

Social aspects of Raze and Rebuild projects

Written by

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Introduction

What can be done so that new neighborhoods built in Raze and Rebuild projects allow longtime low-income residents to stay – homeowners and renters alike – and improve the living quality of the surrounding residents? Which tools would improve the municipal response to residents pondering the possibility of Raze and Rebuild for their homes, including dealing with the long timetables for this type of program? What role can planners, community workers, municipal politicians and social consultants play in improving outcomes of Raze and Rebuild projects for existing residents?

This report is intended for all those – social and urban planners, community workers, elected officials, local leaders and other district and national-level officials – who seek answers to these questions, hoping to broaden and improve the positive social impacts of Raze and Rebuild projects.

The report is based on a series of six meetings, led by the Urban Clinic of the Hebrew University and supported by the Strategic Planning Department at the

Planning Administration of the Interior Ministry and the Planning Department of the Housing Ministry. The main participants in this forum were urban planners from cities with the greatest potential for Raze and Rebuild projects. The planners showed an interest in learning practical new tools from each other for implementing Raze and Rebuild projects and about ways in which other cities promote social goals through these projects. Along the way, other social planning related professionals, such as community workers, social services officials and district planners, joined the meetings and towards the end, private planners specializing in social aspects of planning joined in as well.

Each meeting was devoted to a different topic with a case study from one of the participating cities, usually supplemented by international examples and lessons. Those topics make up the chapters of this report: a policy paper on urban regeneration, residential organization, the municipal corporation, the community worker, the social consultant and social planning recommendations

for Raze and Rebuild.

This document is an effort to put down the insights that arose during these meetings and make them accessible to a wider audience. In addition, this paper includes the Urban Clinic's recommendations for integrating social aspects into the urban regeneration process, intended to moderate the negative effects of Raze and Rebuild projects and support the development of prosperous new neighborhoods for the benefit of all residents. It's true that putting these recommendations into practice will require public subsidies, but the hidden cost of ignoring them may be far greater.

The Urban Clinic acts towards generating knowledge and leadership supporting equitable spatial policy in Israel. We believe that focusing on the needs and interests of poor and marginalized groups, learning from the field, analyzing these fieldwork lessons together with those who put them into practice in a variety of sectors and disciplines, and writing and publicizing these conclusions, can help improve our policy, projects, leaders and cities.

Urban regeneration, and more specifically neighborhood and housing renewal programs, play a critical role in creating more equitable planning policies and better cities in Israel. Indeed, lately more attention is being paid, along with greater resource allocation, to urban regeneration in Israel, as it is becoming clearer that the housing crisis will not be solved by building new neighborhoods alone. Extensive international experience proves that thorough and integrative urban regeneration plans can vastly improve housing options and access to employment, and increase opportunities for low-income families (for more detail see the report on **urban regeneration in the European Union** by Colantonio and Dixon). These programs tend to focus on poverty-stricken neighborhoods and include expressly stated social aims – improving the lives of poor and marginalized populations living in the area. Public resources support these programs by investing in professional training programs, long school days, public transportation and quality public spaces.

However, Raze and Rebuild in Israel is a very different type of project than those designed to benefit and support underprivileged populations around the world. Raze and Rebuild does enormously raise the value of old apartments, but it does not include any social goals or programs aimed at improving the lives of the current residents. The goals of Raze and Rebuild, as stated in the Housing Ministry's website, are above all physical – to increase the Israeli housing stock and to use existing infrastructure more efficiently. Seeing as Raze and Rebuild does not include any stated social goals, it is unsurprising that these goals are also not publicly funded.

International experience, including large-scale housing demolition, very clearly demonstrates the dangers of physically improving deteriorating housing stock without paying attention to social aspects. The results may include loss of the low-priced rental housing stock; voluntary or compulsory relocation of low-income populations, with an attendant rise in school dropout and crime rates; neighborhood deterioration due to lack of investment

during the long time period following the regeneration initiative; creation of individual and group conflict between neighbors and homeowners; and lack of critical social services for low-income populations in the new neighborhood.

This report has two aims: First, as a short term goal, this report aims to assist local municipal planners and their colleagues in different cities, who stand at the frontlines of Raze and Rebuild projects, to help make sure that these projects will also benefit low-income and marginalized populations, along with the publicly advanced aim of increasing the national housing stock. This report, which represents a specific moment in the development of urban regeneration in Israel, contains ideas, tools and recommendations for dealing with the tension between these two goals, despite the lack of necessary public funding.

The second aim of this report, which is more long term, is to promote a new kind of urban regeneration, one that takes into account the social needs of different groups

living in poor neighborhoods, alongside the physical goals of the projects. Raze and Rebuild type projects are not economically feasible in this kind of neighborhood, but their deteriorating physical and social state still demands public attention. The general outline of this plan is laid out at the end of the recommendations chapter, and includes identifying relevant neighborhoods, establishing a public-private foundation for investing in these neighborhoods, initiating innovative social programs and local economic development programs, developing a program for constructing new buildings and renovating old ones and project management and monitoring. The plan will include physical and social investment and will aim to ensure the development of poverty-stricken neighborhoods while preventing relocation of the existing residents.

The report includes the following chapters:

- The first chapter presents the urban regeneration policy paper as a planning tool and examines its implementation in different cities in Israel and worldwide, focusing on Tel-Aviv as a case study.
- The second chapter deals with residential organization in Raze and Rebuild projects and the ways different professionals can assist residents in leading their own urban regeneration programs, focusing on such a project underway in Haifa.
- The third chapter deals with municipal corporations through the Jerusalem example, describing the

ways in which a designated municipal entity can contribute to a Raze and Rebuild project – including initiating, managing and guiding such a program, as well as supporting and maintaining a connection to the residents.

- The fourth chapter deals with the unique job of the community worker, as a municipally appointed social worker in charge of promoting and guiding the Raze and Rebuild projects. The chapter suggests ways the community workers can improve their involvement, illustrating from the extensive Jerusalem experience.
- The fifth chapter deals with the social consultant, whose job today is changing in breadth and depth, and the controversy regarding the job's jurisdiction.
- The sixth and final chapter incorporates the practical insights that came up during the Forum's meetings, and adds the Urban Clinic's recommendations for integrating social aspects into Raze and Rebuild projects. These recommendations include tools for measuring and evaluating social influences, planning beyond the plan's official borders, defining the main roles in these projects, including those of the community worker, the social consultant and the relevant elected official. The chapter ends with a preliminary proposal for a national urban regeneration plan for poverty stricken neighborhoods.