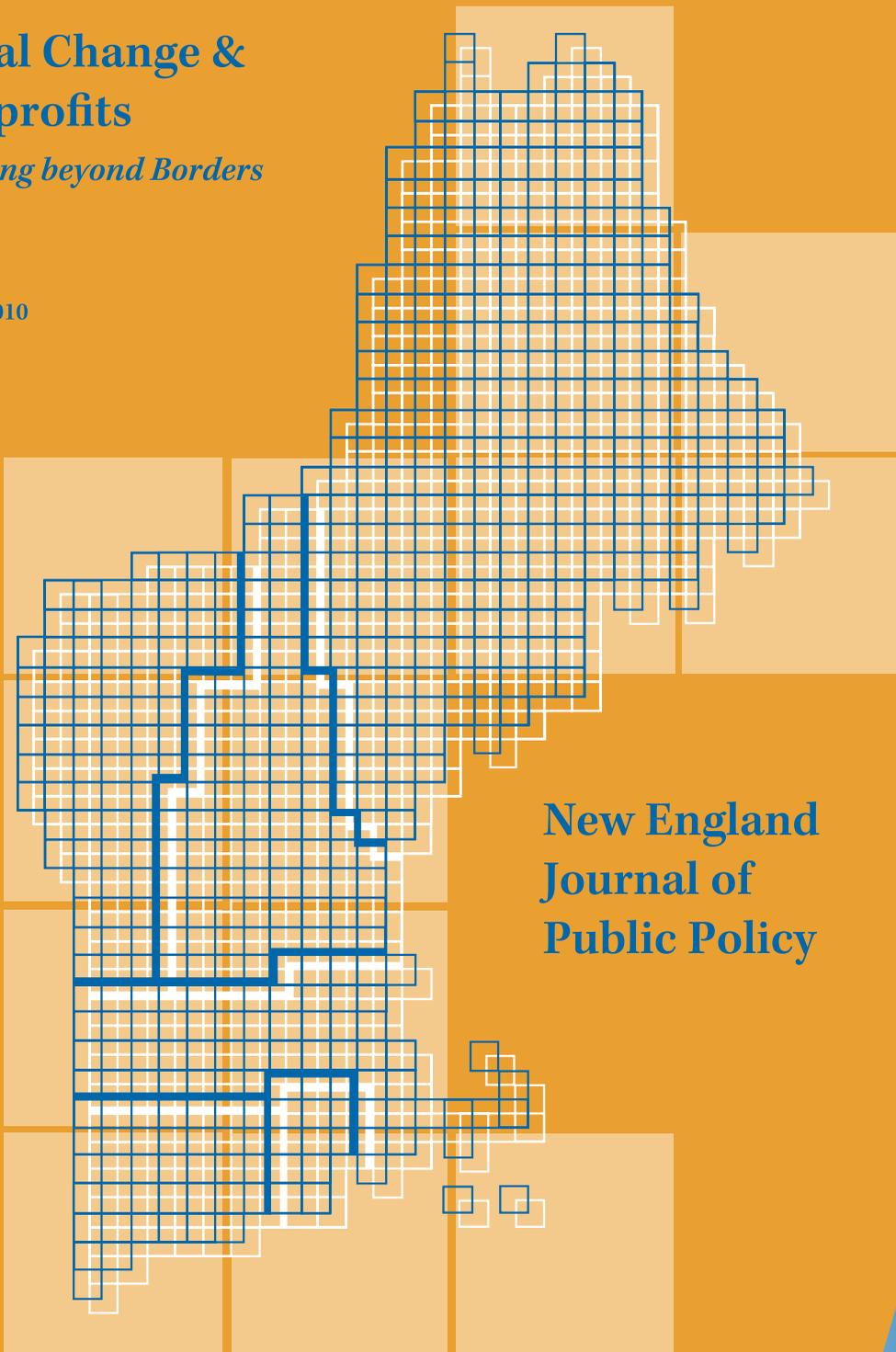


# Social Change & Nonprofits

*Learning beyond Borders*

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The John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy Studies is named for the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives from 1962 to 1971. John W. McCormack was born in South Boston, less than a mile from the University of Massachusetts Boston Harbor Campus. The McCormack Graduate School represents the university's commitment to public policy through applied policy research, particularly on issues of concern to New England, graduate education in policy studies, and public service.

This special journal issue was spearheaded by the McCormack Graduate School's Center for Social Policy, led by Donna Haig Friedman and Jennifer Cohen, in partnership with the Boston–Haifa Social Justice & Civil Society (SJCS) Committee of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston, led by Nancy Kaufman and James Morgan.

Many contributions of talent and monetary resources enabled successful completion of the journal issue: The Haifa, Israel Council of Volunteer Organizations (CVO) offered resources for translation of essays from Hebrew to English; Amnon Reichman, law professor of the University of Haifa, provided analytical expertise and served in an editorial role. The Barr Foundation, the Klarman Family Foundation, the Combined Jewish Philanthropies, the Boston–Haifa Connection, the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston, and the Center for Social Policy all generously supported the effort.

Fay Grajower, artist and volunteer member of the Boston–Haifa Social Justice and Civil Society Committee, created the artistic images that grace this journal issue. Patricia Peterson had a central role throughout in the planning, editing, layout, and production of this journal issue.

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# **Social Change & Nonprofits** Learning beyond Borders

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*Donna Haig Friedman, Jennifer Cohen, Amnon Reichman, James Morgan*

*Fay Grajower, who contributed the images that introduce each section of this journal, studied at The School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Massachusetts, and holds an M.A. in Studio Art from New York University. She was an artist-in-residence in Florida, Israel, and Germany and has been commissioned to do works including a painted sculpted glass dedicatory wall at the JCC in Wilmington, Delaware; a Holocaust Memorial Sculpture Installation at the B'nai Torah Congregation in Boca Raton, a Holocaust Memorial for the Young Israel of New Rochelle, NY, and an installation for The International Women's Research Center at Brandeis University. The artist has served as exhibition curator, appeared on cable television, and presented at conferences, including the International Association of Genocide Scholars. She is a member of the Boston-Haifa Connection and of the Social Justice-Civil Society Committee.*

# Foreword

*Nancy K. Kaufman*

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The “Haifa–Boston Connection” began twenty years ago under the auspices of Combined Jewish Philanthropies as a way to deepen the connections between people in the Greater Boston community and Israelis from the City of Haifa. The Mayors of Boston and Haifa signed a formal Memorandum of Agreement between their cities in 1999. The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston (JCRC) was charged with the responsibility of developing projects that would promote social justice and advance civil society, making Haifa a model for all of Israel. Working with the emerging nonprofit sector in Haifa, JCRC worked with the Council of Volunteer Organizations to forge partnerships between nonprofits in Boston and Haifa as a way to close social and economic gaps and to deepen the relationship among social justice organizations in the two communities. After a very successful NGO trip to Haifa in January of 2005 the idea for an ongoing “Learning Exchange” emerged.

The volume you hold in your hands represents just one of the remarkable — and unforeseeable — fruits of the seeds we, along with our partners in Boston and Haifa, have planted over these past two decades. As the culmination of the first five years of the Learning Exchange Network, it offers a taste of the deep learning the relationships among leaders in Haifa and Boston have engendered. It also stands as a foundation for a new stage of our Learning Exchange Network, which has gained new partners as it has grown to more than thirty participants each year engaged through visits, video conferences, and regular e-mail exchanges.

JCRC is indebted to the many lay leaders, professionals, and organizational partners who have made the Learning Exchange Network — and this special issue of the *New England Journal of Public Policy* — a reality. In addition to JCRC, the Boston–Haifa Connection of Combined Jewish Philanthropies, University of Massachusetts Boston, the Boston Center for Community and Justice, the Council of Volunteer Organizations (Haifa), and Shatil have all been instrumental in the growth of this unique program. They have all played an important role in modeling the difficult task of building an international learning network. We thank everyone who contributed to this Journal and, most particularly, Professor Donna Haig Friedman for her vision and commitment to this project.





# Preface

*Jenna Toplin*

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**W**e are undeniably living in a time when economies and societies as we know them are shifting and rapidly changing the roles of organizations and community leaders. In the democratic societies of Boston and Haifa, tensions across economics, race, identity, and security are high. This journal captures the impact of a project, a learning exchange, between nonprofit leaders that crossed these tensions and brought people together who otherwise may not have had nor sought out the opportunity to learn and reflect together. The implications of the changes happening around us surfaced organically through this exchange as questions were asked, missions were challenged, and inspiring stories of change and perseverance were shared. The essays in this journal, written by participants of the Boston–Haifa Learning Exchange Network (LEN), look through six lenses to reflect upon the impact of societal changes on their work and their communities: Challenges for the Nonprofit Sector; Transnational Learning Networks; Nonprofits and Social Change; Collaborations, Partnerships, Networks; Adaptive Capacity and Social Change; Nonprofit Leadership.

In the opening chapter of *Blessed Unrest*, Paul Hawken speaks of a global movement of individuals who are confronting despair to bring justice to the world. He says, “Inspiration is not garnered from the recitation of what is flawed; it resides, rather, in humanity’s willingness to restore, redress, reform, rebuild, recover, reimagine, and reconsider.” The individual and collective strengths and successes — even in the face of dire challenges — are shared in this journal as the writers reflect upon their energy and hope as they reconsider the reality and reimagine our world.

*Jenna Toplin is an M.B.A. candidate at Simmons College School of Management in Boston. After graduating from Boston University in 2005, Jenna joined the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston. As the International Partnerships program coordinator, she developed and organized numerous programs and initiatives in Haifa and Dnepropetrovsk, Boston’s sister cities in Israel and Ukraine respectively, including the Boston–Haifa Learning Exchange Network. She is looking forward to working with organizations to develop their capacity in order to effectively execute their strategy.*

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## **History of the Boston–Haifa Learning Exchange Network**

Between 2005 and 2009, social change leaders from Boston, Massachusetts, and Haifa, Israel, traveled on a learning journey together as members of the Boston–Haifa LEN, an adventure that would prove to be enriching and inspiring for all involved. The common vision of stronger communities and societies where differences might be celebrated and equal access to opportunities could exist resonated deeply with all participating organizations and leaders. Leaders embraced the opportunity to walk out of their organizations and beyond their immediate environments to learn with other community leaders and to place their day-to-day work in a global context. Bostonians and Haifaim met peers in their own cities who had successes to celebrate and challenges to tackle — some of whom worked across town but whose paths had not crossed.

While cultural differences permeated the Network, cross-cultural and transnational barriers lowered as they recognized and celebrated the similarities in work, purpose, and challenges they all experienced. Despite the differing everyday contexts — government, society, perceived and actual role of the third sector, and community politics — the desire to lead effectively to create change in local communities drew everyone together to a common ground.

In 2004, the Boston–Haifa Social Justice & Civil Society (SJCS) Committee of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston (JCRC) (part of the Haifa–Boston connection of Combined Jewish Philanthropies), implemented a multiyear initiative to improve civil society in Haifa through the strengthening of NGOs (nongovernmental organizations). Initially, this project focused on consulting activities to aid the organizational development of NGOs in Haifa through the Council of Volunteer Organizations (CVO), which envisioned itself as a hub where NGOs in Haifa could develop skills and connect to one another.

In the winter of 2005, eleven NGO leaders from Boston traveled to Israel with the JCRC as part of this initiative. This trip included a two-day seminar in Haifa with Haifa social justice leaders. Participant Dr. Donna Haig Friedman, Director of the McCormack Graduate School’s Center for Social Policy at the University of Massachusetts Boston, craved a deeper understanding of the country’s emerging antipoverty policies and a stronger connection to the NGO leaders whose commitment and work had inspired her during her brief Haifa experience. In less than a year, Donna joined the SJCS Committee and received a Fulbright Teaching/Research Fellowship in Haifa for the spring of 2007.

In partnership with the JCRC’s SJCS committee, the research project quickly developed into a true exchange among leaders and organizations from Boston and Haifa. The seeds of the Learning Exchange Network had been planted in 2005 and quickly began to take root with the guidance of Donna and an active subcommittee

of the SJSC Committee, including volunteers and professionals from both cities and organized by the CVO and JCRC. A systematic recruitment process led to the selection of five service and advocacy NGOs in each city who became paired learning partners. Living in Haifa from February to May of 2007, Donna engaged in a participatory action research (PAR) project, building a connection between advocacy, social change, and scholarship through active engagement of the organizations. As Peter Park explains, PAR is a knowledge-producing endeavor that generates representational, relational and reflective knowledge by gathering and analyzing information, grounded in experience; strengthening community ties; and sharpening the ability to think and act critically.<sup>1</sup> With dialogue at the core of this process, the LEN created a space for sharing information and experience, creating common meanings and forging concerted action. The basic goals over the years were as follows:

- To strengthen the third sector through developing the knowledge and skills and empowering NGO leaders in Boston and in Haifa to continue to address the challenges and tackle the societal problems of their communities in every day circumstances and in extraordinary times of crisis;
- To build a platform for dialogue so that NGO leaders of Boston and Haifa might share best practices and develop skills to benefit each community;
- To develop the skills and abilities of these organizations and leaders to create fundamental change through experiential learning seminars;
- To further develop the relationships, partnerships, and collaboration among and between diverse community leaders in Boston and Haifa;
- To create products (tools, models) that would serve a wider range of NGOs working for social change in each city and together.

Thirty-four organizations have participated in this learning exchange, which has been documented between 2005 and 2009 as a way to build and preserve network knowledge. The first cohort incidentally included only women leaders, and the cohorts that followed engaged a diverse group of men and women leaders from the nonprofit and government sectors in both cities. Throughout the years of the exchange, recruited participants were known for their leadership and their organizations supported their involvement. While the commitment to a mutual learning exchange and engagement of a diverse group of social-change leaders remained consistent, this initiative's direction and content developed organically. The flexible structure allowed it to be a fully engaging experience that met the needs and wants of participants at different times. Network members provided feedback and input regarding the direction of the exchange, because it was important that the learning be relevant to them, their staffs, boards, and volunteers.

Organizational leaders with visions of their community and of the world stepped beyond their agency's walls to reflect, to learn, and to teach. At different times and

for different participants, the experience was one in which professional development and personal transformation emerged as a shared vision. During walks through city neighborhoods, video conferences, and jointly led seminar sessions, members of the LEN discussed relevant issues of leadership, social change, community engagement, and cross-sector collaboration. Through this experience, as well as in their everyday work and personal lives, members of the LEN empowered and inspired others as leaders and as global citizens. It was a safe space to disagree, to challenge, and to process. Personal connections developed and organizational collaboration has resulted within and across cities. As one leader reflected, “The differences lie in culture, language, and so forth, and the similarities are that we are engaged in breaking through barriers that extenuate differences. We are connecting with humanity and celebrating differences. We have and need to continue to create safe spaces where we are free to be ourselves at the heart level and in creating relationships.”

In *Blessed Unrest*, Peter Hawken compares this global, grassroots movement with the human body’s immune system — it is diverse and it is everywhere. At the core of immunity, Hawken says, “is a miracle of recovery and restoration . . . some would say it is a mystery.” It uses internal and external “connective networks” of different sizes and strengths and is somewhat chaotic while appearing orderly. This network of leaders has experienced internal and external processes of change — across oceans and organizations and within themselves and their organizations. The LEN has established relationships, engaged in dialogue, and embraced diversity, joining tens of millions of people worldwide to work toward “restoration and social justice.” As teachers and learners, LEN members continue their learning and reflection in these pages. Their stories bring a diverse collection of voices, experiences, and perspectives and capture a shared vision of creating lasting, systemic change and bettering the communities in which we live.



## Notes

1. Peter Park, “Knowledge and Participatory Research” in *Handbook of Action Research*, ed. Reason and Bradbury, 83-90 (Newbury, CA: Sage Publications).





# CHALLENGES FOR NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

## **Introduction: A Theoretical Framework**

## Civil Society and Challenges Faced by Nonprofits

*Amnon Reichman*

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**T**his introduction will tackle two issues. The first is theoretical: a framework will be proposed with which to approach the activity of nonprofit organizations within civil society in modern democracies. Whereas the traditional approach posits three sectors in a triangular setting (the top corner occupied by the government, the bottom-right corner occupied by the market, and the bottom-left corner by the “third sector”), a better conceptualization defines civil society as a social space between the state (located above) and the individual or the private sphere (located below). This space is where for-profit organizations (usually clustered in one side of the space), nonprofit organizations (usually grouped in the other), and organizations that share characteristics of both (situated in the middle) reside and develop modes of coexistence (sometimes in tension and sometimes in partnership). This spatial model enables better understanding of the dynamics that occur when the state removes itself from segments of civil society by “ascending” (as is the case when the state stops providing some services and deregulates the services it has outsourced), or conversely, when the state interjects itself into segments of the civil society by “descending,” either via direct provision of services or by tight regulation of such provision. Moreover, this spatial conceptualization allows us to better understand the interaction of nonprofit organizations with state agencies, with for-profit organizations, and with individual members of the society, who are the potential volunteers in the nonprofit organization, the audience for their call for social change or the recipients of their services.

*Amnon Reichman, a tenured Senior-Lecturer (Associate Professor) at the Faculty of Law, University of Haifa, holds an LL.B. (Hebrew University), an LL.M. (Berkeley Law) and an S.J.D. (University of Toronto). His postdoctorate studies were devoted to ethics and professionalism (Harvard). His areas of expertise include constitutional and administrative law (Israeli and comparative), theories of human rights and judicial review, and law and culture (primarily law and cinema). Reichman served as a lay leader on the steering committee of the Haifa–Boston Partnership and as the Cochair of the Social Justice and Civil Society Committee (2001–2006).*

The second issue addressed by this introduction is more practical: the dilemmas faced by nonprofit organizations operating within the social space defined above will be outlined (in a stylized manner). These dilemmas will be organized along five axes: those pertaining to the relationship with the state and state agencies; those pertaining to the relationship with other nonprofit organizations; those pertaining to the relationship with for-profit organizations; those pertaining to the relations with the private sphere; and those pertaining to the relationship with organizations in other countries. With respect to each axis, it will be shown that rather than approaching the relationship as tri-polar, a fuller appreciation of the social space, or environment, is of value.

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### **Civil Society as a Social Space**

Civil society in Western democracies witnessed important changes toward the end of the twentieth century. Whereas previously civil society, and civil society organizations, were seen as a “third sector” vis-à-vis the governmental sector and the market, it became evident that this conceptualization is deficient, for it fails to adequately capture the nuances of modern social experience. The old tri-sectors approach assumes clear boundaries between the market and the nonprofit. In reality, for-profit organizations developed social-responsibility divisions, which agenda, even if motivated solely or primarily by corporate public relations, was, nonetheless, similar to that of traditional nonprofit organizations. Similarly, nonprofit organizations adopted, in various degrees, for-profit strategies for negotiating with market forces. Organizations ranging from social-services provision to social change and those with a main focus that ranged from fostering arts and culture (such as orchestras, museums, and faith-based organizations) to providing essential necessities (such as food banks and shelters) decided to operate in modes similar to for-profit corporations except that they do not generate monetary dividends to their shareholders. Moreover, the old tri-sector model posits civil society in a clear adversarial stance vis-à-vis government. The end of the twentieth century saw partnerships emerging among the government, the market, and nonprofit organizations. Furthermore, sociologists have identified the dynamic nature of the civil society in relation to both government and the market, a feature not well depicted by the static tri-sector model. A better definition of the term “civil society” was therefore required, one that would more accurately capture the relationship between the for-profit organizations, the nonprofit organizations, and the state.

The first move toward a better understanding of the term civil society required decoupling the actors — the organizations, including governmental organizations — from the field of social activity within which they operate. The second move required defining the relevant fields of social activity, that is, the social spaces where the activity takes place. Three such social spaces emerge. In the private sphere individuals

State

Nonprofit

Civil Society

The Market

Private Sphere

Civil Society: the Social Space between the State and the Individual

form familial relations and live their “private” lives. Imagine this space at the bottom, as a foundation of sorts. The state, where the official power of the sovereign resides, is organized in bureaucratic form. Imagine this space at the top. In civil society — the social space between the state and the private sphere — for-profit and nonprofit organizations pursue their goals.

Understanding civil society as the space where both the for-profit and nonprofit reside allows us to understand the continuum between the two ideal types of these organizations. The ideal type of a nonprofit organization is composed of a group of people whose relations are less formalized; the organizations need not necessarily be a distinct legal entity (let alone an entity with limited liability), its relations with its members and others are usually based on faith and trust rather than formal contracts, and its main capital is social esteem and the sense among its members of “doing something right.” An ideal-type of nonprofit organization relies on a core-base of volunteers or on people who are there “for the cause.” In the ideal-type of for-profit organization, people join or leave for economic reasons, the organization is hierarchically designed with clear, formal rules of duties and responsibilities, the preferred mode of interaction is the formal contract, and the core-base of the personnel is paid staff, acting to maximize the wealth of the stockholders. While these may be the ideal-types, real-life organizations may be situated in between: they may not act to maximize the profit of the stockholders, but they nonetheless adopt a for-profit mode of management. Or they may act for-profit but instill in their workforce a sense that the work is not just about the money. In short, the social space between the state and the individual allows for a range of organizations to operate: some organizations would gravitate toward the for-profit pole situated to the right of the social space, while other organizations would locate themselves toward the nonprofit

side (where other forms of capital, such as social esteem, carry the day; imagine this pole to the left). Other organizations may reside in between them.

Moreover, understanding civil society as a social space between the individual and the state allows us to understand the possible patterns within that space: the state may “descend in” and saturate the space by occupying all the functions performed by organizations in civil society; the polity would thus become a totalitarian society. Alternatively, the state may “ascend” or “withdraw” from the civil society altogether. It may outsource the provision of services it used to provide to organizations and it may deregulate their provision by removing bureaucratic modes of control or supervision. Similarly, this spatial model enables us to realize the importance of the “private” domain and the interaction between it and civil society. Individuals may either withdraw from participation in civil society by turning their attention to the “private” relationships with friends and family, or they may decide to spend most of their time and energy pursuing activities and relationships within civil society. Some may even decide to merge elements of the private sphere with civil society by living their lives more “publicly,” as new technology now offers. Finally, the spatial model reveals the ability of nonprofits to “move” within that space by changing some of their characteristics (such as by running some for-profit activities or by forming partnerships with for-profit organizations or with governmental bodies). Such partnerships may be project-by-project or on a broader basis; they may be for a limited time or for an extended period; they may be formed in order to promote some transformation or in order to resist proposed changes.

Understanding civil society as a social space also allows us to appreciate that processes may transcend state/national boundaries. Governments, for-profit, and nonprofit organizations partner with their counterparts in other states/nations, and people, goods, services, information, and ideas cross national boundaries. Therefore, patterns occurring in the space between the individual and the state in one polity may be affected by, and may affect, patterns in neighboring — or even distant — spaces. For example, if a government “withdraws” from civil society (or conversely, decides to strengthen its hold by increasing its presence) in one country, this may create pressures — ripple effects — that will be felt in civil societies in other countries. Similarly, if certain policies are adopted by organizations — for-profit or nonprofit — within one polity, organizations in other polities may face some of the consequences (intended or unintended) given the transnational dimension of modern civil society.

Turning from theory to practice, the state has, in several Western democracies, withdrawn (or partially withdrawn) from providing services directly and turned to models of outsourcing by purchasing these services from for-profit corporations or by partnering with nonprofits (through partially funding their activities or through devising tax schemes that benefit their activities). At the same time, such withdrawal was sometimes accompanied, and not necessarily in a systematic manner, with

the adoption of some form of regulation meant to govern the provision of services (or the eligibility to these partially funded services). Furthermore, the end of the twentieth century has seen greater cooperation not only among states and for-profit organizations, but also among nonprofit organizations, in tandem with globalization processes relying on newly available digital technologies, on the relative ease of transnational transportation, and on the emerging awareness that organizations operating within the society in Western democracy share some similar challenges and causes (while acknowledging their culturally specific differences).

The upshot of these changes was that the gaps between the haves and have-nots (which have widened at the end of the twentieth century as a result of privatization and deregulation policies) were met with privatization of social services. The challenges faced by both service providers and advocacy organizations have thus increased. Furthermore, gaps between strong and established organizations and less structured ones have widened, in part since the government preferred to partner with the well-established organizations — a preference shared by foundations and by some private philanthropists as well. Third, the state's role as partial "funder" (or "buyer") of services and as regulator and policy maker has placed the organizations working with (or in opposition to) the state on less familiar grounds. It is therefore useful to examine a little more closely the challenges faced by nonprofit organizations in modern civil societies. The challenges listed below are based on the experiences of organizations in Haifa and in Boston. As revealed by contributions to this volume, organizations on both sides of the ocean face similar dilemmas, but their approaches to such dilemmas may differ. Furthermore, the contributions to this volume reveal that the very process of learning from the experiences of organizations in other countries (a component of the transnational dimension of civil society) is, in itself, capacity-building.

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## **Challenges to Nonprofits in the Civil-Society Space**

### **Nonprofit-State Axis**

The first set of challenges faced by nonprofits pertains to the relationship with the state and state agencies. Given the patterns of state withdrawal briefly sketched above, should organizations seek to replace it, at least partially, by providing social services seen, traditionally, as within the duties of "the public" to provide? Or should organizations advocate for the return of state agencies, while taking on the "extra burden" caused by the state withdrawal only as a temporary measure? Or should service-provision organizations rejoice at the withdrawal of the state, since such withdrawal usually entails greater freedom for the organizations to pursue their mission? Striking a balance between advocacy for social change and the provision of services is a tough call even when the state and its agencies remain static (that is, neither elevate the upper boundary of the civil society nor push it down). When

amendments are made to the social contract that defines the responsibilities of the state, the organizations operating within civil society face a clear and concrete dilemma: whether to challenge these amendments or adapt to the new terms.

Yet as mentioned, the state has not simply withdrawn from civil society. Rather, the state and state agencies, whether national or municipal, outsourced some services by providing partial funding to nonprofit organizations and/or regulated the eligibility to services the provision of which is partially funded by the state. Alternatively, if a service that the state deemed important was not provided by state agencies, rather than developing the capacity to offer such service independently, the state offered to partner with the nonprofit currently providing a similar service. From the perspective of the state, this policy saves money (by leveraging public funds with the funds the nonprofits acquire through fundraising or via their volunteer core). It also allows the state to harness the know-how and devotion of the nonprofits, while deflecting responsibility for mismanagement if it occurs. At the same time, such a policy results in a less hierarchical command-and-control structure and leaves the state partially dependent on nonprofits. This was evident when state agencies (national and municipal) in Israel were confronted with the need to provide assistance to residents during the war between Israel and Lebanon in the summer of 2006. Lacking the capacity to provide all the necessary services, the state had to rely on the cooperation of nonprofits, which entailed managing a less-structured coalition of organizations.

From the perspective of the nonprofits, the dilemma is clear: Should organizations join forces with the state (or the municipal government) to pursue an important social goal and thereby risk losing (or at least diminishing) their independence? Or should they resist being co-opted by rejecting public funding and a seat at the public-policy-making table? Moreover, as will be elaborated below, the state has a preference for working with larger, established organizations, with presence in many localities. This puts pressure on distinctly local, relatively small nonprofits to join others and form a national organization (or a federation), thereby losing some of their uniqueness (and independence). As contributions to this volume reveal, these are not easy dilemmas to handle.

### **Nonprofit and For-profit Axis**

Raising money is important, and for-profit corporations are a great source, but on occasion it is precisely the policy of privatization and deregulation, favored the for-profit corporations, that the nonprofit organizations view as problematic. Furthermore, it is sometimes the policy of for-profit organizations that the nonprofits see as irresponsible. Examples range from pollution to failing to provide adequate labor standards, or failing to provide adequate opportunities for minorities. Should nonprofits refuse “tainted” money from corporations? If this sounds a bit simplistic, life presents variations with multiple shades of gray. For example, when approached

by the social-responsibility arm of a corporation to conduct a joint campaign, should the nonprofits resist, knowing that it is being used at least in part to promote a certain social image desired by the corporation? For after all, not only will its image rub off on the corporation and thereby grant it an air of social respectability, but the corporation's image may rub off on it, which may detract from the latter's noncommercial nature (or its reputation). Assume now that the corporation asks that the nonprofit refrain from running a similar campaign with the corporation's competitor. Should it take a utilitarian stance, seeking to maximize its ability to promote the social good it seeks to promote by agreeing to work with the highest bidder? Or should it resist such market tactics?

Furthermore, when corporate funding is present, corporations may wish to achieve greater control by establishing a new entity in which they call the shots. Alternatively, they may push to place their members on the boards of the nonprofit they support. Some may welcome such a move. It signifies the commitment of the for-profit to the cause (which may translate into cash or other corporate resources and know-how). But the risk is clear: loss of independence.

### **Relationship among Nonprofits**

Joining forces with other nonprofits could strengthen the ability of each organization to pursue its goals. It would also make attracting grant money easier, as foundations usually prefer funding bigger players whose proven ability to make a change is evident, rather than splitting their support among various factions in the same field. On the other hand, joining forces with others may lead to loss of independence and loss of the ability to pursue the specific mission of the individual organization as understood by its members. It may also lead to loss of motivation by the volunteer core. There is also the risk of exposing the fundraising "secrets" of each to its competitors. Put in market terms, a merger of two or more organizations, and even a joint venture, may lead to the loss of the relative advantage of each, as its social capital may be transferred to another organization.

A related dilemma is whether, or to what extent, to cooperate with "umbrella organizations" — a coalition of organizations created in order to facilitate cooperation, enrich the tools available to each organization, and present a united front on some issues. Umbrella organizations may build the capacity of their member organizations by providing access to knowledge and other resources and may serve as a neutral platform for exchanging ideas and forming a joint policy among like-minded organizations. But such umbrella organizations may end up restricting the freedom of each organization to chart its own course and/or may end up competing with the individual nonprofit by stealing its thunder or by directly appealing to its funders. The umbrella organization may thus pose a threat of sorts to the independence of each member. From the perspective of the umbrella organization, the tension is also

clear: on the one hand, in order to maintain trust with the members' organizations, it should stay above the fray and concentrate on providing tools and a neutral platform. It should not step into the shoes of an individual organization, for by doing so not only does the umbrella organization compete with its member, it also thwarts the member's organic development. Yet not leading some concrete activities on the ground also has a price: an umbrella organization is expected to take the front line — in advocacy or service provision — in order to maintain its social capital. For if it is taken to be only a "bureaucratic" agency, its mission may fade and it may lose its momentum and the support of its key constituencies, including its volunteer core.

### **Relationship between the Nonprofits and the Private Sphere**

Recall: the private domain is "below" the civil society; it is where individuals lead their familial lives, pursue their individual hobbies, and spend time on their own. Nonprofit organizations seek to draw the commitment of members of the society engaged in their "private" lives. Recruiting their support and involvement requires appealing to their sense of solidarity or otherwise convincing them of the importance of the goal promoted by the nonprofit. As mentioned above, a nonprofit is usually a less structured organization and even its paid personnel are part of the organization not only for the monetary remuneration. Running it therefore requires a unique approach toward human resources. Should it adopt managerial tools developed by for-profit organizations to attract and manage its human capital, and thus perhaps increase its efficiency, but also risk losing its grassroots support and enthusiasm? The for-profits who donate money would certainly like to see the nonprofits operating according to the for-profit mold, but is this the right course of action, given the unique characteristics of the human capital upon which they thrive? Consequently, should nonprofits attempt to recruit successful business people to their boards, seeking their expertise in running business, or should they steer away from the for-profit way of doing business?

Nonprofit organizations in the United States have, by and large, taken the position that the structure the market offers, and the business administration models prevalent therein, need only moderate modifications in order to suit the nonprofits operating within civil society. Nonprofits in the U.S. are consequently more professional and efficient. The small and medium size nonprofits in Israel are less structured and rely more heavily on the spirit of volunteerism and lay-people's participation. Examining the dialogue between nonprofits from Israel and from the U.S. may therefore shed some light on the trade-offs.

### **Nonprofits Beyond National Boundaries**

As mentioned, the twenty-first century provides nonprofits with opportunities to expand their reach beyond the polity within which they are situated. Transnational cooperations ensue, and multinational organizations emerge. Transnational

organizations or other forms of partnerships may provide local nonprofits with access to know-how, energize their core human capital, and assist in fundraising. Moreover, as part of the exchange, organizations may decide to adopt specific campaigns or join forces in concrete activities. An international frame may be helpful in generating public support or, in case the campaign is adversarial, in providing cover from the opposing forces (including the government or powerful corporations). At the same time, spending time with international partners may consume time and resources and thereby divert nonprofits' attention from their local base. Nonprofit organizations may also need to consider whether experiences gained by organizations in other localities are relevant to them, given possible political, economic and cultural differences. For example, the organizational culture of nonprofits in the U.S., as mentioned above, follows some corporate patterns, whereas the culture in Israel is more grassroots oriented. Are the experiences of U.S. nonprofits relevant to the Israeli counterpart? Furthermore, international involvement may subject nonprofits to critiques launched against partners abroad and may raise concerns regarding "external" interventions. The reports of the nonprofits from Haifa and Boston thus may also shed important light on this dimension.

## **Conclusion**

It is perhaps trite to note that civil society — understood as the social space between the individual and the state, where for-profit and nonprofit organizations pursue their goals — is inherently political. Within this space values and beliefs are translated into social action, policies are formed and implemented, and players — organizations and office-holders within organizations — have to engage with other players (that is, with other organizations and other office holders). As the contributions to this section reveal, we cannot understand governance in the twenty-first century without understanding the dynamics and pattern characteristics of the civil society in any given polity. Our traditional focus on the state as the sole source of public policy has long been questioned and, as leaders of organizations report here, is difficult to maintain. Organizations and their volunteer core view it as their responsibility to strive toward social transformation, hopefully with, but also without (or contrary to the policies of) state agencies. This is not to say, of course, that the state's role is not meaningful; it is mainly vis-à-vis the state and its agencies that the players operating with the civil society form their strategies. But strategies are also formed with respect to other organizations, whether for-profit or nonprofit, and more specifically, the question of collaboration with other organizations appears to be of special importance.

It should be recognized, in this respect, that the political activity (and the organizational politics) of nonprofits raises another question, not directly addressed here: How can nonprofits effectively deal with political parties? After all, such parties are a vital part of civil society. But collaboration with political parties is a risky business. While it may yield access to the state-based policy-making table, it may also risk

alienating the core of the volunteer base, who may find other aspects of the particular political party problematic, or who would like to remain unaffiliated. Collaborating with political parties (and the log-rolling inherent in such collaboration) may also complicate the prospects of building a coalition of nonprofits, since any organization affiliated with a given party may be seen as “tinted” by other organizations in the sense that it has become the long arm of the party or that it has crossed the invisible line that separates grassroots activism and professional politics. This is true especially when deep political divides on issues other than social justice plague a given polity, as is the case in Israel. It is, perhaps, not accidental that leaders of organizations chose not to express themselves on this issue in this volume.

From a different perspective, it is interesting to note how transnational collaboration may influence the decision of organizations to collaborate locally, namely with organizations of the same domicile. The essays in this volume favor, sometimes enthusiastically, the strategy of coalition-building. Yet when the Haifa–Boston Learning Exchange Network project reported in this volume began, this was not necessarily the case. It was not easy to convince organizations to collaborate with neighboring organizations; in fact, several organizations expressed concern regarding the loss of independence and turf. It could be that the transnational dimension of the project has convinced leaders of at least some organizations that “networking” is important. Perhaps the presence of organizations from across the ocean demonstrated the potential gains from successful collaboration, particularly in terms of know-how and perhaps potential future joint-fundraising. It could also be the case that changing the focus from the local to the global also changed the attitude of key office holders within each locale by highlighting the common objectives shared by nonprofit organizations and by generating a sense of expanded community where solidarity matters, thereby energizing the core leadership of the organizations. Or it could simply be the case that since this project was primarily about learning and not about concrete social action, differences and tensions between organizations have become muted, and therefore there was no real reason not to coalesce. Time will tell whether long-lasting partnerships will emerge from the project, or whether the attitudes toward collaboration with neighboring organizations reported in this volume will endure the pressures of the mundane. But be that as it may, this project has opened an interesting window into the structure and operation of civil society in Israel and in Boston and, equally important, it has demonstrated the potential of translational ventures. Consequently, it has contributed to our understanding not only of the concept of civil society — i.e., what it means — but also how key players operate within that space in dealing with systemic dilemmas.



# Service and/or Advocacy

# Nonprofit Sector in the Twenty-first Century

*Nancy K. Kaufman*

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In both Israel and the United States over the past twenty years, there has been an explosion in the number of nonprofit organizations that live in a space somewhere between government agencies and for-profit companies. While the growth of these organizations may have been stimulated by different factors in each country, there is much to be learned through a cross-cultural exchange like the one between organizations in Haifa and in Boston.

In order to analyze some of the challenges facing nonprofit organizations across a wide spectrum of mission, purpose, and size, I have categorized the type of organizations being discussed as follows:

**Direct Service only** — with public and private funds  
(for example, Jewish Family and Children’s Services)

**Direct Service and Advocacy** — with public and private funds  
(for example, antipoverty agencies)

**Advocacy and Organizing** — with a mix of public and private funds  
(for example, Hyde Square Task Force)

**Advocacy and Organizing** — with no public funds  
(for example, JCRC Boston)

Each model presents challenges as to how services are delivered, what constraints exist in managing the organization, and whether advocacy for policy change is possible. All of these models fall into the definition of “civil society” as described by Professor Amnon Reichman in the introduction to this section: “Civil Society is the

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social space between the state and the individual where for-profit and nonprofit organizations pursue their goals.” Challenges develop for the nonprofit organization when government does not behave in a way that supports the strengthening of civil society. Depending on the composition of the board and the nature of the funding the organization receives from government and/or private institutions, the pressures to “conform” can be enormous and can inhibit the ability of an organization to advocate on behalf of the clients they serve or the injustice they seek to redress. If, for example, an organization receives direct funding from the government, can the organization then advocate for policies that may be in conflict with the position of a given government entity (whether elected or appointed by an elected official)? Will the organization’s funding be threatened if it fails to “toe the party line”? And, if the organization provides direct services to clients in need, will those services be jeopardized by the advocacy position the organization takes on any given issue? In the United States, nothing symbolizes this dilemma better than the nonprofit Community Action Agencies that were created as part of the “Great Society” of the Johnson Administration. As the founder and Executive Director of one of these agencies in the 1970s, the author has a unique perspective on the challenges and opportunities presented by organizations that choose to both provide direct services and to advocate around policy issues that impact the people who are provided those services.

Community Action Agencies were mandated by the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 and they were created to fight poverty in the inner cities while providing for the “maximum feasible participation of the poor” in planning and oversight of the organizations. Thus, a hybrid organization was legally constituted by the federal government to be both a direct service provider and an advocate on behalf of the poor with the very government that was providing the funds. The agencies were given clear guidelines for constituting boards of directors that were composed of the local community — one-third low-income members, one-third local government representatives, and one-third civic and business leaders. Thus, an inherent tension was created that often put the organization in direct conflict with the government that was regulating its funding. An example of that tension came to my agency (Tri-City Community Action Program) when fuel assistance and weatherization programs were initiated. Our role to that point had been to advocate on behalf of the poor for exactly this kind of ameliorative program, but not to run the program. But what better way to learn about the needs of the poor than to actually have specific data on who they were and what services they needed. Our organization made a conscious decision to take on the very large direct aid programs while continuing to advocate on behalf of those receiving aid.

The success of the Community Action Agencies (the network still exists forty-five years after creation) is proof positive that it is possible to provide direct services with government funding and advocate to government for a greater share of the resources

and for policies that support society's most vulnerable members. It only works, however, if the provider organization understands that its true mission is to envision a time when such services are no longer necessary because all individuals have the means to provide for their own needs by finding routes out of poverty through employment and full and independent participation in community life.

While it may be easier and less conflictual to run an organization that does not take government funds, this, too, has many challenges. Such is the case of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston (JCRC). While it exists as an "umbrella" organization to speak on major policy issues on behalf of the organized Jewish community, it also advocates with government for increased resources for vulnerable people (both Jewish and non-Jewish) in society. While JCRC does not receive government funds directly, many of the social service agencies it advocates for in the Jewish community receive government funds to serve their clients. Strict government regulations on "lobbying" define the relationship with the public sector and determine what business can and cannot be conducted.

An example of this challenge took place in 1999, when JCRC took a group of state legislators to Israel as part of its Israel advocacy work having nothing to do with its domestic policy agenda. JCRC was heavily criticized for subsidizing a trip to Israel for legislators because JCRC also directly lobbies the state government. So, while JCRC receives no state funds directly for its programs it does maintain relationships with elected officials in order to secure resources for the larger Jewish social welfare system. It was the "perception" of influencing elective officials with a trip to Israel that became the issue. JCRC no longer subsidizes trips for state officials but it does include them on trips to Israel with other key non-Jewish people.

The JCRC does receive considerable private funds through the Jewish Federation in Boston (CJP), and that, too, can be a source of conflict when positions are taken that may run counter to the prevailing business interests of donors to the Federation. By being constituted, however, as an independent organization with a separate board of directors, JCRC is able to carefully weigh the various interests of the community when taking positions on controversial issues. The challenge here has been most visible in efforts to maintain a "broad table" of inclusion on issues where there is disagreement about strategy regarding domestic issues and Israel advocacy issues.

In the domestic area, gay marriage is an example of another challenge JCRC faced. The Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts made a ruling that permitted civil marriage for gays and lesbians. Many different "faith" groups opposed this ruling even though it did not speak to the issue of religious ceremonies. Several partner organizations asked JCRC to take a position, which was difficult given the diversity of the JCRC membership. A decision was made to have an open dialogue and to give all members an opportunity to express themselves. The primary issue was one of civil rights and not religious beliefs. After a thorough debate, a vote was taken and it was

decided to support the Supreme Court's decision. The Orthodox community voted against and clearly expressed their concern but did NOT walk away from the table because the process was a fair and democratic one.

Another example of taking stands on controversial issues involves taxes for social and welfare services. In order to effectively advocate for vulnerable individuals in our community, we often hear from legislators that the resources simply do not exist to fund all the necessary services people need, and decisions must be made as to how to cut the pie unless the pie is actually increased. We have been faced with this challenge many times and it is coming up again in 2010 with an initiative on the November ballot that will ask citizens to decide on a possible roll-back of the Massachusetts sales tax and an elimination of the liquor tax that was put into effect in 2009. As in the past when similar initiatives have been proposed, JCRC is asked by our elected officials and secular and religious partners to take a stand. Our JCRC Council will take up this issue, once again, and I fully expect that it will vote for JCRC to be active in the campaign to prevent the roll-back of taxes. What is at stake here is millions of dollars in funds needed to support poor and vulnerable people. But what is also in play are the beliefs of many that taxes are not good for business or people at the higher end of the income spectrum. Since many of those people are donors to the Federation, this is an issue of great concern. By building support among all the Jewish agencies that receive government funds and their board members, I fully expect that we will provide a voice for maintaining the "safety net" for people in need.

More recently, JCRC has been challenged on the issue of who and how Israel is represented on the Council. B'rit Tzedek V'Shalom has been a member of JCRC for several years. Recently B'rit Tzedek merged with J Street, and some people would prefer J Street not be represented on the Council. It has long been the policy of JCRC that if an organization supports a two-state solution to the conflict between Israel and Palestinians and believes in the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish democratic state, then they would be welcomed on the Council as a member organization. Since J-Street meets those criteria they are on the Council (as is CAMERA and the David Project; ZOA and Hadassah; Reform, Conservative and Orthodox movements). It is the organization's belief that we are stronger when we include different voices around the table than when we try to silence any one voice.

Because JCRC is a representative body with over forty different Jewish organizations represented on its Council, it is able to vet issues in a deliberative and democratic manner. By using a democratic process where majority rules a fairly reliable process exists to insure that positions are taken that represent the majority of community opinion. Thus, JCRC is able to be a forceful advocate with government without worrying about the political implications of the positions it takes, and it is seen as a formidable force at the state and federal levels because of the constituency it represents (higher voter participation) and the careful way in which it carries out its

advocacy, often in coalition with other religious and civic organizations.

In conclusion, one of the greatest challenges facing nonprofits in both the United States and Israel in the twenty-first century is how to balance the delivery of critically needed direct services while also paying attention to the policies that make those services necessary and how to speak out when those policies do a disservice to their clients. This challenge becomes further complicated when government is providing the funds to make the services possible. It can be equally complicated when a private organization is providing funds and wants to try to control the agenda. In both cases, it is important to be true to one's mission, yet sensitive to the many different constituencies and points of view.

Building a powerful base of support among those who receive services and then building meaningful relationships with those in a position to influence policy is an important way to bridge the gap in the space between government and the private sector. By strengthening the "civil society" from a position of shared interests and shared values in a democratic society is likely to be the most effective way to achieve the desired result. The challenges must be addressed in order to guarantee that our vibrant democracies (in Israel and the U.S.) are able to act on their most basic responsibility to support and sustain and strengthen our most vulnerable members of society.



# **The Haifa Council of Volunteer Organizations**

# **Challenges and Dilemmas of an Umbrella Organization**

*Yael Abada*

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**T**his paper reviews the challenges faced by the Haifa Council of Volunteer Organizations (CVO) as the umbrella organization of third-sector organizations working in Haifa, Israel. It will review challenges that affect our everyday decisions and shape the council's activities. Most likely, some of these challenges affect other umbrella organizations as well, while some are unique to the CVO and are the result of local, historical, structural, and organizational factors.

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## **Background**

In Haifa, we enjoy a large number and a wide variety of community activities. There are over 300 registered NGOs working in the city in all walks of life: health, education, welfare, environment, women, social change, culture, sports, religion, and more. Most of these organizations provide various services to the public, while some do lobbying and advocacy work.

The CVO, which was founded in 1983, is a nonprofit umbrella organization that brings together many of these organizations. Surveying the history of the organization, we can distinguish two phases: the first, from 1983 to 2005, and the second, from 2005 to this day. In the first phase, the CVO was founded by several familiar and well-established organizations and was operated by volunteer work only. Its goal was to connect and correlate the various organizations working in Haifa, and its activity amounted mainly to monthly social gatherings in which members gave updates on their organizations' work, went on field trips, or listened to lectures.

The second phase, which started about five years ago, involved a real changeover in the council's structure and character, after the Social Justice and Civil Society

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(SJCS) Committee of the Boston-Haifa Connection of Combined Jewish Philanthropies (CJP) decided to realize its vision of strengthening the civic society in Haifa by ideologically and financially supporting the CVO. Since then, the council has undergone extensive changes, which presented complex challenges and turned into a sort of “inter-generational” struggle between the old and the new conceptions. Change did not come at once. It was a long and slow process (so as to not arouse too many objections, among other reasons). It involved studying the existing situation as well as the desired goals, and was conducted by way of agreement and not by way of revolution. The two phases differ in almost all aspects — mission, goals, organizational structure, and activities.

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### **Challenges Resulting from Organizational Structure**

**The Board of Directors.** The statutes of the CVO state that its board of directors should include representatives of 14 different organizations. Naturally, such a structure is a source of conflicts and dilemmas. In any other organization, members of the board of directors have to see, first and foremost, to the organization’s needs. Members of the CVO’s board, however, are actually members of other organizations and represent them, a situation that might lead to a conflict of interests (for example, struggles over resources or financial information). The amount of time members of the board devote to the council instead of devoting it to their own organization presents another challenge. Members of the board might face a dilemma; they might find themselves asking, To whom am I more loyal? What organization is more important for me? Which one do I want to promote more?

Moreover, in the past, representatives of organizations on the CVO’s board did not always hold key positions in their own organizations, that is, they did not have a senior, decision-making status. Consequently, there were many delays and setbacks in making decisions and advancing projects and programs. In the last two or three years the situation has changed, because the council has slowly gained a significant and influential status, making seniors want to be more involved in its activity. Nevertheless, the CVO is still the “second priority” for board members, and most of their time and effort is directed at advancing their own organizations’ interests and not necessarily the council’s. This structure of a board of directors is a challenging one, and sometimes weakens the organization instead of strengthening it.

**Equal Status for All Organizations.** The old statutes reserved seats on the board for five organizations that were among the ones that founded the CVO. This meant that these organizations had a permanent place on the board of directors, without being elected every two years like any other organization. Consequently, organizations’ representatives changed constantly and did not have a high sense of obligation and commitment toward the council’s activities. Moreover, this prevented others from

being elected, and we think it was not in accordance with the legal requirements of board members to be personally committed to and responsible for the council. After a long process that lasted for nearly three years, the statutes concerning the permanent seats reserved for the founding organizations were revoked, with the objection of the older organizations but with the support of all the others. Today all representatives are elected equally.

**Relationships between Staff Members and Volunteers.** A number of volunteers objected to hiring employees to administer the organization and to conduct its projects, and as a result, several of them stopped participating in its activities. Most members, however, understood that hiring permanent and committed employees who would work mainly for promoting the organization's goals was essential to its proper functioning and development. Nevertheless, some volunteers viewed it as a sign of mistrust in their commitment and claimed that there was a deep contradiction between the council's name and the hiring of employees. They were not willing to accept the director's authority, reserved their loyalty and commitment to the former volunteering management, and were not committed to the new one. As a result, some of the volunteers left the organization.

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### **Challenges Resulting from the Definition of Mission, Goals, and Limitations**

In the first few years following the "changing of the guard," a complex process of defining the council's mission and goals took place. Naturally, the new management wanted to apply its own world views, which were more progressive and proactive than the "old" management's. We were deliberating whether as an umbrella organization the council should lead social-change actions and conduct its own activities instead of encouraging its member organizations to act: Does the leadership of the umbrella organization strengthen or weaken its constituent organizations? Will the council be perceived as pushing the other organizations aside, as their competitor? Which issues should the council deal with, and which ones should it not interfere with? What does the council have to offer organizations in Haifa? And, what do we need the CVO for, anyway?

In order for the council to stay faithful to its cause, we conducted a process of defining our mission and goals together with our "customers" — the organizations themselves. We invited all the organizations in Haifa to participate in several meetings of strategic planning. Of course, not all organizations took part in it but, overall, about fifty representatives of various organizations participated in these meetings. In addition, the council holds roundtable forums that meet several times a year to discuss, among other things, these issues.

The process is never-ending: In each forum or meeting, these questions are raised and discussed, both in meetings of the board of directors (which, as was said, is

composed of representatives of various organizations), as well as in staff meetings. Sometimes when discussing a project, the first questions we ask ourselves are: Is this the council's job? Should not one of the organizations conduct this project? Is this an issue common to several organizations? Does the project fulfill our mission — to strengthen the third-sector organizations operating in the city?

When coping with such dilemmas we are always guided by two fundamental principles: (1) we avoid competition, that is, the council does not work in fields and areas in which other organizations act and does not compete with them; (2) the council focuses on developing collaborative efforts and professional skills. The council also faces questions and dilemmas concerning the issues with which it deals: We do not specialize in poverty, but we activate a forum of organizations that assist impoverished families; we do not specialize in special needs, but we organize a forum of special-need organizations; we do not specialize in helping new immigrants or in the special problems of youths in Haifa, but in these areas, we conduct roundtable discussions. We may say that the council specializes in correlating and coordinating between various organizations that work in similar or parallel fields, and in developing mutual thinking and activities. The council specializes in community organizing: locating and recruiting interested bodies, developing collaborations, building networks, and arranging forums.

The council is especially advanced in the field of professional training. We offer professional training courses, seminars, and workshops in a diverse range of interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral fields: training courses for organization directors and volunteer coordinators, as well as seminars for functioning under stress and in times of crisis. We make sure that courses are attended by representatives of all professional fields and social groups, and so, besides studying and developing professional skills, courses allow participants to meet with colleagues and fellow activists with whom they would normally not have a chance to meet. The most successful part of our training program is the Boston–Haifa Learning Exchange, which brings together directors of organizations working in various fields, deepens awareness of social-justice issues, establishes a network of directors in Haifa and in Boston, and by that strengthens local social solidarity.

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### **Challenges Resulting from Collaborating with a Diverse Range of Groups**

In the past, organizations that participated in the council's activities were older, well-established, mainstream, service-providing organizations, composed mostly of adult Jewish members. Later, as an umbrella organization, we aimed at connecting with other target audiences that were not involved in our activities or represented in the various forums we conducted. We made a great effort to include Arab, new

immigrant, and orthodox Jewish organizations, as well as environmental and social-change organizations. This proved to be a complex move. Up until several years ago, the council's image was of a "social club" — old-fashioned and insignificant. It was hard to bring together social-change organizations and environmental organizations, to enlist Arab members to a "Jewish" organization, to attract young adults to join a "veteran" organization, to include religious organizations in a "secular" council. It was hard for these diverse organizations, so different from one another, to find common fields of interest and to rise above prejudices and political and ideological disputes. To overcome this problem, we applied a strategy of "focalized active courting." For each activity we planned, we located all the social groups that may be interested in the subject; we then recruited organizations by advertising in newspapers, on mailing lists, and on our Internet site, and later by meeting with organizations' administrators in person.

A change started when various organization began joining specific programs that provided them with immediate benefits; for example, when we coordinated the distribution of food packages to impoverished families, or when we offered a volunteer coordinator course, a director training program in collaboration with Bostonian organizations, or emergency and crisis preparation seminars. After participants started meeting and getting to know each other, they realized that they share mutual needs and challenges, and when they started trusting each other, they began to understand that coordinated activities can help all organizations achieve their own specific goals, as well as advance the Haifa civic populace in general. Organizations and directors that took part in focalized activities usually continue to be involved in the council as board members, conference planners, members of the steering committee for the Haifa Volunteer Week, and as strategic planners. Moreover, collaborations between organizations continue even after the termination of formal collaborative programs. Nevertheless, we must note that, alongside these successful efforts, participation of Arab and orthodox Jewish organizations in the council's activities is still relatively low.

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### **Challenges Resulting from the Relations between NGOs and the Establishment**

As any other NGO working in Haifa, the CVO also faces dilemmas and questions concerning its relations with the municipality. Under its former leadership, the council's policy was to try and become closer to the municipality, especially to the Department of Welfare, and to conduct collaborative activities as much as possible. The new management, on the other hand, attempted to make a clear distinction and separation between the CVO and the municipality. This distinction was extremely important, because it allowed the council to form its own independent identity and mission, as well as to position itself as an umbrella organization for other NGOs. The

council's separation from the municipality is a complex and delicate issue: On the one hand, it is supported (although quite modestly) by the municipality, it is interested in establishing good work relations with its departments (mainly the welfare and education departments), on certain tasks, it has to collaborate with the municipality and even under its direction (in emergencies), and many of the member organizations take care to maintain good relations with it. On the other hand, several of the member organizations are fighting against some of the municipality's policies, and even the council itself cannot always tolerate its often patronizing, demeaning, or ignoring attitude towards NGOs. In its relations with the municipality, the CVO tries to maintain a fine line between collaboration and opposition, closeness and separation.

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### **Challenges Resulting from the Relations with Organizations Working Nationwide**

**Competition.** The CVO is a distinctively local organization, striving to represent and promote all organizations active in Haifa, and in all of its activities, it emphasizes its "Haifaite" character. Nonetheless, situations of competition or conflict of interests with other, national organizations might sometimes occur. Several national organizations, for example, offer professional training courses and seminars. To avoid competition, the council might cancel one of its courses, change its program or its subjects, or collaborate with the "competitor" organization. Another example of competition is the contrast between the publicity given to the Good Deeds Day conducted by Ruach Tova, as compared to the Haifa Volunteer Week, which will probably never receive such wide coverage in the national media. A local organization stands little chance when competing against a highly funded, well-connected national organization.

**Exclusion.** Many times we experience difficulties because most of the council's activity is limited to the Haifa area, which is relatively distant (more psychologically than geographically) from the center of Israel. It is quite difficult to get senior position holders, such as important officials, members of the Knesset, or government ministers to attend events held in Haifa, for example. It is also difficult for us to join forums of national organizations' directors, because they admit only directors of organizations that work nationwide, which are mostly situated in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Haifa is perceived as a remote place and the CVO is perceived as a small organization, although in many cases, its activity takes place on a larger scale than that of national organizations.

Another form of exclusion, or a symptom of the center-periphery conflict, is the fact that in many cases, local branches or representatives of national organizations have to ask their organization for permission to attend the council's activities. Some national organizations do not allow their local branch directors to attend our forums,

to list the branch in our local directory book of organizations, or to attend one of our courses. Consequently, the council's dealings with the organization are sometimes conducted through its national head office and not through the local branch.

**Collaborations.** Several of the CVO's programs are conducted in collaboration with national organizations. Our most important collaborations are with the JDC Israel, a large organization that deals with a variety of fields and issues all over Israel. Our work relations with the JDC are mostly related to emergency management and social strength programs. Today, this collaboration is very successful and productive; it is built on mutual trust and it benefits both parties. But in the beginning, it was difficult and complex: A small, local, constantly-changing, low-budget organization was facing a big, national, well-established, experienced, and prestigious organization. Confrontation was unavoidable. The struggle over who would run the projects, control the budgets, and make the decisions, as well as the JDC's patronizing attitude toward the council nearly brought down the project and almost caused us to give up a huge donation. Luckily, mutual efforts brought reconciliation and we managed to build a real partnership, which has kept going for the last three years and allows the CVO to develop and thrive.

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## **Summary**

Volunteer organizations are working in a geographically, politically, managerially, and financially complex space. Every day, we make decisions that take these complexities into account. The short review given here is an attempt to present several of the challenges and dilemmas that the CVO faces as an umbrella organization of NGOs working in Haifa. Some of these challenges are relevant for other organizations; some are typical of umbrella organizations and are related to their unique relations with other organizations and with the establishment. It appears that the principles to which the council adheres, namely, not to act in place of other organizations, to act only when we can offer a specific and unique function, and to focus on professional training and developing collaborations, help us answer the needs of NGOs working in Haifa, who increasingly make use of the council's services and become active partners in determining the CVO's objectives and activities.

*Translated from the Hebrew by Yoram Arnon*







## TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL-CHANGE NETWORK LEARNING

### **Introduction: Shared Responsibility, Collective Reflection**

### Boston–Haifa Learning Exchange Network

*Donna Haig Friedman*

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**H**aving just landed in Boston’s Logan airport early in the morning of July 13, 2006, I looked up at a public TV. The breaking CNN news story of the day — and for weeks to come — featured an outbreak of war between Israel and Lebanon. Bombs were dropping in Haifa, in the very neighborhoods I had visited during the previous seven days. My visit had been focused on recruitment and selection of nongovernmental organization (NGO) research partners for the Fulbright fellowship research to take place a few months hence, February through May 2007, when I was to be in residence in Haifa. During the previous week, Jennifer Cohen and I had jointly led focus groups with leaders of social change NGOs whose communities were in the poorest parts of Haifa, coincidentally many of the same neighborhoods being bombed. In a flash, the defenses I had constructed to ward off the pain of what happens on the other side of the world gave way. Knowing and caring about my new colleagues and friends in Haifa, as well as the communities they are committed to, pushed against the internal cognitive/emotional protections I had built for myself.

Since that day in July 2006, I have come to understand and cherish — in my bones — the reality of being a world citizen with a connection to and shared responsibility with

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all other men and women, near and far, to create a world that offers safety, opportunity, human dignity, and kindness for everyone. Through my research and planning role in the Boston–Haifa Learning Exchange, I have come to learn that transnational learning networks among nonprofit leaders can have significance for advancing such local and global social-change efforts. This second of six sections of the journal explores the core elements of such transformational learning networks, as experienced by three participating leaders from Boston, Massachusetts, and Haifa, Israel.

Local social and economic problems are not simply local. Human well-being in one part of the world is inextricably linked with global economic and political forces, as well as social and economic realities, in other parts of the world. How the decisions made by multinational corporations or political bodies impact humans and human communities far from us affects us all. Increasingly, immigration flows across the world contribute to a rich mix of multicultural world views of countries' residents. Whether we recognize this reality, our futures as world dwellers are intertwined with each other.

New technologies that allow for instantaneous, multiparty communications serve to unite social-change agents in different parts of the world through enabling a vivid, close to real-time, sharing of lived experiences and a rich exchange of ideas. New communication tools are making visible and strengthening the interconnectedness of communities across the world. The potential exists for transnational networks of organizational social-change agents to use these twenty-first-century tools, as well as more traditional in-person exchanges, to forge strong connections with each other for the purpose of generating new knowledge and fortifying local and transnational social change efforts.

The experiences of others demonstrate that as peer-learning networks evolve they shift from being informal in the early stages to developing more formalized coordination structures in the later stages.<sup>1</sup> Depending upon their origins and purposes, they may take many shapes as they evolve, from a centralized *hub-spoke* model to more distributed approaches, such as a *dense cluster* in which all participants have connections with all others, or a *many channels* option that uses a variety of connections among participants, or a *branching* structure in which a series of clusters are connected through several spokes.<sup>2</sup> Effective network structures, however informal or formal, function to facilitate smooth coordination and continuity of activities, as well as the management of challenges, such as pressures from external stakeholders, resource allocation processes, and facilitation and preservation of learnings.<sup>3,4</sup> Governance issues, how decisions are made, are of central importance; how formal and informal power is shared among participating partners has a deep impact on trust-building and members' investment in contributing to the learning network's endeavors and future.<sup>5</sup>

Transnational network building, like all meaningful interorganizational

collaboration, is a paradoxical endeavor.<sup>6</sup> Participants are called upon to rise above their personal and organizational self-interests to contribute to a collective enterprise. For maximum impact, participants invest their time and resources without certainty regarding the outcomes for the collective endeavor and/or for the individuals or the organizations they represent.

Creating “relational learning spaces” has been found to be essential for the success of transnational peer learning and production networks.<sup>7</sup> Bradbury and others identified six dimensions of “relational space, a high quality ecology of relationships” that were positively associated with effective collaborations among transnational business representatives working together as a network:

- **Aspirational trust**, a shared, prosocial vision that allows participants to rise above individual self-interest and to invest in the collective objectives;
- **Reflective learning**, building and preserving knowledge, an iterative, ongoing process, tied to direct experience, of checking assumptions, making meaning, and developing new ways of thinking, through mutual exchanges;<sup>8</sup>
- **Peer connections**, a mutuality dynamic among participants that disregards rank and enables all members to have equal footing in contributing to the network’s evolution and work; such mutuality requires an intentional balance in participation, membership, and decision making, as well as expert facilitation to counteract competitive dynamics that may emerge;
- **Helping**, providing emotional support to each other;
- **Commitment to process**, dedicated energy and time for investment in the relationships among members of the network;
- Lastly, **whole-self presence**, a level of investment in which sharing among members occurs at both personal and professional levels.

“Relational learning spaces,” with the features described above, have the potential to enable participants to experience transformational growth through reciprocal relationships with each other — persons who, by design, bring diverse economic, social, cultural, linguistic, religious, and political life experiences and perspectives to the exchanges.

Sustained transnational exchanges, while energizing and stimulating, are anything but easy. In fact, confusion and ambiguity are essential factors in such multicultural exchanges for enabling participants to develop new ways of thinking about practice, policy, coalition building, and other dimensions of social-change work.<sup>9,10</sup> Seeing our own cultural norms, beliefs, and practices reflected in the other’s eyes unsettles our fixed mental models that, while providing an inner security, limit our perspectives regarding ways of being in the world and ways of solving social problems.<sup>11</sup> Openness to others’ experiences and perspectives, an acknowledgment

of ambiguity, and resistance to clear answers are preconditions, in the context of multicultural exchanges, for enhancing creativity, inventiveness, and the development and adoption of new mental models.<sup>12</sup>

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### **The Case of the Boston–Haifa Learning Exchange Network (LEN)**

This LEN project has emerged as both experiential and active. The in-person learning exchange seminars, which since the project's inception have been taking place once a year in Haifa, Israel, and once a year in Boston, Massachusetts, were planned and facilitated jointly by the NGO partners as well as by outside trainers. Dedicated staff time and collaborative, generous attitudes on the part of planners in both cities have been essential for power sharing, efficiency, and thoroughness in the planning processes. Preparation has been extensive, requiring the core planning team, a Haifa–Boston mix, to use conference calls and e-mail communications, months ahead of time, for developing the substantive content for the in-person seminars and for coordinating the logistics, resources, recruitment, travel, and a myriad of other practical and substantive dimensions of these encounters. Especially for Bostonians visiting Israel and Haifa for the first time, an immersion in the complex cultural, religious, social, economic, historical, and political contexts of the country has proven to be of great significance. Bostonian learning exchange cohorts experience such an Israeli immersion through a multiday guided tour of the country prior to meeting their learning partners in Haifa. A less intensive tour/immersion takes place for Haifa partners when they come to Boston.

*Use of communication technologies.* Video conferencing among participants has taken place prior to and after the in-person seminars with mixed success. For the most part, rotating pairs of Haifa–Boston participants plan and facilitate the 1- to 1½-hour conversations. Oftentimes, participants read an article ahead of time and/or ponder their responses to a set of questions, drawing from their NGO leadership experiences, which become the basis for the video conference conversation. For example, following contextualizing introductions, participants have responded to questions, such as: How do we as NGO leaders define and implement social justice — as individuals, organizations, in society? or, What is the role of social change NGOs during elections? or, How have you tapped into the power of what you have learned through this learning exchange in your NGO leadership work?

Video conferencing as a means for connection and communication has worked best once the transnational partners have developed trust through the intensive in-person connections. On the one hand, the long distance reconnection after an in-person experience feels like a “home-coming,” a reuniting of friends. Picking up on themes and topics that were a central part of the in-person exchanges allows for a deepening of the discussion and a hindsight reflection of the experiences participants

had when they were together. On the other hand, when video conferencing has been used *prior to* participants meeting each other in-person, introductions of “self” have been awkward and a pressure to impress appears to hold sway.

Additional challenges have been the constraints of the video conferencing technology itself; communication during video conferences has to be very controlled — one person talking at a time and orderly turn-taking. Such constraints are culturally difficult for both Haifa and Bostonians and are made more onerous when the technology fails to work as planned, more often than not. For the present and foreseeable future, carefully planned video conferencing will take place sparingly for very particular purposes. Other communication technologies, such as e-mail and free/low-cost Internet phone communications, are most commonly used by the cross-city planners or by participants who have become close friends. Most recently, social media tools are emerging as viable and important avenues for connection.

*Challenging linguistic realities.* Linguistic barriers add to the challenges of transnational communication. English has been the predominant written and spoken language used by learning exchange participants. Many Haifa participants are somewhat fluent in English; only a sprinkling of Bostonian participants is fluent in Hebrew or Arabic, the languages most commonly spoken in Haifa. Translation options and resources have been extremely important, given the linguistic imbalance described above. In most in-person exchanges, simultaneous translation is offered by strategically placing bilingual members next to those needing English, Hebrew, or Arabic translation or through providing simultaneous translation, which requires a translator who speaks to participants through headphones. The first Learning Exchange report<sup>13</sup> was written in three languages: English, Hebrew, and Arabic. The March 2008 Haifa conference — the report’s release event hosted by the University of Haifa’s Center for the Study of Society and its Jewish Arab Center — included simultaneous translation in the three languages. The translation service allowed coauthors of the report, which included the Haifa NGO leaders who took part in the project in 2007, to speak at the conference in the language of their choice. And they did. Some spoke in Hebrew and one spoke in Arabic, to the consternation of some in the audience who were not accustomed to using headphones for translation of Arabic. Essays authored by Haifa leaders for this journal issue were written in the author’s language of choice. Collaborating partners contributed funds to enable the Hebrew and Arabic texts to be professionally translated into English.

## **Evolving Network Infrastructure and Functions**

*A Branching Infrastructure Model*, a series of clusters connected through several spokes, best represents the formal coordination structure of the LEN.<sup>14</sup> Informally within and across each city, learning exchange members utilize a many channels model<sup>15</sup> in their relationships, regularly connecting with each other on both personal

and professional levels. With respect to the more formal branching infrastructure, the Jewish Community Relations Council has staffed the Boston spoke and taken responsibility for coordination of communications and planning, as well as decision making, with Boston and Haifa-based partners; in turn, the Council of Volunteer Organizations (CVO) in Haifa, Israel, has staffed the Haifa spoke and taken the lead in coordinating the same planning and decision making functions with its Haifa and Boston partners. The CVO also hosts Lead Haifa, an outgrowth of the LEN, a newly launched leadership development initiative for leaders from nonprofit, business, and government sectors in Haifa. The LEN planning group members in each city have remained relatively stable over the project's four to five years.

REFLECTIONS OF JENNA TOPLIN, THE BOSTON COORDINATOR. As an American Jew with a strong connection to Israel and as an individual committed to and passionate about global social-change and cross-cultural understanding, the opportunity to work on a project such as this was truly a dream come true. Coordinating this project between 2006 and 2009, I both experienced and observed the challenges and opportunities that cross-cultural learning exchanges can offer. While at times the planning and communication across distance, time zones, and languages was frustrating, it enhanced my own professional and personal growth tremendously. Meeting people where they are, communicating directly and consistently, asking questions, and being truly patient are skills that I practiced on a regular basis and that allowed me to develop dear friends as colleagues.

Participating in the planning, execution, and reflection phase of each component of this exchange introduced me to incredible leaders. Each LEN member had a story that I was fortunate to tap into, even just slightly, as we talked through workshop or video conference planning, visioning the future of this network and our communities, and reflecting on challenging and emotional conversations. As planners, we paid close attention to creating space where all perspectives might be voiced in rich conversation. But planning could only go so far. Throughout this journey, I was never on my own — I was part of something bigger than myself, and I felt valued for all that I brought. I found myself immersed in a plethora of experience and knowledge of individuals who themselves were yearning to learn and understand more about “the other” and about themselves. This exchange and the LEN members encouraged me to learn more about myself as a leader and the dimensions of leadership. It inspired me to commit myself to being a lifelong learner through experience and conversation, and for that I will be forever grateful.

### **Relational Spaces for Transformational Learning.**

To build trusting, reciprocal relationships and shared understanding, in-person sessions have included a mix of active learning methodologies, that is, formal, informal, large, small group and one-on-one, as well as organizational visits,

site seeing, and home hospitality. Facilitation of large and small group in-person sessions has been carried out by rotating Haifa–Boston pairs who customarily begin the seminars with nonthreatening, playful ice breakers. Over time, as trust deepens, participants have taken greater risks in sharing their ideas, experiences, and vulnerabilities.

**A STORY OF ASPIRATIONAL TRUST-BUILDING.** An important conversation took place in March 2007 in a meeting with the leaders of the five Haifa NGOs, Jennifer Cohen, and myself. The makeup of this all-female group was as follows: Israeli Arab/Christian; Israeli Jewish/German; Israeli Jewish/Russian immigrant; Israeli Jewish/Ethiopian immigrant; Israeli Jewish/U.S. Jewish; U.S. secular. We were discussing plans for a particular evening in March when leaders of the Boston NGOs were to be in Haifa for the next person-to-person learning exchange. Preliminary plans had been made to have a festive event one evening in a location that is now being used by the Ethiopian community in a very beautiful town a bit south of Haifa where many artists live. The Arab leader in our group told a story of the history of this place: an entire Arab village was evicted from this quarter and relocated only a few hundred meters away. The evicted households can see their former homes being used by others now. Only recently was the relocated village made “official” and recognized as worthy of being included on maps. Very quickly the conversation moved into thinking of other locations for the evening event. This greatly offended our Ethiopian group member who felt that her community’s experience and culture were being cancelled out and sacrificed in an attempt to pacify the Arab group member’s discomfort and what she perceived as the group’s willingness to rush to seem “politically correct” (and especially tolerant of the Arab minority) at her expense. This hard conversation exposed difficult divides, the kind that had often prevented close collaborations among NGOs in Haifa prior to this point. But the respectful listening and courageous sharing among these women laid the foundation for strong bonds that have allowed them to work together closely on their shared social change missions in Israel.

A central component of the project since 2006 has been documentation and collective reflection. The essays in this journal are grounded in and informed by the core insights that have emerged from these reflections and from analyses of the extensive, multiyear documentation products. Indeed, this coauthored journal issue is one way in which the LEN is building and preserving knowledge; writing is thinking and collective writing is collective thinking. Using a mutual feedback process, essay authors, all of whom have been involved in the learning exchange, engaged in reviewing and building on each other’s essays from start to completion.

**A STORY OF THE VALUE OF REFLECTIVE LEARNING.** A Haifa leader reported as part of the project evaluation that she appreciated the “widest way of thinking,” in a global way, and learning about the potent value of reflection. She had come to

understand that reflection could deepen her organization's capacity to learn from its practice and ultimately to grow. "Our success would be getting to the places where the organization is capable of changing."

*Peer connections.* Creating a learning environment in which all participants are on equal footing has been a priority for LEN planners from the start. Such a balance is not easy to strike because much of the funding for the enterprise is Boston-based; money speaks unless a conscious effort is made to counteract its impact in processes of mutual engagement. In addition, the Anglophone-oriented reality of the learning exchange presents more challenges for Haifaim than for Bostonians, as Haifaim are constantly challenged to move out of their linguistic comfort zones. This linguistic challenge has very likely had a negative impact on the power balance in the network; in effect, those with English facility have an easier time in making their arguments and putting forth their points of view. For all of these reasons, ensuring equal investment and joint engagement in planning and decision making have been challenging at times. Nonetheless, deep personal connections have emerged among the learning partners.

A STORY OF PEER CONNECTIONS AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT. The focus of an in-person session in Haifa in March 2008 was *Working in Times of Crisis*. The Haifa leaders came prepared to share their experiences of the 2006 summer war with Lebanon when many of the poorest Haifa neighborhoods (in which these organizations work) were being bombed. "The war broke out while we were running summer camps for 700 kids at [the community center]," said a Haifa leader. "We had to find the balance between our work (responsibility toward the kids, parents, and bosses) and our own safety and that of our own families' . . . How to bring workers into work . . . given the mixed messages from the media about whether they have to come or not? Do we have to force them? Also, it was hard not to judge the people who left, who did/didn't do their work." "It kept me sane to go to work, but I was eight months pregnant," said another Haifa leader. "I got early contractions and my husband was very angry at me for going to work." "I lost a friend on the first day of the war," said another who was very choked up while speaking. "Our center changed its regular work and went on to hold special meetings and to call the women. We also did some post-stress work including running a focus group with the women after the war, to hear about their experiences. We helped 150 women."

Boston leaders listened in stunned silence as more stories emerged of Haifa participants' personal traumas with their own children/families and the conundrums they faced as to how their organizations should respond in the midst of the crisis. Then a Boston leader said: "We can't understand your loss and trauma. In another way, we're losing close to 100 kids a year in Boston to street violence and we're trying to figure out what to do with that violence. I appreciate

your sharing your stories of moral courage in staying in this work when you are in harm's way. You give me hope and inspiration to stay in the middle and negotiate.”

In terms of commitment to the LEN, participants have busy and demanding work lives; their attention goes to the priorities close at hand. The twice-yearly, intensive, multiday in-person experiences have therefore been the most powerful mode of connection for Haifa–Boston Learning Exchange participants. Those Boston and Haifa participants who have invested in the learning exchange have developed meaningful and significant personal and professional connections with each other.

**A STORY OF COMMITMENT TO PROCESS.** “I entered this experience without really knowing what to expect,” said a Haifa leader. “But in retrospect, I think I must have expected an experience that would be largely academic and intellectual since I was taken aback by the intimate way in which we connected almost from the start. I was surprised by the depth of the engagement we managed to achieve, given the short time period. Whether it was the frame of mind with which we all entered this (and the video conference the previous week), the fact that we were all women, or the fact that we shared such deeply held values, it felt as though we were able to communicate in an authentic way right from the start. We established a remarkable level of trust fairly quickly, which was reflected in our sharing our challenges along with our successes right from the start.”

**A STORY OF “WHOLE SELF PRESENCE.”** “Talking about the learning exchange experience in Boston, a Haifa leader referred to two levels of emotions: “personal intimate friendship between us (very direct) and the peer learning that I really enjoy.” Other than enjoying being able to share issues of directing, she found exploring the workings of organizations very helpful. “Although we have very different [organizational sizes], the basic issues are very much alike” and “being able to see [another’s] work and my organization’s work through the international perspective was very helpful. . . . Understanding the American part, seeing the office of [a Boston organization] looking worse than ours was comforting, that there is something common, our struggles are common.” In addition, the Haifa leader reported learning a great deal from her Boston partner that “gave me perspective, seeing more easily the processes and that one has to wait, be patient, not thinking that five years is too long, . . . having realistic expectations.”

## **Open Multicultural Exchanges**

LEN planners have been intentional in ensuring that all of the joint activities have been open-ended and designed to allow for ambiguity and for a disruption of our fixed ways of thinking. In fact, “living in the in-between” has been a theme of the immersion experiences for Bostonians in Israel. The tenuous nature of life in Israel, a cultural norm of vigorous debate and the complexities of the country’s historical, religious, political, economic, and social contexts ensure that there are no clear answers to any

of the questions learning exchange partners ponder with each other. As a result, all committed LEN participants have come to see themselves, their organizations, and their countries with fresh eyes.

A STORY OF SEEING ONE'S HISTORY AND ORGANIZATIONAL EXPERIENCE WITH NEW EYES. A session in Boston, hosted at Project Hope, focused on learning organizations. Thinking about her own organization's learning practices, one Boston leader reflected, "There are a lot of ways in which we are engaged in this type of work throughout the agency . . . but the visit from our sisters from Haifa brought it forward in a vivid way for me. . . . It is most important," she said, "that we listen to each other and broaden ourselves and our understanding [of social justice work] through our talking to each other."

She saw her own organization's history anew as a result of a conversation with her learning partner. "When I listened to Rula speak about how her organization began, I realized that we have some strong similarities in our own history. Kayan was started as somewhat of a cooperative or collective. A group of five women came together to design and implement a program that would engage with and respond to the needs of the community. We were started by a group of religious women who came together to do the very same thing because of their connections in the community. Then we grew and found a need for enhanced structure. The fabric of our collective and mutual beginning is present throughout. We are perhaps in a different phase of our development and it was good to remember our beginnings through the eyes of an outsider. The conversation raised some questions around the challenges of maintaining strong inclusiveness and "mutuality" while becoming a larger organization. . . . These human connections and the realization that you are so very different and so very alike — a duality to live in — is valuable and rich and gives tremendous hope."

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## **Closing Reflections**

The words of the Boston leader above aptly illustrate the self-reflection and new questions that emerge through positive transnational connections. Similarly, the essays to follow are powerful first-person testimonies to the transformational impact of such connections, developed within conducive, relational learning environments. Sr. Margaret, Alex, and Fannette each tell stories of the ways in which their lives have been impacted and their work strengthened through the relationships they have built through this and other transnational experiences. Some of their experiences were surprising; for example, Haifa's Fannette and Alex developing a connection during their Boston sojourns. Other experiences they reflect upon illustrate the evolution of their understandings of nonprofit social change work, coalition building, and organizational effectiveness. You will clearly see from their essays that each of these

persons has entered into the Learning Exchange with the qualities and stances that lead to deeply satisfying learning: a sense of curiosity, openness to the other, mutuality — both giving and receiving — a comfort with ambiguity, and considerable generosity.



## Notes

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# Learning beyond Borders

*Alex Altshuler*

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I was involved in the Learning Exchange Network project mainly during the years 2007–2008, both as an active participant and as a member of the Social Justice and Civil Society committee, in the framework of the Haifa–Boston Connection. I was inspired by the spirit and commitment of both the Boston and Haifa leaders. At that time I coordinated recovery projects at the volunteer organization SELAH–Israel Crisis Management Center, which focused on immigrants in Northern Israel following the Israel-Lebanon war in 2006. SELAH’s core mission is providing essential assistance and emotional support to immigrants who face crisis situations; its involvement in postwar recovery processes in Northern Israel was very intensive. In addition, I developed and coordinated a newly established project on integrative emergency preparedness at the Center for Social Responsibility of the University of Haifa. My involvement in the Learning Exchange project began after a two-year involvement in the Open Apartments project, which was supported by the Haifa–Boston Connection and other partners. This project aimed to empower people in the poorer neighborhoods in the city of Haifa through student-initiated projects that included both guidance and project development. My personal involvement was mainly with the immigrant youth-at-risk. I brought this experience to the Learning Exchange program; I learned much, much more than I brought.

One of the important impacts of my experience participating in the Learning Exchange was the transformation of my internal models or “borders,” which were substantially challenged. Some of those dimensions of change are clear. First of all, it was remarkable indeed on the local level in Haifa, for all of us — Jewish Russian and Ethiopian immigrants, Arabs, Israeli-born Jews, women and men, senior citizens and youngsters — to sit together not “just to talk,” but to address critical and controversial

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social and national issues. This dialogue was not just among the people who were present at that moment in the hall, but to some extent it was a dialogue between larger groups since the participants had leadership positions in their organizations, communities, and other arenas. We were able to take our experiences to all those larger circles and in so doing bring some new “colors,” thoughts, and ideas to those environments. The change of the mental borders for me did not mean that I lost my identity or changed my opinions, but it definitely meant that I know much more about “the other,” my internal world became richer and I received some kind of a key to other circumstances, histories, customs, and much more. By no means easy or ideal, this process was a very deep and important one for me.

The other dimension or circle that served as a very powerful impulse to building bridges and to changing the borders was the meeting between the American (from Boston) and the Israeli (from Haifa) groups. These very meaningful and powerful experiences were characterized by fruitful professional and interpersonal dialogues. I discovered that the issues of poverty and food security, present in Haifa, were also very much present in the Boston area; I could see the U.S. and Boston ways to deal with that (for example, the activities of the Greater Boston Food Bank). Other organizations, such as Project Hope, Hyde Square Task Force, and others we visited were also very inspiring. I discovered that the issue of security is unfortunately very “hot” in both countries — in Israel resulting from wars and terror, and in Boston mainly resulting from community violence. The challenges for immigrants in the two countries were both similar and different, as are the organizations that address immigrants’ needs. Their operational forms are different, but the same fundamental passion inspires the leaders — to address people in need through a very complicated process of transition.

My experience with the Learning Exchange was by no means only professional or intellectual; it was deeply personal. Frankly speaking, I did not feel myself to be simply a guest in Boston, but rather I felt welcomed as a friend — just a great feeling! The hospitality was more than warm! I felt that I came to Boston to learn from friends who have the same basic goal — to make our social reality around us at least a little bit more welcoming and secure. Indeed, we live in a very small world, which is characterized by so many divisions. I am not against these divisions. They formulate our identities and constitute us. They are important. But we have to look beyond them and build bridges across our separate identities. I believe that we may feel (and be) both united and different. One small story from a discussion in Boston reflects many of the elements of that jointedness. I had multiple talks in Boston with Fannette Modek from Haifa, who represented the Seniors Lobby. Surprisingly, there, in Boston, I discovered that she also has Russian-Jewish roots and we spoke a little bit in Russian (two Israelis speak Russian in Boston). I understood that, with her young soul, she should be in the Youth Lobby. It is just an unexplained mistake that she is with the Seniors Lobby. I learned from her, in Boston, a lot about her efforts in providing

assistance to Africa, an issue that interests me greatly. I learned much, much more from her. Unity and peace in the world is possible if we just could have much more dialogue. The “dialogue” was the key word for me in the Learning Exchange project.

My personal and social insight from the project may be formulated in various ways. I prefer to think of the impacts on me in a simple and symbolic way: We are similar and different at the same time; we can learn a lot from “the other” — various “others” in different situations — if we have a need and the passion to do that. We really need people who will enable that process and will “open the door.” Let’s keep learning and “opening the doors” for others in every single moment we have within our reach!



# The Power of Peer Learning

*Fannette Modek*

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**M**y contact with the Boston–Haifa Project started at about the same time that the Seniors Lobby–Haifa saw the light of day. I was fortunate to have participated in the very first Seminar for NGOs in Haifa, held in January 2005. Several representatives of Haifa’s NGOs joined a group of leaders of Boston NGOs for a three-day seminar that put social-change issues on the table: Leadership, Organization, the Social Sector, Advocacy, and Conflict Management. The Power of Vision closing session generated a statement that by 2015, fifteen groups of U.S. social workers and gerontologists would visit Israel to study community-based services for the elderly. “This is recommended as it would raise the visibility of the Seniors Lobby of Haifa!”

The Seniors Lobby of Haifa formally became a participating NGO in the Learning Exchange Project in 2008. The visits and meetings in Boston had by far the biggest learning impact on me, in terms of conceptualizing and concretizing why, what, and how the third sector is capable of contributing to social change and social justice. More specifically, I have taken away with me a professional plan, an itinerary, and a guide for my fellow board members on the Seniors Lobby as they aspire to serve as a voice for Haifa’s elderly. But I faced a complex dilemma as the only representative of the Seniors Lobby with the Learning Exchange: How can I present these learnings to very competent board members who, fired with a righteous goal, are very sure of what they are doing? This question haunted me as we visited very impressive and competent NGOs whose counselors, for example, had themselves been the clients of the program (Project Hope) or where a scale of five steps was used by counselors and teens to measure teenagers’ ascents from “social alienation” to steady employment

*Before her retirement thirteen years ago, Fannette Modek was the Director of the Golda Meir–Mount Carmel International Training Center, a branch of Israel’s Agency for International Development Cooperation in Haifa. Since immigrating to Israel from the United States in 1964, she has served at the Center as a course coordinator and instructor in Community Development and Gender studies. She was the assistant director in charge of Training Programs from 1971 to 1987, before moving into the position of Director. She has continued to take on short-term assignments for the Center in Haifa and on-site in developing countries. She has a Bachelor’s Degree from Syracuse University, a Master’s in Adult Education and Community Development from New York University, and a Certificate in Sociological and Anthropological Aspects of Developing Countries from the Institute of Political Science in Paris.*

(ROCA). I wondered how I could effectively transmit insights I gained as I listened to two pastors, one a Nigerian Muslim and the other a Christian, share their profound experiences of laying down their weapons and working together to lead peace-making and conflict resolution with their own and other warring communities.

When the Seniors Lobby began, we, retired professionals, community leaders, and business people, all volunteer board members of the Lobby, found ourselves unexpectedly starting from zero: forming working relationships, giving space to one another, defining rules of procedure, facilitating agreement, designing pathways to action, seeking maximum appropriate involvement, and advancing haltingly trying to apply what is called “facilitative leadership.”

I was happy when the Lobby’s agenda made room for my biannual reports on the Haifa–Boston Project, but sad when a very active colleague didn’t recognize himself as an actor in the “Third Sector.” I also learned to ask “The Right Question” from a Boston NGO with that name, as a means of getting my colleagues to reflect on our decisions and activities during board meetings.

The Seniors Lobby–Haifa is an advocacy agency, created as a result of a survey conducted by the Social Services of Haifa that identified the need for an organization that would speak in the name of the elderly. We learned much from the seven Core Elements for a Successful Organization presented by Susanne Beaton, the Boston-based Campaign Director for One Family, Inc., a project of the Paul and Phyllis Fireman Charitable Foundation. We had the organizing elements needed to mount what she identified as a successful social-change effort: (1) sound data and solutions; (2) a clear task; (3) a record of success in mobilizing our constituents and developing constituent leadership; (4) the organizational capacity of a nonprofit executive board; (5) a shared division of committee responsibilities; (6) a means for raising public awareness, including publishing a magazine in Hebrew two to three times a year, with summary translations in Russian and Arabic (for two large cultural groups in Haifa); (7) a Web site; and (8) success in building partnerships inside and outside the system.

The Lobby successfully mobilized elderly constituents raising the membership rolls from 2000 to 3,500 between 2006 and 2008. This success gave the organization a certain prestige and power especially in the period before local municipal elections of February 2008. Many members pondered whether the Lobby should run in the city elections; were the Lobby to attract sufficient votes, it could advantageously place two persons on the City Council. Actually penniless, the Lobby would have had to partner with an existing party in order to run in the elections. The board decided to partner with Gil — a relatively new party for the elderly that in previous national elections won five seats in the Knesset, Israel’s Parliament. Since Gil did not have a strong representation in Haifa, a bargain was struck: Gil would provide the cash and the banner would bear the name “Seniors Lobby–Haifa/Gil.” This development touched the core values of a few members of the Board who, facing the dilemma of voting either for their political party of choice or for Seniors Lobby–

Haifa/Gil, resigned from the board to vote for their political party of choice.

Even though the platform of Seniors Lobby–Haifa/Gil was uniquely local, its creation put in clear perspective the value conflicts and compromises inherent in forming partnerships outside the nonprofit circle. I remember walking through the Boston Hyde Park neighborhood in May 2009, debating with Alex, a Haifa colleague from SELAH, the wisdom of the Lobby going into politics and having to compromise its ideals. It seemed so abhorrent to him. Alex was right! Though the Seniors Lobby–Haifa/Gil has been successful in achieving some of its goals, for example, reducing city taxes for the elderly, as is the case in other towns, on many issues our representative, who joined the ruling coalition, must vote as the coalition decides, even though a no-vote would better represent the position of the Seniors Lobby–Haifa. This realization brought to mind as well the 2008 Haifa workshop jointly led by Boston’s Nancy Kaufman and Haifa’s Yael Abada on the advantages and disadvantages of linking with the government and/or the business sector on projects.

In the beginning, what we were seeing and hearing through the Learning Exchange Project seemed to be a fantasy — beyond our reach. I shifted my assumptions about what could be applied in the Lobby’s work in Haifa through conversations that took place during the 2009 exchange visit in Boston. Specifically, a colleague and I met a lawyer working for the Elder Law Unit of Greater Boston Legal Services and the Director for Outreach and Recruitment of the Harvard Cooperative Program on Aging–Multicultural Coalition on Aging. Naturally, the sophistication and level of their activities were far more developed than what we have in Israel. But the idea that one’s activity or program can serve as a research theme for University students was an idea that I was ready to buy. Again, I would have to be patient about applying this learning back home. The visit brought Carmit Shai, my Haifa colleague, and me closer together, and on our return, the Seniors Lobby–Haifa, my women’s organization, Soroptimist International, and the Golda Meir – Mount Carmel International Training Center, and Israel’s Program of International Cooperation organized a Study Day on The Involvement of the Elderly in the Community, where Carmit Shai and Arlette Adler, founder of the Lobby, made presentations.

It is interesting to note that I was the oldest person in the Learning Exchange representing the youngest Haifa NGO. Having been involved professionally in the community and having been a longtime acquaintance with some of my Haifa colleagues facilitated both the formal and informal exchanges among us. On another note, those of us of different cultural and religious backgrounds became closer on a personal level, discovering interests and preferences we had not known in our previous contacts. I believe that my participation in the Learning Exchange served to introduce the Seniors Lobby to the wider Haifa community, a point I stressed forcefully to my colleague board members who tended to remain insular vis-à-vis relations with other NGOs. I continue to wonder if insularity is characteristic of new organizations that are unsure of themselves.

Solidarity across borders also developed. In March 2008, the Haifa NGOs hosted the Boston NGOs; at one of the sessions, the topic was the role of NGOs in times of crisis. Never short of crisis, two Haifa NGOs, one being the Seniors Lobby, presented a report of their efforts to assist on the home front during the Second Lebanese War — delivering food to the elderly and to single parents afraid to leave their homes for fear of an air raid, baby-sitting where necessary, bringing medications to the bedridden, and so on. We Israelis are uniquely aware that a war is never without fatalities and resulting pain. With empathy and feeling for their Haifa hosts, one of the Bostonians reflected for a minute and yes, told about the loss of lives in his town due to crime and violence. Different but the same. Solidarity was established.

Another realization that emerged from the learning exchange was the value of making connections with similar bodies, exchanging experiences, and looking for common goals and objectives. The force that can be achieved when organizations serving the same client population, discuss and identify common goals is irreplaceable. It can change the atmosphere and priorities for the benefit of the elderly. But not only for the elderly! Many of the needs and rights of the elderly are those of other age groups as well. This conclusion or learning was probably lodged in a faraway corner of my mind for a long time, but it was thanks to the Learning Exchange, not only with Bostonians but also with my Haifa colleagues, each struggling to satisfy the needs of his/her client population — poor women, minority groups, disconnected teenagers, emigrants, the disabled, the uninvolved citizens — that the learning crystallized. The Seniors Lobby–Haifa must not only be a voice for the elderly, but a voice for social action and social justice for the whole Haifa community.

A moment came in May 2009 when all the participants of the Learning Exchange asked themselves, “Where is this experience leading?” I had been asking myself all along how I might transmit the stimulating learning experiences of the Project to my fellow board members. With maturity, the Seniors Lobby has become more relaxed, open, confident, and eager to strengthen its internal organization and external partnerships, giving me considerable satisfaction. As for my fellow Exchange Learners, the fellowship, cooperation, and personal commitment of the Haifa NGO representatives must be maintained and nourished. We look forward to regular meetings to keep up to date with each NGO’s progress and to cooperating on projects of mutual interest. This is our challenge for the future!

In summary and thinking back on two years of Learning Exchange, more often than not we found that Bostonians and Haifaim could end each other’s sentences. We found that we possessed some common basic human qualities or frailties that led us to positions and activities: a sense of justice that transcends race, religion, and class. And we are very, very grateful for the opportunity that was given us to participate in this project that will leave, I am sure, its unique mark in both cities.



# Global Learning Partnerships

*Margaret Leonard*

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**T**he title of this section is profoundly significant to those of us who have experienced global partnerships. Our experience has revealed to us that there is a profound organic integrity to these five words, Transnational, Social Change, Learning, Networks, and together they are revelatory of an emerging future we are stretching to envision and realize in the twenty-first century.

In this brief essay I would like to share with you five core experiences of global learning partnerships that I have had over the past half decade. From these experiences I have learned volumes about the organic relationships of these five words. The experiences have transformed my thinking; expanded the contours of my heart; invited me to become a citizen of a global world; gifted me with an emerging consciousness of our relationship with and responsibility for the sustainability of our sacred environment and planet; and lastly, challenged me to explore with others how we might act collectively to structure our world differently at local, national, and global levels.

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## **International Religious Congregation**

My initiation into a global world view was in the late 1950s when I made the decision to join an International Congregation of Women Religious (of the Roman Catholic Tradition). The Little Sisters of the Assumption, the congregation that I joined, shared a primary commitment to families living in poverty throughout the world. Living in their neighborhoods, becoming neighbors and family with them, joining them in

*Sister Margaret A. Leonard, L.S.A., Executive Director, Project Hope, whose mission is to partner with families as they move up and out of poverty. Since her appointment in 1985, Project Hope has grown from being an Emergency Shelter serving eight homeless families, to a multiservice center with an array of educational and economic empowerment programs serving families in the North Dorchester/Roxbury neighborhoods. Sister Margaret has long served on the boards of the Pine Street Inn, Homes for Families, and the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative. In 2008 she received an honorary doctorate of humane letters from her alma mater, Assumption College, for her lifelong commitment to improving society — one person, one family, and one community at a time. In 2009 she received honorary degrees from University of Massachusetts Boston and Tufts University. She was also selected to be a Barr Fellow in 2009.*

efforts to get the resources needed for survival, we collaborated with them to create a more just, equitable, and loving world locally, nationally, globally.

This primary allegiance was truly transformative. It called me to belong to a global family consisting of the members of my religious community and the families with whom they are engaged throughout the world. This “belonging” gradually challenged me to transcend an “I” consciousness defined as “my family, my neighborhood, my nation” and move to an ever-widening “We” consciousness in what was becoming my rapidly expanding world. The operative word for this transforming journey is to rise — to transcend the limits of one’s consciousness, and to discover the limitless possibilities that open up with new ways of thinking, belonging, and acting. Such a journey requires openness, receptivity, respect for diversity, conversion, and a commitment to mutuality. Mutuality is the belief that the power of growth is in relationships where we all become givers and receivers, the belief that diversity is a gift, and that ultimately we are all on a journey toward unity and communion.

In this so-called transnational laboratory it is evident that I learned much about what it means to be transnational, and what it means to live a process of continuous learning and conversion, but I also learned much about social change and networking. Our collective mission called us to see the world through the eyes of the poor, and equally to be committed to change this world of injustice and inequity wherever we were. But we had a profound advantage — we were an international entity — and we were networked to twenty-six places of the world. We had regular structures for ongoing communication and dialogue, and international meetings where we reflected together on what we were living, analyzing the economic, political, social causes of what we were seeing, and making collective choices to share our resources more equitably among ourselves. But equally, we made decisions to act in collaboration with other networks to try to right the global wrongs, such as famine in Ethiopia and Apartheid in South Africa. We joined with others to issue Corporate Responsibility Resolutions to influence the action of corporations in Latin America. In summary, this transnational belonging led to conversion and transformation, and then to a commitment to network both internally and externally to affect change on the global scene where the poor were being unjustly oppressed.

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### **Place-Based Experiences: East Harlem and Roxbury**

In the 1960s to 1970s, I lived in New York City’s East Harlem during the beginning and aftermath of the Civil Rights Movement. In the mid-1980s to the present, I have lived in the Roxbury Community in what was one of Boston’s poorest neighborhoods. In both of these experiences I lived and worked with a global community. These two neighborhoods were peopled with individuals and families from many different places: Puerto Rico, Latin America, Central America, Africa, Cape Verde, Haiti, and Ethiopia

and they were connected to their countries of origin.

We were and are a multicultural community with diversity of race, color, and creed. The common denominator has been that all of these families were struggling with the effects of urban poverty in deteriorating, forlorn, neglected places slated for gentrification; many were sharing their limited resources with family back home.

A widening support network of individuals and groups partnered with these families. They were concerned individuals and groups: human service organizations, community-based organizations, faith-based groups, civic groups, health facilities, and those engaged in educational institutions. Yearning for social change was the driving passion for this cadre of partners who journeyed with these families.

Our collective journey to mutual partnership was paved with pain, misunderstandings, struggle, and conversion as we transcended our own limits, engaged in a mutual discovery of one another, made leaps from offering charity to seeking justice, and learning to embody the critical dynamics of “power with.” Together we encouraged the community to dream of what could be, to create a plan for change, to organize, network, evaluate, and continue to move ahead. And so much change happened: closing down the Mafia-run drug drops in local bars in Harlem; closing down the trash transfer stations in Roxbury; repairing the 100 Worst Buildings above 96th Street in New York City, with the commitment, resources, connections of people in the churches below 96th Street; and obtaining control of the land through the principle of eminent domain and building affordable housing. These were place-based transformative social-change experiences that were lived by a diverse global community.

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### **Leadership Council of Women Religious (LCWR)**

From 1975 to 1985, I was my religious community’s congregational leader for our United States Province. In this capacity I became a member of a national group called the Leadership Conference of Women Religious whose members were the leaders of religious congregations of women throughout the United States. Many of these congregations were international like ourselves, and national congregations sent members to the Third and Fourth world. They were open to a global world view.

I was privileged to be part of this powerful group of women leaders. They were well-educated, articulate, deeply rooted in the spirituality of Vatican II and committed to justice. There is a phrase from a Church document that in my experience best describes this group and that is: “the pursuit of justice is a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel.” These leaders understood the prophetic dimension of Apostolic Religious Life and reinforced the preferential option for the poor and the commitment to social justice.

During these years they created learning opportunities for their membership, enabling them to see the world through the eyes of the poor, and, through praxis and social analysis, to name the causes of poverty and injustice in our own country and globally, and thus to network and to act. The national lobby network of Women Religious and also the Center of Concern were partners in this process of social change.

This network is clearly an example of how the local is global. LCWR is a national organization with a global view of the world. Their commitment to education and the training of their membership was significant; its ripple effect in schools, human service agencies, health institutions, and faith-based institutions was truly amazing.

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### **Expanding Global Partnerships: Israel and Brazil**

I was offered the opportunity from 2006 to 2009, to visit Israel and Brazil on learning journeys that enlarged my world and brought me new insights and learning. On both of these transnational learning journeys, I was in a community of individuals like myself, leaders of nonprofit organizations in the Boston Area. I went to Israel as a guest of the Jewish Community Relations Council, and I went to Brazil because of a fellowship given to me by the Barr Foundation. I could write volumes of the learnings from these two wonderful experiences, but I will touch, very briefly, on each. But first, I must say a word about mutuality. Being open to a relationship characterized by mutuality is having an attitude of openness, of being receptive to the diversity and gifts of other peoples and their cultures, and to learning the art of receiving and giving.

The co-learning Boston–Haifa experience was significant. I was profoundly moved by the emerging nonprofit sector in Haifa and its commitment to be as inclusive as possible from the onset, bringing into the circle Jews (orthodox, conservative, liberal), Arabs, Ethiopian and Russian Jews. Second, I witnessed their commitment to create a nonprofit sector equally committed to social change. These two insights have deeply influenced me and my practice here in the United States and this exploration together continues.

As with Israel so with Brazil; the learning grasped at a moment in time continues every day and into the future. In Brazil I understood in a more palpable way that the solutions to the sustainability of the environment and to the eradication of endemic poverty must truly be global. I was struck by the community groups we met on the ground, by connections with the networks of Asoka and Berkana groups, and by the communities of Little Sisters and their partners in mission in the remote areas of Bahia. These transnational experiences reinforced my belief that we must seek to discover new ways of networking globally to create the kind of world we all desire.

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## International Commission on the Laity

What I learned from my experiences of Israel and Brazil reinforced what I was learning through my international religious congregations. When our systemic analysis identifies the causes of poverty and the deterioration of our environment, we all converge on the global economy. Long-term solutions to the problems of the poor and the environment require global solutions. Networking across national boundaries is a vehicle for this kind of change.

I am currently engaged in building networks to effect such change with my religious congregation. For ten years now, we have had a Secretariat for Justice and Peace and the Sustainability of the Environment; however, we are taking this work to an advanced level. Our efforts were augmented by networking with members of a sister congregation that has communities in thirty-four countries of the world. With this congregation, we share a similar spirituality and world view. Together we have begun a partnership with an international NGO at the United Nations called VIVAT and we are in dialogue about partnership with them. We have identified an area for action: immigration. We are networking our congregations and the people in mission with us to create a channel for education, for sharing of information, and for lifting up and sharing the experiences of individuals and families — at a global level.

I am also chairing an International Commission of our Congregation exploring a partnership with all those who share our collective DNA and are engaged in mission with us throughout the world. We have begun to design a network for ongoing communication and dialogue, and we believe that these two networks will merge into one.

Both of these initiatives have taught us volumes about how to network for social change and transformation across the world.

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## Conclusion

In this brief article I have shared with you how various transnational experiences have moved me more decisively to a “We” consciousness in an ever-expanding world. These learning experiences have moved me with others to explore and promote networks that are vehicles for social change and transformation in our local, national, and global world.

Many years ago I was captivated by a book entitled *The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980s* by Marilyn Ferguson. In this book she spoke about an underground grassroots network of small groups working to create a different kind of world. She suggested to her readers an image of small groups proliferating around the world and eventually converging and becoming the catalyst for global change. This kind of thinking was reinforced for me when I was exposed

to Meg Wheatley's insights emerging from quantum physics, chaos theory, and evolutionary biology and how they are changing our understanding of the universe.

My own experiences in Haifa, Brazil, Latin America, Central America, Ethiopia, and Africa give credence to the reality that a multiplicity of grassroots groups are at work across the world bringing a new vision of the world, and a commitment to transformative change. One of the strongest contemporary voices to describe this new emerging future, beckoning us to create and grow Transnational Social-Change Networks, is that of Paul Hawken in his masterful book, *Blessed Unrest*. "This is a movement that has no name, leader, or location, but is in every city, town, and culture. It is organizing from the bottom up and is emerging as an extraordinary and creative expression of people's unstoppable need to re-imagine their relationships to the environment and to one another" and, might I add, to the world and the planet.







## **Introduction: An Anchor**

## **Reshaping the Relationship**

*Jennifer Cohen*

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Nonprofits encourage dialogue between citizens and institutions in democracies. . . . Although it is not always evident in the debate, we know that small grassroots groups and community-based organizations are essential to the preservation of those opposing voices necessary for a democracy.<sup>1</sup>

— *Eleanor Brilliant*

In response to a variety of internal and external forces, including the recent economic downturn, nonprofit organizations in both Israel and the United States have increasingly been called upon to provide a safety net and serve as central players in the development, strengthening, and maintenance of civil society.<sup>2</sup> These shifts include the privatization of services, blurring of the sectors and their traditional roles in providing services, reduced funding from traditional sources, welfare reforms including devolution, opening of new markets, enhanced role of faith-based people and organizations in service provision, intensified dependency and connectedness of policy makers and stakeholders, and the subsequent change in the relationship between citizens and institutions. These and other trends have led organizations to seek and create ways to restructure their internal and external roles and relationships with societal institutions.

Nonprofits in both the United States and Israel are responding to current changes in ways that challenge their traditional missions and practices. A growing number of nonprofit service organizations are intentionally integrating social change principles and activities into their work in an attempt to expand their focus

*A community social worker, Jen Cohen has been involved in the Learning Exchange as a practitioner, planner, and researcher since 2005. She has practiced and grown in the world of community-based social-change organizations in the United States and Israel since 1984 and continues to be regularly inspired by nonprofit leaders, professional and volunteer, including those whose voices are heard in this volume. Jen is a doctoral candidate at the University of Massachusetts Boston, where she is currently using participatory action and case study methods to research community-based social-change organizations in Boston and Haifa.*

from solely individual-level change to include larger systemic issues. At the same time, conventional policy advocacy organizations have been called upon to respond to the emergency basic needs of their constituencies, especially in times of crisis. In general, wherever they fall on the service/advocacy spectrum, nonprofits have increasingly begun to adopt organizational strategies that strengthen their ability and commitment to empowerment, engagement, and partnerships.

In the context of the ongoing Boston–Haifa Learning Exchange Network (LEN) project, social change has meant transformation on the individual, community, organizational, and public policy levels, which can lead to the reduction of social and economic gaps and improved social and economic security for marginalized people, groups, and society at large. A working definition of social change has involved a shift toward increased civic participation and democratic processes.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the new definition goes beyond traditional assumptions about growth and scale (namely, that more is better) to strive for outcomes that are valuable as measured by depth, authenticity, flexibility, and diversity.

“This new era of possibility is also one of accountability.”<sup>4</sup> In the United States, President Obama has made a point of prioritizing the active search for “solutions to our nation’s challenges that have resisted traditional approaches and support innovation that is working in communities across the country.”<sup>5</sup> In Israel the government has, for the first time in the history of the state, made formal recognition of the critical role of nonprofits. This shift has come largely in response to the role filled by nonprofits in providing emergency aid and support to individuals and communities, underserved by the government during the 2006 war with Lebanon.<sup>6</sup> In both countries, the response of nonprofit organizations to new challenges and opportunities, and to their evolving roles in society as mediators of social justice and service provision, is significant, not only to the organizations themselves but to national and municipal officials and policy makers, as well as to advocates, low-income households, and the public at large.<sup>7</sup>

Academic and practitioner literature from the United States and Israel recognizes that nonprofit organizations are tools for and agents of social change. Nonprofits function through a variety of avenues that are related to their roles in advancing democracy, many of which are explored in greater depth in other sections of this journal: by partnering with and/or challenging government to meet the needs of individuals, families, and communities; by creating, facilitating, and maintaining cross-sector partnerships; by encouraging and facilitating engagement; by creating social capital; by facilitating social entrepreneurship; and by surfacing voices of the constituents most directly affected by public policies. Public policy outcomes, interdisciplinary by nature, can be stronger when created and evaluated by teams of people that have the capacity to look at the issues through a variety of lenses, a model embodied by successful and ambidextrous nonprofits.

A particular subgroup of nonprofits, which are often referred to as community-based organizations (CBOs), have a central role to play in creating and affecting public policies that contribute to social change, especially in diverse democracies, and especially for disenfranchised populations and communities. CBOs, like other nonprofits, use organizational strategies to achieve their social change missions. Grounded in communities, CBOs employ strategies related to shared leadership, innovation, the ability to create, facilitate, and maintain relationships among diverse groups of stakeholders, and to further adaptability, learning, and balancing between seemingly opposing forces. These opposing forces — and the need to maneuver and balance on continua between them — may include service provision and advocacy; an instrumental vs. expressive societal role; grassroots engagement and professionalism; individual transformation and community/policy change; and expansion for broader impact while maintaining loyalty to core values, including community empowerment.

Because they are closer than any other social institution to the people who are most directly affected by particular public policies, CBOs are strategically situated, although often under-recognized, to reveal knowledge that is critical for finding sustainable solutions to poverty and other inequalities that perpetuate social and economic gaps. Often (but not always) smaller than other types of nonprofits, even when this type of organization does manage to “scale up,”<sup>8</sup> the CBO stays intentionally grounded in the community. Explanations of organizational success, especially in the field of poverty solutions, seem to include CBO flexibility and talent for simultaneously relating to a wide range of policy makers including a complex mix of constituents, community leaders, appointed and elected officials, practitioners, academics, and others. The existence and active involvement of these organizations increases the effectiveness of public policy development and implementation.

The power of CBOs to affect public policy and social change is related to their emphasis on individual, group, and community empowerment and the advancement of constituent participation in democracy, especially constituents who are most marginalized in society and whose voices are theoretically and practically critical to legitimate civic involvement in democratic societies. Successful CBOs perceive and treat their constituents and communities as assets and holders of knowledge that the organization needs to do its work. Successful CBOs seem to have a heightened sense of constituent accountability, which is “a source of connection that breaks down isolation and increases effectiveness.”<sup>9</sup> These organizations recognize and practice the “strength of frailty,” which refers to the recognition of the power and shortcomings of both citizens *and* institutions in society, as a step toward the transformation of both, toward social change.<sup>10</sup>

Related to this, CBOs facilitate “participatory policy making,” a strategy that requires involving the individuals most directly affected by a policy in its development and implementation.<sup>11</sup> This ability to engage people from whom the most authentic

knowledge<sup>12</sup> can be obtained, allows organizations to foster and take advantage of “new interdependencies” among diverse groups of stakeholders.<sup>13</sup> Successful CBOs are not only able to hear that knowledge and respect it, but also to translate it into terms that can be understood and used in decision making and program development by those stakeholders who are currently recognized as having power. This, the ability to bring forth knowledge that would otherwise remain elusive to policy makers, is one of the most compelling reasons for having CBOs at the public policy table.

Marina, Claudio, and Miriam, authors whose organizations are highlighted in this section of the journal, can be heard in the following pages, sharing honest stories of struggle and success. These essays chronicle precisely the types of strategies and practices that exemplify intentional social change work being coordinated by community-based organizations in Boston and Haifa. Core questions that have been posed and documented by these and other LEN members over the last few years include the following:

- How, in a current policy and funding environment that increasingly expects quick and easy returns on investments, do nonprofits measure and explain their particular social-change achievements?
- How, and at what cost, do CBOs maintain an equilibrium between diverse partners and stakeholders?
- How do successful CBOs maintain or challenge traditional models of power in working to affect change?
- Is public policy work necessarily the best avenue through which nonprofits can affect social change?
- How can we, as social change activists and institutions, sustain ourselves?
- What role does spirit play in social change work?

These are only a few of the fascinating issues, related to the role of nonprofits in advancing social change and social justice, that have emerged over the last few years through the LEN project.

I’d like to close with an anecdote, a personal experience I had during the initial years of the learning exchange. Living in Haifa at the time, I accompanied my young daughter on a play date. As her friend grabbed a toy from her, Keddy looked at me and said, “Mommy, *zeh lo hogen*,” which means, in colloquial Hebrew, “that’s not fair.” The word *hogen* in Hebrew is quite a sophisticated way of saying fair (often we just say “fair” with an Israeli accent). Like many new mothers, I deliberated about how best to respond, and I tried to understand what she really needed and wanted from me. My instinctual response was to encourage her to tell the friend how she felt and to suggest they share the toy, take turns, and/or find a way to enjoy it together. Not exactly rocket-science parenting, but it seemed to work.

As Hebrew phonetics lends itself to word play, my daughter’s words echoed in

my mind on the drive home. *Hogen* morphed into *haganah* (“defense” in Hebrew), and then *ogen*, (“anchor”). Keddy had turned to me for protection from unfairness; we were each other’s anchors, as mother and daughter, and there seemed to be a broader life lesson embedded in there too. How we negotiate relationships is at the core of who we are in the world, both professionally and personally. Perhaps from childhood and all the way through to adult-social-change-activist-hood, we link equity and protection. I wondered, then and now, how our sense of these concepts, practically and theoretically, keeps us grounded in the world. During the last five years of the LEN, I have witnessed the profound impact of openness to sharing, assumption of good will, and freedom from defensiveness. I have been fortunate to witness, learn, and (strive to) integrate how such a stance with others provides a powerful and grounding anchor for safety, fairness, partnership, and (dare I say) love.



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# **We Make a Difference**

# **Balancing Advocacy and Service**

*Marina Zamsky*

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**S**hmuel, a forty-six-year-old man who was facing many problems and troubles came to seek help at the Haifa center of Yedid–The Association for Community Empowerment. In the past he was a computer technician, his wife was a librarian, and they both made a respectable living. Various tragic events and illnesses left them in debt, causing financial complications, and leading to their unemployment. Finally, they were forced to leave their house. One day, Shmuel called us and told us he was camped at the beach with his wife and two children.

We got in touch with all bodies that could possibly assist in this case, and in the end, we found a temporary housing solution for the family. In order to give Shmuel a sense of self-importance and dignity, we suggested that he volunteer for Yedid and help others, in spite of the fact that he had difficulties coping with his own problems.

During this time, Yitzhak, an immigrant from Ethiopia who was a divorced single father, found himself unemployed, without any financial means, and unable to pay his mortgage. He was forced to leave his house and was thrown out on the street. Yedid helped him to rent an apartment and to receive rent support from the Ministry of Construction and Housing. We asked him to help us with our work among the Ethiopian immigrant community, and he has become an active and enthusiastic volunteer for Yedid.

Shmuel and Yitzhak met in one of our community organizing groups that bring together people from various socioeconomic backgrounds who are seeking to bring about and promote social change. Hearing the experiences of people who one day find themselves thrown out on the street without a roof over their head, group members decided to initiate a struggle for the right to housing.

*Marina Zamsky is a social worker and has been the director of the Haifa Citizen Rights Center of Yedid – The Association for Community Empowerment since 1998. Yedid works on three levels to empower underprivileged populations: individual assistance in exercising social rights, community work, and policy-change advocacy. Combining the three levels, which influence and support each other, allows for better achievements in each. All Yedid's activities are based on volunteer work. We view volunteering as the most efficient mode of empowerment and a way of realizing our dream of solidarity between citizens of various socioeconomic strata who work together towards achieving a common goal.*

The first action of the community organizing group was to create a creative and colorful artistic installation, which was presented in the Carmel Center area in Haifa and illustrated the problem of housing. By drawing public and media attention, the installation raised awareness of the problem.

Later on, group members studied the legal aspects of the problem and found a breach in the law that allowed mortgage banks to throw debtors out of their houses. Yedid's legal department formulated a proposal for amending the repossession law, and for two years our lawyer has participated in discussions over the bill. Finally, we reached an impressive accomplishment: the bill was passed by the Knesset and the new law was implemented this year.

While we were celebrating this great achievement we started receiving some disturbing complaints: the banks were trying to get around the new law and to reserve the option of evicting debtors without providing them with alternative housing. We had to appeal to the Superintendent of Banks in order to protest the banks' evasion of the new law, and at the same time we started making use of the new law to postpone and prevent evictions of mortgage debtors.

This story exemplifies how a combination of strategies can lead to social change. The present essay deals with the problem of balancing community service provision and social-change advocacy, as well as other strategies, from various aspects: efficacy in achieving short-term and long-term goals, necessary resources, the benefits for society as well as for individuals, empowerment, and empowerment deficit.

During its first years, Yedid founded many citizen rights centers, which were built in the midst of settlements, neighborhoods, and communities of a low-socioeconomic status. I started working in Yedid in the beginning of 1998 and was lucky to be one of the founders of the first citizen rights center, which was founded in Haifa. The Haifa center is situated in Hadar, a neighborhood with a large disadvantaged population and a clashing mixture of new immigrants, Israeli-born residents, Jews, and Arabs.

Our aim was to establish and offer a different kind of community service — friendly, open, collaborative, empowering. Our first deliberations concerned the center's layout: Should it have a counter or not? A counter communicates a formal and bureaucratic atmosphere but provides a more convenient and discreet environment for both staff and applicants. What is more important for us, creating a friendly, welcoming, and communal atmosphere or a more intimate one? We decided that the interaction between applicants will support the process of mutual empowerment, and for many years, we have had to cope with difficulties arising from lack of privacy.

Assisting individuals with obtaining their social benefits allowed us to fulfill their real needs and to connect with them. In the citizen rights center they not only received tools for solving problems, they also met people with similar stories. The feeling of accomplishment encouraged many applicants to take part in the center's

activities as volunteers; helping others gave them a sense of empowerment and belonging. The first volunteers were recruited from among the applicants, and after six months, there were already about thirty volunteers in the center, most of whom spoke Russian or Arabic. Today, there are over 100 volunteers working in the Haifa center, including former applicants, lawyers, economists, and other members of privileged populations.

We started by providing services, but soon enough we realized the need for advocacy work. First, we discovered that some of the problems we dealt with were the result of deficient formal policies. Second, there is always a danger that developing local community services would release the government from its responsibility to act.

From applicants' appeals, we identified social issues that needed to be systematically resolved both on a local as well as on a national level. Yedid made its resources available to underprivileged populations: it raised public awareness of their problems, and represented them in the arenas of legislation, the justice system, politics, and administration. It used its connections with local communities to provide community support and founded several coalitions with other groups in order to expand the resources available to each group.

Although I realized the need for policy-change activities and in spite of our successes, I was coping all along the way with the dilemmas of a leader: Who directs the process of change? How does advocacy work empower disadvantaged people? How can we engender a natural leadership that grows out of disadvantaged populations?

During my years at Yedid, I always looked for ways to incorporate applicants in our advocacy work. The center in Haifa had to face another challenge: In the course of national-level struggles, the most important events take place in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. How could we make the Haifa applicants feel that they were taking part in the process?

In order to raise public awareness of social problems, many applicants were interviewed and told their personal stories in the public media. The experience of sitting in front of a journalist or even a camera, of sharing their stories with the general public, and of influencing others, strengthened applicants' self-confidence and their belief in themselves, and encouraged them to take responsibility and actively work for social change. Many applicants and volunteers participated in conferences organized by Yedid and, there, had the opportunity to express their opinions about the issue in question. They also attended Knesset committees and took part in meetings with decision makers.

In order to let underprivileged individuals participate in policy-change processes, we used several other strategies, such as publicity, mass recruitment, and public struggles. Yedid reaches hundreds and thousands of people and succeeds in influencing public opinion through publicity and promotion activities, leadership

development projects within the community, and by providing tools for coping with day-to-day problems. We make an effort to include them in the organization's activities on various levels of collaboration, from providing information to cooperating in our actions.

In many of its struggles, Yedid has managed to gain the support of large social groups. Many people have participated in our demonstrations and conferences, signed petitions and collected signatures. For example, during the struggle for the school feeding law, Yedid — through its volunteers, staff, and other activists — succeeded in collecting about 100,000 signatures for a petition supporting the law. The large number of signatures assisted in raising public awareness of the issue, and the law was passed by the Knesset in the preliminary vote.

Since its founding twelve years ago, Yedid has operated many community organizing groups in Haifa and all over Israel. The groups struggle to support various populations. In Haifa, for example, a group of unemployed Arabic speakers arranged to have an Arabic-speaking clerk installed in the Haifa Employment Services Bureau.

These days, we are holding the course “Public Campaign Toolbox” for the third time, which provides local residents with the tools to conduct a public campaign, as part of one of Yedid's groups or for any other organization struggling for a specific cause. Participation in a community organizing group is a very efficient means to accomplish individual and community empowerment.

The story that opened my essay portrays the path of applicant–volunteer–social-change activist that many have taken.

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## **Reflections on the Boston–Haifa Learning Exchange Network**

When Donna Haig Friedman invited me to participate in her research, which later produced the wonderful idea of forming a connection between organizations in Haifa and in Boston, I had already been directing the Haifa center for many years, with significant achievements to our credit in providing high-quality community services as well as in advocacy and policy-change work. At the time, I was not bothered by the question of how to balance the two, but I started acknowledging its importance after meeting and talking with colleagues from other organizations. Influenced by these talks, I started examining the question of balancing strategies in the context of the resources required for each type of activity.

The question of what is the most efficient strategy for social change — providing services or changing policies — has been discussed extensively by representatives of the organizations participating in the Boston–Haifa Learning Exchange Network (LEN). It was raised in meetings held in Haifa but was even more dominant in the meeting in Boston. The long-term relationships established in the framework of the

LEN allowed peers to study the variety of models used by organizations in Boston and Haifa. It was a unique opportunity to see how organizations combine a variety of strategies to achieve their goals.

In one of the meetings in Boston, each representative positioned his or her organization on a continuum ranging from service provision on the one end, to advocacy on the other. There was not one organization that was positioned in one of the extremities of the continuum: Each organization combines these two strategies in one way or another. As part of the study process, each organization reached its own conclusions as to what combination of strategies is required for fulfilling its goals and whether there is a need to adjust the balance in order to answer the changing needs of the community for which it works.

Trying to identify the most efficient strategy has led us to examine what organizational resources are available to us and how to transform successes into capacities. I felt that it was not enough to look for answers to these questions by myself, and that the whole staff should be involved in a collaborative evaluation. I used the tools I acquired during the research process, and I asked Donna Haig Friedman and Jennifer Cohen to take part in the teamwork. I organized a staff meeting — the best staff meeting I held during my ten years in Yedid. About fifteen workers and volunteers developed the center’s “strength map.” The results were amazing. We came to understand that we had many accomplishments and that we have many unused in-house and community resources. But the most interesting discovery was that our successes could be used as a resource and that we should use them in order to achieve more success and obtain more resources. That meeting instigated programs for rewarding volunteers and for publishing our stories of success; it even offered insights about how we should use personal stories to raise public awareness of social issues and to promote policy-change activities, and how to use advocacy achievements to assist individual cases.

In addition, we found that other organizations are also interested in the questions of how empowering a leader influences the empowerment of the organization, and how a learning leader turns his or her organization into a learning organization.

In March 2009, during the workshops directed by Donna Haig Friedman and Jennifer Cohen for the Haifa organizations, we took part in a session that demonstrated the process of organizational learning: Yedid’s workers and volunteers were placed in an inner circle — the “aquarium” — while representatives of other organizations observed them from the outer circle. Yedid’s representatives were each asked to express their opinions on their successes and what resources they used in order to achieve them. Each member viewed successes from his or her point of view, but the list of resources turned out to be much longer than anyone expected. This session led to a heated discussion among representatives: not all of them recognized the possibility of learning from successes; many viewed the principles of a learning

organization as quite difficult but, without doubt, as a means for growing and developing. For me, it was a very significant experience. It strengthened my belief in my capability and my responsibility to lead Yedid's staff toward achieving our goals; but people's trust in me presents new challenges all the time.

Participating in the Learning Exchange has given us an opportunity to reexamine the resources, strategies, and actions we employ in the course of our stressful and demanding day-to-day work. It has introduced us to new ideas, perceptions, and audiences, and has strengthened our feeling of belonging to the global community of social-change leaders.

*Translated from the Hebrew by Yoram Arnon*



# Change from the Inside Out

*Miriam Messinger*

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**S**ome dream of large-scale action, influencing larger and larger numbers of people as a means to create change. On the one hand, it is hopeful to believe that one has the capacity to transform social structures that reinforce inequality. On the other hand, a focus on size and growth in the nonprofit or NGO sector may be a distinctly Western phenomenon, fueled by a profit paradigm that requires growth and profit.

In this article, I proffer that one way to build social change is to create organizations, lead, and build relationships that model and reflect the change being sought on a grander scale. Sometimes this necessitates burrowing deeper and focusing inward as a means to building sustainable change. I was engaged in this work for eight years at The City School of Boston. While The City School is a functioning, vibrant organization, I no longer work there and so will talk about the work I was a part of in the past tense.

The City School is a youth leadership social justice organization for high school students. It brings together young people (and adults) in the greater Boston area across their wide range of identities, to learn about social change together, to acquire leadership skills, to build a supportive community, and to create change. The students study, act, and reflect. The studies may happen in classrooms, prisons, homeless shelters, or on the streets. Like the Hyde Square Task Force, The City School sees youth as assets and uses a youth-development model to create a community capable of action and social change. The City School is unusual in its ability to unite young people across class, race, geography, religion, and sexual orientation, to learn about and address oppression, and to discover new ways of being and creating together that

*Miriam Messinger is the only U.S. LEN participant who is Jewish and who had been to Israel before. Her previous trip to Israel was in 1983 to study for a semester and work on a kibbutz. She lives in Boston with her wife and two children, creating a multiracial Jewish family. She has done youth social justice work and public health work for the last twenty years, eight as executive director of The City School. The City School is a powerful community supporting youth leaders to learn and take action. Most recently, she worked at the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation, supporting their innovative health disparities/health equity work and health policy funding, and working on grant making and evaluation.*

do not replicate regular channels of power and control.

Borrowing from architecture and yoga, I offer a metaphor for organizational development work: At The City School we sought to build a strong foundation, strengthen and maintain our core, and breathe deeply in order to create an inner structure that parallels and models our external vision. A spirit of love and hope, authenticity, strong justice values, flexibility, and reflection were critical to this effort.

There are numerous examples of how The City School created change through building our foundation and core. I will first offer elements from our content work — the space that we created and the educational offerings intended to build a youth-adult movement for social change:

- *Program content: learning the history of social change.*  
The City School introduces young people (and adults) to social change history by sharing examples of youth and adult leaders from movements over time. This exposure is not available in most schools but it allows people to be inspired and connected to history. The education about the historical and under-told story of social change provides hope and access to models; it is coupled with instruction to build concrete skills that will help these teens in their own work, from public speaking, to fund raising, to group facilitation.
- *Opportunities to practice increasing leadership within the organization.*  
Teens put their historical and skill learning to work leading activities or a group of peers, and move on to leading organizing campaigns, teaching, and then serving as staff and Board leaders. Leadership is also about decision making. In 2004, a group of youth leaders met to propose a new mission statement, believing that current policies were stifling their political activity.
- *Creating a transformative space.*  
At TCS, we built environments that foster social norms not always supported in the “real” world. In each program, teens and adults together created guidelines about how to work and be together. The organization has overall expectations to treat people with respect and as equals. To do this counters the norm that most of us live with. If you want people to treat each other with love, respect, and equality, you have to tell people what it looks like, model it, repeat it and expect people to make mistakes. Some of the core elements are:
  - hold people responsible for their actions/impose consequences
  - expect people to challenge each other about real issues; conflict and disagreement are okay
  - expect people to be open to others and loving.
- *Working across difference*  
The world we live in is divided by lines of race/ethnicity, religion, class,

sexual orientation, geography (urban/suburban), age, and other parameters. Young people and adults live, work, and go to school in virtually segregated environments. When people do come together, their interactions and communication are often stilted and fail to create deep relationships that can nurture empathy and love. At The City School we not only intentionally bring people together across these lines but we discuss the barriers and issues that can keep us apart, talk about histories of oppression, and model working together across differences in a meaningful way. This is something that needs to be practiced and can lead to transformation, leaving all involved unable to return to a life filled mostly with assumptions, preconceptions, and barriers to building solidarity with other groups.

In addition to cultivating programs and environments that support creating positive change, the next most important contribution is organizational policies that support and promote the changes. The City School believed in building a healthy and just organization, fit to carry out its mission of building youth leaders who take on social change. Examples of policies and processes to create this kind of just organization include the following:

- *Hiring policy:* Young people were involved in hiring all staff in order to build their skills and ensure that their needs were acknowledged. Having this kind of engaged hiring process also led to conversations about priorities, the balance between the “who” and the “skills,” how staff not engaged in direct youth work needed to relate to our teens, how people learn, and who has the power to make decisions. Adult staff and youth involvement were both important in these processes.
- *Circle of Elders:* Part of The City School work involves helping teens understand the criminal justice system, doing leadership work with people in prison, and bringing teens into contact with people who are incarcerated in order to expand learning and understanding for both. Given that work, it was even more critical to introduce alternative justice practices in dealing with breaches of community guidelines. Youth and adult staff developed these practices including a “Circle of Elders,” a group of three people with strong ties to the community designed to mediate disputes and suggest remediation as well as to meet each year to address general areas of tension in the community.
- *Salary guidelines:* We developed baseline values and a policy to be used in setting salaries. One principle was to value direct work with young people so that one should not have to move into management to increase one’s salary. We sought to balance market prices with the skills we were valuing as an organization. Another guideline was that the salary of the highest paid person should not exceed three times the salary of the lowest paid full-time person.

- *Firing policy:* We attempted to have the Circle of Elders or more than one supervisor involved in the disciplinary and firing process. We put in place disciplinary steps to deal with non-emergency but problematic work situations. This policy emerged following the dismissal of a popular staff person; young people felt that they wanted more of a voice as the main constituency of the organization.

These are some of the ways we used content and organizational policies to build a social justice organization from the inside out. Another crucial element was being able to be clear about power structures and power in the organization and to intentionally build ways to share that power. The impetus for this work came both from my beliefs about leadership and demands from staff and young people that we be accountable to our mission, from the inside out. At times, that movement to sharing power was smooth, and at other times it was contentious and solutions emerged from struggle.

As a youth development organization, it was an important value to offer growth and challenge for young adult staff as well. These staff structures and skills also support collaborative leadership: peer feedback and support, explicit mentoring, coaching for those interested in taking on director roles in the future, shared responsibility for decision making and rotating roles from taking out the trash to facilitating staff meetings.

The move toward increasing power and voice for young people was emergent throughout the history of the organization. Teens, for example, have always served on the Board of Directors. That involvement resulted in changing the number of youth representatives who serve on the twenty-person board from two (from the founding in 1995 and for several years), to doubling their numbers (~2000), to crafting the “youth power” statement mandating 30 percent representation on the board and that a youth and an adult serve as board cochairs (2004). Shifting decision-making power in this way was more than changing numbers on paper. It required reflection on how our board model would change given the different representation, and examination of what training and expectations you have of all — youth and adults alike. We were clear that we were not simply training young people how to exist on a traditional board but rather challenging the efficacy of such a board structure and training everyone how to be effective leading youth-adult community-based work. In many ways, our board functioned as one of our programs; it was a place of great learning and transformation, particularly for adult members less accustomed to youth work.

The work to address power and create more equitable power structures began, for me, with a need to cast an inward gaze. I always felt privileged to be in a leadership role at The City School. As an organization with a mission to bring young people together across divides of race, class, and geography, I could see that I had a place at the table but knew that it required awareness and vigilance to serve in the role of executive director. It was important to see the ways in which I could be a bridge

builder, translating the magic of The City School to potential donors and facilitating a powerful emerging conversation between youth and board members, for example. Bridge building has always been a piece of my life. And yet, that was not sufficient. Another aspect was to think about what privilege was afforded to me as a white woman with advanced educational degrees in an organization predominantly serving youth of color, staffed primarily by people of color.

At root, I believe that individual accountability and reflective leadership are essential to creating a just organization. Steps I see as important in this journey are transparent decision making; never acting as if you are “helping” someone; devoting time to mentoring staff; acknowledging how privilege and institutional racism and oppression impact our roles, our work, and our lives; and determining how this awareness translates into action in your workplace.

In order to think about collaborative decision making and power sharing, one must acknowledge one’s positional and societal power, be aware of strengths and weaknesses, and be able to honestly say what one does not know. North American society does not honor not knowing or the wisdom of working in concert to create better solutions. Some of the steps I took felt in direct contradiction to all my schooling, which had propelled me to think of myself as smart, highly qualified, and able to take on increasing responsibility . . . on my own. In order to support this work at The City School, I found I needed support from colleagues both internally and externally. Another step was to know when I did not have the answers and when to step out of the way, a lesson I am still mastering. These are issues and reflections that can be implemented in any work setting.

As a leader, I am caring, grounded, concerned that others achieve their goals, practical, and loving. I believe deeply in the capacity of every human being, even when they are not living to their full capacity, and I care fiercely about building workplaces and organizations that reflect those values. For me, this is about equality and about the belief that we can create a more just world. These values grow out of Jewish teachings and are bolstered by my desire to build on the work of those who came before me to create something better for my two children. I found in my time at The City School that, like a vibrant family, the work takes tenacity, love, clear guidelines, flexibility, and humor. You do not always know that you are doing the right thing in the midst of the tumult but with clear purpose and good people, you know that you have a deep foundation and a strong and flexible core that will allow you to experiment and grow.

Self-awareness and a willingness to learn, coupled with thoughtful programs, policies, and organizations can help to build change from the inside out.



# Speaking Up and Taking Charge, Urban Teens

*Claudio Martinez*

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It takes sixteen-year-old Marisol ten minutes to walk from her summer job at one of Boston's youth development agencies to the Jackson Square train station in the late afternoon. As she makes her way through the predominantly Latino neighborhood where reggaeton, bachata, and merengue rhythms pulsate out of Toyotas and Hondas, she is beeped at, whistled at, followed, peppered with obscenities, and sometimes even touched by males who congregate in large groups on the busy urban corners. In survival mode, Marisol puts her head down, crisscrosses the street when necessary, and ploughs forward.

The next day at lunch, Marisol discusses her experience on the street with other female teens who share similar stories. Adult youth workers join in the conversation, as do some male teens who are empathetic to the girls' plight. After several days of discussion, the girls hatch a plan. With adult support, they design, write, and print bilingual cards that articulate how they feel when they are harassed by the males. They explain that they have a right to wear summer clothes without receiving accusations of being provocative. They describe the difference between an insult or threat, which they despise, and a compliment that they may welcome. The girls don't view the males on the street as the enemy, but as a group that needs to be educated, that needs to have their consciousness raised.

Within a few days, the girls hit the streets in groups of four, hand out the cards to hundreds of males and engage in discussions. For the most part the males are receptive and willing to listen. A week later, the girls perform street theatre during rush hour in front of several hundred onlookers, as they continue to try to get across

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their message. The girls then connect with a sociologist at a local university and design and implement a survey of their peers in Boston's high schools. The findings of this exercise reveal that over 80 percent of the girls surveyed have been repeatedly harassed at school. Over 40 percent report having been cornered and touched in an unwanted manner. A *Boston Globe* reporter hears about the girls' efforts and writes a full feature article. Top officials from the Boston Public Schools and the Mayor's office meet with the girls to design a system-wide strategy to address the problem. The girls receive inquiries and encouragement from girls' and women's groups across the country.

The above description of an authentic youth-led organizing effort is a model of social change that has developed at the Hyde Square Task Force (HSTF) over the past decade in our work with urban youth. We believe that members of this segment of the population are critical change agents, those with the potential to have a major impact on the future cultural and political development of our society.<sup>1</sup>

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## **Changing Demographics**

According to the Population Reference Bureau, racial and ethnic minorities, currently accounting for one-third of the U.S. population, are projected to reach 50 percent by 2050; this trend may largely be explained by increasing immigration and high fertility rates.<sup>2</sup> By 2050, Latino youth are expected to comprise 29 percent of the U.S. youth population.<sup>3</sup> According to the U.S. Dept. of Commerce the population of the U.S. is projected to grow from 263 million in 1995 to 394 million in 2050 and the minority population will account for nearly 90 percent of this increase.<sup>4</sup> According to the Urban Institute, in 1990 there were 8.3 million children with immigrant parents in the U.S. and in 2007 that number rose to 16.4 million. Children of immigrants contributed 77 percent of the increase of the number of U.S. children between 1990 and 2007.<sup>5</sup>

A large number of these youth are concentrated in U.S. cities. Will these urban youth become productive members of American society? Will they bring new positive energy and unique cultural perspectives to our country's institutions and perhaps even change these institutions? Will these youth play a role in the development of a new America? Will they grow into adults who will have a voice within a democratic society?

Many U.S. citizens view youth of color with a xenophobic attitude, hoping that they will continue to be contained within urban areas, and some suburban enclaves, so that mainstream America can remain "uncontaminated." We suggest that at this unique time in our nation's history these youth can play leadership roles in a transformation of our society. We believe that these teens have the capacity to join in the construction of a new society that doesn't fear diversity and change, but rather embraces them as a positive source of strength, grounded in an emerging culture.

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## **The Youth Community Development (YCD) Model**

The HSTF has adopted a youth community development (YCD) model, a relatively new approach to teen programming that builds upon the prevention and youth development models that have evolved over the past several decades. In a prevention model, the teen population is perceived as a problem that needs to be addressed for the betterment of the overall society. Programs are set up to “keep the kids busy” and “off the streets” until they reach the safer confines of young adulthood.

The next stage of teen programming — youth development — views teens as assets in the community. In a youth-development model teens develop their academic, social, cultural, creative, and life skills so that they can reach personal goals and develop a lifelong commitment to service in their community. We expect that teens will experience the intrinsic rewards that are gained through serving others. A fundamental belief of the youth-development model is that when youth are fully engaged and play an active role in their community, they are able to make better decisions about their lives, have a sense of responsibility for their actions, perform better in school, have high self-esteem, and have more options in choosing a college. Youth can play a role in influencing their community’s capacity and, in doing so, they enhance their own capacities.

A model of youth-community development maintains the elements of the prevention and youth-development models and goes a step further. The YCD model rests on the philosophy that we must develop comprehensive and seamless community-wide efforts that promote positive youth development for all youth, not only the youth involved in our programs. Those engaged in youth community development realize that organizations serving youth cannot do this work alone. We understand that it is our role to mobilize the community, so that all sectors of society are involved in providing opportunities for the transformation of youth. In the YCD model, youth development should be imbedded within the consciousness of the entire community so that an ecology that supports and understands youth development is created and maintained. In the YCD model, youth develop the skills so they can take the lead in this mobilization effort. Youth are viewed as valuable change agents, pushing all of us toward a more humanitarian and egalitarian society that has a vision for youth and is willing to invest sufficient resources to support the human development of young people.

In order to engage at the YCD level, youth must examine all of the social, economic, and political forces acting on themselves, their families, and communities. The youth take the lead in challenging the levels of inequality that leave many urban minority communities impoverished and isolated. The youth are supported by caring adults who work with them to develop strategy and implement political action. In this process, teens learn the rules of political engagement in this society but they also develop the awareness that they can be a historical force for creating a new exciting,

diverse society with new rules of engagement. Through these activities, teens create a new consciousness, build a sense of personal efficacy, and develop a belief that social change is possible. In the youth community development model we not only prepare youth for the future; we believe youth should play a critical role in creating a new future for themselves and their community.

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## **The YCD Model in Action**

A quick look at the Hyde Square Task Force's *Ritmo en Acción* cultural dance program for teens demonstrates the evolution from a prevention model to a YCD model.

- Utilizing prevention strategies, dance classes are offered to teens to keep them off the streets and engaged in positive activities. Along with the dance classes a whole array of services is also offered: college prep, counseling, tutoring, and enrichment activities.
- Utilizing youth development strategies, the teen dancers are offered all of the above-mentioned services but are also viewed as assets in the community. Therefore, the teens not only practice and perform dance, but they also are trained to teach peers and younger children to dance. They serve the community during after-school hours and set up a business where they provide high-quality, low-cost workshops in Latin and Hip-Hop dance.
- In the YCD model the teens also advocate for more dance programs across the city. They mobilize other youth, health professionals, parents, educators, cultural workers, political leaders, and advocate that dance be integrated into the school day in the Boston Public Schools. They conduct research and undertake power analyses to understand where there are resources for these programs, and who has the power to shift those resources. The teens challenge the status quo and take the lead as cultural and political advocates for themselves and all youth in the city.

Utilizing the dynamic urban setting as an asset, the HSTF model builds on the best practices of youth community development by creating teams of teens that engage in a wide variety of meaningful and exciting community-based projects. Each team of teens undergoes extensive leadership training and then expands its positive influence by reaching out and engaging hundreds of their peers, younger children, and adults. As teens develop the consciousness that they can change the world around them, they simultaneously develop the consciousness that they can change themselves — that they can take control of their lives — that they can define themselves and their role in society — that they can find meaning and purpose. Teens begin to develop their own personal philosophies: their basic beliefs, values, attitudes, and assumptions, which explain, shape, and reflect their view of themselves and their surroundings. This

personal philosophy will guide their lives and help them make sense of the complex world in which they move.

Using this model, groups of youth have taken on a multitude of projects over the past decade. They led a community-wide mobilization to prevent a K-Mart from being built on several acres of publicly owned land in the neighborhood. The teens practiced a home-grown version of self-determination by defending the dozens of local small business owners against the corporate chain. Through marches, protests, and by turning out in the hundreds for community meetings, the youth convinced the Boston Redevelopment Authority and the Mayor of Boston to instead build a \$220 million community-friendly urban development consisting of a youth and family center, recreational facilities, affordable housing, and locally owned businesses. Youth have written and published books for their peers and young children on health and nutrition issues. They have produced a documentary film on violence that has been shown on local cable television and is used as a tool in schools, churches, and living rooms to talk about this issue. They successfully lobbied for the right of youth aged 16 to 17 to both vote and run as candidates for the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council, and they have elected over ten of their peers to this decision-making body. Recently, a group of youth successfully lobbied for a Civics in Action course to be taught in Boston public high schools. Not only has the course since been piloted in four high schools, with plans to go city wide, but teens have also worked with professionals to write the curriculum.

After realizing that electoral politics is a major factor in determining the amount of power they have, the youth work each year on voter registration, voter education and voter turnout. In the past decade they have transformed the predominantly minority and immigrant precincts in Hyde/Jackson Square voting precincts from one of the lowest turnout areas to one of the City of Boston's highest turnout areas. The youth have used this growing electoral power to successfully lobby for millions of dollars in renovations to public parks. They have also used their clout by making frequent trips to the Massachusetts State House, where they have been credited with adding millions of dollars to the state budget for violence prevention and youth jobs programs.

The goal of the Hyde Square Task Force is not only to make political change, but also to create opportunities for youth to develop and express their dynamic and evolving urban culture — a culture that embraces diversity and change, a culture of justified anger, a culture of love, authenticity, and hope. Therefore, we consciously integrate the arts into the organizing campaigns and actions. In the summertime our youth organize outdoor concerts and cultural events that attract thousands of young people and local residents. There, the youth build and educate their political base through spoken word, theater, comedy, original rap and music, and dance. They design and paint murals throughout the community to stake a claim and advocate

for themselves. As the youth create social change and the foundation for a new democratic society, they are also creating new cultural forms and patterns that are representative of the “new” America. We encourage youth to work to create change through our daily interactions with each other, through exploring new ways to relate to and support each other.

What is most exciting about this work is that we never know when or how future organizing campaigns will emerge. In recent months, our youth have reported that they have been pushed, shouted at, insulted, and generally disrespected by the Transit Police as they travel to and from school on public transportation. Diving into meaningful action, they have devised a multilevel strategy that includes the creation of a Civilian Review Board and a new training program for police officers in how to communicate with and positively engage youth. In the coming months, these police officers and their supervisors, as well as local elected officials, should expect to be sitting down at a conference table with our youth to address these issues.

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### **Reflection, Transnational Learning Exchanges, and Hope**

The model that has developed at the Hyde Square Task Force has come about through constant dialogue, reflection, and change. Our learning organization has been energized through regular transnational learning exchanges with individuals and groups that are engaged in social justice initiatives around the globe. Staff, board, and youth have had opportunities to both travel and welcome a wide variety of community development practitioners from all continents. We have also engaged interns from Ireland, worked on arts projects with South African women, and hosted colleagues from Israel, Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Colombia.

Our long-term relationships with the Boston–Haifa Learning Exchange as well as the Barr Foundation Fellowship have given HSTF a unique opportunity to expand our “glocal” (global/local) knowledge and strengthen our relationships and networks in Boston and internationally at the same time.

Through these exchanges we not only gather ideas and best practices, but also develop the consciousness that indeed there is an international movement for social justice. Knowing that there are sister organizations spread across the globe is immensely comforting and provides a deep sense of hope. And it is this hope and inspiration that fuels our youth with the power to create authentic, compassionate change at an urgent and ripe time in our global history.



## Notes

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## COLLABORATIONS, PARTNERSHIPS, NETWORKS

# Introduction: From the Personal to the Professional Interorganizational Partnerships and Networks

*Liron Peleg-Hadomi*

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**O**ften, when I think about the nature of interorganizational partnerships and networks, I find myself thinking about the broader meaning of relationships, which form an integral part of our lives. What is it about relationships that make them so intricate, unique, mysterious, and full of opportunities? What are the components required for building a successful relationship that allows us to grow and develop in the complex world in which we live? Is it the ability to trust one another? Is it the ability to recognize one another's needs and interests? Or maybe it is the belief that together, we can reach more distant and important places than on our own? I have been pondering these questions for quite a while now, and they have led me to consciously — or maybe unconsciously — connect with the fascinating world of collaborations among communities and organizations, and later to the professional and academic study of interorganizational networks.

For years, as a community social worker, I had the privilege of working with organizations on projects that are founded on the values of my professional world — organizations that advance collaborations between Jews and Arabs living in Israel and between various populations and the establishment. Today, I work mainly with the Haifa Council of Volunteer Organizations (CVO) an umbrella organization in Haifa.

My journey in the world of interorganizational partnerships began about four years ago, when I was invited to take part in a seminar organized by the CVO, which was attended by directors from Haifa and Boston. I still remember the empowering

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experience I felt while attending that seminar in Haifa. As directors of organizations, specifically NGOs, we often find ourselves working alone, under daily pressures, while striving to locate resources and fulfill our organizations' goals. As a young director, the seminar was my first opportunity to meet other directors, to learn from their experience and exchange ideas and, most importantly, that was when my networking activities with other directors from Haifa started. Next I was invited to Boston to take part in another seminar. The trip to Boston was a grand learning experience. It provided me with new ideas and tools as well as new personal and professional relationships, which I use even today in my personal and professional life and which led me to take such a significant part in the Learning Exchange project, and later, in the Lead Haifa program.

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### **The Boston–Haifa Learning Exchange Project: A Story of Partnerships, Relationships, and People**

The Haifa–Boston Learning Exchange project implements many principles of collaboration development and interorganizational networking. The project comprises a number of elements and levels of partnership:

The first element is the structure of the project's partnership. The project is led by several bodies: the CVO; Shatil (The New Israel Fund's Empowerment and Training Center for Social Change Organizations in Israel); the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston (JCRC); the Boston–Haifa Connection of Combined Jewish Philanthropies (CJP); and the University of Massachusetts Boston.

The second element is the partnership between organizations working in Haifa. The first group to take part in this project consisted of five women who were directors of NGOs working in Haifa in various fields. The five women participated in Donna Haig-Friedman's research and, during that time, developed close relationships built on mutual trust, support, and learning. Later, ten more directors of NGOs working in Haifa joined the group, and the network widened to include other collaborative activities. In the project's third year, we decided to initiate Lead Haifa — a program for social responsibility and leadership development for directors of NGOs as well as directors of business and governmental organizations.

The third element is the partnership between organizations in Haifa and organizations in Boston. Throughout the project, from the research stage until today's Lead Haifa program, a process of mutual learning between the Haifaim and the Bostonians is taking place. The local network has been growing and expanding to become an international network of interpersonal and professional relationships — of tools and knowledge exchange.

The fourth element is the combination of academic research with social change work. Thanks to Donna Haig Friedman's study and her commitment to the project

as well as Amnon Reichman's involvement in it, the project has grown to become a unique model of combining academic knowledge with concrete practical work, of research in various fields related to participants' work with peer learning. Until now, three seminars have been held at the University of Haifa and at the University of Massachusetts Boston to present this model.

All of the above elements have several common characteristics: they involve establishing partnerships and collaborations between people who view social change work as a mission, forming meaningful professional and interpersonal relationships, and developing a common vision of working toward a better society for us all.

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### **Interorganizational Partnerships and Networks: Current Thoughts**

In today's world, collaborations and social networks are everywhere and in all walks of life. Very little, if anything, happens in isolation; most things are interrelated and are formed by and related to many other pieces of the puzzle of humanity. Networks, therefore, have an important role in shaping our lives. Despite the problems and dilemmas we face when we come to establish and form a collaboration, it seems that we are all able to connect and relate with other individuals and organizations. We establish social networks and form interpersonal relationships in order to advance issues and fields that we cannot advance on our own.

In addition to the study of network development and networking as a spontaneous, natural process, much work has been done on the subject of networks and the relations within and between them.<sup>1</sup> In recent years, we have witnessed an increase in the number and dispersal of collaborations and partnerships between organizations in general and among volunteer organizations in.<sup>2</sup> Many volunteer organizations, as well as other types of organizations, have reached the conclusion that social networking can significantly contribute to bring about change and to resolving complex social problems. The extent and complexity of the issues and challenges faced by social change and social services organizations require third-sector leaders to develop new paradigms, tools, and techniques to help them cope successfully with the many demands and needs in the field. Some of these needs are the result of the rise in the extent of services provided and the functions fulfilled by nonprofits in Israel and all over the world.

In recent years, the government has decreased the number and extent of essential social services it provides to the community, while the demand for these services has been rising. Such a state of affairs requires nonprofit organizations to become more involved and to expand their community work in order to answer essential needs.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the global financial crisis, which caused an abrupt decrease in donations and funding, as well as the fact that many foundations have decided to promote interorganizational collaborations and partnerships in order to make work more efficient

and save on resources, have lead many organizations to start working together toward advancing shared goals.

These phenomena and trends have made volunteer organizations around the world understand that things have changed: instead of focusing on leadership and organizational capabilities, now is the time to start reaching out, to focus on developing inter organizational networks, in order to have more influence and realize more objectives.

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### **Interorganizational Partnerships and Networks: Terminology and Definitions**

In professional literature we can find a distinction between three types of interorganizational collaborative relationships: The first type is termed *collaboration*: an array of resources, knowledge, funding, and other components is shared by two or more interested bodies in order to solve issues that cannot be solved alone. Another definition refers to *collaboration* as a relationship between various organizations that mutually commit to working together — with and alongside other organizations — when they share the same vision and interests and when combining resources can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the services they provide and their initiatives.<sup>4</sup> Collaborations usually take time to form, and incorporate mutual development of vision, goals, and resources.

The second type of interorganizational collaborative relationships is *coordination*: mutually planning and defining various functions and responsibilities of each of the parties as well as sharing the resources used for a project.

The third type of interorganizational relationships is termed *cooperation*: inter-organizational relations directed at fulfilling a definite and specific need. In such cases, each of the organizations works separately, and they do not share planning or resources.<sup>5</sup>

One of the ways by which organizations collaborate is to take part in an inter-organizational *network*. In literature and discourse we can find many definitions of the term *network*. Some view networks as collaborations between organizations of various sizes that together form a contexture of interrelationships. Others define a *network* as a group of organizations that are organized in such a way that the autonomy of its members is not harmed, and they voluntarily exchange information and assets, and sometimes even develop collaborative activities. A more updated and detailed definition describes a *network* as a group of organizations actively and collaboratively working together toward fulfilling their needs in a range of fields, while distributing responsibilities and expenses among themselves and, consequently, reducing risks.<sup>6</sup>

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## **Interorganizational Partnerships and Networks in Civil Society**

Scholars Chao Guo and Muhittin Acar<sup>7</sup> classify the various forms of collaborations between nonprofit organizations into eight types of collaborative activities and rank them according to their level of formality. Under the category of informal activities they list: sharing information, redirecting “customers,” sharing a building or an office, and organizing management services. Under the category of formal activities they list: establishing and coordinating shared programs, sharing resources, mutual initiatives, and merger. In informal collaborations, unlike in formal ones, organizations do not commit to being permanent partners in a partnership, and decisions are made by each of the organizations. Civil society organizations tend to collaborate in other fields, such as attending to other organizations’ customers, community planning, and assessment of community needs.<sup>8</sup>

Another form of partnerships by which civil society achieves social goals is interorganizational networks. In a network, relations between organizations as well as other members allow the whole to be more than the sum of its parts and, by that, bring about more significant achievements. Networks are established and maintained for various reasons and serve a wide range of objectives; they can be formal or informal, work in one city or in a limited geographical area, or on a national and even international level. Among nonprofit civic organizations there are several types or categories of interorganizational networks: information networks, networks that provide social services to specific populations (the homeless, impoverished families), social change and advocacy networks, and community of practice networks.

Without regard to the type of network in question, several factors may cause an organization to join or not to join an interorganizational network. Among the motives for joining are the benefits of pooling resources as well as sharing risks and new opportunities. Among the barriers are the complexities of collaborative work, the loss of authority and control, the investment of time, and the sharing of reputation with others.

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## **Stories from the Field**

As an umbrella organization for civil society organizations in Haifa, the CVO has taken it upon itself to develop and advance a wide range of interorganizational collaborations. In recent years, the council has promoted roundtable forums, and today it operates three roundtables: one for food distribution organizations, one for young adults in Haifa, and one for special-needs organizations. Each is a little different: each serves a unique audience and conducts special activities. Nevertheless, several elements are similar in all roundtables: they all seek to bring together various organizations and to establish collaborations for achieving common goals. Organizations arrive at the roundtable forums for various reasons and motives: some

are interested in exchanging information and knowledge and in exposing themselves and their activities to a wider audience; others are interested in establishing specific projects that serve their goals.

Establishing roundtable forums requires time and effort in order to build inter-organizational relationships. Only after participants know each other personally and professionally are they ready to develop joint initiatives. In addition to roundtable forums, the council, together with Shatil and the Boston–Haifa Connection, also developed the Lead Haifa program, which grew out of the Learning Exchange program and forms a network between various organizations and sectors in the city. The goal of the program is to promote local Haifa leadership with strong social justice awareness as well as to develop a multisectoral network that will work to establish social change partnerships. The first class of the program consisted of directors of civil society and public service organizations operating in the city. This year we widened the program to include business organizations as well.

Shlomo Taylor, director of the Community Outreach Department at Carmel Olefins Ltd., who participated in the second class of the Lead Haifa program, says: “I joined the program as a representative of the business sector in Haifa for two reasons: Firstly, in order to widen the circle of opportunities of my factory, to be active in the field, and to establish more collaborations with organizations and NGOs that need our help; secondly, it was important for me to assist third-sector organizations with my professional experience and to help them establish professional relations with the business sector.”

Ferial Basul, who works with Arab residents in the neighborhood of Wadi Nisnas for Shilo, an organization that assists senior and elderly people in Haifa, describes her reasons for joining the second class of the Lead Haifa program: “In my professional as well as my personal life, I have always favored collaborations. Working in the Wadi Nisnas neighborhood committee, I realized that in order to make significant achievements, we have to collaborate with all the organizations working in the neighborhood. These days, when the government is privatizing more and more social services, collaborative work is extremely important. After taking part in the program, I established many collaborations and my work for the organization has improved.”

The Lead Haifa program features monthly sessions in which participants meet for lectures and workshops in a range of fields and topics, such as social justice, leadership, multiculturalism, and project development. The program gives special importance to establishing networks and developing formal and informal collaborations among participants. During the first and second classes of the program, one of the issues we addressed was how to choose the type of network participants were interested in establishing. Some participants wanted to establish a network that would help them exchange professional information and develop specific collaborative projects for providing services for various populations. Others wanted to establish a

network that would deal with social change work in Haifa because, according to them, networks provide leaders with significant power.

Hila Maoz Shpitser, director of Beterem (The National Center for Children's Safety and Health), who participated in the first class of the program, tells about her experiences: "As a director of a third-sector organization, I often feel alone. I often feel that nobody really understands what I'm doing and what challenges I'm facing along the way. After taking part in the program, I felt less lonely. Meeting other people who do such important work like the participants in the program is strengthening and inspiring. I have learned something from each of the group members; I made friends who will stay with me. After being in the program, establishing inter organizational collaborations has become a very significant part of my work as a director. Until now I have already established twelve collaborations, which our organization promotes and advances on a national level."

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### **Interorganizational Partnerships and Networks: Reflections and Recommendations**

By reviewing professional literature and by examining the actual work carried out by third-sector organizations, we can conclude that establishing and developing interorganizational networks that promote social change is extremely important. Nevertheless, we must ask ourselves what prevents such networks from developing more rapidly. Although there are many collaborations between organizations in Israel, the number of formal interorganizational networks is relatively small. How can we explain this? How can we help organizations develop this field of work? Are we to expect directors to be able to establish collaborative relationships and develop partnerships? What is the role of umbrella organizations, such as the CVO, and organizations that provide organizational consulting services, such as Shatil, in assisting, guiding, and even encouraging organizations to develop networks?

Amnon Reichman's essay in this issue portrays the dilemmas and problems faced by organizations when dealing with collaborations; Yael Abada's essay deals with the same issues from the CVO's perspective. A comprehensive study that examined directors' views on whether to join or not join inter organizational networks would cast more light on the subject of partnerships and their formation, and help us develop practical tools for resolving related issues. Another study that might assist in developing this field would be to examine the interorganizational networks operating in Israel today, what has made them successful, and what challenges are faced by organizations and individuals who want to develop similar networks. In these times, society faces many challenges that require us to develop new and creative strategies in order to successfully achieve our social change goals. Investing time and effort in establishing meaningful relationships between

individuals, communities, and organizations will help us develop significant collaborations and interorganizational networks.

*Translated from the Hebrew by Yoram Arnon*



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# Raising the Gaze

*Mary Coonan*

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**T**here is an old, very familiar Sufi story about six blind men who encounter an elephant for the first time while walking down a road in India. Overcome with curiosity, they begin to describe their understanding of the elephant. Bumping into the side of the elephant, the first man proclaims, “An elephant is like a wall.” The second touches the tusks and likens the elephant to a spear. The third feels the trunk and says the elephant is a snake. The ears become a fan, the legs a tree, and the tail a rope. The point of the story, of course, is that we each bring a different perspective to how we perceive reality; none of us grasps the full truth of our surroundings and community.

At a recent conference of the American Evaluation Association, I heard a new spin on this very old tale. Michael Quinn Patton suggested that sharing our perceptions about the elephant is only a first step. We can’t really know the elephant without understanding where it lives, what is happening to the surrounding environment, the effect of the drought, the impact of the poachers who seek its tusks, the expansion and encroachment of human communities on the elephant’s territory, changing vegetation, and much more. To understand the elephant, we have to raise our gaze beyond a single point of engagement and even beyond the elephant itself.

When I first set out to write this article, I knew I wanted to reflect on our joint efforts to address the challenges of our complicated world. I thought about sharing some insights on the process of working in coalitions in a “how to” or “here are some tools” approach. But as I thought more deeply, I realized that what is most needed at this particular moment is reflection about how we come together to support one another with wisdom and the courage to act.

We live in complex worlds with intertwining issues that often cannot be separated from one another. A homeless mother in Boston not only faces the lack of a home; she may also need employment, additional education, healthcare, childcare,

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transportation, academic support for her children, or a caring social network. Yet, the resolutions to these problems often reside in separate systems with distinct processes, rules, and regulations. Her life becomes even more splintered and fractured as she attempts to journey toward stability for her family.

As social-service and social-change agents, we know such a broken system does not meet the needs of this homeless mother, yet we are stymied by the complexity of the situation. We scramble to respond and do the best we can to make the system work for her, often in very creative and innovative ways. We attempt to buffer the family from the unsettling and jumbled process. We develop strong relationships and a network of interconnections with other agencies that support us in the endeavor. We create a caring, agile organization that works efficiently within the system, recruiting allies and providing incredible service, spirit, and support. Yet, unintentionally we often contribute to sustaining a fragmented system.

The way our society is organized seems to be at the core of our joint dilemma. Peter Senge and Fred Kofman suggest that our success in building an efficient scientific culture has created some debilitating blind spots.<sup>1</sup> According to the authors, the scientific milieu is predisposed to fragmentation, competition, and being reactive.

In short, we try to solve and understand problems by taking them apart and analyzing their smallest component. We specialize and become experts, moving us further from an understanding that the parts intertwine to comprise a whole. We desperately want to find and possess answers that may not be found in single institutions or even combinations of institutions. We separate the world into those who know and those who do not, those who help and those who receive.

If we dig deeper into this scenario, we find an underlying belief that knowledge can be acquired in bits and pieces, and problems can be addressed by treating symptoms and creating specialized departments and organizations. If we are efficient enough, we can resolve any issue. Further, answers are available for each part, but they are the domain of specialists.

An environment of competition and reactivity undergird and reinforce the fragmentation. Laboring under a “scarcity mentality,” we encounter an underlying belief in a finite number of resources that are to be acquired through healthy competition and hard work. Our society rewards individuals and organizations that project an image of “success,” give the appearance of “knowing” the answer and “producing” results. This leaves little room for uncovering complexity and admitting that we don’t know what to do about the fragmented systems we encounter. In order to maintain the image of “knower” we attempt to solve the problem immediately, without fully understanding the underlying causes.

These beliefs are deeply seated in our culture, affecting the way we think and operate — even of our nonprofit organizations dedicated to building a better and more

just society. I have come to believe that the only way to counter these strong forces and to raise our gaze is to do so collectively. Peter Senge refers to this as building “communities of commitment.” The notion of commitment connotes action, and community reminds us that we cannot do it alone.

Communities of commitment support us to hold uncertainty and not knowing and set the stage for wisdom to emerge. Realizing that we do not have the answers is a first step. Having the courage to admit it publicly is quite another endeavor. It takes tremendous openness and personal courage because such an admission is so different from the way cultural forces have marked our understanding and way of operating.

The collective environment begins to provide space for exploration and understanding. Fully understanding and believing that answers and solutions are a collective effort is perhaps the hardest challenge. It requires us to listen closely to one another and to understand that wisdom and knowledge come from many sources. It requires letting go of our concepts or at least allowing them to mix with the ideas of others. Listening to our “competition,” “opposition,” or the “nonexpert” does not come naturally. It takes practice to recognize that all of us are a part of the whole, not just some of us.

We spend much of our time sorting through information, judging it as worthy or unworthy of consideration. We have preconceived notions of what is good and what is bad. Unfortunately, this process leaves little room for creativity and the emergence of new understanding. While each of us must work to remain open on a personal level, we need each other to really see beyond the circumstances of our particular organization or community.

We need each other to understand how deeply interconnected we are. Some have referred to this as moving from an “I” consciousness to a “we” consciousness.<sup>2</sup> When we understand ourselves in this context, we can better see what is needed and who or what organizations might possess this quality. This is indeed a difficult personal and organizational challenge that many of us may have experienced in the form of ideological or turf warfare. On the other hand, many of us have begun to see the power of collaborating from a more open perspective.

Ironically, science, one of the strongest forces promoting fragmentation, is now teaching us to think about interconnection. Growing awareness of global warming, how the flap of a butterfly’s wings can have an effect thousands of miles away, complexity theory, neuroscience, the new cosmology, and quantum physics are all revealing that the universe is much more connected than we had ever thought. In high school, we learned about the atomic subparticles of photons and neutrons and their orderly and predictable patterns only to learn recently that their behavior is actually random and interconnected: both a wave and particle at the same time.

I believe that cultural forces of fragmentation are so prevalent in society that until

we shift this seemingly simple yet tremendously challenging paradigm, we can only experience limited success in bringing about a just society. I see no other way of making change, other than bringing our collective energy together. In doing so, we must be willing to let go of the very structures we have developed to respond to the injustices and splintered reality. For example, to eliminate homelessness, we must be willing to consider doing away with homeless shelters. We must be willing to let go of the “way we do things.” We may even be challenged to create new structures of coalitions that more accurately mirror the random and interconnected nature of our world.

The Learning Exchange between Boston and Haifa provides a wonderful example of a “committed community.” It provides a space for participants to learn together and to grapple with common issues. But more importantly, I believe, it gave me courage to speak about and explore different ways of looking at my world, far from the daily pressures of our busy lives. I believe it takes courage to think outside of the norm — beyond even the nonprofit norm.

Critics may claim that there is no “productive” agenda for committed communities, that they divert our energy from the important tasks at hand. I would claim that these communities help us to focus our energy precisely on what is most important so that we can act with as much wisdom as possible.

Returning to the parable of the elephant, our challenge is to move beyond our current vision. We must move beyond sharing our impressions of the elephant to seeing the elephant within its broader context. This kind of vision requires our joint effort and a willingness to live with uncertainty until clarity emerges through the chaos because we have been willing to look.

## **Notes**

1. Fred Kofman and Peter Senge, “Communities of Commitment: The Heart of Learning Organizations,” in *Learning Organizations: Developing Cultures for Tomorrow’s Workplace*, ed. Chawla and Renesch 14–43 (Portland, Oregon: Productivity Press, 1995).
2. A. L. Keating, “Transforming Status-quo Stories: Shifting from ‘Me’ to ‘We’ Consciousness,” *Education and Hope in Troubled Times*, ed. H. S. Shapiro, 210–223 (New York: Routledge, 2009).

# Joining Forces in Boston

# Community Development Corporations

*Carl Nagy-Koechlin*

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In 2005, the Jewish Community Relations Council organized a Learning Exchange in which a group of Boston antipoverty leaders traveled to Israel with the goal of fostering cross-fertilization between the Boston delegation and their counterparts in Haifa. The Exchange achieved that goal remarkably. At the time, I was the director of a Boston-based community development corporation (CDC) that faced challenges related to rapid neighborhood change, and my experience spurred me to seek out opportunities for cross-fertilization and collaboration within greater Boston of the type we experienced in Haifa. Specifically, I brought colleagues together to share our experiences leading CDCs in a changing environment. Those conversations grew into the Community Development Innovation Forum, which engaged about eighty community development practitioners and allies in a process of rethinking our strategies and our field. As part of that process, and motivated by the Boston–Haifa experience, I devoted myself to exploring how collaborations can help CDCs be more effective and resilient. This article summarizes the observations and analysis that resulted from that exploration, which I believe are applicable to nonprofit and social-change organizations more generally, particularly those that are place based.

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## Collaboration Continuum

Collaborations are complex undertakings, bringing together the goals, cultures, and peculiarities of two or more organizations. This complexity, however, has not prevented a proliferation of such collaborations throughout the community-development field and among nonprofits in general. These collaborations appear to be growing in number and complexity.

The call from public and private funders for consolidation among nonprofits

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— CDCs in particular — has grown more persistent during this difficult economic period, and understandably so. The Boston Foundation, a leading funder and policy advocate in greater Boston, published a report entitled *Passion & Purpose: Raising the Fiscal Fitness for Massachusetts Nonprofits*, in which the foundation asserts that the “Massachusetts Nonprofit Sector needs to seriously consider mergers, strategic alliances, and collaborations.”

Mergers among community development organizations so far have been rare. On the other hand, collaborations short of mergers are common. David LaPiana (lapiana.org), an organizational consultant specializing in strategic restructuring, depicts a continuum of organizational affiliation with three distinct degrees:

- Collaboration: No permanent commitment and decision making remains within each organization.
- Alliance: Commitment for foreseeable future; decision making is shared; structured by explicit agreement.
- Integration: Changes to corporate control and/or structure, including creation and or dissolution of one or more organizations.

Organizations considering collaboration should move deliberately and strategically in choosing the right partner and structuring the partnership effectively. Less structured and “reversible” collaborations may allow groups to test the waters before entering into more formal partnerships or mergers.

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### **Form Follows Function: Goals and Forces Driving Collaboration**

When it comes to the nature of organizational collaboration, Frank Lloyd Wright’s principle that “form follows function” is apt. Collaborations should be structured appropriate to the objectives of the participating organizations. These objectives might include pursuit of scarce resources, operational efficiencies, shared capacity, and enhanced power through coalitions. Most collaborations are driven by a combination of these factors and are not easily categorized. But there are certain patterns and traits among the community development collaborations that form the basis for the following collaboration typology.

**Collaborations for Comprehensive Community Impact.** CDCs typically view their neighborhoods comprehensively. Their visions usually extend beyond the bricks and mortar of their affordable housing projects and the range of their various community programs. Driven by their expansive visions, some CDCs have over-extended themselves, trying to address issues that they are not suited to address. Most CDCs have concluded that achieving all aspects of their vision for stable, diverse, and vibrant neighborhoods is beyond their scope and capacity. Some have turned to collaborations with other groups in their communities to achieve the kind of

comprehensive impact they seek.

The most promising current model for this approach is the Chicago New Communities Program ([www.newcommunities.org](http://www.newcommunities.org)). The program, which was initiated by the Local Initiative Support Corporation, with extensive funding from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, supports broad community partnerships in sixteen Chicago neighborhoods aimed at comprehensively addressing those communities' needs. In most but not all cases CDCs play the convening role in these partnerships. The priorities in each community were set through extensive and inclusive community organizing and planning processes.

**Regional Collaboration.** While CDCs' neighborhood base is ideal for achieving community participation and organizational accountability, it is limiting in that the solutions to the challenges communities face — like jobs, transportation, and the environment — are increasingly regional national, or even global in nature. CDCs that aim to address these issues often come together to cover a broader geography that corresponds better to the issue they strive to address.

In their efforts to bring living-wage job opportunities to their neighborhood residents, Jamaica Plain NDC and Fenway CDC jointly initiated the Health Care Research and Training Institute. The Institute consisted of an elaborate incumbent worker-training program that over five years trained and coached over 1,000 entry-level workers at about ten Longwood Medical Area (LMA) institutions, and trained and placed over 100 jobseekers from various Boston neighborhoods for entry-level jobs in the LMA. Despite its important impact, this sectoral workforce strategy coexisted uneasily with the two CDCs' neighborhood focus.

**Shared Capacity Collaboration.** The rationale and viability of having “soup-to-nuts” community development organizations in some seventy-five communities across the state has been legitimately questioned. Increasingly practitioners and funders alike have favored the evolution toward a more diverse community development field that includes a greater variety of community development organizations that network at the local, regional, and statewide level. Under this scenario, some organizations would specialize in particular activities or serve particular populations, while others would retain a largely place-based character, with a number of permutations in between. Some organizations would be largely volunteer-run, perhaps with small staffs, while others would have substantial real estate assets and a relatively large staff. The result could be a field that is more efficient and able to serve more communities and people than it does now, while at the same time remaining accountable and accessible to the communities it serves.

There have been many effective and instructive examples of collaborations built on this principle. CDCs recognize that the residents or businesses in their communities may benefit from certain programs or expertise that the CDC cannot itself provide

or sustain. In these cases collaborations may offer the economies of scale to support shared programmatic or technical capacity that can serve several communities. The Community Business Network is an example of this approach. It was forged by Boston-based CDCs in 1997 to offer small business technical assistance and training through a shared capacity network where a few CDCs with technical capacity served businesses referred by “feeder” CDC partners who lacked that same capacity. Among the network’s impressive results and success stories were the nearly \$12 million in loans it made or arranged to small and microbusinesses and the 992 jobs created as a result.

**Transactional Partnerships.** While the work of CDCs is grounded in their social justice missions, their impact is usually driven by specific opportunities. Some of these opportunities — including complex and risky real estate development opportunities — are too big for CDCs to pursue on their own and therefore require partnerships or joint ventures.

Even as CDCs have built extensive development track records, they may still lack the internal staff and financial capacity to seize development opportunities in their neighborhoods or to manage these assets. This is particularly true for mixed-use and mixed-income projects, which may include components with which CDCs have little experience. In addition, in the current financing and investment crisis, CDCs frequently do not meet lender and investor financial requirements. For their part, CDCs bring various attributes as partners on complex real estate deals, including legitimacy within the community, housing development expertise, and access to flexible and below-market financing resources.

Some of the most productive CDCs in the region have turned frequently and fruitfully to real estate development partnerships. This suggests that transactional partnerships, or joint ventures, are becoming more common, even as — or perhaps because — CDCs are more experienced and sophisticated.

**Power Collaborative.** Individually, communities and CDCs may lack the power and leverage to achieve their visions. For this reason, the community development movement has relied on the same coalition strategies that many other social movements have successfully employed. Most CDCs have led or joined coalitions to stop urban renewal, highways, ballparks, crime, or lending practices from ravaging their neighborhoods. Coalitions have also given communities the power to affirmatively advance their vision through legislative efforts and grassroots campaigns.

The Fairmount Collaborative, a partnership of CDCs and other organizations located along a commuter rail line that runs through many of Boston’s low-income neighborhoods, is a powerful example of a coalition of CDCs that has been able to address a fundamental injustice — transit inequity — in a way that none of its coalition partners could have independently. The Collaborative has already won improved train service and additional stations along a commuter rail line that runs through

neighborhoods previously underserved by mass transit. It is now spearheading a smart growth development agenda to create vital “urban villages” with new affordable housing, economic development opportunities, open space, and needed services to benefit the low- and moderate-income residents living along the corridor.

**Long-Term Partnerships.** Successful partnerships often endure or else resurface around new opportunities. The partners in these long-term collaborations have overlapping goals that go beyond a specific opportunity and capitalize on complementary expertise. Trust and fluid working relationships are also key elements that motivate organizations to stick together or to regularly rekindle their collaboration when the circumstances call for it.

Jamaica Plain NDC’s long-term collaboration with City Life/Vida Urbana has been productive and enduring. City Life has played a sort of “tree-shaker” role — organizing tenants, pressing landlords, and engaging public officials in ways that have created housing development opportunities for JPND. For its part, JPND has played a complementary “jam-maker” role, picking up the opportunities shaken free by City Life’s agitation and turning them into projects that advance the organizations’ shared vision.

**Funder-Initiated or Encouraged Collaborations.** Most community development collaborations have been practitioner-driven. But private and public funders are increasingly encouraging collaboration, in some cases making it a prerequisite for funding. While some CDCs bristle at the imposition of funders’ priorities on the field, if community development is to become more collaborative and more rationally configured, funders need to help make that happen. Practitioner skepticism regarding funder-driven collaborations is not unfounded. Incentives or requirements to collaborate can lead to dysfunctional forced marriages that lack synergy and are unsustainable. More often, though, funders enable productive collaborations that might not have been forged without the availability of resources.

The Boston Foundation has not only encouraged or required collaborations among grantees, it has also organized various consortia of funders around a variety of philanthropic initiatives including workforce development, civic engagement, English as a second language, family homelessness, and housing foreclosure.

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## **Conclusion**

CDCs in Boston and elsewhere are collaborating extensively. These collaborations have been driven by the desire to have broader or deeper impact, achieve greater efficiencies, build power, and secure resources. In addition to the range of goals that motivate them, these collaborations fall along a continuum of intensity, formality, and permanence, with the great majority falling short of merger. Many of these appear driven by necessity. A tough economy and fewer viable real estate development opportunities, among other factors, have put financial stress on CDCs, forcing

downsizing. Financially vulnerable CDCs with more limited capacity are considering collaboration as a means to survive and maintain their impact.

Whatever form they take and despite their complexity, collaborations have proven to be an effective strategy for achieving community development goals and strengthening the participating organizations. Current economic and fiscal circumstances, as threatening as they are, will likely lead to more collaboration and may provide fertile ground for innovative restructuring of the community development field in general.

Practitioners or scholars with expertise outside of the community development field can better determine the applicability of the collaborative trends described in this article to their own field. But organizations that strive to bolster their capacity and impact while remaining rooted in and accountable to geographic communities will increasingly turn to collaboration to achieve the best of these two worlds.



# A Story of Collaboration

# Haifa Council of Volunteer Organizations and Shatil

*Hagit Shachar*

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**T**aking part in a partnership is a delicate and complex task involving many opportunities for leveraging initiatives together with power struggles, competition, and a great deal of sensitivity and vulnerability. A lot has been written about how partnerships should be conducted in order for them to succeed, including concrete recommendations on how to establish and sustain partnerships. Writers in the field also discuss the dilemmas faced by organizations that consider establishing collaborations. But the most powerful components of a partnership, the elements that cannot be controlled or moderated, are the chemistry and trust between partners and their willingness to make it successful.

The present essay tells the story of a partnership between two organizations: the Haifa Council of Volunteer Organizations (CVO) and the Haifa branch of Shatil (The New Israel Fund's Empowerment and Training Center for Social Change Organizations in Israel). They have cooperated for many years and, in the last two years, have further tightened their partnership.

The first part of this essay presents a theoretical framework that serves as a basis for the case study discussed in the second part. The summary offers a number of open-ended questions for further consideration and research.

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## What Does the Theory Tell Us?

According to professional literature, a *partnership* is a beneficial and well-established relationship between two or more organizations that helps them achieve results more easily than by working each on its own. A partnership is based on a commitment to the relationship between parties as well as to the shared objectives, and includes:

- Developing a collaborative organizational structure and mutual commitment

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- Sharing authority as well as the responsibility for success
- Sharing resources and rewards.

A partnership can be established for various reasons: it can be driven by internal forces (a need to develop, to widen the range of activities) or external forces (funding, customers' needs). A partnership can be established on a narrow, one-time, functional basis or on a wider, far-reaching, comprehensive basis. Being involved in a partnership may provide organizations with valuable assets and allow for new and unexpected directions for action. On the other hand, in many cases, a partnership can demand a great deal of time and energy and, in extreme cases, even drain personal and organizational resources.

When we examine a partnership, we can position it on a continuum ranging between *sharing* (a low level of partnership) and a *strategic partnership* (a high level of partnership), which enables a gradual change between limited commitment and investment and considerable ones, in terms of time, resources, and emotional and organizational energy. Following is a short review of each of the levels on the continuum:

- 1. Sharing:** One party shares one or some of its organizational assets and resources with the other party. Among the resources that can be shared are knowledge, information, connections, realty, and property. Sharing allows for one-sided relationships and a relatively limited investment, while still making it possible for both parties to develop mutual opportunities.
- 2. Participation:** An opportunity to combine one organization's activities with another's, either on a temporary or a permanent basis. Participation requires investing more time and resources, but can be limited to a one-time, specific activity.
- 3. Focalized collaboration:** Conducting together a move or a project that requires investing time and effort for planning, making decisions, and coordinating activities in a clearly defined limited period.
- 4. Continuous collaboration:** Unlike focalized collaboration, the time limitations of a continuous collaboration are not easily defined. This type of collaboration requires organizations to invest more time and effort because they need to react to changes and to work harder in order to establish and maintain associations and relationships.
- 5. Strategic partnership:** In a strategic partnership, parties share the core targets, mission, and values as well as the belief that the collaboration can bring about a real change. Shared activities are means for promoting and realizing core values; when they are not successful, partners can develop alternative ones.

The collaborating parties' decision on the nature of the collaboration is based on the similarity between the values of the organizations, on the collaboration's ability to promote and advance each of the organizations' interests, on the relations of power between the parties, and on their ability to invest time and effort in collaborative activities (for more on the theoretical framework of collaborations, see Liron Peleg-Hadomi's essay introducing this section).

Partnerships that are located on the higher levels of the continuum of collaboration require the parties to form a collaborative work model that acknowledges personal and organizational differences and combines the various views, values, and attitudes into an agreed course of action. The following elements should form the basis for a collaborative work model: A *shared vision*, which stands for the future to which they aspire; a *shared mission*, which expresses the goals of the partnership and the reasons for establishing it; *shared values* and *agreed principles*, which govern decisions made by the partners. Shared vision, mission, values, and principles are essential prerequisites for establishing a partnership, but they should also be continually reexamined, challenged, and reexamined along the way by all the parties in the partnership.

Among other elements that can contribute to a successful partnership we can list a fearless, determined, and vision-oriented leadership that is willing to cope with difficulties and disagreements; available human and material resources; other bodies' involvement in and support of the organizations; mutual trust and respect as a basis for making hard decisions and necessary compromises; predetermined structures and procedures including ones for coping with disagreements; direct and sincere communication that allows for an open exchange of ideas and feelings.

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## The CVO and Shatil

The following case study portrays the process of establishing a partnership that went through different types of relationships (supplier–consumer, consultant–consulted, competition, and finally, partnership) and has become a success mainly owing to mutual trust and a shared vision.

The Haifa CVO was founded by a group of volunteer organizations in order to promote volunteer work in Haifa. The council advances and supports social initiatives, coordinates local social change activities, and provides professional assistance for organizations.

Shatil, a national organization that has a branch in Haifa, is a capacity-building organization operated by the New Israel Fund. Shatil supports social change organizations and provides consultation and training services in such fields as organizational development, financial capabilities and resource development, media lobbying, advocacy, and conflict management.

Throughout the years, the relations between the CVO and Shatil went through different phases: at certain times, Shatil provided the CVO with various services, such as specific professional training workshops; at other times, Shatil's consultants accompanied the CVO's management staff and assisted them with issues of leadership and resource development. In 2008, the CVO invited Shatil to assist it in conducting the Lead Haifa program for socially responsible leadership. Initially, the CVO asked for assistance, and it was not then clear what type of partnership might develop later. The nature of this partnership became clearer with time, as work proceeded.

Lead Haifa is a program for developing local leadership based on social responsibility, collaboration, and social-change action. It brings together leaders from all sectors who are interested in influencing local issues. The program consists of weekly meetings that take place in the course of one year, as well as two one-week peer-learning seminars in Haifa and in Boston.

As we can see, in the beginning, the nature of this partnership was ambiguous — it was not defined as a partnership, but as a short-term, localized collaboration.

The theory examines the process of partnership building by using terms related to familial relationships: ideation; courting; giving birth; adolescence; and formalization, change, or termination.

The relationship between the CVO and Shatil was conducted carefully, mutual expectations were kept to a minimum, and there was a clear distinction between the areas in which Shatil would serve as a partner and the areas in which the CVO would be the leader. This cautious process was the result of the need to move slowly from one type of relationship to another. In the course of the first year, the partnership was not clearly defined and required little mutual commitment; it was based mostly on good will and a sincere desire to work together. The structure of the partnership was built gradually in a process that was led mostly by two leaders who served as the steering committee (Yael Abada represented the CVO and I represented Shatil), as well as a program coordinator appointed by the CVO (Liron Peleg-Hadomi).

During the first year, we established structures and built mutual trust and, consequently, felt it was time to formalize our meetings, decision-making processes, and planning procedures. Without noticing, our partnership transformed from a *short-term collaboration* to a *long-term partnership* and had the potential to develop into a *strategic partnership*.

When we were considering continuing the Lead Haifa program for the second year, there was no doubt that we would do so. This time, work and responsibilities were more clearly defined and required greater commitment. Ambiguous issues needed to be clarified and conflicts to be solved. When relationships became more formalized, we felt it was time to sharpen, elucidate, and explicate both parties' expectations. The partnership advanced to a new stage, and with new challenges for its partners.

When we examine the development process of the CVO–Shatil partnership, we can see that the partnership had reached the stage of *formalized relationship*. As we know from other types of relationships, such as spousal relationships, this stage does not guarantee a long-lasting successful partnership; paradoxically, challenges only grow with time. Today, it appears that both parties acknowledge their partnership and recognize its valuable contribution to each. The challenge now is “to keep the fire burning,” to continue the formalization process, challenge basic assumptions, and nurture the deep relationship and mutual trust.

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## **Summary**

Some partnerships are the result of a rational decision and are formed systematically and gradually by establishing a formalized infrastructure of shared vision, values, mission, and principles. The partnership between the CVO and Shatil grew out of existing relationships and was formed by a process of constant change while being sustained mostly by mutual trust, respect, and appreciation. It is a growing and developing partnership that constantly redefines itself and reexamines its mission and goals.

Several questions and issues remain: To what extent should we attribute the success of this partnership to the fact that it is led by three Jewish women? How does the partnership’s structure affect the gender and ethnic formation of the group of its leaders? What happened to several people who were central figures in the partnership, but withdrew from it when it became more formalized? To what extent is the partnership affected by other bodies not mentioned in the essay, namely the funding bodies — the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston (JCRC) and the New Israel Fund? And, furthermore, do we need to include more individuals (from within or from outside the organizations) in the partnership? If we include more people, will we be able to maintain the delicate equilibrium between good, productive work relations and contrasting approaches, which allows for new breakthroughs?

*Translated from the Hebrew by Yoram Arnon*









# ADAPTIVE CAPACITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

## Introduction: A Conceptual Framework

## Organizational Learning and Long-term Stability

*Nancy Strichman and Fathi Marshood*

If there is one kind of certainty for social-change nonprofits such as those participating in the Haifa–Boston Learning Exchange, it is that they will continually be challenged to cope with periods of instability and possible crises. The ability to adapt to changing environments, learn from experience, and perform in conditions of uncertainty are considered critical tools for organizations in order to ensure sustainability. Developing this “adaptive capacity” is a particular challenge for nonprofits at the start-up or growth phase of their organizational development, as are many of the Haifa–Boston Learning Exchange participants. This discussion presents a conceptual framework for adaptive capacity.

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### Introduction

Especially in today’s environment, the capacity of organizations to learn is considered crucial for ensuring long-term organizational stability and productivity.<sup>1</sup> Adaptive capacity essential for nonprofits to achieve their mission, requires nonprofits to act as learning organizations and collectively gain insights from their experiences and surrounding environment in order to enhance organizational performance.<sup>2</sup> For organizations to learn, individuals have to learn.<sup>3</sup> Continual scans of the environment, systematic reflection around goals, and a culture of collaboration and trust are essential elements to support individual learning and organizational learning.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, among the four core organizational capacities that are considered critical for nonprofits: adaptive capacity, leadership capacity, management capacity, and technical capacity, adaptive capacity is considered by many as the most vital.<sup>5</sup> Efforts

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such as the Haifa–Boston Learning Exchange, which encourage nonprofit leaders to collectively reflect on their work and to strengthen community networks, offer vital opportunities to build organizational adaptive capacity.

In considering the theoretical model for adaptive capacity, we should keep in mind that the demands on an organization and its capacity to respond will vary depending on the nonprofit’s stage of organizational life.<sup>6</sup> Nonprofits at the start up or growth phase face a particular set of challenges in maintaining their adaptive capacity. Based on recent research on the topic, including specifically on Haifa-based social-change nonprofits, we can consider in this discussion the ability of emerging social-change nonprofits to improve their adaptive capacity within the context of their particular stage of organizational development.

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### **Adaptive Capacity: A Theoretical Background**

The concept of adaptive capacity draws upon research on nonprofit capacity building, organizational learning, and knowledge management.<sup>7</sup> The table below presents five key dimensions of adaptive capacity. It is worth noting that the dimensions are interrelated, overlapping, and serve to strengthen one other.

Five Key Dimensions of Adaptive Capacity<sup>8</sup>

	Description of Concepts
Shared Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating shared understanding, collectively building a shared purpose. Staff involved in setting, owning, and implementing a joint vision.</li> <li>• Organizational vision integrated with personal vision. Understanding how job tasks fulfill organizational goals.</li> <li>• Articulated learning strategy and investment in long-term planning.</li> </ul>
Inquisitiveness/ Openness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embracing dissension and diversity of perspectives. Willingness to question underlying assumptions and accepted wisdom.</li> <li>• Rewarding curiosity, risk taking, and experimentation. A marketplace for new ideas with a participatory style of decision making.</li> <li>• Nurturing a safe environment for failure. Learning collectively from past mistakes. Discussions focus not only on success or noncritical problems.</li> </ul>

<p>Evaluative Thinking/ Systems Thinking</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding interdependence of different parts of organization.</li> <li>• Recognizing patterns of change/ Addressing underlying causes of events/ Acknowledging the nature of unpredictability.</li> <li>• An “appetite for inquiry”: seek out data and information in order to learn, and then apply and share the knowledge.</li> <li>• Data collection, learning, and knowledge development are an essential, organization-wide effort. Evaluative activities are considered as a tool for learning and improving performance.</li> </ul>
<p>Social Capital</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating an environment of trust among staff. Ensuring that organizational policies nurture trust.</li> <li>• Encouraging group dialogue, communication, and collective reflection. Signaling the importance of knowledge sharing and importance of reciprocity. Rewarding group success, not just individual. Expectation of staff to work together.</li> <li>• Creating opportunities for interaction (providing both time and space). Supporting the creation of social networks.</li> </ul>
<p>External Focus/ Network Connectedness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of interdependence with surrounding environment. “Sufficiently porous” to information and ideas, and locates resources and capacities from outside of organization.</li> <li>• Understanding of potential to create systematic change through strategic alliances and joint efforts with other organizations. Construction of partnerships or affiliations with other organizations and colleagues.</li> <li>• Understanding needs of clients or other organizational stakeholders.</li> </ul>

### **Opportunities and Challenges to Adaptive Capacity**

Based primarily on our research study of Haifa-based social-change organizations, the following discussion highlights selected issues facing social-change nonprofits in strengthening their adaptive capacity at an early or growth stage of development: (a) defining a niche, (b) coping with growth, and (c) developing an organizational approach. The discussion explores growing pains of nonprofits, which can usually be anticipated and viewed as part of the normal process of organizational development.

#### **Defining a Niche<sup>9</sup>**

As we learned from research on social-change nonprofits in Haifa in particular, there is great motivation and commitment of the staff to the organizational mission. Part of a relatively new social-change community in Israel, a significant percentage of the current staff in the research sample are some of the founders who often worked for years as volunteers prior to the official establishment of their nonprofits. This dedication to the organizational vision among the staff is also accompanied by a keen sense of immediacy and urgency about their work. Operating in the highly volatile

Israeli social-political context, the staffs of these nonprofits have to remain motivated and committed to their organizational vision. Indeed, the majority of the nonprofits in the sample enjoy an important characteristic of learning organizations — personal fulfillment and professional fulfillment are intertwined.

Yet while there may be strong consensus on the organizational vision, it is uncertain as to what degree nonprofits are able to successfully map an organizational strategy or provide sufficient clarity regarding the specific organizational goals. For example, staff members from two different organizations voiced their concern:

We need to match our strategies for each goal. It is very difficult for us to connect the goals of the organization with the investment of time and to understand that if we do A, it will lead to B, which will lead to C.

And,

We need to spend more time planning and not just advance by inertia. If we are not pushed by a dilemma, then we do not ask if our strategy is right or wrong. We have too many missions. It is like we are standing there holding our finger in a hole in the dam.

As many of these nonprofits continue to grow, they are carefully defining their organizational niche as they struggle to fully align the organization's vision, strategy, and capacities. A particular difficulty that we have often heard articulated by staff members of various nonprofits is the ongoing dilemma of matching their strategy to their vision in the midst of growth. Especially for many of these nonprofits that are struggling to secure funding and gain public legitimacy, it requires a great deal of discipline to resist being diverted from their core mission. Indeed, it is precisely during the growth phase that organizations define their distinctive competence; "it becomes a nonprofits' edge and provides a distinguishing factor for internal pride and external support."<sup>10</sup>

Nonprofits, especially those in the early stages of development, must concern themselves with the question of how to fit within their local environments and the manner in which their mission, strategies, and programs distinguish them as organizations. While no niche is "permanently secure" for nonprofits at any stage, this process can be especially problematic for smaller and newer organizations that are not as connected to the community as more established organizations.<sup>11</sup> Numerous studies, analyzing the transformation of ideologically based or activist start-up nonprofits into established organizations, note the difficulties that can emerge as an organization situates itself within its external environment.<sup>12</sup> As nonprofits become more formalized, they can find themselves struggling to keep a balance between maintaining their grassroots connections while also working to expand and improve services. Inter-organizational conflicts can arise regarding concerns such as the co-optation of the organization by supporters and funders, the institutionalization of collective action, or the loss of organizational autonomy that can come with greater public support and integration into the policy-making process.<sup>13</sup> For example, in order

to work with governmental organizations and forge relations with other nonprofits and agencies, nonprofits may be pressured to channel their work into issues with more mainstream appeal and change their advocacy tactics.<sup>14</sup> These are certainly salient issues for the social-change nonprofits, including those participating in the Haifa–Boston Learning Exchange, many of whom are working to empower disenfranchised populations and engage in different types of advocacy and collective action.<sup>15</sup>

### **Coping With Growth**

The intimate and informal nature that characterized the establishment phase of many of the nonprofits we studied is slowly being transformed, either intentionally or unintentionally, in order to cope with growth. As explained by a staff member of one nonprofit:

We are now moving from ad hoc procedures that were based on ideology and commitment into one that has established roles, and yet at the same time allows flexibility.

In the midst of growth, nonprofits are often searching for a balance between an organizational culture that prizes informality and openness with the need to develop systems and procedures that can maximize performance. Indeed, while organizational growth should ideally be planned and carefully managed, it can often occur without an accompanying strategy and place a significant strain on the capacities of a nonprofit. Rapid growth, often sparked by a sudden influx of resources (i.e., big money), can actually pose a threat to the long-term sustainability of an organization.<sup>16</sup> We often see that nonprofits at this stage tend to find themselves in the process of gauging their current limitations and deciding how to pace their rate of growth. The establishment of an organizational infrastructure that can provide stability and enhance learning becomes essential for ensuring their adaptive capacity. Yet maintaining this balance can be especially challenging, as one staff member noted: “We are a small organization doing big things. And you can lose important things when trying to be big.”

Numerous studies have addressed the difficulty that organizations with political and social change goals face in establishing formal nonprofits. The process of formalization, where the organization becomes more professionalized and adds new services and staff positions, generally creates the need for more complex administrative systems and a more hierarchical nature of information sharing.<sup>17</sup> As the organizational structures and decision-making processes undergo transformation, the original network of relations begins inevitably to change and volunteers or staff members may begin to lose their “sense of place.”<sup>18</sup> Staff members who enjoyed the informality and frequent chaos of the start up phase can encounter difficulties when organizational life becomes more routinized, and they are subsequently required to deal with seemingly mundane issues such as filing systems, personnel policies, and

regular staff meetings.<sup>19</sup> We sometimes see that there can also be a resistance by staff members to the creation of a more formalized hierarchy and the introduction of new administrative responsibilities (e.g., staff may feel that they are losing some of their autonomy or may resist newly implemented reporting routines).<sup>20</sup>

The process of formalization during the growth phase for a nonprofit can be especially relevant for maintaining adaptive capacity. While enjoying very strong value systems, we see that many nonprofits do not necessarily have the history of a reporting culture among the staff. Staff members, after years of operating in a work environment that was “volunteer-oriented,” are now being held much more accountable for gathering data, documenting their experiences, and sharing their learnings; for example, knowledge exchange that may have taken place informally is slowly being replaced by office memos, e-mail updates, and performance reports. Nonprofits can frequently find themselves challenged to put systems in place, and to provide time and space for their growing staff to share knowledge, learn collectively, and work in cooperation. With minimal resources to invest in skill development, reward staff performance or provide monetary incentives for staff to engage in activities that may enhance organizational learning, these nonprofits have to be especially strategic in developing a shared understanding of what knowledge is needed to successfully pursue the organization’s strategic goals.

### **Developing an Organizational Culture and Approach**

As indicated in our research findings on social change nonprofits based in Haifa, social capital provides a sense of stability and connection among the staff members to their respective organizations. The work is quite difficult, often unpredictable, and the road can be rather bumpy; as one staff member cited the expression in Arabic, “one day is honey, one day is onion.” The nonprofits in the sample are generally characterized as collaborative work environments that enable open dialogue and feedback. The majority of the nonprofits, many of whose stated goal is to create a more just and democratic society, are conscious of linking their organizational values to their organizational management style. They are purposeful about creating an organizational culture that mirrors the values that they espouse to the outside. Overall, staff members indicate that the organization leadership employs a participatory model of decision making and that they generally feel comfortable asking questions, offering alternatives, and conveying information that may contradict current practices or beliefs, key indicators of an organizational culture that nurtures adaptive capacity.

It is during the growth phase in a nonprofit’s development that it becomes “less dependent on individuals and more method oriented,” establishing a culture and an approach that distinguish it as an organization.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, what is unique about emerging nonprofits is that “there are no precedents”; during the early stages the organization

must establish procedures, routines, and systems for the first time.<sup>22</sup> We often see that nonprofits, as they undergo a process of transformation and growth, need to develop an organizational style that balances participatory decision-making structures and collaborative work environments with an effective organizational infrastructure.

As discussed earlier, organizational growth is generally accompanied by developments such as an increase in staff size and a more formalized management structure. When a nonprofit strengthens its management capacity, a casual division of labor is gradually replaced with a greater hierarchical structure (i.e., previously volunteer-based organizations add paid staff and board members, job descriptions become specialized, systematic processes for staff orientation and staff training are implemented).<sup>23</sup> As nonprofits develop their particular culture and organizational routines, the organization becomes more dependent on “positions and less dependent on individual people.”<sup>24</sup> It is during this transitional time that individual contributions become more “interchangeable.”<sup>25</sup> A sense of uncertainty can pervade the organization, creating tensions between volunteers and staff or between the first stage, entrepreneurial staff and the second stage, professional staff.<sup>26</sup> For example, staff and volunteers may be reluctant to welcome new specialized staff members, or have their job roles reallocated and their responsibilities changed.

As noted earlier, nonprofits such as those in our research are generally characterized by collaborative work environments and high levels of social capital. Organizations with this type of organizational culture tend to be reasonably well-equipped to manage the complex transition of an organization defined by its people to an organization being defined by its organizational approach. As these nonprofits decide how to balance the formalization process with their participatory management styles, they will need to determine the role that ideology plays in organizational transformation, especially because they tend to be very conscious of linking their organizational values to their organizational structure. Research studies on feminist organizations, for example, highlight this challenge and the need for the nonprofit to reconcile its priorities for growth and its ideological commitment to the equitable distribution of power.<sup>27</sup> Certainly nonprofits that we see, including feminist organizations, are coping with these issues as they figure out their organizational direction.<sup>28</sup>

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## **Conclusion**

Light discusses fundamental questions that all nonprofits should ask when they are establishing themselves: “How will we make a difference? Who does what in the organization? Why do we exist? How will we know we are successful, if we are?”<sup>29</sup> As we see in the development of the Haifa–Boston Learning Exchange, efforts to create opportunities for reflection on critical organizational questions and issues can provide essential support to nonprofit leadership. These types of efforts can provide a model

for building networks for learning as well as for shared cooperation in promoting goals. Opportunities such as the Learning Exchange should be expanded to help strengthen the adaptive capacities of social-change organizations as they grow and evolve to better enable them to contribute to the creation of a civil society in both the United States and Israel.



## Notes

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3. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*; H. Preskill and R. Torres, *Evaluative Inquiry for Learning in Organizations* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1999).
4. M. Volpe and V. Marsick (1999), "The Nature of and Need for Informal Learning," *Advances in Developing Human Resource* 3 (1999): 1–9.
5. Letts and others, *High Performance Nonprofit Organizations*, P. Connolly and P. York, *Building the Capacity of Capacity Builders to Last: A Grantmaker's Guide to Strengthening Nonprofit Organizations* (Philadelphia: The Conservation Company, 2003), <http://www.tccgrp.com/pdfs/buildingthecapacityofcapacitybuilders.pdf>
6. Susan K. Stevens, *Nonprofit Lifecycles: Stage-Based Wisdom for Nonprofit Capacity* (MN: Stagewise Enterprises, Inc., 2001); Judith S. Simon, *The Five Life Stages of Nonprofit Organizations* (Saint Paul, MN: Fieldstone Alliance, 2001). While the specific developmental stages are defined differently by various nonprofit researchers, the lifecycle approach, in general, outlines the various organizational milestones including the initial idea phase (*Can this dream be realized?*), the growth stage (*How can we build this to be viable?*), and the mature phase (*How can the momentum be sustained?*).
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8. See N. Strichman, "Adaptive Capacity in Israeli Social Change Nonprofits," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* (2009) at <http://nvs.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/37/2/224> for more detail.
9. Niche will be defined as "distinctive competence," see Stevens, *Nonprofit Lifecycles*, 4. For other definitions of organizational niche, see J. Galaskiewicz and W. Bielefeld, *Nonprofits in an Age of Uncertainty: A Study in Organizational Change* (NY: Aldine De Gruyter, 1998).
10. Stevens, *Nonprofit Lifecycles*, 32.
11. Quote by T. David, *Reflections on Sustainability* (Woodland Hills, CA: California Wellness

- Foundation, 2002): 10 [http://www.tcvf.org/pdf\\_docs/reflections/feb2002.pdf](http://www.tcvf.org/pdf_docs/reflections/feb2002.pdf); M. Hager, J. Galaskiewicz, W. Bielefeld, and J. Pine, "Tales from the Grave: Organizations' Accounts of Their Own Demise," *American Behavioral Scientist* 39, no. 8 (1996): 975–994. The authors explore this issue in depth within the context of research findings linking organizational size and age to organizational survival.
12. For more on how nonprofit leadership develops varying strategies in order to adapt to the environment and how this ultimately affects organizational change, see Galaskiewicz & Bielefeld, *Age of Uncertainty*.
  13. S. Staggenborg, "The Consequences of Professionalization and Formalization in the Pro-Choice Movement," *American Sociological Review* 53, no. 4 (1998): 585–605; J. Thomas, "Everything About US is Feminist: The Significance of Ideology in Organizational Change," *Gender and Society* 13, no. 1 (1999): 101–119; H. Lune, "Weathering the Storm: Nonprofit Organization Survival Strategies in a Hostile Climate," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (2002): 463–483.
  14. Lune, "Weathering the Storm."
  15. See Strichman, *Adaptive Capacity*.
  16. A. Filipovitch, "Organizational Transformation of a Community-Based Clinic," *Nonprofit and Management Leadership* 17, no. 1 (2006): 103–115.
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  18. M. Kelley, H. Lune, and S. Murphy, "Doing Syringe Exchange: Organizational Transformation and Volunteer Commitment," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (2005): 375.
  19. Stevens, *Nonprofit Lifecycles*.
  20. See Strichman, "Adaptive Capacity in Israeli Social Change Nonprofits."
  21. Stevens, *Nonprofit Lifecycles*, 32.
  22. La Piana Associates, Inc., *Tools for Assessing Startup Organizations* (Washington, DC: Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, 2003), 7.
  23. Thomas, "Everything About US is Feminist"; Staggenborg, "The Consequences of Professionalization"; Filipovitch, "Organizational Transformation of a Community-Based Clinic."
  24. Stevens, *Nonprofit Lifecycles*, 25.
  25. Kelley, Lune, & Murphy, "Doing Syringe Exchange. The research discusses the case of high risk volunteering, concluding that when the organization becomes more institutionalized, the individual commitment of the volunteers becomes less critical.
  26. Ibid; Stevens, *Nonprofit Lifecycles*.
  27. A research study on feminist organizations that originally started out as collectives, for example, discussed how the ideology (in addition to internal dynamics or environmental forces) impacted on organizational transformation (Thomas, "Everything About US is Feminist").
  28. Staggenborg's (1988) research, for example, found that feminist organizations that choose a more formalized organizational structure, which enables them to mobilize resources and hire additional professional staff, are taking critical steps to ensure their long-term sustainability. Factors such as established procedures, bureaucratic processes for decision making and a developed division of labor provide these organizations with continuity, thereby enabling them to perform certain tasks routinely and to reduce their exclusive dependence on the executive director for leadership.
  29. P. Light, *Sustaining Nonprofit Performance* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 141.

# **Kayan–Feminist Organization**

# **Sustainable Grassroots Community Activism**

*Rula Deeb*

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**T**his article describes the process by which Kayan (Being) created the model for the Women’s Leadership Development and Sustainable Community Activism Program. The organizational model presented here was developed as a result of activities that began in 1998, during which Kayan worked with approximately 180 Arab women’s groups, with over 3,000 women from around fifty villages and towns across Israel. The model changed and solidified, through repeated evaluations and testing of the program’s goals in general, and through the program’s ongoing feedback specifically with groups of women involved. Evaluations were gathered from women participating in the groups and also through evaluations of its activities conducted by Kayan.

The program model changed in light of these findings, with progressively deeper understanding about the continuity required when working with leadership development projects with communities of women and sustainable community activism. The result, as will be seen in the following pages, has become the anchor regarding the needs of women and their communities, and of the vision of the Kayan feminist organization.

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## **Who are We?**

Near the end of 1997, a group of young Arab feminist women who were active in women’s organizations in Haifa began to discuss the possibilities of establishing an Arab feminist organization for social change. The feminist vision that slowly emerged from the many ideological discussions was that of a society that is equal, just, and secure, free of violence and racism, coercion or discrimination, and one that would secure for its citizens — women and men — the freedom to choose one’s own lifestyle, actualize each one’s potential, and express oneself without either social or institutional obstacles. The result of these meetings was the establishment, in

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1998, of the organization Kayan–Feminist Organization for social change and for the promotion of the status of Arab women in Israel.

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### **Community Activism: Crucial Conditions for Social Change**

During the beginning ideological discussions surrounding the establishment of the organization, it was clear to the founding members that direct activism with women in their communities was vital for social change. In order to be directly active in the field, Kayan created a program for individual empowerment and consciousness-raising that was long-term (meeting weekly for three to six months). This program was implemented with groups of ten to fifteen women within various Arab villages and towns, and in ethnically mixed cities. Such activism with groups, as opposed to individuals, was a strategy specifically chosen as more appropriate for the goals of Kayan as an organization for social change, as opposed to the strategies of other service organizations that address the needs of the individual. Group work also facilitated, as much as possible, the crucial dialog among a large community of women. Programs were based on the concept that group activities created greater space for interpersonal support among the women themselves, and more empowerment of the group within the larger society.

The organization instituted the goal of actively creating empowerment groups in fifteen to twenty communities a year. Therefore, the members of Kayan made contact with community professionals, men and women, such as social workers, local welfare professionals, and community organizers. These people initially mediated contacts between Kayan and the women of various communities.

A modest fee was asked of each participating women, and at times membership was provided free of charge. This low price allowed Kayan's workers to market their programs more aggressively to the public and professional bodies through which the organization was reaching out to various communities. At times, the community workers themselves initiated contact with Kayan. Such long-term direct action with hundreds of women in geographically far-flung, outlying communities propelled Kayan to the forefront of the field of Arab women's community organizing. As a result, the organization succeeded in building a network of contacts with hundreds of women within their home communities, which in turn ultimately became a precious organizational resource for widespread grassroots social change.

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### **Work Model of Women's Groups, Initial Phase**

The programs offered by Kayan were provided by a facilitator who accompanied the group throughout the entire process. Group meetings consisted of guided discussions concerning subjects of direct interest to women's daily lives, specifically examining

the connections between their personal issues and their social status as women within their communities, and opportunities for social change. Most of the participants in the empowerment groups were mothers who did not work outside of the home, were of the middle to lower ten percent of household income levels, and who had no more than elementary education. A minority of participants had completed high school.

The participants were unfamiliar with the format of group discussions, and some expressed grave doubts about the need to share their personal thoughts and experiences with others. They were fearful that they would suffer personal repercussions from having their thoughts and opinions open to others, or from the social ramifications of unpopular or socially unacceptable opinions. (This is not uncommon among traditional Arab women, who rarely publicly share personal thoughts and opinions.) Indeed, some participants dropped out of the group after the initial meetings for these reasons. But most of the women discovered that they were keenly interested in the group process and in the challenging questions raised in their discussions.

Kayan's role ended with the completion of the series of meetings, which lasted approximately three months. Kayan's goal of creating such group discussions among Arab women in their communities had been realized, and, usually for the first time in the women's lives, questions about their individual empowerment as well as their status in their communities, had been raised.

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## **Evaluation and Reorganization, I**

At the end of this period, each group's activities and process were evaluated. These evaluations concentrated on two main factors: the participants' feedback and the status of the organization in terms of goals realized; that is, numbers of individual participants and numbers of communities/villages where Kayan had been active. Concerning the latter, Kayan succeeded in reaching its goal. But the participants' feedback made clear that they were not satisfied with just the process of personal empowerment; indeed they saw the implementation of community activism as a necessary act, as a motivator for social change. Even so, women reported their frustration as a result of having taken part in the groups. In their opinion, as they became more aware of their status and position in society, they realized their complete lack of tools to change their situation and to improve their lives.

As a result of such feedback, Kayan began to offer additional programming, in the form of workshops aimed toward community organizing that provided tools and skills in the establishment and development of community projects. These programs became an integral part of Kayan's work with women's groups. At this point, Kayan's model of working with groups of women consisted of accompanying groups in their process of planning and implementing community entrepreneurships, in addition to facilitating groups of personal empowerment within various communities.

The results were impressive. A women's community center was established — the first and only of its kind in the village of Arabeh, which offered local women various enrichment classes, ranging from basic literacy, language skills, and computer skills, along with lectures and discussions about women's status. Another group succeeded in launching a public transportation system into Maghar, a town of 20,000 that suffered from a lack of transportation (and for which women were the primary users, as the overwhelming majority had neither driver's licenses nor access to cars). This achievement brought the women public recognition and respect as a body able to meet the needs of women in the community, and was a catalyst for raising public consciousness as to their potential power and influence over their daily, and public, lives. As before, Kayan's role ended with the completion of the community project. Organizational resources were turned toward new groups and projects.

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## **Evaluation and Reorganization, II: The Element of Long-term Sustainability**

An evaluation was undertaken based on the examination of women's groups' capabilities to initiate projects and implement changes within communities, or to integrate social-change processes/community activism. Viewed thus, most groups showed that they were able to achieve their stated goals.

Moreover, the element of sustaining long-term activity was not evaluated in the review process at the end of each project. Initial, basic evaluations were carried out by Kayan's staff midway through 2006 and showed that most of the groups ceased their activities when Kayan ended its hands-on guidance of the groups. When questions were raised pertaining to the cessation of activities, women responded that the lack of support, both on-site and from the wider community, made it impossible to continue to fund their community activities, along with their lack of knowledge and tools for community activism, feelings of isolation, and unfamiliarity with the skills needed for group leadership.

During the Second Lebanon War of 2006, all community activism stopped completely. For the duration of the conflict, Kayan's staff began asking specific questions about the women who had participated in its groups: how were they faring, how were they dealing with the emergency situation, were they receiving any particular aid, and what were their needs in a wartime situation? The most common answer was that they needed support from others, they needed to communicate with others. The question of whether the women who had participated together in an empowerment group continued to support and communicate with each other during the war was answered in the negative; outside of chance meetings, the fact was that the women themselves had gone into "emergency mode," and regressed from any public roles into traditional roles. The disappearance of any continuity of

the community of women during times of crisis or emergency strengthened Kayan's resolve to concentrate its resources on community activism to create structures whose goal was to preserve and ensure women's sustained activism even when Kayan itself was not directly involved.

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### **Project Model of Work with Women's Groups after Two Evaluation Processes — Leadership Groups**

The working model was developed as a result of two rounds of program evaluations on a number of levels, plus many long discussions, incorporating the experiences described above. Six months after the cessation of the Second Lebanon War, the following three obstacles to sustainable local community activism were identified, and became the basis for the new approach:

- The lack of support for local women leaders, both within the larger community and from representatives from public bodies
- Restricted access to knowledge resources
- Lack of financial resources.

The women of Kayan decided to reduce the amount of the organization's resources devoted to opening new groups, and to concentrate attention and resources on developing groups of local leaders, and to respond to their difficulties. This was in opposition to the beginning working model, which was based on creating women's groups in many different communities. Kayan began working directly with a smaller number of women from a variety of locales who gathered together for a program of specialized leadership training. Participating women were meticulously identified and tapped to take part in this next stage of programming, with the view that sustainable community activism is conditional on a continuity of functioning local leadership. The role of the organization now became that of training and preparing women in the tools and skills of community activism and organization, in addition to aiding and supporting their transformation into community leaders.

The makeup of the groups had an influence on how the participants viewed themselves in leadership roles. In the previous working model, the participants were made up of women from the same communities; that is, women with similar local identities who were distinguishable from each other by their different levels of personal motivation and commitment to social change. These gaps of motivation between women weakened the commitment of emerging leaders, who found themselves isolated among their neighbors due to their higher level of interest in community involvement. In contrast, the leadership groups were more homogeneous in the participants' level of commitment to social change, and created bonds between the women despite differences in their local identities. These women stood out from

the others due to their ability and commitment to taking the reins towards social change within their communities and in the importance each attached to improving the status of women in general and in their home communities in particular. The gathering together of these women greatly strengthened them in their leadership roles and deepened their understanding of what these roles would demand of them.

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### **The New Work Model: Jusur**

These leadership training groups constitute the platform for the new working model that has been named Jusur (Bridges). The model works through three central directions dedicated to sustaining local women's activism by addressing the following obstacles:

**Support and Empowerment of Local Community Leaders.** According to the participants' feedback, the lack of local support, on-site and from a distance, caused obstacles to continued activism, such as isolation and frustration. The women were accused of neglecting their duties at home and to their families as a result of their public activism. Their isolation is worsened by feelings of guilt, making it very difficult for them to continue their activist work in a consistent manner, and in most instances their work stops completely.

### **The creation of a supportive space for women leaders is crucial for sustainable activism.**

The new model is focused on a local leadership framework drawn from various villages or towns, in addition to Kayan's guidance. The goal is to assist women in planning and implementing various activist projects. This framework constitutes an opportunity for women leaders from tens of communities to meet and interact as partners with the will and commitment to bring about social change. The goal of such a platform is to allow these women to support and draw strength from each other, as they together examine the obstacles and challenges that confront them all as agents of social change. The meetings are known as The Jusur Forum, which meets four times a year. Members of the Forum testify to the feelings of relief from the personal isolation that has become part and parcel of their activism, and the strong connections that have resulted from belonging to a broader framework that has created a common bond among them.

**Provision of Knowledge Resources.** Currently available frameworks deal with promoting advanced capacity-building and training, which serve the needs of a different type of activism. This refers to "formal" activism within centralized institutions with a wide resource base. These frameworks are not accessible to local activists for a number of reasons. The most central of these is the geographic distance between these institutions and the women of Kayan's constituency. There is also the fact that the services provided by the larger institutions do not meet the women "where they are," and often are not targeted to the needs of this population.

Therefore, the advanced training programs in community organization are inaccessible, unavailable, and inappropriate for the community of women with whom Kayan works. This situation is a set-up for failure in terms of sustainable local activism, in that such activism demands advanced skills and tools that are unknown to the women. Kayan's ideological basis focuses the organization toward the empowerment of women who make up the disadvantaged sectors of Israeli society, and who are limited in their access to resources. These women for the most part are outside the scope of public circles of influence. The new model places Kayan as the organization that fills the vacuum created by the gap between women in grassroots communities and the knowledge and resources they need to be effective leaders, through the Jusur Forum program. The program provides women with opportunities to receive advanced training in many areas of community organizing, which helps them continue their work and improve their effectiveness in leadership roles. Among the subjects covered in the training, for example, are issues of managing a budget, working with the media, appearing in the media, short- and long-term planning skills, and more.

**Financial Aid.** The vast majority who work with Kayan are not employed outside the home. It clearly follows that they are not economically independent. In that their activism takes place in frameworks that they themselves create, or within those completely without financial support, these women are themselves the only source of any monies to finance their activities. This in turn causes many women to stop their projects, or to deplete their own meager resources to fund their work. Any outside funding is usually given to groups with solidly based organizational structure and proven track records. But the activism that Kayan has obligated itself to promote does not necessarily meet these requirements, and therefore is left out of the traditional funding circles. Due to the lack of traditional funding resources, Kayan founded a small fund whose goal is to support projects through modest grants of up to \$1,500 to each community.

The creation of this circle of support, the access to knowledge, and the source of modest financial resources allow participating activists of the Jusur Forum to bring together women from within their communities, to pass on the knowledge and skills they have acquired from the Forum and the programs offered by Kayan, so that together they can advance broad processes of local change and activism. These groups constitute the main source of a support base for the women leaders themselves.

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### **Leadership and Sustainable Community Activism: The Next Steps**

The responsibility for broadening the base for community activism rests with the leaders themselves. Leaders do, indeed, go out into the field and enroll women to become members of active groups, train them, and together they start on their way to social change. These groups succeed in reaching hundreds in their communities, and by so doing expand the

sphere of connections and influence. During the last two years, this model has succeeded in preserving the cohesiveness of activist community groups and their activities within local communities; to promote local change, and to initiate connections between the groups and public bodies to facilitate cooperation among them.

The continuous existence of the group in and of itself affords it public recognition, from the women of the community and also from representatives of the public institutions around them. The participants of the Forum's enrichment programs and financial support allowed the leaders to achieve independence and the ability to plan actions for the future, and by so doing, increased their ability to preserve sustainability of the women's community's initiatives.

The goals that we have for the near future are the expansion of the Jusur Forum, with the objective of widening the circles of influence for the long term. This is a new model for us, and we are working to develop it even as we implement it. We especially wish to focus on two main challenges:

**Sustainability in times of emergency or crisis  
(war, local conflicts, or natural disasters):**

The regression that began with public roles for women in times of crisis in favor of traditional roles, as was seen during the Second Lebanon War, does essential damage to the ability and potential power of women to act within the community. Women's activism, which had proven its worth and effectiveness under normal circumstances, suddenly has no relevance in times of crisis. The struggle to secure basic needs such as safety for oneself and one's family leaves behind a very small place for women's public involvement. They must withdraw into the family sphere, and therefore find it nearly impossible to exercise their leadership precisely when it is most sorely needed. Before us, then, is the challenge of translating women's activist and leadership skills for use during crises, and to create groups of skilled, proactive leaders who will actualize their leadership abilities.

**Establishment of a Grassroots Women's Network**

Two years after the realization of the Jusur project, we are investigating the option of establishing a Women's Network, so that it will be possible to leverage cooperation across communities, not only for mutual support, but also for joint community activities in general. We would like to enable the fledging projects in individual places to meet the challenge of institutionalizing under an umbrella of grassroots activism, wherein local leaders would be able to embrace the big picture, not only based on the interests of their local communities, but of all Arab women.

*Translated from the Hebrew by Batya Salzman*



# Lessons from the Field

*Mary Nee*

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**O**rganizational growth can fundamentally undermine the social-change mission of a nonprofit organization if the adaptive responses to growth are not continually checked against mission and vision. As the executive director of a U.S. nonprofit created in response to the crisis of homelessness, I have observed that this danger is particularly acute when an organization evolves from advocacy to service delivery.

Over the past thirty years in the United States, organizations that were established to end homelessness grew and adapted to external conditions that led to a new kind of organization: the “homeless services agency,” which provided many worthwhile services, but ultimately did not end homelessness. On the contrary, the homeless population in Massachusetts (where I live and work) and across the nation has grown significantly with estimates upwards of 24,000 in Massachusetts and 3.5 million homeless in the United States today.<sup>1</sup>

The experience of U.S. nonprofit homeless service organizations during this time, including hopeFound, the organization I lead, demonstrates how organizational growth diverted the sector from its original social-change vision of “ending homelessness,” which at its most fundamental level, means access to affordable housing and an income.

For emerging social-change nonprofits in Israel, the U.S. nonprofit sector’s response to homelessness serves as a stark example of the unintended consequences when collective action is institutionalized and staff transformed from agents of social change to stakeholders of a system.

Instead of solving a societal crisis, the U.S. homeless services sector fostered the

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growth of a new classification of citizens, “homeless people,” who required specialized services. Over time, the sector moved from the goal of delivering short-term emergency services, with an assumption of ending homelessness, to long-term service models in which the people served became clients in an ever-expanding system of emergency — but paradoxically permanent — shelters.

Over the last decade, this sector has come to realize the implications of its adaptation to growth. This knowledge has forced a reassessment of how best to end homelessness, the conclusion of which is that the best approach is to place everyone in housing. This new perspective is driving another shift in public policies and in public and private funding; once again, homeless service organizations need to learn, adapt, and transform.

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## **Background, Advocacy, and Homelessness**

In the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, faith-based and grassroots community organizations in Massachusetts and around the country began to advocate for public policies to address a growing and visible presence of homeless people living on the streets of major cities. This period witnessed a convergence of structural economic factors that caused a rapid increase in the number of homeless, literally driving people onto the streets. These factors included rapidly rising housing prices, dwindling employment opportunities for those with a high school education or less, the closing of mental health institutions, exclusionary zoning practices, and a reduction of federal funding for public housing and job training.

The response to the growing number of street homeless was to open emergency shelters managed by a combination of public and nonprofit agencies. Many of these shelters were operated by the original homeless activists, who, in order to receive public and private funding, incorporated as registered nonprofits, recruiting boards of directors and hiring administrative and program staff.

From the early 1980s until the present day, this homelessness service system grew both in scale and scope. As organizations gleaned insights into the social and economic barriers that caused homelessness, they expanded their services to address these conditions to make an individual or family “ready for housing.”

Federal policies and funding supported the growth of this sector, especially with the passage of the McKinney-Vento Act in 1987. Administered by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, the legislation funded emergency shelter, food, mobile health care, and transitional housing. Today, the federal government spends over \$2 billion for homeless services<sup>2</sup> with Massachusetts state government spending an additional \$120 million.<sup>3</sup>

This funding spawned many new services for the homeless and brought new kinds

of professionals to the sector, including medical providers, mental health counselors, case workers, and employment specialists. People staying in shelters became “clients” with individual, linear-sequenced service plans that charted their progress toward “readiness” for housing.

In addition, homeless services agencies were initially focused on shelter and support services rather than on permanent housing. By the 1990s, however, many organizations expanded beyond the social service model and developed internal divisions to build and manage housing. This new organizational adaptation required another whole set of professional staff, including project managers, architects, and financial analysts.

This expansion also generated new financial pressures; the demand for capital ushered fundraising professionals into the field to manage annual giving, capital campaigns, and major donor programs. To support these activities, organizations began to recruit a new kind of volunteer to sit on boards of directors; instead of the social activists, religious leaders, and agency clients who had traditionally populated these boards, organizations now required leaders with access to money and political influence.

By the turn of the twenty-first century, the paradigm of homeless services again began to shift as organizations and funders adopted the Housing First approach, a philosophy of rapid rehousing.<sup>4</sup> Housing First posits that vulnerable homeless are more responsive to interventions and social services *after* they are in their own housing, rather than while living in shelters or transitional facilities. In this model clients are given “keys” — immediate access to permanent independent apartments — in combination with intensive treatment and support services. Participation in treatment or sobriety is not a precondition for housing.

The Housing First model finds support in a growing body of research on homelessness that points both to the efficacy of rapid placement in housing and the money saved by reducing the need for shelters, emergency rooms, and intervention by the criminal justice system.<sup>5</sup>

A *New Yorker* article by Malcolm Gladwell, “Million-Dollar Murray,” vividly illustrated this approach, chronicling the experience of Murray Barr, a chronically homeless man in Reno, Nevada, who regularly received emergency services. Officials calculated that over a ten-year period, the services Murray received cost well over one million dollars. These costs would have been substantially less if he had received subsidized housing instead.<sup>6</sup>

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## **hopeFound**

hopeFound began in 1983, when Michael Dukakis, then the Governor of Massachusetts, opened an emergency shelter in a local public hospital. Six months later, a group of

community leaders formed a nonprofit organization, hopeFound, to provide advocacy and fundraising support for the shelter. After a few years, the hospital ended its direct management of the shelter, contracting operations to hopeFound.

I joined hopeFound just over five years ago and found an organization that had grown and adapted under the old paradigm of homelessness services. In assuming the management responsibilities for an emergency shelter from a public hospital, hopeFound had followed a fairly typical path for homeless services organizations with program expansion into addiction treatment, employment services, HIV counseling, and street outreach.

In the early 1990s, hopeFound purchased one twelve-unit lodging house as an affordable housing initiative, but this effort was not subsequently repeated due to capacity limitations and an internal perspective that it was primarily a “service organization,” helping adult men and women overcome homelessness through treatment and counseling.

On my first tour of hopeFound’s emergency shelter, managers proudly pointed to the sparkling facility and the great respect that shelter guests could expect from the staff. At the same time, I was dismayed to learn that a cohort of twenty-six guests had been living in the shelter more than five years; one individual had lived there an astonishing nineteen years. Managers did not see this situation as problematic, however, because staff perceived these individuals as incapable of living independently. These guests were happy because other guests and staff in the shelter formed their community and support network.

I also learned that government support for the emergency shelters was based on occupancy levels, how many people were in beds. Lengths of stay in the shelter were neither time-limited nor comprehensively tracked.

Today, five years later, I am proud to say that all of these twenty-six guests have been placed in housing; that every quarter we measure all of our programs against specific, time-bound outcomes, (including lengths of stay); and that we have a rapid rehousing initiative in the shelter so that within seventy-two hours of arriving at our door, all guests undergo an assessment and receive referrals to housing and employment counselors.

Additionally, without building a single unit of new housing, hopeFound has secured federal subsidies for rental housing and, through partnerships with a host of public and nonprofit housing developers, has achieved close to 510 placements to affordable housing during this time. Housing placements are no longer guided by individual readiness criteria; instead, housing is the first response, followed by at-home support services, if necessary.

To achieve this organizational transformation, the board and staff had the difficult task of honestly measuring programs and services against the agency’s

mission and vision. But first, new shared vision was required; hopeFound's mission statement had evolved from a principled statement of ending homelessness to a list of services; what we did for clients rather than our vision of a society free from the scourge of homelessness.

So through a structured strategic planning process, the board and the management team reflected, debated, and ultimately developed a new statement of mission, vision, and values.

This planning was greatly assisted by external currents. The urge to change became not just a philosophical debate, but a necessity driven by new realities: major funders, both public and private, were moving away from the old model of service. Future funding would be at risk if the organization did not adapt.

The organization adopted a new vision statement that emphasized ending homelessness through providing permanent housing and a set of values that began: "shelters are an unacceptable form of permanent housing."<sup>7</sup> These decisions formed the foundation of hopeFound's adaptation.

Underpinning this organizational change is an outcomes measurement system that aligns the organization's mission with program services and client outcomes. These outcomes drive all services. We review data quarterly and report results widely, both within the organization and to external stakeholders. This year these outcome measures informed the performance plans and evaluations of every hopeFound employee.

For some staff and board members, the transition was too difficult. For a period, we needed to accept the high-level turnover we experienced. For those that remained — and the new staff and board members who sought to be part of our new model — the change has been exciting and rewarding but also exhausting, constantly stretching our organizational capacity.

Once again, external forces are driving hopeFound's future direction, in that both public and private funders are shifting dollars from emergency services to homelessness prevention, diversion from shelter, and permanent housing. As an organization that has adapted by confronting the realities of its external environment, measuring impact, and keeping our mission forefront in all we do, I believe we are prepared to evolve in a direction that will preserve the social change role for which we were established.

My colleagues, leaders of nonprofit social change organizations in Israel, can learn significant lessons from the U.S. response to homelessness. Since the election of the Likud government in 1977, Israel has embarked on a policy of decentralization and privatization of social services to the nonprofit sector.<sup>8</sup> This policy has led to the rapid growth of Israeli nonprofit organizations, which have increasingly assumed functions, including the provision of affordable housing, that the government previously managed.

As a member of the Haifa–Boston Learning Exchange Network, I frequently found myself challenging my Israeli peers not to “adapt” to the increasing social service needs of their constituents for housing and food but to fight for the social safety-net system that existed for more than forty years in their country, a system that guaranteed housing, employment, and health care to each citizen.

Unfortunately, This principled response does not reflect the realities and direction of Israeli public policy. While a return to the broad-based publicly supported safety-net is unlikely, Israeli NGOs can avoid the errors of their U.S. counterparts on issues of housing and homelessness by adapting in ways that allow them to remain true to their social-change missions. In the area of homelessness, I would suggest one way for my colleagues not to lose track of their mission: listen closely to what people who are homeless always respond when asked what they need — a permanent home.



## Notes

1. National Coalition to End Homelessness, [http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/How\\_Many.html](http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/How_Many.html)
2. Ibid.
3. “The Special Commission Relative to Ending Homelessness in the Commonwealth (under Chapter 2 of the Resolves of 2006 and Chapter 1 of the Resolves of 2007),” December 28, 2007, <http://www.cmhaonline.org/documents/HHB/ReportEndingHomelessness%5B1%5D.pdf>
4. “Pathways to Housing,” [http://www.pathwaystohousing.org/content/housing\\_and\\_services](http://www.pathwaystohousing.org/content/housing_and_services)
5. “Home and Healthy for Good, A Statewide Housing First Program Progress Report,” December 2009, [http://www.mhsa.net/matriarch/documents/HHG\\_December%202009\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.mhsa.net/matriarch/documents/HHG_December%202009_FINAL.pdf)
6. Malcolm Gladwell, “Million-Dollar Murray,” *New Yorker* 82, no. 1 (February 13, 2006): 96.
7. hopeFound Strategic Plan, 2007–2010.
8. Nitza Nachmias, “The Government of Israel’s Control of NGOs,” Department of Political Science, University of Haifa, 1998.

# Management for Growth

*Michal Dagan*

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**S**unday, 16 July 2006, was a pleasant summer day and the first day of another busy week here at Mahut Center, Haifa. Our center was relatively young then and, only four months earlier, we had moved to our new office in the Lower City, Haifa. Suddenly at nine o'clock in the morning, we heard the sharp sounds of sirens and the strong blasts of explosions, which shook the building. These noises were unmistakable — missiles were falling around us, and then we realized, there was a war going on. A while later we found out that during the same missile attack, eight railroad workers were killed in the train hangar right across the road from us. The war, which had started four days earlier as a limited military operation near the Lebanese border, had now reached us. The Second Lebanon War lasted thirty-three days and its violence was experienced by all residents of northern Israel. In this war, not only were houses ruined — the space that we nurtured as our protected and protective space was also laid in ruin, as was our productive life routine.

The “welfare state” in Israel has been in a process of deterioration for many years now, but the war dramatically exposed this reality. The authorities were not prepared for the war, and the civil population, especially underprivileged and impoverished civilians, of whom women and children make up the majority, were left without essential services, protection or livelihood. Women who live in poverty are an especially vulnerable social group; their economic vulnerability exposes them to violence. For underprivileged women, who do not have any financial reserves and lack emotional support, the war had accentuated their feelings of destitution, defenselessness, loneliness, distress, and neglect and therefore, was an exceptionally traumatic experience.

During the war, the day-to-day work of Mahut Center was suspended. We could not hold courses or workshops nor provide women with job-seeking or placement

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services. The office, which was located in an area subjected to frequent bombing, was closed. As the director, I was facing the question of whether to close the center and dismiss its staff until the war ended, or join the nationwide effort to provide emergency services that differ completely from our skills and mission. I consulted the staff and we decided to act. Seeing that the governmental systems were paralyzed, we felt that we should not let disorder, confusion, and fear take over and that we should work to support women in these distressful times — to provide them with necessities for their survival, to listen to their needs, to make them feel that they are not alone, and to give them confidence and hope. Consequently, we divided work between us, and each started working from her own home. We phoned women who were using the center's employment services — impoverished women, many of whom are survivors of violence, and single mothers. We worked to identify emergency needs among these women. We gave out food packages, and we actively connected these women with various bodies and individuals in the community and the municipality.

These times of intensive activity — which included defining objectives, building a daily schedule, and working actively to accomplish our tasks — had a strengthening, uniting, and trust-building effect on us. This was both true for us, the staff, as well as for our women participants. At the same time, we started carrying out sessions of “emotional processing” among the staff members, which I encouraged: At the end of each day, sometimes at night, we would talk, e-mail, share our experiences, and give each other some comfort and hope; in this way we deepened our connection and supported each other. In a state of war, we sometimes feel compelled to function only for our survival, but this is the time when it is important not to forget to listen to each other and to share our emotions. In a state of war, organizations, as well as individuals, find themselves functioning under extreme conditions, but I needed to combine my role as a leader who conducts targeted actions with my effort to be a supportive, caring, and maybe even motherly, figure.

While we were assisting women, they were telling us about their situations and about their feelings: the anxiety, the pain, the anger, and the feeling that the state has abandoned them. We listened to their testimonies and stories. When somebody listens to you, it is at least as comforting as a food package arriving on time and so, alongside our intensive commotion of “doing,” we set up a comforting space of “being.” Having somebody to talk to relieved, if only for a short while, the loneliness experienced by so many women during the war. In the very first days of our emergency activities, I asked staff members to document women's stories. I had no idea what we would do with these testimonies after the war ended, or if we would use them at all, but we could sense the special importance and significance of their voices, which are usually silenced, ignored, and cast aside in times of peace, and all the more so in times of war.

For us, the time of war was a constructive and productive period. But it was listening to women's stories and recognizing their importance that marked a turning

point and formed a basis for our organization's growth. After the cease-fire agreement, we realized that the distress experienced by women during the war did not disappear after returning to "ordinary" life. We thought that women's outlook on the war as well as the war's implications on their financial and employment conditions should be published and brought to the public consciousness.

The report, *Living Testimony: Women in a War Economy*,<sup>1</sup> which we published several months later, marked the beginning of an extensive long-term project aimed at bringing about wide-ranging socioeconomic change and at promoting the concept of decent work. A major component of this project is the publication of reports that portray the harsh reality of the Israeli employment market through the eyes of women who play an active role in it. Two reports followed later: *Women Workers in a Precarious Employment Market*<sup>2</sup> and *Managers in Chains*.<sup>3</sup> These days we are working on a new report that portrays the problems and barriers faced by middle-aged women in the employment market. These reports are an important channel for bringing the voice of women to the public's consciousness; they show the importance of their employment stories as a source of social and economic knowledge. These personal stories allow us to characterize, define, and portray harmful employment structures, practices, trends, and policies that are taking over the employment market. The reports call on us to look for ways to transform the economy of exploitation and control into an economy of equal opportunities for all.

Our reports are used extensively for awareness-raising activities. Based on the insights presented in them, Mahut Center and other organizations have already developed social-change projects. In addition, they have been cited in various academic and governmental papers and have been included in the syllabi of several social science courses in Israeli universities. These documentation projects draw their strength, their meaning, and their uniqueness from the close relation we have with the women who approach our center. In the midst of the turmoil of economy (or war), we find it important to stop and listen — listen to the silenced voices of employees, which can describe the reality of the employment market — not by looking at it from afar, but by being at its very heart.

Combining social-change work aimed at promoting women's economic empowerment with research based on fieldwork is central to Mahut Center and has been recognized as such by various bodies with which we work.

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## **Management for Change**

Another defining process that developed our uniqueness as a means for future growth and for strengthening our belief in our mission took place during 2009. It did not have a definite, dramatic starting point, such as the commencement of the war, but stemmed from a process and may have generated a critical change for our

organization's long-term capacity building. We decided to move from assisting women of a wide age range to specializing in the employment advancement of middle-aged women who are over forty. Every growth involves a change, (although naturally, not every change involves a growth) and therefore, the distinction between the two is not quite clear. Nevertheless, I feel that leading a change presents a much more complex and difficult challenge than leading a growth.

Several events and processes have led me to realize that a change was needed: the economic crisis that started in 2008 and worsened in 2009 and its harsh implications on underprivileged women's employment, as well as the competition resulting from the significant rise in the number of employment programs. All these and other factors had a negative effect on our work. I realized I must lead a change without delay: to present these issues before the staff and board of directors, to discuss the need for a change, and to indicate possible solutions. Such solutions would involve redefining our organization's professional specialization and maybe even the sector with which we work. Moreover, a change that would lead to sustainability must be genuine; that is, it must stem from the organization's real character and qualities and answer an actual need. Change must come from a deep acquaintance with the women who approach us and with their needs as well as from a deep acquaintance with the solutions that already exist in the field. Why did we choose to start working with women over forty? Because for various reasons, the percentage of middle-aged women that approached Mahut Center was relatively high; because they form a large and growing social group that has to cope with harsh discrimination and other barriers in the employment market; because there are almost no programs that focus on employment advancement for middle-aged women (or men); because, looking into the future, I realized that such a change offers an opportunity for developing a specialized work model and a knowledge base that would become increasingly necessary in the near future.

As opposed to the immediate action needed in a time of war, I realized that in this case, it is possible and important to lead a calculated and carefully planned process of change. This process, with everybody in the organization involved, was based on insights drawn from our day-to-day work at the center. It included gathering knowledge from Israel and abroad, talking with the women who approach us, conducting strategic discussions, forming a comprehensive work program, developing resources, establishing collaborations, increasing our visibility, and various other strenuous preparations. Instead of giving a detailed description of the change process, I would like to indicate two of its most significant elements: The first element is the necessary changes we had to make in our organization's identity — its perceptions, work patterns, and consciousness — a process that raised conflicts, fears, and sometimes objections; these needed to be resolved mutually, while combining determination with acceptance. The second element is the length of time it took us

to undergo the change. We initially decided that we would start implementing the new program by the beginning of 2010, and so the change process stretched over a year (from the beginning of 2009) and developed slowly at the same time that we were conducting our day-to-day work. I thought it important to devote a long time for such a significant change process, because while trying to manage in the present with complex budget problems, we were directing our efforts at future developments and changes. At the present, the beginning of 2010, we are starting to see signs of success: more and more women over forty are approaching our center, various organizations and bodies are interested in establishing collaborative projects with us, and our staff is enthusiastic and excited about our new direction.

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### **Acting Here and Now, Thinking Far Ahead**

“Act here and now, think far ahead,” my late mother, Ora, used to say to me. I have often used her inspiring words in my private life as well as in my work. For me, these words form the essential principles of how to lead and direct an organization during times of crisis and of adaptive capacity in general.

- Acting here and now means working with women, being with them, understating their real needs. Thinking far ahead means disseminating our knowledge, developing programs, and advancing change.
- Acting here and now means continually supporting women. Thinking far ahead means empowering them and establishing their ability and their right to control their destiny and to conduct a decent economic and social life.
- Acting here and now means listening to a woman’s story. Thinking far ahead means understanding its relevance, expanding its visibility, and raising awareness of it.
- Acting here and now means recognizing difficulties and obstacles. Thinking far ahead means knowing how to translate them into opportunities.
- Acting here and now means coping with and enduring troubles and surviving crises. Thinking far ahead means giving meaning and significance to this survival.
- Acting here and now means living in uncertainty. Thinking far ahead means transforming it into security.
- Acting here and now means investing in the present. Thinking far ahead means aiming at the future.

Acting here and now means offering a helping hand. We live and work in a precarious world that constantly challenges our ability to survive and compels us to change and transform and develop our sustainability. This is true for all of us — our organization

as well as the women we assist. And so, the caring and protecting hand is also the hand that should hold and lead us along the way toward a new future.

*Translated from the Hebrew by Yoram Arnon*



## **Notes**

1. Ya'ara Buksbaum, Dorit Avramovich, and Michal Dagan, *Living Testimony: Women in a War Economy* (Haifa: Mahut Center, 2007. Published in Hebrew and Arabic).
2. Ya'ara Buksbaum, Michal Dagan, Umayma Diab, and Dorit Avramovich, *Women Workers in a Precarious Employment Market* (Haifa: Mahut Center, 2008. Published in Hebrew, Arabic, and English).
3. Ya'ara Buksbaum, Michal Dagan, and Chava Nishri, *Managers in Chains* (Haifa: Mahut Center, 2009. Published in Hebrew).







## **Introduction: Miracle Workers at the Helm**

## **New Ways of Exercising Leadership**

*Kristen McCormack*

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**L**eadng a nonprofit organization in today's world requires nothing less than a miracle worker at the helm. That could be the conclusion one might draw from reading the literature on the traits, skills, and characteristics required to lead a nonprofit organization. Today's leaders should be honest, competent, forward-looking, and inspiring as well as intelligent, fair-minded, broad-minded, courageous, straightforward, and imaginative. Leaders should be of high integrity, dedicated, magnanimous, humble, open, and creative while energizing others. Able to cope with change, leaders must establish direction, align people, motivate, and inspire while effectively communicating their story. He or she must be ambitious for the company, demonstrating a compelling modesty, calmly determined, never blaming, willfully creating superb results, demonstrating an unwavering resolve to do what must be done to produce the best long-term results, no matter how difficult. Finally, the leader should be tactically and technically proficient, be self-aware, set an example, build effective teams, ensure tasks are understood, supervised, and accomplished, and make sound and timely decisions.

And while I don't debate the findings of the leadership research, I, and the scores of nonprofit leaders I work with are left wondering: Where does that leave the rest of us?

I have the pleasure of teaching nonprofit management and leadership to bright-eyed M.B.A. students who yearn to someday lead a nonprofit organization as well as

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savvy veteran executive directors who have seen it all. Both groups have something in common: they don't see themselves in the poster composite of "the great leader." The picture is seemingly unattainable and is in stark contrast to their reality leading nonprofit organizations on a daily basis.

And yet thousands of organizations around the world are led, day in and day out, under the most difficult of circumstances with aplomb, dignity, grace, and quiet effectiveness. I have had the opportunity to work with dozens of nonprofit leaders in the United States, Israel, and Brazil over the past ten years, observing their actions and listening to them reflect on their individual roles as leaders. Beginning with the Boston–Haifa Learning Exchange participants in 2005 and more recently listening to community leaders in Brazil, I have observed a sea change in the environment in which leadership is exercised. We live in an increasingly transnational world where individuals claim more than one country as home and where communication is both instantaneous and continuous. Journalism is more democratized and the demand for transparency is a steady drumbeat. Our work and personal lives are increasingly intertwined at a time when we are more reliant on human capital to produce goods and services than ever before. Does this world require different leadership traits and skills, or simply a new way of exercising leadership?

I turned to the reflections of the nonprofit leaders who participated in the Boston–Haifa Learning Exchange as well as those I met in Brazil for answers.

The Boston–Haifa Learning Exchange is represented by leaders of nonprofit organizations from both cities. During the process of documenting the Learning Exchange the topic of leadership was best represented by these descriptors: empowering, nurturing, collaborative, receptive, flexible, understanding, supporting, persevering, and sharing responsibility and credit.

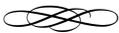
Several leaders stated that they've learned their best leadership skills from their constituents, especially young people with their energy and resiliency and reminders "not to live in boxes." Creating trust, transparency, collective ownership, democratic processes, and space for enjoyment at work were identified as important strategies. Positive ("noncompetitive and cooperative") relationships between NGOs and their leaders was also named as a key tactic for good nonprofit leadership, as "it models for others the ability to celebrate differences." Other suggestions included regular opportunities for individual and collective reflection, "planning more and reacting less," taking risks and being willing to test new initiatives, and "seriously investing in taking care of our relationships."

—*Learning Exchange Research Project,*  
*March 2008 Boston–Haifa Learning Exchange Seminar*

Each year I lead a Brazil Field Seminar for M.B.A. students from Boston University focused on global sustainability and social enterprise. We meet with dozens of

companies, nonprofit organizations, and community leaders. This year we asked each leader to offer advice to the students regarding their future roles as leaders. The response was remarkably uniform including these comments: take risks, never give up, never fight with your own people, cooperate, don't be selfish, learn as much as you can, be fearless, and most of all develop other people as leaders. Perhaps the most inspiring words of advice came from an old Brazilian man, nicknamed Black Bean, who lived in a Brazilian *favela* (slum) of 30,000 on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro. After describing his addiction to violence, crime, and drugs as a younger man and his remarkable turnaround, rising to a respected elder in the neighborhood, he offered these words of wisdom in Portuguese, "*Líderes freqüentemente enfrentam enormes obstáculos, mas você sempre encontrará um caminho e você deve persistir.*" Or, "Leaders often face huge obstacles, but you will always find a way and you must persist."

Perhaps not surprisingly, these anecdotes and remarks reinforce many of the same traits and characteristics the leadership research identifies. But they also uncover new ways of exercising leadership. Not only do these executive directors model the traits and characteristics of leaders, they also demonstrate an astonishing ability to embrace ambiguity, differences, and conflict in their daily routine. They build networks of peers, coaching and mentoring each other along the way. Their ability to execute a social change mission is surpassed only by their patience, perseverance, and grand sense of humor. The next time one of them is dismayed by the seemingly unattainable list of leadership qualities to which they aspire I need only suggest they look in the mirror to see a miracle worker. The essays that follow are written by and about these leaders.



# Leadership as Legacy

*Elias Sussan*

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I joined the House of Grace twenty-three years ago when I was looking for a job as a social worker and, very soon after, I found myself taking part in important and fulfilling social and community work, in an ever-renewing and developing institute — a house that is a home for people in distress.

I chose social work and not one of the professions because I had a strong desire and a need to do something for the community: to work with prisoners, women survivors of violence, the homeless — with underprivileged and disadvantaged people. In my childhood and youth, I experienced poverty and distress, and I had an intimate acquaintance with the hardships experienced by underprivileged people. Several of my friends had found themselves entrapped in the vicious circle of delinquency and crime, but I was determined to break free and bring change into my life. I joined a supportive and empowering organization that works with people to help them regain their deprived honor, a place that motivates people to make a change and improve their lives and futures.

Joining the House of Grace, managed by Kamil Shahade and his wife Agnes, fulfilled my personal and professional aspirations. Working alongside this couple, whose life and work for the benefit of disadvantaged and underprivileged populations is my inspiration and motivation, deepened within me the values of compassion, social responsibility, community involvement, humanity, and selflessness.

Kamil Shahade grew up as a member of the Christian minority, surrounded by an Arab-Muslim community, in the midst of the multicultural Israeli society. Such a background, of course, made it hard for him to ascertain his personal, religious, ethnic, and social identity. Moreover, growing up in a neglected neighborhood afflicted with crime, Kamil also experienced hardships and destitution.

Kamil's humanitarian outlook is rooted in his childhood education and

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upbringing. The simple and modest house of his mother's family was always open for girls at risk and the homeless. His family shared a house with a Jewish family, with whom they lived a life of harmony and mutual respect; this strengthened in young Kamil the values of love, faith, and tolerance. He grew to believe that with tolerance, accepting the other, and working for the general good, all hardships could be overcome. Together with some of his neighborhood friends and under the leadership of a Protestant cleric, he founded a social youth club for the neighborhood youths, to help them escape a life of crime.

In 1972, Kamil was sent to Canada to study community work. After a year and a half, he returned to Haifa, in order to realize his vision of bringing a change to underprivileged populaces. He chose to focus on helping rehabilitating prisoners as a means for bringing about social change.

Several years later, he met Agnes, a Swiss girl, and their relationship tightened later when she was working in the Sacred Heart, a hostel for mentally challenged children in Haifa. Kamil and Agnes felt bonded by their mutual desire to help others and, not long after, they got married and started a family.

The tragic story of the prisoner Elias Namuz and his mother, who had both committed suicide, was the spark that ignited and started the mission of establishing a home for ex-prisoners, who have nowhere to go and who need love and support in order to escape the vicious circle of crime. Kamil and Agnes's small rented apartment was where the House of Grace started. Together with two rehabilitating ex-prisoners who were living with them, they renovated an old, neglected building across the road, which belonged to the church, but was then serving as a meeting place for criminals. In 1982, after extensive renovations, it became the House of Grace.

Many obstacles were put in the way of the kindhearted couple by the religious establishment in their community, but their belief in their cause, their enthusiasm, and their determination incited and inspired their community members to help them realize their vision. They believed in Kamil and Agnes's power to succeed in making a change where nobody else had yet succeeded, to contribute to the welfare and wellbeing of the whole community and those of its members who had become criminals.

In 2000, at the age of forty-six, Kamil died of a terminal illness. But his lifework continues. The staff at the House of Grace and I have absorbed and assimilated Kamil's moral and social values — love of the other, compassion, endless giving, and humility — and under the guidance of his widow Agnes, we carry on his legacy. His children, who lost a charismatic and compassionate father, view the House of Grace as their home. Within its walls they absorbed values and ideals that few children are exposed to. They will carry on Kamil's way of giving without expecting anything in return — only the light in the eyes of people who through love and support have regained their hope for a better life.

Kamil will be remembered as a charismatic leader, driven by a vision, a sincere passion, and kindness to others. His enthusiasm and determination have swayed the people in his community, who believed in his ability to bring about change, and have encouraged them to take part in realizing his vision of a better society. His bequest to his successors, his children and the house's staff, is to continue the work of the House of Grace. We believe in his vision — in the mission of helping the defenseless in order to strengthen the whole of society.

*Translated from the Hebrew by Yoram Arnon*



# Hope in the Room

*Cheri Andes*

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**T**he most powerful moment of the learning exchange for me was a discussion that Haifa and Boston leaders had about violence and post-traumatic stress syndrome during my second trip to Haifa. Quite a bit of relational work had already been done that allowed this discussion to occur. This was no theoretical discussion, but rather a deep sharing of personal experience.

Boston leaders talked about the epidemic of violence on Boston's city streets — the profound impact this violence had on the young people they served and organized and the profound impact it had on them as leaders. In particular an organizer shared about the brother of a youth leader who was shot in the head at 4:30 p.m. in a park that is not even considered to be particularly dangerous. There was a sense of urgency in Boston leaders' voices, an exasperation, yes, but also a hunger to address the violence head-on in an effective and creative way.

Haifa leaders, in turn, shared about the Lebanon War. They spoke of their fear for themselves and their loved ones. They spoke of bomb shelters and explosions. Their voices choked in the recollection of those days and weeks. The politics of war seemed overwhelming; Haifa leaders had suffered certainly, but they also publicly asked themselves how their own suffering compared with the reality of living in the dominant culture — the overwhelming power of the State of Israel, the expansion of the settlements, the checkpoints and control? The anguish and confusion and even disagreements between the Israelis were raw and compelling. Nonetheless, Haifa leaders seemed to have emerged from their shelters more determined than ever to make a difference in their city, country, and world.

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The room we sat in that day was heavy, silent, and full. But something, I felt, happened in that silence, a surprising sense of connection developed, unexpected commonalities seemed to arise, our shared humanity in the face of pain, fear, and loss was felt in a real and deep way. Strangely, there was hope in the room, a shared passion for action to address these and other injustices. We sensed in each other what trauma specialist Judith Hermon labels integrity, — “the ability to hope even in the face of death.” And this integrity generated a reservoir of respect for one another and our work. Integrity more commonly suggests the alignment of one’s actions with one’s values, and we sensed this trait in each other as well.

I was moved by this session to my own memories of suffering and trauma. I grew up in Mt. Pocono, Pennsylvania — a bucolic town set in the beautiful mountain range known as the Poconos. It was, and is, known as a resort town — a place where people go to get away from the world and its troubles. I shared with the Haifa exchange group a family tragedy that took place in this normally peaceful environment.

It was 1968, three days after the assassination of Robert Kennedy; I was three years old. My grandfather was out in his back yard picking tomatoes. His neighbor suddenly opened fire on him with an automatic rifle. Mr. Higgins was his name, and he was mentally ill, although my grandparents were not aware of that. My grandmother heard the shots and saw my grandfather fall. She rushed out to his side and was shot as well.

One of my grandfather’s sisters ran out to help and took a bullet to the chin; the other sister ran out the front door and down the street to our local church. There she pulled a state trooper out of services. He ran up the street, commandeered a truck from a neighbor, pulled the truck between the two houses to block the line of fire, and tear gassed the man out of his house. The ambulances arrived to take my grandparents to the hospital where treatment awaited.

My grandparents survived, but both lost limbs. My grandfather lost his right arm from the shoulder and his left leg from the knee. My grandmother lost her right leg from the hip. While they were in the hospital and rehab center recovering, my parents put a home in their back yard, and that is where I grew up, literally in the yard where my grandparents were shot.

As you can imagine, this story has lots of layers for me. My grandparents became my world, my center. They were my after-school program and my “say no to drugs” program. Their handicaps became my opportunity — to be responsible, to be needed, to be cherished.

This story is a big part of why I do organizing, why I lead. I have this feeling in my gut, this anger, this passion that comes from experiencing those I know and love being so needlessly violated and mutilated. I know there are so many things we can’t change; there is so much violence, craziness, and oppression in the world. My anger could be debilitating. It could have left me cynical, depressed or worse.

But I learned from my grandparents that there are some things we can change. We can influence some things. My grandparents were a witness to that. While they were literally maimed, limbs amputated, mobility lost, still they acted; they made a difference in the world by loving me and nurturing my spirit. I once asked my grandmother after my grandfather had died “how do you go on?” and she said “God wants us to live; there are people to love and work to do and we just have to go on!”

During my first trip to Israel, I was matched with Yedid in the Learning Exchange. During the second trip I was asked to give a talk at a Haifa University conference on the role of nonprofits in civil society and I acted a facilitator for some of the group work shops. My experience in Israel and especially with the Learning Exchange, reinforced a life-long belief that where there is suffering and grief, so too is there love, hope, and compassion. I am so grateful for both my trips to Israel and believe that they truly belong as part of my life’s biography.

Leadership requires hope-filled integrity. And integrity, Judith Hermon also points out, lends itself to trust — “the assured reliance on another person’s integrity.” Trust is what is needed for true leadership to flourish. Trust is what we were building with each other through the Learning Exchange.



# Doing the Right Thing

# Doing Things Right

*Jane Matlaw*

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I was privileged to be a part of the “birthing” of the Learning Exchange Networks (LENs) and am a veteran participant. I sat through many superb workshops and led a piece on social justice and advocacy. I had no idea that during year three of our endeavor, I would see how my world of work would so clearly intersect with the mutual learning that was happening with my colleagues in Boston and in Haifa. In my job as Director of Community Relations at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BIDMC), I am responsible for the community relations activities of a 560-bed Harvard teaching hospital in Boston, Massachusetts. My personal philosophy about how to work with the community is very simple.

- Listen and hear what your community (no matter how you define it) are saying
- be honest
- be genuine in your response
- follow through.

And perhaps above all else, lead with your values. Moses, with his values of humility and devotion, was able to lead the Jewish people from slavery to freedom. The story of Passover that culminates at the giving of the law at Sinai teaches that despite great hardship, and “losing their way,” Moses was able to lead the Jewish people to freedom and fulfillment by connecting his devotion to God and the law to the stewardship of its people in difficult times.

In our workshops on leadership, Learning Exchange participants talked about the qualities of all kinds of leaders, and the challenges that leaders face. Much has been

*Jane Matlaw, M.S.W., LICSW is the director of Community Relations at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston. She is a member of many boards and community groups, including the Jewish Community Relations Council where she served as vice-president of the Board and was chair of the Haifa Social Justice and Civil Society Committee when the Learning Exchange was created and developed. She cochairs the Jewish Women’s Coalition on Breast Cancer and is a member of the Board of Directors for Jewish Vocational Services and Action for Boston Community Development Parker Hill/Fenway. Jane is also on the executive committee of the Multicultural Coalition on Aging, and the Mission Hill Main Streets elderly friendly business district advisory board.*

written on great leaders so I will resist a literature review on this topic. Leadership involves a wide range of skills. From my perspective, you need to have transparent guiding principles and practices, and value and respect those whom you are formally “leading” as well as those who are affected by your position of leadership. In an ideal world, you would have a trusting and mutually respectful relationship with your leader where each individual could hear the feedback from the other.

I have worked at BIDMC for twenty-eight years, beginning as a social worker, and in my current position in community relations for the past fifteen years. While participating in the Learning Exchange I had a chance to step back, listen, and learn about leadership styles, cultural differences, leadership successes and failures. I was given the time and space to reflect on how different leaders of my hospital had an impact on my work; on the way I felt about it, and ultimately how I related it to the people I worked with in the community. It also helped me see BIDMC as a social-change organization, though I did not see this connection initially.

This new view first came when I began reflecting back to the roots of the hospital and its beginnings. I realized that BIDMC had been a change agent from the day it opened its doors. When the Jews immigrated to Boston from Eastern Europe in the early 1900s, they did not feel welcomed in the local hospitals. They were viewed as outsiders who had peculiar eating habits, language, and rituals. The children of these immigrants who went to medical school could not get medical residencies at the hospitals in Boston. As a result, in 1917 the Jewish community built its own hospital. One of the big sociological questions facing the Jewish community at that time was whether they wanted to remain separate from the mainstream community, or to try to assimilate and be a part of it. The same question was raised about building the hospital. What resulted was construction of a hospital based on the Jewish principle of *Tikkun Olam*, “Repair of the World.”

The Jewish community built Beth Israel Hospital for the general Boston community. It created a place where people of all races, cultures, and ethnic backgrounds could get high-quality and culturally sensitive medical care from a Harvard teaching hospital. In this sense, Beth Israel Hospital was a change agent. It changed the culture of hospitals and of the way care was delivered to the community. It took the experience of being the outsider and designed a hospital so that no one else had to have that same experience. It took into account the needs of patients and their families beyond the body part that needed attention. The first Patient Bill of Rights was created by Mitchell Rabkin, M.D. at Beth Israel Hospital, which, for the first time, gave patients a set of rights and responsibilities and made the hospital accountable to its patients. The Patient Bill of Rights was later adopted by almost every hospital in the nation. This radically changed the nature and culture of hospital care delivery.

I consider myself lucky. At BIDMC, our current CEO, Paul Levy, leads with values that are critical to me personally and professionally. On a daily basis he “walks the

walk.” To know what I am talking about all you have to do is look at his blog, [www.runningahospital.blogspot.com](http://www.runningahospital.blogspot.com). He is thoughtful, candid, and provocative and he gets you thinking. No one screens what he writes (my colleagues in corporate communications did some initial nail-biting when he launched the site) and he talks openly about what goes on at BIDMC; the good and the bad. He poses questions to his readers and welcomes comments and criticism (as long as it is civil) in addition to YouTube videos, photos of birds on the beach, poignant, tragic, and uplifting stories and political commentary on the current healthcare system. When he criticizes something (for example, healthcare reform) he offers his reasons why. I may not always agree with him but I listen to what he says and, conversely, I feel that he values my opinion, though he does not always agree with me. He is not afraid to talk about the “elephants in the room” and “outs them” in the service of better care for patients. He is a risk taker, an embracer of new technologies when they have been proven to be beneficial (not just because they are “hot”) and uses social media to the fullest extent possible to connect with people. And yet he tossed out his blackberry and went “cold turkey” when he found he was becoming a “crackberry addict” and was in cyberspace when he should have been present in the room.

In a year of devastating budget cuts with thousands of individuals losing their jobs around the country, Mr. Levy was faced with the painful prospect of cutting over 500 jobs due to budget shortfalls. But he chose to go a different route. He involved the entire hospital staff in brainstorming ways to avoid layoffs. His guiding principle was that he should trust the people who worked at BIDMC because they care about the place and they care about one another. So why not trust them to come up with approaches that would solve this problem? He scheduled several “town meetings” at different places and times around the medical center. He began by laying out the financial realities with facts and figures so that people understood what the situation was. He said that the shortfall could be solved with layoffs, but the reality was that it would be very hard for people to find new jobs in the current economy. He proposed that if everybody in the organization made a sacrifice, we could save most of these jobs. That led to the next question: “how can we make that happen?” Before entertaining responses to that question he asked the group if they would consider going one step further. He asked what we thought about leaving the low-wage earners out of the equation. In other words, whatever was suggested and ultimately implemented, these workers would be exempt from any and all cuts — salary or benefits. Many of these workers were struggling immigrants, and others had a spouse already out of work.

What happened next was extraordinary. The entire auditorium stood up and spontaneously applauded. Many of us had tears in our eyes, including Paul Levy. It was a moment where I felt like I was truly a part of a larger family and one that cared about all of its members — and willing to sacrifice for it. Employees then came up

with a variety of suggestions of ways to cut their own salaries and benefits. Setting an example, Levy announced that he was cutting his own salary. Most of the hospital's skilled workers took a pay cut. What we gained was greater than any dollar amount — a recharged sense of family, support, and the value of each employee's labor. Ultimately, only seventy jobs were lost. Paul Levy was an inspiration for showing consideration for his employees and trusting in their compassion. "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you — all the rest is just commentary," Levy said, quoting an old story about the Jewish scholar Hillel when being interviewed for an article. "It's a code to live by, and if you behave that way, the world will be a better place because other people will behave that way back."

This had just happened one day before a trip to Israel on the Learning Exchange. One of the other participants, Donna Haig Freidman (the editor of this journal) arrived a couple of days later and brought news that Paul Levy was all over the local and national press for the approach he had taken to facing the deficit — one where he was transparent about the seriousness of the problem, and how he held open meetings demonstrating his faith in his employees by asking for their help in trying to avoid layoffs at a time when immediate action was needed. The LEN participants were intrigued and inspired by his actions. Many took to the Internet to read his blog and follow the stories in the U.S. press. I arranged for Mr. Levy to speak to the group during their next visit to Boston. The group talked about this as an example of leadership that incorporated many of the attributes and values that we had been talking about in our discussions. It was then that I realized that my hospital had been a social-change organization.

I used to think that the leadership of the hospital did not really matter much to me. All that I needed was to believe in the hospital's mission, values, and the work that we do to eliminate human suffering and disease. Having been a social worker for many years, I personally knew many of the clinicians and knew that they cared deeply about our patients and their families. In my community work, that helped me during tough times when in my role as community liaison, I had to deliver hard and/or disappointing news. I used to think that whoever was "at the top" was supposed to keep us in a solid financial position, make sure the operations ran efficiently and smoothly, and could work effectively with the wide variety of constituents. These are still important parts of the work of leadership, but during and since the learning exchange I have thought much more about leadership and management, the distinctions between them, and how they need to work hand-in-hand. Trying to separate the two is likely to create more problems than it solves. The leader's job is to motivate and inspire, and the manager's job is to plan and coordinate. In his 1989 book *On Becoming a Leader*, Warren Bennis composed a list of the differences:

- The manager administers; the leader innovates.
- The manager is a copy; the leader is an original.

- The manager maintains; the leader develops.
- The manager focuses on systems and structure; the leader focuses on people.
- The manager relies on control; the leader inspires trust.
- The manager has a short-range view; the leader has a long-range perspective.
- The manager asks how and when; the leader asks what and why.
- The manager has his or her eye always on the bottom line; the leader's eye is on the horizon.
- The manager imitates; the leader originates.
- The manager accepts the status quo; the leader challenges it.
- The manager is the classic good soldier; the leader is his or her own person.
- The manager does things right; the leader does the right thing.

It was Paul Levy who led me to this list. This is how he thinks and how he thinks about leadership and management. In late 2009, he wrote a piece on his blog on accountability. "I view the leader's job as helping to create an environment in which people are so comfortable with their role in the organization, and are given the right tools for doing their job, that they hold themselves accountable." He went on to say, "After all, most people want to do well in their job and want to do good in fulfilling the values of the enterprise. Why not trust in their inherent desire to be successful personally and collectively? Instead of focusing on measuring their performance against static metrics, why not create a setting in which they use their native intelligence, creativity, and enthusiasm to solve problems in an inevitably changing environment? Then, spend your time praising them and making sure they get credit." As he says in his blog, this is at variance with most management guidance on the subject. He asserts that it is not only impossible to hold people accountable in an organization, but trying to do so is a misallocation of managerial attention.

There are areas of overlap between managers and leaders. To be a great organization, there are times when managers need to demonstrate leadership skills and leaders need to step in and manage. But what makes the difference is that a great leader helps employees feel that they are a part of his or her team and have a role in shaping the organization rather than just carrying out their tasks on a day-to-day basis.

The Learning Exchange has provided not only the theoretical foundation and frame for learning about issues such as leadership. It has brought us together as leaders from Boston and Haifa for the chance to learn together and from one another about the challenges and successes of leading and being social-change organizations in a very complex world.







## CONCLUDING SYNTHESIS: LESSONS LEARNED

### A Complex Web

### A Collective Process to Advance Social Justice

*Donna Haig Friedman, Jennifer Cohen,  
Amnon Reichman, James Morgan*

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There is a fierceness at work here. There is no other explanation for the raw courage and heart displayed over and over again in the people who march, speak, create, resist, and build. It is the fierceness of knowing we are human and intend to survive. . . . What can help preserve [humankind and the planet] is the gift of self-perception, the gift of seeing who we truly are.

—*Paul Hawken*, *Blessed Unrest*

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#### Act Here and Now, Think Far Ahead — In Relationship

In *Blessed Unrest*, referenced by the opening quotation and several essay authors, Paul Hawken uses the metaphor of the immune system to describe the connectivity of organizations and activists across the world fiercely working to realize local and global social, economic, political, and environmental justice. Just as the invisible but interconnected parts of the body's immune system jump into concerted action to restore health to an ill body, this social-change movement is organizing from the bottom up and emerging as an extraordinary and creative expression of people's unstoppable need to reimagine their relationships to the environment and to one another.<sup>1</sup> The leaders and organizations participating in the Boston–Haifa transnational learning exchange are actors in this powerful movement with “no name, no leader.” The transformational interplay between personal, collective, and social-change processes, nourished by our relationships with each other across and within national borders, is apparent throughout the journal essays and the Learning Exchange overall. We have collectively built knowledge to feed and inform our future actions and directions while simultaneously acting in our present worlds. Our reflection processes focus on matters of importance. Transformational change happens as we see ourselves and each others' worlds through the others' eyes. We privilege and grow from the interplay of many ways of knowing. In the process, transformation happens — changes of self, our organizations,

and our communities. A connective web of relationships grows across borders, advancing social justice.

### **Building Knowledge in Action and in Community**

This network of leaders has been engaged in a vigorous reflective learning process, while simultaneously acting in the world to create just communities, institutions, and political systems in Haifa and Boston. Michal Dagan's mother's sage advice — act here and now, think far ahead<sup>2</sup> — characterizes very well the interplay of action, reflection, and visionary planning that is a foundational principle of building knowledge. A distinguishing dimension of the Learning Exchange Network (LEN) is its evolving process of building knowledge collectively, a process in which participants have demonstrated a commitment to ask significant questions of themselves and each other, to listen deeply and compassionately, and to expect and tolerate differences, ambiguity, and uncertainty. As is evident throughout the essays, participant leaders have shared their power and vulnerabilities with each other in the face of mainstream forces to compete rather than cooperate. In addition, many authors described ways in which they strive to develop cultural environments and practices that enable a sharing of power at organizational and community levels. In many instances, these social justice leaders view the youth, men, women, and families they work with as coleaders and partners for making the desired change — making change WITH rather than FOR others. They see their organizations as capacity builders, in which community members are not passive, deficient service recipients, but rather strong and active agents of change. They see their service and social-change work as inextricably intertwined.

### **Intersections of Many Ways of Knowing**

As is evident in this journal issue's multivocal collection of essays, the LEN involves a dynamic interplay of perspectives and life experiences. Participants are creative and flexible in their roles and application of planning, programming, facilitating, and academic capacities.<sup>3</sup> For example, consultants and planners bring capacity building tools to this collective endeavor. Visionary frontline leaders bring deep leadership, managerial, and practitioner insights to the table. Academic partners bring significant theoretical perspectives to this circle of learning. Each perspective, privileged as equally important, is essential in building knowledge that has significance for meaningful social change locally and globally. Knowledge in this sense is understood not as know-how or bottom-up knowledge, but as a collective process of developing concepts — grounded in know-how, bottom-up, and theoretical understandings — with which to understand the world around us, in particular the efficacy of our approaches to make the world a more just place for all.

Each of us who has been engaged in the LEN has drawn from this experience ways of expanding our knowledge-based community (i.e., the community from which our experiences matter). This knowledge building endeavor contains inherent

tensions. Knowledge is by definition specific, leading to fragmentation and incomplete understandings. As Mary Coonan illustrates from her own LEN experience, for maximum impact, we are called to “lift our gaze” in recognition of the limits of our understandings and the need to broaden our gazes to be open to inputs — seeing ourselves through the other’s eyes — which may have unsettling effects. As uncomfortable as this journey may be at times, shaking up our fixed mental models is precisely the condition necessary for transformational learning, especially in multi-cultural contexts. A second tension has to do with the political dimension of knowledge sharing, since knowledge often serves to create a relative advantage of one organization over another. Trust-building, therefore, is a precondition and an essential part of the ongoing work of networks, such as the LEN, if they are to be effective and to have staying power. Given these inherent tensions in collective knowledge building endeavors, the benefits of committed participation need to outweigh the risks and efforts required.

### **Transformational Impacts on People, Their Organizations and Their Environments**

Transformational learning triggers change for committed participants in fundamental ways; once changed, going back to the former state is not possible. Many essay authors tell stories of internal and external processes of change — within themselves, within their organizations, and across organizations, and across oceans — which they have become aware of as part of their LEN and other transnational learning processes. They have highlighted the importance of seeing the work of social justice/social change in a broad and, at times, global perspective. The opportunity to connect with colleagues beyond national borders, stepping back from day-to-day pressures, to learn from them, and to discover new approaches to the challenges at home have fortified these leaders to act courageously back home. In particular, the LEN’s profound cross-cultural experiences have nourished leaders’ imaginations and intentions to push back against barriers that keep people apart and to engage in bridge building across ideological, cultural, sectoral, and other dividing lines in their local community work.

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### **Leadership in the Face of Complex Challenges**

In their introductory essays, Reichman and Cohen elaborated on the changing roles of nonprofits vis-à-vis government in the United States and Israel over the past several decades. As reflected in many of the essays, these realities present nonprofit leaders and their communities with challenging questions to address: What is the proper role of government relative to ensuring basic services for its residents? Should government step in more resoundingly and provide human and other services itself? What would this mean for the work and survival of nonprofit organizations? How can nonprofits partner with government and also push back against government policies that sustain injustice?

Likewise, navigating relationships between nonprofits and for-profit organizations is a complex enterprise. Questions, rather than clear answers, are evident from their reflective writings: What are the trade-offs that emerge in partnerships with businesses that, by definition, have a profit motive that is, at times, at odds with the well-being of the very communities nonprofits are engaged with? What strategies can nonprofit leaders use to tap business expertise and generosity in ways that align with their social justice missions? What would a colearning process look like that builds bridges among nonprofit constituents, communities, and business people and leads to internal and external change for all participants?

Nonprofit leaders also have to deal with power dynamics associated with mobilization for social change. They have to decide how to deal with dilemmas such as the extent and ways in which they might (or might not) engage in political movements (ideological movements, party politics) or other such political processes to advance their social change missions. Politics at the organizational level is no less complex, as was made crystal clear by many of the authors. There are no easy answers on any of these fronts; one choice leads to other hard choices.

As for coalition building among nonprofits, the complexities and questions are endless. When coalition members develop joint ventures, what is actually included in their coalition agreements? What is outside the joint venture? What are the agreed-upon or legitimate areas of disagreement among and between coalition members? And, how do these partnerships actually work? How shall nonprofits deal with the possible pitfalls of spending time and energy on coalition building relative to fund-raising? When does coalition work benefit the missions of the nonprofit members? When are the missions harmed? For example, do such coalitions in effect mute the pluralism of members within the coalition to the detriment of the individual organizational members and communities?

The essays in this volume also tell us something about what it means to govern in the twenty-first century. This is a different way of thinking about social policy, since the word “policy” implies a certain type of formal process for formulation and also alludes to there being some type of public accountability, in the form of election or formal appointment, which generates legitimacy to the “policy” adopted. Yet, governance as reflected in this set of essays involves unelected bodies, namely nonprofits, which have a special kind of accountability and different kind of legitimacy than elected or appointed officials, stemming from their actual commitment and close community relationships, and from their knowledge of the field and organizational connectivity beyond the nation-state.

The issue of language has come to the surface in a significant way through this collection of essays. The labels for civil society organizations — nongovernmental, not for profit, nonprofit — all characterize these organizations by what they are NOT. Not surprisingly, the forceful leaders of organizations involved with the LEN are calling

for a definition that is grounded in what they ARE. The organizations they lead are sometimes WITH government and sometimes WITH profit. These organizations represent a voice FOR creativity, cooperation, resourcefulness, and bridging divides. These leaders define themselves, their organizations, and their work in positive and proactive, rather than negative or reactive ways.

The LEN story is a shared quest. These are stories of moral courage. Leaders, from diverse pathways, have joined together to realize their commitment toward creating a more “just” society where economic, social, and political gaps lessen and meaningful opportunities increase for all. In the face of the complexities and hurdles inherent in their work, we hear in their essays stories of activists and organizations who are joining forces to not only take advantage of existing power sources but to create new sources of power, internally, within their organizations and in their communities. This group of nonprofit leaders is a community of commitment, which can tolerate and hold uncertainty and not knowing, as several authors highlight. We have learned that allowing ourselves not to know is crucial in this work, in the sense of humility, in the sense of allowing programs to evolve as new and fuller information emerges, and in the sense of being open to learning from others.

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## **The Future**

Current developments of the Learning Exchange speak to its success. Specifically, the LEN has led to the creation of Lead Haifa, a cross-sector leadership development program, housed within the Haifa Council of Volunteer Organizations (CVO) in partnership with Shatil. A new partnership is budding among Lead Haifa and its well-established counterpart, Lead Boston, a program of the Boston Center for Community and Justice, and the Jewish Community Relations Council. Lead Haifa’s academic partner continues to be the University of Massachusetts Boston’s Center for Social Policy.

The next stage of the Learning Exchange will be a deepening of relationships between Boston and Haifa organizations, specifically among youth development organizations: Boston’s Sociedad Latina and Hyde Square Task Force and Haifa’s Neve Yosef Matnas, and Leo Baeck. The current priority is youth work, so plans are underway to bring the staff of the four organizations together for additional mutual learning via virtual and face-to-face youth exchanges.

With its goal of surfacing and creating different kinds of knowledge, the Learning Exchange has inspired additional research projects, building upon the initial Participatory Action Research designed and implemented by Donna Haig Friedman in 2006. Among other offshoot projects, Jennifer Cohen’s dissertation research, carried out within the McCormack Graduate School’s Public Policy doctoral program and the Center for Social Policy at the University of Massachusetts Boston, explores how community-based organizations contribute to social change,

especially through public policy-related activities. This case study and action research project engages four of the original NGOs (two from Boston and two from Haifa), all of which have been recognized by the wider policy community as successful and high-impact organizations.

These current connections and future plans are clear evidence of “change ripples,” which many authors refer to in their essays. We have collectively come to know that the LEN has inspired small and big shifts on the individual, organizational, and wider levels where we live and work. Some of the changes and impacts are external and already apparent; others are internal and have yet to be revealed — today, tomorrow, or years down the road. We have no doubt that seeds planted over the past five years will bear fruit in the coming years.

A closing story: In a transnational learning exchange gathering, the facilitators gave the group a ball of string, telling them to toss it to one another — while holding on — as they identified and described the connections they had made with one another. Their stories were rich, numerous, and inspiring and resulted in the creation of a complex web, grounded in each having changed the other in some concrete and fundamental way. This activity has been used numerous times with numerous groups throughout the years. Traditions, such as this one, have been passed along, grounded in the LEN’s core values. Local and international networks thusly expand through the actions of committed leaders who hold the ball of string, pass it along, and share it with others.

We will either come together as one, globalized people, or we will disappear as a civilization. To come together we must know our place in a biological and cultural sense, and reclaim our role as engaged agents of our continued existence... the defense of the world can truly be accomplished only by cooperation and compassion.

— *Paul Hawken, Blessed Unrest*

## Notes

1. Paul Hawken, *Blessed Unrest* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), 3.
2. See her article in this publication.
3. Peter M. Senge and C. O. Scharmer, “Community Action Research: Learning as a Community of Practitioners, Consultants and Researchers, in P. Reason and H. Bradbury, eds., *Handbook of Action Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications (2006), 197.

## Guidelines for Contributors

1. Length of manuscript, not including figures, tables, endnotes, and appendixes, should be approximately 24 to 40 double-spaced pages of 300 words per page, or 7,000 to 12,000 words, in roman and italic fonts only. Please forward three copies of the manuscript to the editor. Once a manuscript is accepted for publication, authors are responsible for providing a Microsoft Word copy of the work.
2. Place each figure and table, omitting horizontal and vertical lines, on a separate page and indicate where it should appear in the manuscript. Include below each one, when pertinent, a full note, labeled Source, crediting the originator of the data. Should permission to reprint material from the source be necessary, request it and the desired credit line from the copyright holder, in writing, and submit it with the manuscript. Should your methodology require explanation, place it on a separate double-spaced page (or pages, if necessary) with the heading Methodology.
3. Provide an Abstract — a short summary of the article — of about 150 words, double-spaced, as well as a one-line author identification. The latter should include professional title(s) and affiliation(s). For articles by more than one author, provide an ID for each.

Example: Shaun O'Connell, professor of English, University of Massachusetts Boston, specializes in contemporary Irish and American literature.

4. Endnotes, which appear at the end of the text with the heading Notes, must be formatted in humanities style, double-spaced, and placed in a separate file. Under no circumstances should they also be embedded in the text. Author-date style with reference list is unacceptable. See sample citations below. Book and periodical titles must be in italics, never underlined. When possible, place mathematical formulas in the endnotes.

Publication data for citations from a book must include, in the following order: full first name or initials and last name of author(s), editor(s), compiler(s), translator(s); full title, including subtitle, of the work; editor's name if given in addition to author; city of publication; year of publication; and pertinent page number(s). For example:

Robert Frost, "The Gift Outright," in *The Poetry of Robert Frost*, ed. Edward Connery Lathem (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975), 348.

Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power* (New York: Wiley, 1960), 24.

Publication data for citations from a periodical must include, in the following order: full first name or initials and last name of author(s); full title, including subtitle, of article; full name of periodical/journal, including volume and issue numbers, date, and pertinent page number(s). For example:

Shaun O'Connell, "The Infrequent Family: In Search of Boston's Literary Community," *Boston Magazine* 67, no. 1 (January 1975): 44–47.

5. The journal uses shortened references rather than op. cit. For a book, include last name(s) of author(s); short title containing key word(s) of main title; and page number(s) of reference. For an article in a periodical, include last name(s) of author(s); short title of article; and page number(s). For example:

Frost, "The Gift Outright," 348.

Neustadt, *Presidential Power*, 24.

O'Connell, "Infrequent Family," 44–47.

6. We are happy to answer any questions about these guidelines. Address queries and manuscripts to Patricia Peterson, Managing Editor, New England Journal of Public Policy.

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