial factors in understanding social relations. *Articulation* in their eyes is a practice that connects different subjects so that their identities change as a result of this specific practice. But these practices are also *contingent,* that is, they are conditioned by the dynamics that develop between the different subjects taking part in the articulation process, and therefore the results are not known in advance. Rather, they usually allow new discourses to emerge. This viewpoint suggests that social relations are not total, hermetic and identified in advance, or assumed as static, as modernist planning perceives them. Rather, social relations are perceived as fluid, flexible and unexpected. Social relations according to Laclau and Mouffe reflect *antagonism;* that is, they assume a situation in which the existence of one subject prevents the total existence of the other. The development of antagonistic relations is perceived by them as one of the great achievements of democracy and its discourse, because this means that subjects are aware of their position as opposing other subjects within the antagonistic field, and they therefore fight for their own position. Social relations can be defined on various levels: for example, *subordination* characterizes social relations in which one subject is dependent on the decisions of another subject (for example, workers and employers, women and men). However, subordination becomes *oppression* when there are elements of antagonism in these relationships of subordination. This happens when an awareness and perhaps even a challenge is developed among the subordinated subjects who become aware of their subordination. This process of transforming *subordination* into *oppression* takes place only when it is possible to extract external discourses and to use them for this transformation. For example, Laclau and Mouffe argue that feminism could not have developed without extracting the notion of political equal-

ity from the democratic discourse and re-defining it as gender equality. The main challenge, according to Laclau and Mouffe, is to identify the discursive conditions that allow collective action against inequality to take place and to challenge oppressive relations.

Following this line of thinking, a process of 'planning' for strategic changes takes place when subjects' spatial subordination become spatial oppression and thus the *awareness* of the subjects involved in the planning process about their antagonistic position leads to the need for strategic change. These processes take place when discursive notions of equality, justice and human dignity are extracted from the democratic modernist, 'top down' discourse and become part of the planning discourse. In this way, a new discourse is created that is both democratic and spatial.

 In Israel, *planning for practical and strategic changes* is at its beginning, especially in relation to the Palestinian-Arab citizens of Israel who have been fighting to have their spaces and territories developed on terms equal to the Jewish ones. This includes the Bedouins' struggle for meeting both their practical and strategic interests – especially those who live in the unrecognized villages. As a result of the ongoing conflict over land ownership and the recognition of their villages, many are becoming more antagonistic with a growing awareness of oppression rather then subordination. This results in initiating planning procedures to meet not only practical needs (infrastructure and services) but also strategic ones (recognition of their villages, of their landownership). This is in contrast to the social processes that the Ethiopians undergo, which can be described as subordination with no explicit antagonism or sense of oppression, and therefore they fight for practical changes rather than strategic ones. It might be that the different positioning of the two communities is derived from their different senses of inclusion or exclusion within the hegemonic structures. While the Bedouin position themselves outside of the Jewish, Zionist hegemonic structure, the Ethiopians wish to be part of the hegemony and therefore their discursive arguments and struggles arise from a subordinate position and remain on the practical level.

With these new definitions, let us now review the establishment of *Bimkom-Planners for planning rights in Israel* within the wider framework of the development of alternative thinking in planning in Israel.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS IN PLANNING IN ISRAEL: *BIMKOM-* PLANNERS FOR PLANNING RIGHTS

Although conceptualized in the USA and Europe in the 1950s and 1960s, these alternative planning approaches began to enter the Israeli planning discourse only in the 1980s. The reasons for such a late response can be traced to the strong nation-state oriented consensus based on the Zionist ideology that has been the leading motivation of the Jewish establishment. This strong consensus is expressed in educa-

tion as well as in the social and welfare systems, all of which emphasize a strong assimilationist viewpoint similar to the planning of the state in its efforts to strengthen the Jewish presence in and the Jewish connection to Israel's territories and spaces. It was only in the mid 1970s after the Yom Kippur War in 1973 that this united consensual attitude began to be challenged, especially by the Mizrachi Jews whose families came from Arab countries and who had became deprived and marginalized economically, socially and spatially (Yiftachel, 2006). The protest against the Ashkenazi hegemony started from within these communities by establishing social grassroots movements such as the Black Panthers and the Neighborhoods Movements. These social trends marked the end of a united Jewish consensus around the idea of the nation-state. It was at that time that the Jewish settlement project in the West Bank began to grow with the blessing of the various governments that were in power in the late 1970s. The 1980s marked the era of the 'Judaization of the Galilee', a grand plan that aimed to establish small Jewish settlements (*mitzpim*) in order to block the demographic and spatial growth of the Arab Palestinian citizens of Israel. These planning procedures meant in fact that a vast swath of privately-owned land was appropriated from Arab citizens. This act resulted in riots that became part of what is known today as *the Land Day*.

The beginning of the 1990s marked the shift from a consensus to multicultural discourse (Kimerling, 2004; Shenhav, 2003; Yonah and Shenhav, 2005) challenging the Zioninst hegemonic discourse. These changes encouraged the rise of multiple voices in the field of planning and development so that, besides the formal planning systems, individuals and communities are now taking active roles in the planning processes, mainly in the form of NGO's.

Four reasons can explain these shifts (Fenster, 2007): first, the development of academic knowledge and the awareness of Israeli scholars of the formulation of alternative planning approaches; second, the growing political awareness of disadvantaged communities, especially the Palestinians and the Bedouin, of their civil and cultural-national identities and rights; third, the development of the discourse of civil society, or what is termed the 'third sector' in Israel, which put the public interest in a different light (Yishai, 1998; 2003; Ben-Eliezer, 1999), and finally, the articulation of and connection made between human rights and planning procedures. The notion of 'planning rights' determined by *Bimkom* opened up and enlarged the language of planning to include concepts such as justice, equality, honor, and democracy. With this expansion of the planning discourse, organizations and individuals could now easily challenge the formal, hegemonic, planning apparatus and fight for the inclusion of multiple layers of knowledge, representations and power relations.

Thus, the establishment of NGO's such as *Adam Teva V'din* (Israel Union for Environmental Defense), *Adalah* (The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel), *The Arab Center for Alternative Planning* and many others[9] marked a change in the planning discourse and practice in Israel (see also: Yacobi, 2007). This is

reflected in the fact that new actors from 'below' are now involved in the planning process in the name of the public interest, and their involvement has transformed the planning process from an exclusive, formal, top down, state bureaucratic process to a field in which professions other than planners and architects are involved (such as attorneys, social workers, mediators, historians, economists, political scientists and geographers).

This was the social and political background in which Bimkom was established in the late 1990s. Its establishment was not based on a one-track-mind alternative planning approach but rather with the broader goal of strengthening the connection between human rights and spatial planning in Israel (www.bimkom.org.il). This was somewhat a new and innovative connection, and Bimkom emphasized it in its name: planners for planning rights.

The appearance of Bimkom marked a difference, as until that point, most organizations and NGOs working on promoting human rights did not include planning in their activities and therefore did not employ planners or architects. This was a result of two main reasons: first, planning as a profession has been considered as separated and perhaps even unrelated to the promotion of human rights and equality. Second, the planning profession has been considered a closed, somewhat 'elitist' expert cult that doesn't intervene with other disciplines. Bimkom's establishment has marked a change in formulating these links from 'within' the profession. As Bimkom declared from the beginning, it is a professional planning organization consisting of planners and architects who use their professional knowledge and tools to promote human rights in planning.[10]

Bimkom's founders in fact introduced new ways of alternative thinking in Israel's planning. As already mentioned, they did this first by linking ideas of human rights and planning. They also broke the highly centralized structure of formal planning in Israel and enabled different forms of challenge to take place, such as submitting objections to plans in the name of disadvantaged communities. Finally, they have also aimed to ensure transparency in the planning process, the dissemination of information to the public, and public participation in the planning process. The means to achieve these goals include producing *reports and position papers* on planning rights, providing *professional consultancy services* to communities, submitting *professional opinions* in legal proceedings, providing *assistance* in submitting planning objections, initiating and *promoting legislation* on matters concerning human rights and planning, o*rganizing workshops* for residents of neighborhoods, villages, and cities who have to deal with planning processes, *running training programs and seminars* on planning rights for professionals, etc. (www.bimkom.org)

No doubt, this large and impressive scope of activities indeed marked a change in the planning discourse in Israel and contributed to the reformulation of the planning language to include principles of democracy, equality and justice. My argument is that these impressive activities and changes all took place within the existing modernist planning epistemology and frameworks using its definitions (of

what is planning, for example) and its formal tools (objections to plans, reports on plans, participation in planning etc.) and thus can be labeled as *planning for practical changes*. While *Bimkom*'s activities indeed marked a significant change in the Israeli planning discourse, it is perhaps the right time to move onwards and to suggest alternative thinking from below – *planning for strategic changes* – which challenges these definitions and frameworks. I wish to use the example of one of *Bimkom*'s projects in Kaser al Sir to emphasize the differences suggested in the last section between *planning for practical and strategic changes*.

Kasr al-Sir

Historically, Kasr al-Sir is a Bedouin village that was constructed during the Ottoman period (at the end of the 19th century). It now consists of some 3,000 inhabitants divided into seven hamulas (extended families). Until recently, this village was considered illegal by the authorities, and therefore has not been provided with infrastructure and services such as electricity, roads, education and health systems. The houses in the village are considered illegal as well, and therefore have demolition orders from the government. Some 70,000 Bedouin live in unrecognized villages in the Negev, in the southern part of Israel. From 1969 until 1984 the authorities constructed seven planned towns and recently approved the legality of five additional villages, including Kasr al-Sir. In 2001-2002, *Bimkom* initiated a planning rights workshop in the village with the following goals (identified by *Bimkom*'s planners): to formulate the village's future vision as it is perceived by its inhabitants; to help inhabitants to participate in the planning process; to deepen the awareness of the inhabitants of the wide range of planning considerations that should be taken in the planning process; to provide a general overview of the community's spatial dispersal and the relationships between its components; to provide the inhabitants with the professional planning tools which will allow them to understand the planning process (Bimkom, 2003). The workshop included four stages: an overview of the village and its inhabitants; a formulation of the village's future vision and introduction of the planning processes and suggestions for alternative plans. Twenty-two Bedouin men took part in the workshop, while women were involved in one or two separate meetings for women only.[11] Certainly, this workshop can be identified as *planning for practical changes,* aiming to reach equality in infrastructure and services. It can also be identified as a democratic process, as it ensured that the inhabitants' representatives take part in the process. In addition, it guaranteed that the process would be transparent, and would result in a series of alternatives for the planning of the village's neighborhoods. On the basis of this participatory process, *Bimkom*'s planners suggested five alternative schemes for the village, which reflected the local knowledge of the Bedouin and their needs. As such, this project reflects ideas of several alternative models in planning such as advocacy, equity and the communicative model.

However, this process also has the potential to become *planning for strategic changes,* as it involved the village inhabitants in the process of planning, introducing them to the various considerations, constraints and problems that modernist planning faces and in this way opening up the professional field for them. No doubt, the actual realization of such a workshop is a great achievement in itself in that it provided necessary local knowledge to the planners and necessary professional knowledge to the inhabitants. However, as advanced as it was, this was still a project carried out within the conceptual framework and ideas of the established modernist planning and as such, cannot present a radical change or a *planning for strategic changes* despite its potential to become so. Several components would have transformed this project into *planning for strategic changes*:

First, the actual modernist planning framework must be challenged. One of the first issues that has to be raised in such a project is the definition of the 'planning framework,' which should have been questioned rather than taken for granted as a 'normal' process. This is especially the case with the Bedouin who, for centuries, have designed their living spaces according to principles different from those of modernist planning. For example, high density, which is such a significant issue for modernist planners, contradicts one of the basic social values of the hamula's separation (Fenster, 1999). Another issue is landownership patterns and the spatial dispersion of their houses, which are arranged in a layout different from the modernist one. Thus, *planning for strategic changes* should start with the clarification of issues such as these.

Second, the notion of participation must be perceived as a social process in which the *awareness* of subordination is transformed into an awareness of oppression, which means that antagonistic relations emerge and become explicit. In this way, the antagonism found among community members (for example, between generations or between men and women) will be exposed and will become explicit. This social change will be analyzed as part of the planning process. At the same time antagonism between the community and the state will also be made visible and explicit. This process allows changes to take place not only in creating the future vision of the village but also -- and perhaps in particular -- in creating the future vision of the community and the power relations between its subjects. Such a process does not distinguish between social change and spatial change but merges the two into a strategic change in planning, which transforms power relations both within the community and between the community and the state. This can lead to better planning for more people in a more democratic society.

Third, promoting planning for strategic changes means also allowing articulation and contingency to take place. This is in contrast to modernist planners' tendency to carry out social activities that are organized and initiated in advance and, in a sense, dictate and control the planning process. For example, the goals that were determined by *Bimkom* for this workshop perhaps prevented the development of other ways of thinking and of more radical or transformative social changes from

within and from without. The idea here is to let a fluid and flexible process take place without projecting its end result.

This reading of the planning process as a social change that contains the constant flow of discursive notions and actions, as well as articulated and contingent interactions, ensures a revision of power relations and a more democratic planning process. From this point of view, a planning process is perceived as a political struggle that contains ongoing, fluid and flexible processes that affect both society and space.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this paper has been twofold: to analyze the transformations that have taken place in the planning discourse in the last decades by focusing on the dialectics between planning from 'above' and planning from 'below;' and to suggest a new line of thinking that distinguishes between *planning for practical changes* and *planning for strategic changes* as two options of planning from below which also reflects the public interest.

I have briefly reviewed the historical and epistemological development of modernist planning from the mid-18th century until today, both in the West and in Israel, with a particular attention to the changes in the rhetoric of public interest in each period. I then elaborated on the use of the rhetoric of public interest to control, discriminate against and oppress one public (Bedouin) for the benefit of another (Jewish), and the implications of such policies in planning. I then suggested a radicalization and democratization of 'planning from below' by distinguishing between *planning for practical changes* and *planning for strategic changes*. As I argue in the paper, this distinction helps to expose new practices of radical planning for NGOs that work to promote contra-hegemonic principles of equality and justice. By highlighting *Bimkom's* aims and means of work, and especially by analyzing *Bimkom*'s intervention in the Bedouin village *Kasr al-Sir,* I suggest a new way of promoting principles of equality and democracy in planning in Israel.

NOTES

1. The word 'planning' appears in quotation marks because planning is considered part of an established procedure and a product of modernist thinking. When I refer to struggles from below regarding planning issues, it is perhaps more appropriate to relate to it as ' the design of spaces and territories' but for the purpose of clarification, I use the word planning in the two cases.
2. This is not to undermine modernist planning as bringing progress and development but to highlight its 'dark sides' (For elaboration, see: Yiftachel, 2001).

3. Some might argue that planning is not only or even primarily about democracy. Yet 20th-century writings on planning (especially on modernist planning after World War II and even more in the 1980s) emphasize its contribution to equality and justice as part of the liberal democratic regimes (see: Harvey, 1999; Forester, 1999; Sandercock, 1998; Healey, 1997; Portugali, 1996; Alfasi and Portugali, 2007; and Yiftachel, 2001).

4. This notion of the 'emptiness' of Palestine has been one of the bitter controversies in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as it has, for example, in Australia (Yiftachel, 2006). In most Israeli literature and historical documents, the land is mentioned as 'empty' while in fact some 700-900,000 Palestinians lived there.

5. See for example: Fenster, 1998; 1999; 2004; Yiftachel, 2000; 2006; Meir, 2003.

6. See elaboration in: Ben-David, 1991, Fenster, 1998, 1999, Meir, 2003. Some recent writings such as Yahel (2006) propose a different viewpoint, that of the Government which suggests financial settlements with various Bedouin individuals and tribes and the revival of the Land Title Settlement procedure.

7. The reason the word 'planning' is written in parentheses is because its actual definition encompasses the professional-modernist notion of this act, which is usually carried out by planners and architects. But in fact, the reality today shows that other professionals (economists, social workers, geographers, private entrepreneurs, politicians, organizations, citizens, pressure groups, etc.) are also involved in these processes of the design of spaces. The definition 'design of space' might have been a better one in order to illustrate the multiplicity of actors involved in this process, but I've decided to leave the notion of 'planning' in parentheses so that it illustrates two contrasting processes in this field. In this vein, Law-Yone (2007) argues that modernist planning is usually perceived as an official state top-down apparatus, but planning by private landowners existed before modern times. As such, the term "planning" is in fact unclear, and confuses planning as a daily human action and planning as an established practice – a confusion that, according to Law-Yone, serves the ideology of the state. Law-Yone mentions a variety of meanings for the practice of planning: private planning (by individuals), collective planning (by communities), statutory planning (legislation and formal prohibitions), state planning (formal action to stabilize national territories), economic planning (which might involve land arrangements to ensure economic development, etc.). Planning also includes various *procedures*: planning as a plan preparation, planning as a policy making, planning as part of implementation, planning as objection, etc. As we can see, the term 'planning' has multiple meanings and therefore these clarifications are necessary in order to discuss the various ways in which planning from below can promote principles of democracy and equality.

8. Participation in the planning process as a means to promote democratization in planning is one of the most popular concepts and a subject of a large amount

of research (see: Alfasi, 2003). It has become one of the major means of democratization for alternative thinking in planning as much as for Bimkom's activities. However, the question remains: what is the meaning of such participatory actions? Are they just a means of establishing communication and collecting information or can they be perceived as social procedures that involve articulated and contingent processes and contribute to raising the awareness of subjects to antagonistic situations and to the transformation of subordination into suppression? The two perspectives of participation are different in their content and implications on the community dynamics and the planning process and results.

9. It is worth mentioning that other organizations such as The Association for Civil Rights in Israel, Housing Demolition, and Betzelem, also did work on planning issues before. The above-mentioned organizations were established as organizations that focus on planning issues.

10. This is clearly declared in the association's goals: "*Bimkom*'s point of departure is that spatial planning impacts on the community, society, and basic human rights. The connection between planning and human and civil rights is not always self-evident: there is a tendency to assume that planning is the province of the authorities, something dictated from above that defines for the individual and the community the physical surroundings in which they live. It is precisely for this reason that it is important to stress to residents and citizens of Israel that they do have rights when it comes to planning processes and they are liable to suffer when spatial planning does not take their needs and aspirations into account." (www.bimkom.org.il).

11. Unlike the men, their names are not mentioned in the workshop's report.

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