

## Article

# The Riddle of Community Resilience: Neighborhood Struggles for and against Clearance in Israel 1950s–1970s

Paula Kabalo

Ben-Gurion Research Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Sde Boker Campus, Beer-Sheva 8499000, Israel; pkabalo@gmail.com

**Abstract:** Resilience is a concept of concern to researchers of humanitarian disasters and crises as well as relief organizations and agencies. Compelling findings in recent studies demonstrate the centrality of social networks and connections, among individuals and groups, in powering rehabilitation processes after disasters and crises. Derived from this perspective is the concept of community resilience, based on Ozawa's definition as groups and individuals working together to minimize the adverse consequences of crisis. This study aims to demonstrate that the postulate that communities can attain their objectives if only they "work together", irrespective of their material resources, remains valid in situations of protracted crisis such as economic distress or lengthy struggle against economically or politically powerful elements. I wish to substantiate and prove this hypothesis by micro-historical reconstruction and analysis that sheds light on practices used by local neighborhood committees in view of protracted crises resulting from severe poverty and clearance plans. The article is based on two case studies harvested from the history of Israel. The first looks at Nahalat Ahim, a neighborhood in the southern segment of the Nahlaot cluster of neighborhoods in central Jerusalem, and the second, at the Shemen Beach (Hof Shemen) neighborhood of Haifa. The advantage of historical research, which by nature deals with matters already concluded, lies in its retrospective gaze on ways members of a community in crisis coped. An after-the-fact contemplation such as this, allows us to identify additional variables that may enhance our understanding of the community-resilience phenomenon in current contexts as well.

**Keywords:** neighbourhood committee; community resilience; social capital; local leadership; community organisations



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## 1. Introduction

Resilience is a concept of interest for researchers of humanitarian disasters and crises and for relief organizations and agencies as well. After many decades of focusing largely on matters of physical and pecuniary revitalization, compelling findings in recent studies demonstrate the centrality of social networks and connections, among both individuals and groups, in powering rehabilitation processes after disasters and crises—no less, and perhaps more, than material resources [1,2]. Connie P. Ozawa defines community resilience as a community's ability "to respond to unexpected and unwelcome events in ways that enable groups and individuals to work together to minimize the adverse consequences of such crisis" [3]. A resilient community, it follows, draws its strength and stability from its members' social capital; this is a concept that captures the phenomenon of social networks and the norms of trust and reciprocity associated with them. "When such elements exist", Golam M. Mathbor states, "better preparedness and superior ability to respond to the disaster and its implications effectively are assured" [4,5].

The study that follows deviates from the extreme situations—disasters and wars—on which the development of the community resilience concept was based. It aims to demonstrate the continued validity of the postulate that communities can attain their objectives only if they "work together", irrespective of their material resources, in situations

of protracted crisis such as economic distress or lengthy struggle against economically or politically powerful elements.

I wish to substantiate and prove this hypothesis by offering a local-historical reconstruction and an analysis that, together, shed light on practices used by local neighborhood communities that faced protracted crises.

The advantage of historical research, which by nature deals with matters already concluded, lies in its retrospective gaze on the ways members of a community in crisis coped. An ex-post contemplation such as this reveals additional variables that may enhance our understanding of the community-resilience phenomenon in current contexts as well.

## 2. The Case Studies

This article is based on two case studies harvested from the history of Israel.

The first looks at Nahalat Ahim, a neighborhood in the southern segment of the Nahlaot cluster of neighborhoods in central Jerusalem. Founded by members of the Yemenite-Jewish community in the 1930s, the neighborhood was comprised of houses that the residents constructed themselves. Although these were built to a somewhat higher standard than those in the other Nahlaot neighborhoods (some of which were founded in the late nineteenth century), they were still highly crowded and deficient in basic infrastructure [6]. In the late 1960s, a struggle ensued against attempts to implement the Construction and Clearance Law in part of Nahlaot, including Nahalat Ahim. The struggle was spearheaded by the Nahalat Ahim local committee, which mobilized a vast array of players and skills in order to thwart the clearance and relocation scheme. In an earlier study of the Nahlaot affair, I and my associate Elia Etkin investigated the dynamics that evolved between government at large and two local committees that differed in terms of the outcomes that they desired. That preliminary study of the affair, described below, addressed and assessed the likelihood of an impact on policymakers and policies by marginalized but well-organized communities [7]. In the present case study, I elaborate on the one smaller community that eventually won its struggle. My objective is to solve the riddle of this community's resilience by delving into its internal relations (bonding social capital) and its members' capacity to utilize networks from other circles (bridging and linking social capital).

The second case study also concerns clearance and relocation, but in the opposite direction. In the Shemen Beach (Hof Shemen) neighborhood of Haifa, people organized in order to have the neighborhood dismantled and its residents relocated.

Shemen Beach was a marginal neighborhood in Haifa that was established before the State of Israel came into being. Based on huts and metal shacks that were built without permits, it continued to expand vigorously after the attainment of statehood against the background of the newborn country's grave housing crisis. In this neighborhood, populated by Jews and Arabs in illegal structures that afforded some of the poorest living conditions that Israel knew, most inhabitants were determined to cure their housing distress by moving into new tenements that the state had begun to construct for recently arrived immigrants. Since most of the residents did not qualify for preferential treatment in housing because they were not immigrants or were immigrants but had not been living in recognized transit camps or immigrant centers, they needed to secure special terms that would allow them to relocate from their existing homes to the new apartment buildings.

The living conditions that fueled the inhabitants' distress were manifested at both the personal and public levels; leaking and rickety residential huts that lacked electricity, sewage drainage, and running water, and surroundings that were considered temporary and were therefore denied the most basic infrastructure, including schools, healthcare, streets, and transport (Hareuveni, M. "What Seawater Didn't Do, the Government Will Do", *Lamerhav* 1957, August 16, p. 4). Here, as in Nahalat Ahim, the residents coped with their hardships by establishing local committees that confronted the authorities. In Shemen Beach, however, the residents' goal was the opposite of that in Nahalat Ahim: advancing the "eradication" of their neighborhood under conditions that would allow most of them

to leave and solve their housing woes in other ways. The case of Shemen Beach is unique in that dismantling the community became an expression of the community's "resilience".

In both cases, I retrieved my data from written records that were produced during residents' campaigns vis-à-vis local and national authorities and deposited in the Israel State Archives (ISA), the Jerusalem Municipal Archives (JMA), and the Haifa Municipal Archives (HMA). In the case of Nahalat Ahim, where the residents remained in their community, I also held in-depth interviews with individuals who had lived in the neighborhood during the crisis (some still living there today) or with family members of prominent leaders who have passed away (see Appendix A). I integrated these oral testimonies into the analysis in order to shed light on the informal networks that played a role throughout the struggle. In the case of Shemen Beach, I could not apply this methodology because the community had been dissolved and the struggle took place so long ago that none of the major players is still alive. However, the neighborhood attracted attention at the time of the events, and journalists interviewed residents and covered their distress. These interviews and journalists' observations are included in the analysis below.

### 3. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

In both case studies, the committees operated within communitarian milieus that I will profile and compare in terms of their characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses.

The frame of analysis yielded in this manner rests on two theoretical pillars. First, I examine the functioning of the two communities by means of their committees, following a communitarian self-perception bounded in ways that I will specify pursuant to the social-structure dimension of the community as noted by Hunter (1974) and Cnaan, Milofsky, and Hunter ([8], pp. 1–19). Second, I investigate the modus operandi of the committees in their efforts to expand and deepen social capital, identify and cultivate intra-community social networks, and mobilize various circles outside the community [1].

#### 3.1. Community Organizations

One of the dimensions of community that enjoys broad consensus is related to voluntary organized groups. It is for good reason that Cnaan, Milofsky, and Hunter based their discussion of the concept of community on "community organizations", with special emphasis on "local organizations." Members of a community create small and medium-sized organizations to promote various causes. Some of these organizations are informal and tend to be embedded in the communities where they operate. Their activity is often measured more in "process" than in "product", and their expressive value is frequently equal to or even greater than their instrumental value ([8], pp. 1–19). These voluntary organized groups are based on relationships among members of the community and, foremost, on their willingness to contribute whatever the task requires. They are often led by people who are drawn to action in response to immediate needs (*ibid.*). Hunter predicates the discussion about community organizations at various levels of institutionalization and formality that exist under the social-structure dimension of the community; one of three dimensions that, he says, determine the degree of "communityness". In his fieldwork in neighborhoods in Chicago in the 1970s, Hunter found that members of local organizations tend to have a clearer cognitive picture of the local area than others do, and, in turn, express a stronger attachment to that area. The local organizations also enable interaction among members of the community and between them and external players ([9], p. 157). Both aspects—connection and interaction—stand out strongly in my two test cases. Hunter's important distinction, a relevant one for our understanding of the case of Shemen Beach (on which I elaborate below), is that there is no correlation between those aware of the existence of local organizations and those who hold a positive view toward their place of residence ([9], pp. 152–153).

In both case studies, my unit of analysis is the neighborhood committee, a type of voluntary association that was common in most neighborhoods in Israel at the time and that led the community's struggle. This entity, as I demonstrate below, generated norms of trust

and reciprocity within the neighborhood and thus became an anchor for the development of the community identity and the community's ability to mobilize members for action or induce decision-makers to take the community into consideration.

### 3.2. Social Capital

To explain what a community must have in order to cope with a state of crisis, various scholars invoke the concept of social capital, a term helpfully defined by Aldrich as "the networks and resources available to people through their connections to others" ([1], p. 14).

A series of scholars, starting with Putnam in the 1990s [5,10] and continuing today, refer to norms and patterns of reciprocity and trust, both resulting from and leading to collective actions that bring individuals, groups, and institutions together ([1,4,11,12], pp. 650–667). Thus, the preconditions for community resilience, in the sense of being able to "work together to minimize the adverse consequences of [ . . . ] crisis" [3], depend on local community organizations and social capital.

As the social ties that played a role in coping with the crisis and leading a community struggle in Nahalat Ahim and Shemen Beach came to light, various types of social capital found expression in different intensities. Bonds within and between community members generate "bonding social capital" ([1], p. 60). When members of a group connect with other local networks or cross ethnic, racial, and religious rifts, they create "bridging social capital" (ibid.); when people interact across explicit, formal, or institutionalized lines of power or authority, they materialize "linking social capital" ([12], p. 655). Thus, ties are established with authorities and decision-makers who sit "some vertical distance away in positions of power" ([1], p. 62). As I show below, it was mostly bonding social capital, grounded in trust and reciprocity, and linking social capital, with players outside of the community, that materialized through the social structure of the neighborhood committees.

I now briefly present the case studies and elaborate on the social structures that were put in place, and the social capital produced, in two challenged neighborhoods, and thus attempt to untangle the riddle of their community resilience.

#### 3.2.1. Case Study 1: Opposing and Preventing Gentrification and Slum Clearance—Nahalat Ahim

In August 1971, after two years of deliberation, the Government of Israel officially announced its intention of launching a clearance program involving extensive areas in Nahlaot (Nahlaot Clearance Area, 5 May 1974, ISA, 3436/3). The announcement marked the start of a nine-month period in which residents of the area earmarked for clearance were allowed to present objections to the scheme (*Davar*, 1971) [13]. A self-defined Nahalat Ahim neighborhood committee submitted such an objection; so, too, did a lengthy series of residents (Subcommittee for the Matter of the Nahlaot Neighborhood in Jerusalem, 17 January 1971, ISA, 3429/33). The Nahalat Ahim committee's objection to the program stirred displeasure among representatives of another committee that called itself the "public committee" and purported to represent all residents of the area intended for clearance on the assumption that they supported the program broadly (Public Committee for Zikhronot Nahlaot, Letter #4 [September 1971], ISA, 5610). During this time, we will track the Nahalat Ahim committee in its struggle to thwart their inclusion in the clearance scheme.

The committee began by laying down working procedures vis-à-vis the authorities. Its members appointed a chair and a secretary and gave them sole authority to represent the neighborhood vis-à-vis state and municipal public entities (Sa'ad, Yefet, and Ratzabi to Shimoni, 24 September 1971, JMA, 5610). Concurrently, they began to mobilize residents for public struggle; two months after the government's announcement, residents of the Nahalat Ahim and Zikhron Ahim neighborhoods held a protest rally, providing the neighborhood representatives backing to pursue the struggle by turning to the government and public opinion (Nahalat Ahim and Zikhron Ahim neighborhood committee, 19 October 1971, ISA, 3432/8).

One of the neighborhood representatives' first achievements found expression in a meeting that took place in the Knesset (the Israeli parliament) at the office of Member of Knesset Moshe Baram of the Labor Party, one of the architects and authors of the 1965 clearance law and himself a resident of Nahalat Ahim. Baram, serving as a mediator of sorts, brought two officials to the meeting: Zvi Tirosh, chair of the government's Rebuild and Clear Authority (hereinafter: the Authority) and the Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem, Haim Marinov. All ten members of the Nahalat Ahim residents' committee, including five women, took part in the meeting. This gender equality in the composition of the panel was highly unusual for the time. As I show below, it attested to the strength of the committee's traction among the residents, signifying the existence of bonding social capital. Another possible manifestation of this capital was the participation in the meeting of additional neighborhood residents who were not active on the committee but instead in various public capacities (Nahalat Ahim Committee meeting at the Knesset, 6 December 1971, ISA, 3432/8).

At the meeting, the neighborhood representatives argued against the program on various grounds and criticized the Authority's comportment. They saw no justification for the choice of Nahalat Ahim as the area to be cleared; this neighborhood was in better shape, they claimed, than other neighborhoods that had been omitted from the program. The Authority, they continued, overlooked the internal resilience of the community and the excellent rapport that prevailed among its members. Finally, they demanded that nothing be done without them as the authorized representatives of the neighborhood. Even though the Authority's delegate dismissed the allegations and criticized the personal attacks on him, he expressed his wish to act in good spirit and in coordination with the residents. The deputy mayor spoke in a similar vein.

Baram, well acquainted with his neighbors and emphasizing their credibility, affirmed his support for the program but made it clear that he would do nothing by force: "We are not going to war with each other". Concluding the meeting, he firmly advised the Authority's delegate that the Nahalat Ahim committee was a "recognized representative" and that the law would not be applied "unless the matter is concluded in negotiations" (ibid.).

Even though the channels of discourse between the residents and the policymakers were opened and preserved, and notwithstanding Baram's role as a mediator whom both sides trusted, the Nahalat Ahim committee also turned to legal action. Avraham Bar-Yefet, son of the committee member Zivia Yefet, met with Tirosh and called attention to procedural failures in promulgating the official notice (Bar-Yefet to Tirosh, 20 December 1971, ISA, 3432/A). The committee also demanded a clear answer about the main bone of contention: the percentage of residents who would be allowed to remain in the neighborhood after its renewal. The Authority responded by not responding (Tirosh to Ratzabi, 17 December 1971, ISA, 3432/8).

Another player recruited for the struggle was the rabbinical judge, member of the High Rabbinical Court, and neighborhood resident Yosef Kappah. His wife, Bracha, was a prominent leader in the neighborhood and a member of the committee. Among his multiple titles and achievements, including the Israel Prize, Rabbi Kappah chose to speak out against the plan as president of the Yemenite-Jewish community in Jerusalem. In this capacity, he stressed that he spoke as the public's representative and not as a cleric or a resident of the neighborhood. Publishing a column in the widely circulated newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth*, he accused the government of deliberate discrimination on ethnic grounds: "They are concocting malevolent and heinous schemes around us and are planning to drive the Mizrahi [Eastern-ethnic] communities out of the neighborhood." (Yosef Kappah, "A Neighborhood in the Shadow of Clearance", *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 31 December 1971). This shifted the struggle against the Nahlaot clearance plan into a higher gear: instead of a local struggle, it became a national one with ethnic connotations that touched the raw nerves of Israeli society.

The authorities, in turn, trying to soften up the opponents in any way possible, sought to switch their loyalties by co-opting them into the process. To this end, they set up a

meeting between a Nahalat Ahim delegation and the Minister of Housing in order to offer them professional stewarding by the Authority. The Nahalat Ahim people, however, turned down the invitation and avoided all contact with the Authority (Tirosh to Ratzabi, 10 January 1972, ISA, 3432/8). The committee's resistance began to seep into the discourse of the national-level elected echelon. Zevulun Hammer of the National Religious Party specified the ethnic consideration as a factor that influenced the choice of this neighborhood over others that were worse off, and Nissim Eliad of the Independent Liberal Party asked, "To what extent will things take place with the citizens' consent?" (minutes of Nahlaot Affairs Subcommittee meeting, 17 January 1972, ISA, 3429/33). The representatives of the pro-clearance public committee, eager to defeat the trend, also turned to various elected officials and the media (Haviv Shimoni, memorandum, January 1972, ISA, 3432/8). Concurrently, however, the anti-clearance Nahalat Ahim and Zikhron Ahim committee appealed to the same people and with no less resolve. One of its members, writing to the Mayor of Jerusalem, Teddy Kollek, made his stance clear: "My family and I will not leave our home. No pressure on us will have any results even when we'll be staring down the barrels of rifles" (Yehuda Danoch to Teddy Kollek, 26 January 1972, JMA, 4960–5609).

Gradually, those at the Authority and City Hall realized that the crisis would end only with compromise: the clearance would go ahead without the Nahalat Ahim and Zikhron Ahim neighborhoods (Authority meeting, 31 January 1972, ISA, 3434/3). In a document that it distributed, the Municipality emphasized dialogue with the residents and denied any intention of "throwing anyone out of his home" (Mayor, JMA, 4960-5609). Nevertheless, the Authority and the government continued to move the original scheme ahead (meeting of Authority, 20 March 1972, ISA, 3432/8).

In response, the committee sent a personalized letter to all government ministers, alleging that the plan was meant to clear valuable land in the city center for a commercial center (Nahalat Ahim committee to government ministers, 11 April 1972, JMA, 4960-5609). Turning up the rhetoric, the committee spoke of a scheme to "kick out" the residents, causing immense harm to their livelihood by distancing from the commercial district and the open-air market. Aside from the practical rationales against the clearance scheme, the committee offered a reasoning that pertained to social damage and offense to the community framework "that no institution or body can create artificially." In their letter, the committee members pleaded with the ministers to exclude their neighborhoods from the intended clearance area (ibid.).

At the end of the lawful nine-month period for the presentation of objections and responses to the program, the Nahlaot clearance plan was cut back significantly. As finally approved in May 1972, it left the Nahalat Ahim and Zikhron Ahim neighborhoods out (Clearance area in Nahlaot, early notice and announcement, 15 May 1972, ISA, 3436/3).

Even after the downsized program was approved, the public debate continued and the representatives of residents who supported and opposed it were invited to a series of discussions with the Labor Committee of the Knesset. In these meetings, the neighborhood delegates objected to the very labeling of their neighborhood as a slum and criticized the planners for not understanding its deep sociocultural structure: "The social fabric in Nahalat Ahim and Zikhron Ahim gives people peace of mind; the residents live as a single community" (meeting of Knesset Labor Committee, 15 June 1972, Knesset Archive).

Although the Nahlaot clearance plan was scaled down, it remained intact for several years until it died a natural death. One of the explanations that the planners offered for the difficulty in implementing it specified the exclusion of Nahalat Ahim and Zikhron Ahim, reducing the potential area for construction and making the entire scheme economically unviable [7].

### 3.2.2. Case Study 2: Demanding and Campaigning for Slum Clearance—The Shemen Beach Neighborhood

In July 1955, a delegation of residents of the Shemen Beach neighborhood visited the Haifa municipal secretary at his office and presented him with "the residents' urgent

demands." These desiderata, set forth on a petition signed by 290 residents, included "construction of unrestricted rental housing, public conveniences, lighting, a school, a well-baby center, and neighborhood cleaning services" ("Residents of Shemen Beach Demand Services", *Lamerhav*, 18 July 1955). According to the documentation in our possession, it was the first initiative that attests to organized activity by the residents of this neighborhood and stands as an act indicative of a community's self-awareness.

This organized initiative appears to have arisen against the background of reports about the neighborhood residents' expectation of receiving eviction orders, which were indeed sent out some time later. The press reported the orders but also assumed that the Municipality would not force the residents out without ensuring alternative housing for them ("I Saw, I Heard: the Ard a-Ramal Neighborhood in Haifa", *Ha'aretz*, 8 December 1955; "Residents of Shemen Beach Neighborhood Won't Let Themselves Be Abandoned without a Roof over their Heads", *Kol ha-'Am*, 5 December 1955). Israel was then in the throes of a dire housing crisis due to steep population growth fueled by immigrants, mostly indigent and coming from situations of deprivation or persecution. The municipality did offer the inhabitants a solution: sign up for one of the "popular housing" projects that were based on a down payment that the residents of Shemen Beach could not afford. A journalist from the communist opposition newspaper *Kol ha-'Am*, who visited the location, intoned: "Dozens of residents of the place told me that they wouldn't budge and would struggle until they're assured human housing" (*Kol ha-'Am*, *ibid*).

At roughly this time, the problem of Shemen Beach was discussed at Haifa City Hall; the quarter was described as "a serious sanitary nuisance and a grave social and welfare problem for the city". To determine whether clearance was a real possibility, the discussants were asked to assess the likelihood of the residents' participating in the purchase of alternative housing and therefore decided to conduct a survey among them (HMA, 01596.2, memorandum of meeting concerning Ard al-Ramal, 5 January 1956). At this point, a soi-disant Shemen Beach neighborhood committee entered the picture. The committee, headed by the neighborhood resident Esther Ben-Giat, met with the Deputy Mayor and handed him a memorandum with a list of needed improvements in the area. The authors of the document also described the goal of the committee: "to move all the residents to rental housing" and, until then, to assure basic living conditions (HMA, 01596.2, Ben-Giat to Deputy Mayor Schub, 22 January 1956). When the committee members got no answer, they sent additional letters, demanded to be invited to a meeting, and warned that they would turn to the central government (HMA, 01596.2, Ben-Giat to Mayor Abba Khoushy, 7 April 1956).

The envoys met with the Deputy Mayor about a month later. At the encounter, the discussants began to mull the conditions for clearing the neighborhood and even noted the sums that the residents would have to invest in the cause (HMA, 01596.2, Ben-Giat to Khoushy (undated)). At this stage, the Municipality still assumed that the residents would have to commit to taking mortgage loans on regular terms (HMA, 01596.2, Khoushy to Shemen Beach Neighborhood Committee, 8 May 1956). The committee, in turn, stepped up the pressure to find another solution and, for this purpose, attempted to have residents sign a document that would authorize it to negotiate with all institutions on their behalf. The committee, acting as a mediator between the Municipality and the residents, showed them a document in which they were supposed to undertake clearing the land where they were dwelling and deposit a sum of money for housing purposes (HMA, 01596.2, Shemen Beach neighborhood power-of-attorney and commitment form, 8 May 1956). The residents resisted this initiative, demanding instead official confirmation of the terms of clearance that they would be offered. The committee, responding to the residents' objections, presented the Municipality with an alternative phrasing that reflected the spirit of the residents' demands (HMA, 01596.2, Ben-Giat to Khoushy, 11 May 1956). Concurrently, it continued to insist that the Municipality deal with the neighborhood's ongoing problems (HMA, 01596.2, Ben-Giat to Khoushy, 22 June 1956).

The talks between the committee and the Municipality rose in volume in light of the gap between the terms that the latter offered the evictees and the minimum conditions that the residents demanded in order to equalize their status with that of immigrants who left the transit camps. Importantly, many inhabitants of Shemen Beach were recent immigrants who had chosen not to use the transit camps or to leave them on their own counsel, thus, in effect, waiving their entitlement to government assistance (HMA, 01596.2, Khoushy to Ben-Giat, 16 July 1956). The residents' demand for an improvement in their current living conditions until clearance occurred was also turned down on the grounds that investing tens of thousands of Israel pounds "lack[ed] public moral justification" in view of the illegality of the existing structures (HMA, 01596.2, Haifa Municipality memorandum to Shemen Beach Neighborhood Committee, 30 September 1956).

The breakthrough occurred only after two deputy mayors, Zvi Barzilai and Moshe Fleiman, stepped in after meeting with the neighborhood committee and began to act for the establishment of a loan fund, which came into being two years later in cooperation with the Municipality, the state, and a public bank (HMA, 01596.2, Municipal Secretary to Barzilai and Fleiman, 12 May 1957; Barzilai to Savings and Loan Bank, 11 November 1957). At this time, dealings with Shemen Beach took a political turn. Poale Zion-Ahdut ha-'Avoda (a party within the Israel Labor Movement that seceded from the ruling party, Mapai, and would reunite with it several years later) undertook to lead the treatment of the neighborhood, and its representative, Deputy Mayor Zvi Barzilai, was matched with the chair of the Shemen Beach Neighborhood Committee, Ben-Giat ("Will the Ministry of Labor Take Care of the Shemen Beach Neighborhood in Haifa?" *Lamerhav*, 17 June 1958, p. 4; HMA, 01596.2, Ben-Giat to Barzilai, 30 June 1958). This connection led to a re-discussion at City Hall that ended with a resolution to eradicate the neighborhood and allocate apartments in new tenements to the evacuees under payment terms that would include loans covering the full cost, namely, without requiring any down payment. This roadmap, which equalized the status of the inhabitants of Shemen Beach with that of the transit-camp evacuees, paved the way to the "liquidation" of the neighborhood (*Lamerhav*, 1 October 1958, Reuveni, "Shemen Beach Neighborhood to Be Liquidated").

In early April 1959, the Municipality appointed a special committee to deal with the clearance of Shemen Beach and invited members of the neighborhood committee to testify before it at its first meeting (HMA, 01596.2, Barzilai to Ben-Giat, 5 April 1959). At this time, another political player came onto the scene: the Haifa Labor Council and its representative, Moshe Shahal, overseer of activity in disadvantaged neighborhoods for the Histadrut (the General Federation of Labor) in Haifa (HMA, 01596.2, Shahal to Khoushy, 20 April 1959). Shahal's reports indicate that, alongside Ben-Giat's committee, an additional body of residents operated in Shemen Beach, it, too, dealing with neighborhood affairs. Speaking for the Haifa Labor Council, Shahal demanded that the municipal panel enter into talks with the latter committee, to which he gave his support (*ibid.*).

For the purposes of our discussion, the question of which committee "officially" represented the neighborhood is moot. More interesting is the very fact that in this unofficial neighborhood, considered the poorest of Haifa (its residents occupying illegal structures and many on welfare or barely scraping by), two committees operated simultaneously and engaged in local social self-organization, one of the parameters of strong community consciousness. As for the heart of the matter, each committee's relationship with a different political player and different policymaking entities (the Municipality, the Histadrut, and the Poale Zion-Ahdut ha-'Avoda Party) created linking social capital that amplified the residents' bargaining power and "mediated" their wishes until the Municipality of Haifa officially decided to start evicting them (HMA, 01596.2, "Clearing the Shemen Beach Neighborhood", Municipal Secretary, 30 June 1959). The residents' growing bargaining power also resonated in a decision by Poale Zion-Ahdut ha-'Avoda to hold a rally in the neighborhood, where residents were told that they could demand compensation for their eviction in addition to the loan they would receive from the city. At this assembly, too, the internal political-party schism that had come about in the neighborhood emerged as

each committee chose a political side on which to rely (HMA, 01596.2, Yaakov Hazan to Khoushy, 11 May 1959). This rift may have been to the residents' advantage because it forced the policymakers to compete. Their rivalry escalated when riots erupted in the nearby Wadi Salib neighborhood, underscoring the intensity of the crisis that immigrants from the Islamic lands were facing. The upturn in involvement of and even competition among political elements in solving the Shemen Beach problem may also be understood against this background.

On 24 October 1959, Khoushy, now the Mayor of Haifa, informed the inhabitants of Shemen Beach that the Municipality was preparing an action plan for their relocation to permanent housing. The notice included a commitment by the municipal administration and the Housing Division of the Ministry of Labor to make relocation possible "on easier financial terms than in any other housing project in Israel" (HMA, 01596.2, Khoushy, to residents of the Shemen Beach neighborhood). This statement may be seen as the first public corroboration of the neighborhood residents' attainments due to their having organized.

In the first two years after the decision, the residents (by means of their committees) continued to be involved in the clearance process, including by signing up those who wished to evacuate and coordinating the forwarding of information to the Municipality (HMA, 01596.2, Goliger to Lupo Zilberman, 8 September 1959). Parallel to their relations with City Hall and the Haifa Labor Council, they were in touch with the director of the Housing Division and reported directly to him about the extent of the exodus from the neighborhood. Remaining there, they noted, were many families that could not afford to relocate under the threshold conditions for their departure (HMA, 1600.6, Shemen Beach Neighborhood Committee to Khoushy 7 March 1961). Thus, the mayor met with their representatives and together they discussed ways of expediting their evacuation and increasing the size of their loans (*ibid.*).

It took until 1968 to depopulate Shemen Beach for good; this was nine years after the Municipality resolved to do this and thirteen years after the residents began to organize in order to facilitate the clearance under conditions that they could meet. This serious delay was occasioned by a shortage of housing possibilities in Israel's long-standing cities, to which the response began only after the municipal slum-clearance companies began to build in the early 1960s. After 1961, the "communityness" of Shemen Beach appears to have declined badly because residents who were able to organize and motivated to act—those with agency—had left, leaving behind those who were weakest in the financial, social, and familial senses.

The difference between the case studies presented above, of Shemen Beach and of Nahalat Ahim, lies not only in the definition of the community's goal—staying put in the latter case, demanding clearance and relocation in the former—but also, importantly, in the distinction between a positive sense of community and a negative one. The motive force behind the clearance of Shemen Beach and the dispersal of its inhabitants appears to have been the negative image of the neighborhood in the residents' eyes and in those of the citizenry of Haifa at large. Alongside these acute differences, however, are conspicuous similarities in the role of neighborhood committees in coping with their respective crises and in the practical measures they undertook.

The next question we ask is how well the neighborhood communities fit the definition of the social-structure dimension of community. To answer, we analyze the types of social capital that were produced during the struggle to clear the neighborhood or to thwart that very outcome.

#### **4. Discussion and Conclusions: The Historical Case Studies in View of the Community-Resilience Paradigm**

The committees that represented the residents of Nahalat Ahim and Shemen Beach belong to the larger phenomenon of small and medium-sized organizations, firmly planted in their communities, that Cnaan, Milofsky, and Hunter characterize as having "permeable borders", that place stronger emphasis on process than on product, that emerge in response

to a concrete problem, and that disappear after the problem ceases to be relevant. The organizers of these entities shape them in their image: usually ordinary citizens who are driven to action by some ad hoc necessity. The added value of their activity is more expressive than instrumental. They have no resources of their own, relying instead on relationships and others' "willingness to do what is necessary to get the job done" ([8], p. 2).

Contemplating the Nahalat Ahim and Shemen Beach neighborhood committees, we detect many of these characteristics. Both committees were led by residents, both men and women, who arose from "inside" and "from the bottom up." In the case of Nahalat Ahim, the leadership coalesced around an ad hoc necessity but continued to exist afterwards as well (see the full archival file from the Jerusalem Municipal Archives: JMA 4960/5609). In both cases, most activity took place at the expressive level: writing letters and articulating a position vis-à-vis policymakers. Neither committee had material resources. Neither is known to have charged membership dues, maintained a physical infrastructure, or even, as best as is known, had an office. The address for responses to letters was that of one of the committee members (in Shemen Beach) and a post-office box (in Nahalat Ahim).

In the case of Nahalat Ahim, true to Cnaan, Milofsky, and Hunter's differentiation, the committee "depend[ed] on relationship and history and the willingness of people to contribute what is needed when the time comes for work to be done" ([1], pp. 67–68). Examples are the Nahalat Ahim committee's turning to the son of Zivia Yefet for legal aid and to Rabbi Yosef Kappah, a neighborhood resident and the husband of Bracha Kappah, for public support (see above).

Observing the roles of community organizations in the local community structure, we find the cases of Nahalat Ahim and Shemen Beach compatible with Hunter's findings in the 1970s. The neighborhood committees served as a framework for interaction and embodied a local symbolic culture. Both central members of the Nahalat Ahim committee, Zvia Yefet and Bracha Kappah, maintained daily intensive contact with residents, particularly the most disempowered of them. Bracha Kappah, born in Yemen and wife of Rabbi Yosef Kappah, was a social entrepreneur who ran a relief program for elderly residents while the neighborhood's struggle was in full swing. For her social initiatives, expanding over the years, she eventually received the title of Esteemed Citizen of Jerusalem and won the Israel Prize (interview with Naomi Tsahi, 19 October 2021). Zivia Yefet, older than Bracha Kappah, was in her sixties at the time of the struggle. She, too, had been born in Yemen and by then was a widow whose eleven children had grown up and moved out. Many of them held positions in the defense system and were active in the Labor Party. Her home was a one-woman "institution" that had a storeroom stocked with clothing, housewares, and food for the needy; the rooms of her home were open to those in need of shelter (interview with Eitan Kuberski, 17 October 2021). The activity of these two women, who were also personal friends and collaborators in their charitable projects, included the mobilization of residents, women in particular; it was this that enabled them to line up the community's support for the struggle against the clearance scheme. Thus, bonding social capital was produced in Nahalat Ahim and the community was able to draw on it in its confrontation with powerful government and municipal players. In the case of Shemen Beach, there is no indication of informal relations between neighborhood residents and their representatives on the committee, but the residents did appear to trust their representatives as mediators between the neighborhood and the Municipality in carrying out the survey (HMA, 01596.2, Ben-Giat to Khoushy, 21 January 1958).

At the level of local symbolic culture, both committees made use of the name of the neighborhood that they represented, even though they had other options around which to organize. In the case of Nahalat Ahim, a "public" committee in the Nahlaot complex purported to represent everyone living in the complex that had been earmarked for inclusion in the urban renewal program, irrespective of the actual neighborhood where they lived. The Nahalat Ahim committee clashed with the public committee and insisted that only it, comprised entirely of residents of Nahalat Ahim and the adjacent Zikhron Ahim quarter, was authorized to speak on the residents' behalf (Nahalat Ahim committee

to Haviv Shimoni, 26 September 1971, JMA, 3432/8). The activity of the Nahalat Ahim committee was helpful in demarcating the borders of the area, strengthening the residents' sense of identification with their neighborhood and distinguishing between it and other quarters in Nahlaot where people felt differently about the program [7].

This role was manifested with even greater strength in Shemen Beach because this neighborhood, unplanned and illegal from the outset, was divided into sub-neighborhoods based on the characteristics of their structures (HMA, 01596.2, sanitation survey). Although the authorities were familiar with this internal segmentation, the two committees that operated there insisted on calling themselves by the inclusive name of the neighborhood, Shemen Beach, thus demarcating the area and proclaiming it a "recognized" urban unit, a "neighborhood", helping them to present claims on the residents' behalf.

Another important differentiation relates to the committees' roles in intensifying "symbolic identification" with the local area. The distinction that Hunter found in 1970s Chicago between "attachment" and "evaluation" finds expression here. While Hunter found a fit between the evaluation of the local community by its members' and their overall social status (social, racial, and economic), he determined that residents' "attachment" to their place is contingent not upon their status but on their integration into the local social structure (Hunter, 1974: 128–129). These findings square with the cases of Nahalat Ahim and Shemen Beach and explain the high levels of organization and effectiveness of the Shemen Beach committee despite distress and poverty. In both neighborhoods, a clear "attachment" is seen between the residents and the neighborhood, viz. the place and the community, but no identical "evaluation" is derived from it. In Nahalat Ahim, residents belonged to extended families that had numerous offspring there. The population did include struggling families alongside members of the lower-middle-class but occupied a higher social rung than that of residents of Shemen Beach because they were not recently landed immigrants. Accordingly, they exuded pride in the community that they had established and went out of their way on various occasions to emphasize their community cohesion, disproving any allegation of their neighborhood being a slum (see above). In Shemen Beach, the point of departure was the opposite: most residents were recently arrived immigrants and their social cohesion was flaccid, reflecting their diverse countries and cultures of origin in addition to their desperate economic distress (HMA, 01596.2, Shemen Beach neighborhood survey). Indeed, despite their attachment to the neighborhood and their willingness to organize under and in its name, their self-organization rested primarily on a disdain for the neighborhood. As evidence of this, their whole purpose in organizing was negative: dismantling and eradicating the neighborhood and not renewing and revitalizing it. The case of Shemen Beach corroborates the findings of Brodsky (1996) about the role of a negative psychological sense of community as a motive force for action at the community level.

### *Social Capital*

Even though the struggle in Nahalat Ahim received the support of the official national organization of the Yemenite-Jewish community, significant bridging social capital is not attested in the committee's activities and was even less evident in Shemen Beach. Indications (of different intensities and depth) of the existence of bonding social capital did exist in both neighborhoods, but it seems that the social capital that made an impact, the decisive sort that received priority in the committees' work and helped to leverage the struggle into real achievements, was linking social capital. As I demonstrated above, the committees devoted most of their attention to creating paths of access to municipal and national policymakers and power centers.

Here, too, the case of Nahalat Ahim is more salient and decipherable than that of Shemen Beach due to the possibility of interviewing erstwhile activists in the struggle or their acquaintances. From this oral documentation emerged the fact that many committee members in Nahalat Ahim were members in various political parties. Gavriel Ratzabi was closely involved with the National Religious Party; Zivia Yefet and her children were Labor

Party activists who numbered Member of Knesset Moshe Baram among their friends. Not for nothing did Baram serve as a mediator between the committee and government and municipal elements. These connections with the ruling party (Labor) and the National Religious Party, a participant in the governing coalition, also explain the committee's ability to access government ministers and the formulation of the compromise that left the clearance program in place but exempted Nahalat Ahim and Zikhron Ahim from its provisions—an omission that ultimately brought down the whole plan, as Kabalo and Etkin explain. Another resident of the neighborhood who was not active on the committee but attended several of its meetings was Shalom Habshush, a Histadrut activist very closely tied to the Baram family. An additional committee member, Aharon Saad, was affiliated with a party on the Right, Gahal, which had seceded from the government at the beginning of the period discussed. At the municipal level, Kappah's and Habshush's connections created much utility. Kappah enjoyed close relations with the Mayor of Jerusalem, Teddy Kollek, as a consequence of her charitable activities.

The case of Shemen Beach is harder to decode because its circumstances rule out ethnographic research that would supplement the archival probe. Many residents of the neighborhood passed away and acquaintances of the committee activists can hardly be tracked down because the entire community disintegrated and scattered. The indications of linking social capital in this case emerge only due to the discovery of correspondence and meetings between Ben-Giat's committee and the Poale Zion-Ahdut ha-'Avoda faction at the Municipality of Haifa and the Deputy Mayor, Zvi Barzilai, along with evidence—scant but unequivocal—of the connection between the other committee headed by Jacob Hayon and the person in charge of the city's disadvantaged neighborhoods in the Haifa Labor Council, Moshe Shahal. In both cases, the committees plainly understood the importance of these links in communicating their message about the need to tear down the neighborhood and allow its residents to evacuate on the basis of equal status with those leaving the transit camps. It appears that the elected officials, mostly from the municipality and the Federation of Labor, assumed that rapprochement with the committees would be politically useful to them.

High levels of social capital, Aldrich explains, may offer a way to solve collective action problems. Continuing, he finds three main mechanisms in social capital that may help to overcome such problems: (1) establishing new norms of compliance and participation among network members; (2) providing information and knowledge to individuals in the group; and (3) establishing trust ([1], pp. 67–68). The evidence from Nahalat Ahim and Shemen Beach demonstrates that the neighborhood committees addressed themselves to all of these collective-action matters, at least to a certain extent, in order to “define problems, get work done, and achieve coordination” ([8], p. 6).

This retrospective look at the neighborhood committees in Nahalat Ahim and Shemen Beach, which promoted contrasting solutions to a similar problem, yields additional raw material for scholarly efforts to solve the riddle of community resilience. The findings emphasize the decisive role of community members in coping with a protracted crisis. The joint activity in local organizational settings in Shemen Beach and Nahalat Ahim produced social capital, foremost of the bonding and linking types, and led each community to the different if not clashing outcome that it desired. In both case studies, the residents coped with a weak point of departure. In Nahalat Ahim, they had to deal with a government resolution, municipal interests, and opposition to their stance among residents of adjacent areas who challenged their right to organize independently. In Shemen Beach, the community was a mosaic of recent immigrants of diverse origins who lacked real material resources. Their claim to the status of “neighborhood” or “community” was wobbly because their entire place of residence had been established illegally.

Given that these points of departure reflect inferiority vis-à-vis the authorities, one would expect them to have left the residents less able to bargain for their fate. The answer to the riddle of community resilience that they demonstrated by managing to attain their goals is found in their pattern of local organization and the practices that they adopted,

which generated social capital that, in one case, allowed the community to survive and, in the other, allowed its residents to leave and start over elsewhere.

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## Appendix A

**Table A1.** Interviewees from Nahalat Ahim, Zichron Ahim, and Nahalat Zion, and family members of prominent residents of the neighborhoods (listed in alphabetical order of surname). All interviews were conducted in October–November 2021. Residency refers to the years under consideration in the study (1950s–1970s).

No.	Name	Gender	Age on Date of Interview	Affiliation with Neighborhood or Family from Neighborhood
1	D. Avidan	F	?	Conducted field research on behalf of the Nahalaot community center in the 1990s
2.	T. Atiya	F	83	Resident of Nahalat Ahim, acquainted with Bracha Kappach
3.	Z. Baruch	M	88	Born in the "Tin Shack" neighborhood Shevet Zedek, adjacent to Nahalat Zion; resident of Nahalat Zion
4	Y. Ben-Yosef	M	61	Nephew of Haviv Shimoni, chair of Nahlaot Public Committee, member of Jerusalem City Council; documented the Shimoni family history
5	G. Biazi née Mizrahi	F	91	Resident of Nahalat Ahim, widow of Eliyahu Biazi; the Biazi family, owned a grocery store in the neighborhood
6	M. Ella née Avdan	F	83	Resident of Nahalat Zion and Nahalat Ahim
7	S. Habshush	M	86	Grew up in Nahalat Ahim, neighbor of MK Moshe Baram, close ties with Baram family; active in General Federation of Labor (Histadrut), and engaged in Nahalat Ahim neighborhood struggle
8	E. Kuberski	M	75	Grandson of Zivia Yefet; documented the Yefet family history
9	A. Levi	F	86	Resident of Nahalat Ahim, member of neighborhood committee

Table A1. Cont.

No.	Name	Gender	Age on Date of Interview	Affiliation with Neighborhood or Family from Neighborhood
10	A. Mizrahi	M	93	Born and raised in the “Tin Shack” neighborhood, Shevet Ahim, and Nahalat Zion
11	Am. Mizrahi	M	~60	Chair, National Organization of Kurdish Jews in Israel
12	M. Micha	M	68	Resident of Nahalat Ahim; family owns a well known restaurant in downtown Jerusalem; chair of organization of Urfal Jews
13	M. Mizrahi	M	81	Resident of Nahalat Ahim; maintains Va’Yomer Avraham Synagogue, affiliated with the Jermuk Jewish community
14	Y. Sa’ad	F	78	Resident of Nahalat Ahim; daughter of Aharon Sa’ad, co-chair of Nahalat Ahim neighborhood committee
15	Y. Serri	M	81	Resident of Nahalat Zion
16	S. Shimoni née Aslan	F	87	Resident of Nahalat Ahim and Nahalat Zion, widow of Haviv Shimoni, chair of public committee, and chair of the organization of Kurdish Jews in the 1970s
17	N. Tsahi née Kappach	F	81	Resident of Nahalat Ahim and Nahalat Zion, daughter of Rabbi Yosef Kappach and his wife, Bracha Kappach
18	D. Tsahi	M	84	Resident of Nahalat Zion, son-in law of Rabbi Yosef Kappach and Bracha Kappach
19	R. Ushpiz née Hamdi	F	81	Resident of Nahalat Ahim; neighbor of Zivia Yefet,
20	S. Zarfati née Cohen	F	87	Resident of Nahalat Ahim

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