PRECEDENT STUDY

Alexandra Network of Community Centres

Background

Since its redevelopment in early nineties, Alexandra Township has had to bridge over a few decades of neglect social infrastructure, as well as in other basic services. From Governmental Centres to NGO's which operate private centres, there is an effort to establish a proper network of social services in order to address the community's vast needs.

Figure 1
Computer laboratory. Alexan Resource Centre.

Operational Concept

Community centres divided to two types:

Governmental/municipal centres which are operated by the Government or by the community, and NGO's which operate private Centres according to their understanding of the local needs.

The Alexandra Development Centre (ADC) and the Alexandra Development Forum (ADF) are the main local organisations which are involved in these activities.


Schools - Primary / High
Community Centre
Clinics
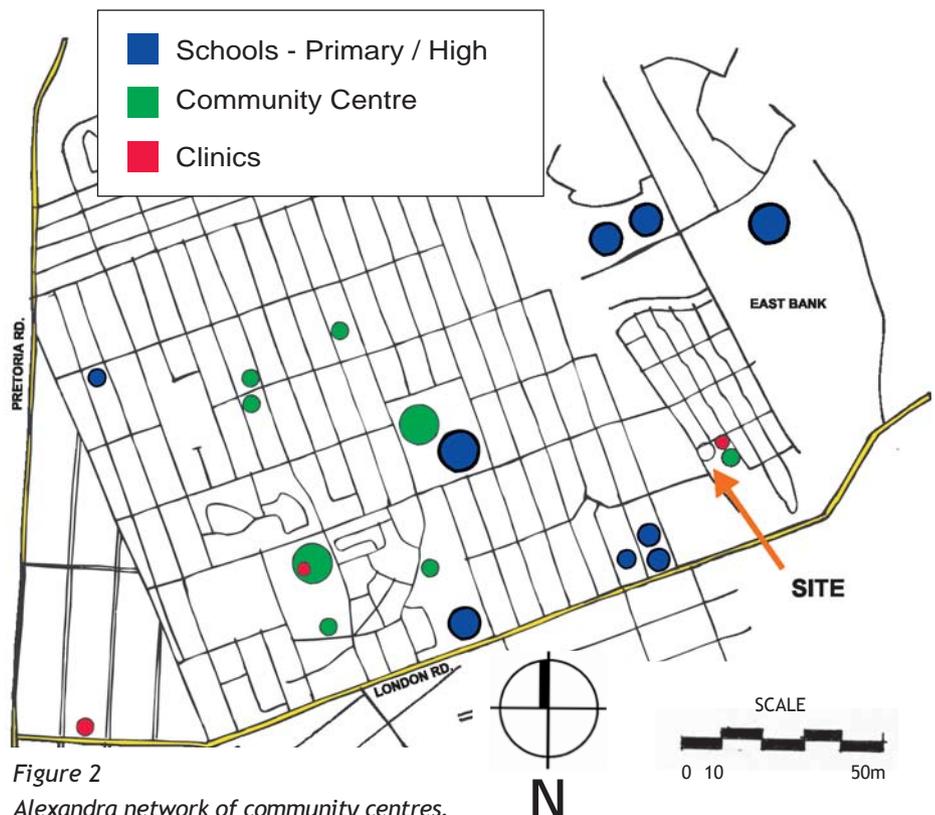
Figure 2
Alexandra network of community centres.

Community Centres - Alexandra

The main and most important centres are, Alexan Resouce Centre and MPCC.

The Alexan Resource Centre is run by the Community's Trust and serves the whole Alexandra community as a multi purpose activity centre. Based in the middle of Alexandra   and combined with the local stadium and high school, the Centre is easily accessible to the entire population. The main functions are multi purpose hall, library, computer lab, youth advisory, medical office, pension pay point, as well as municipal services like heritage office and Alex Chambers of Commerce.

Figure 4
Main square around the tuck shop.
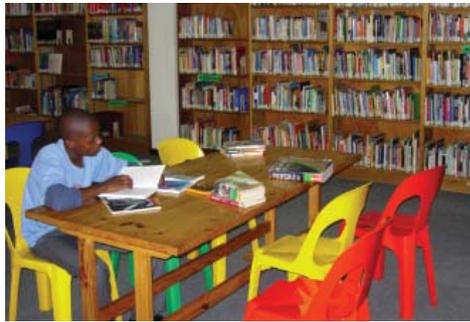
Figure 3
Youth Library.

Alex Resource Centre - Alexandra: Many activities for the community.
The interior open space disconnected from the main street.

Figure 5
Amphitheatre towards the library.


Figure 6
Main entrance towards the square.
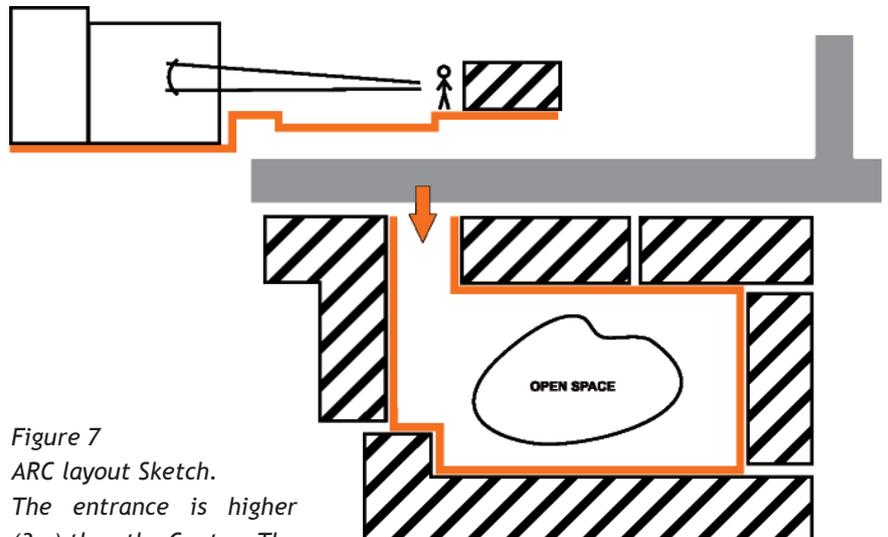
Figure 7
ARC layout Sketch.
The entrance is higher (3m) than the Centre. The Centre isolates itself by its surrounding buildings.

The MultiPurpose Community Centre

The Multi Purpose Community Centre (MPCC) is run by the Government. Its guiding principle was to concentrate maximum services in one place in order to simplify access to those services. Its vast variety of public services includes municipal services, Governmental departments, education centre, library, post office, social security, youth   advisory and clinic. Based on Roosevelt street, it is easily accessible to the community.

Figure 8
MPCC offices - more an offices complex than a community gathering centre.

Nelson Mandela Museum

Architect - Peter Rich

Nelson Mandela's House
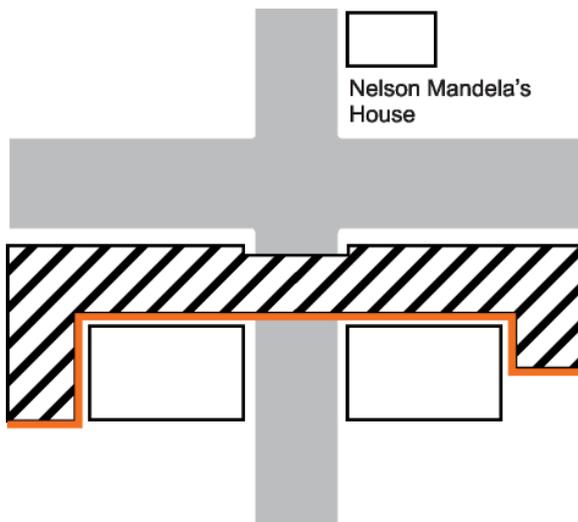
Figure 9
Nelson Mandela Museum
Sketch - Two story building enables continous pedestrian movement under the building, in order to "open" the museum to the public. The design includes a commercial shop to improve economical sustainability.

Centre for the Elderly

The Centre for the Elderly runs by an NGO, it concentrates on activities for the elderly in the main hall, clinic and sewing rooms. Future developments will include kindergarten for children who lost their parents and are now under their grandparents responsibility. The main hall serves as a lecture and function space, while on weekend it is used as a church.

Figure 10
Lecture in the main hall. The operational concept promotes the opportunity the elderly people to come for a set of activities: prayers and bible reading, physical exercise, sewing workshops and lunches.

Community Centres - South Africa

Figure 11
Guga S'Thebe Arts, Culture and Heritage Village
Architects - S.C Studio.

Fragment village organisation around outdoor stage generically close to the fragmentation of squatter camp. Various separate indoor and outdoor rooms able to contain many activities at the same time. The centre combines old buildings as a reminder of the conditions people lived in.
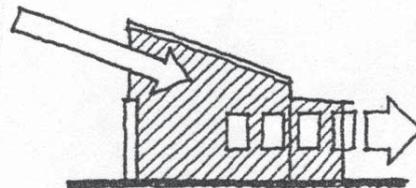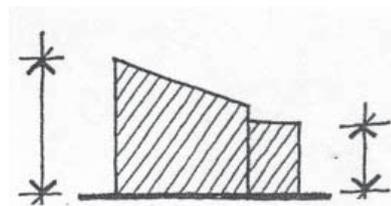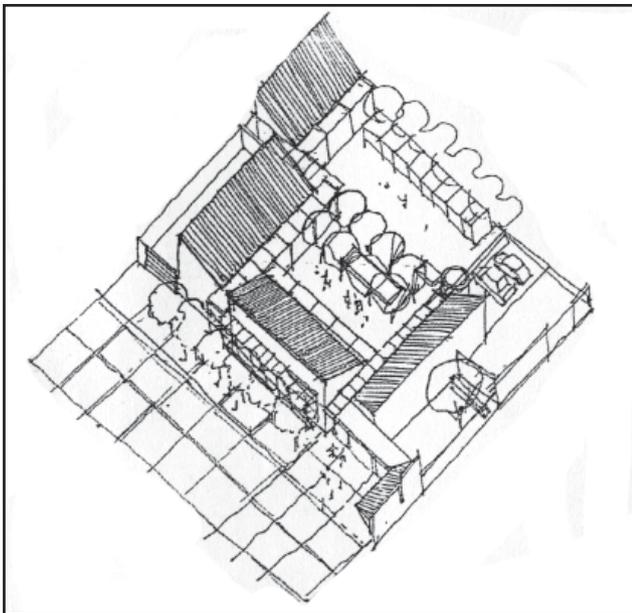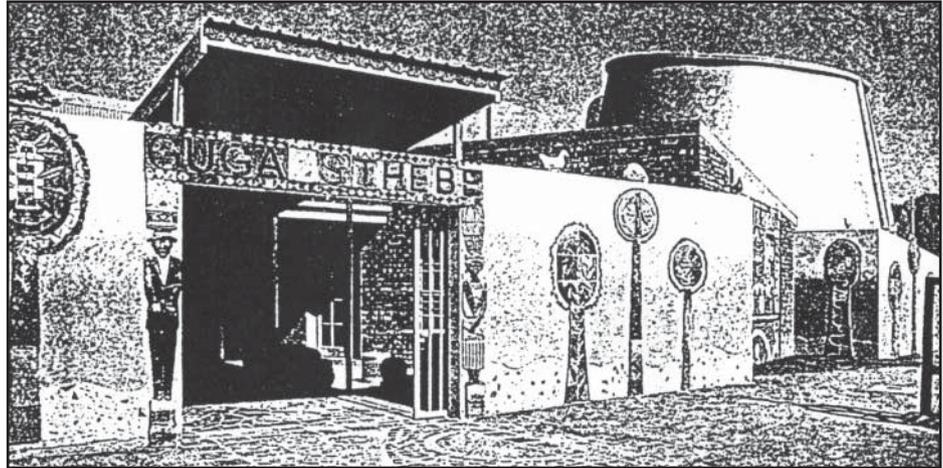

Figure 12
Early Childhood Development Centre, Brown's Farm, Cape Town.
KrugerRoos Architects & Urban Designers.

The idea is of a building as a 'kit of parts'. A public space with seating serves the street and functions as a linked space. Glazed walls and doors from the room frontages to the courtyard so that every space is visually linked.
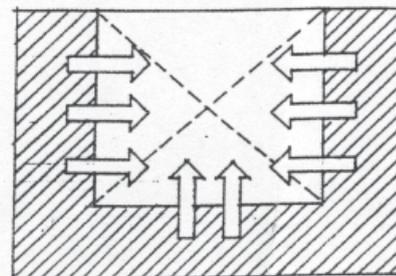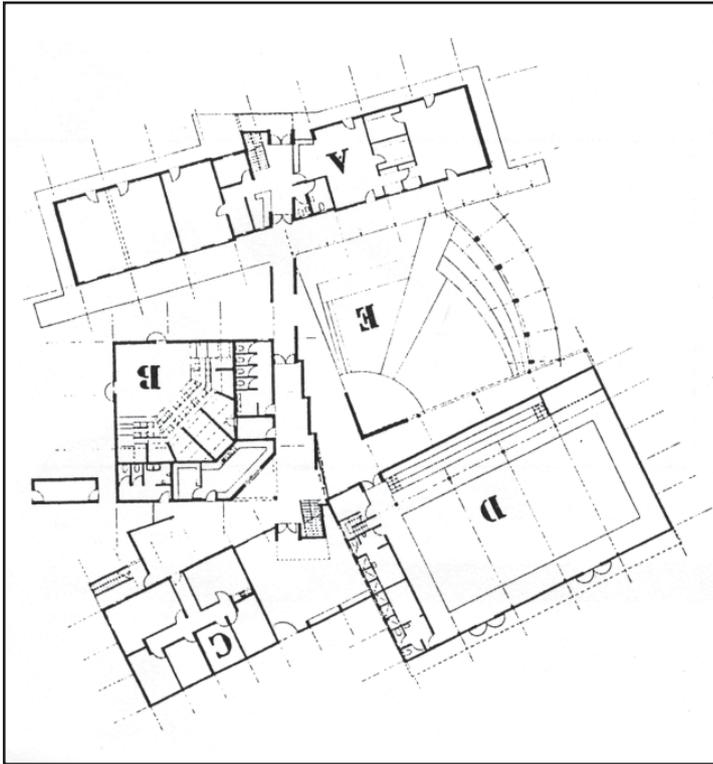
Figure 13
Unobuntu Multi-Purpouse Centre - Worcester
C.S. Studio Architects
(Source - SA Architect - 7/8 1999).

Principles of the centre: integrated and sustainable development, community-driven initiatives, cap-acity-building, transparency and democratisation. Simple individual units enlivened by rich in-between spaces for divers activities.
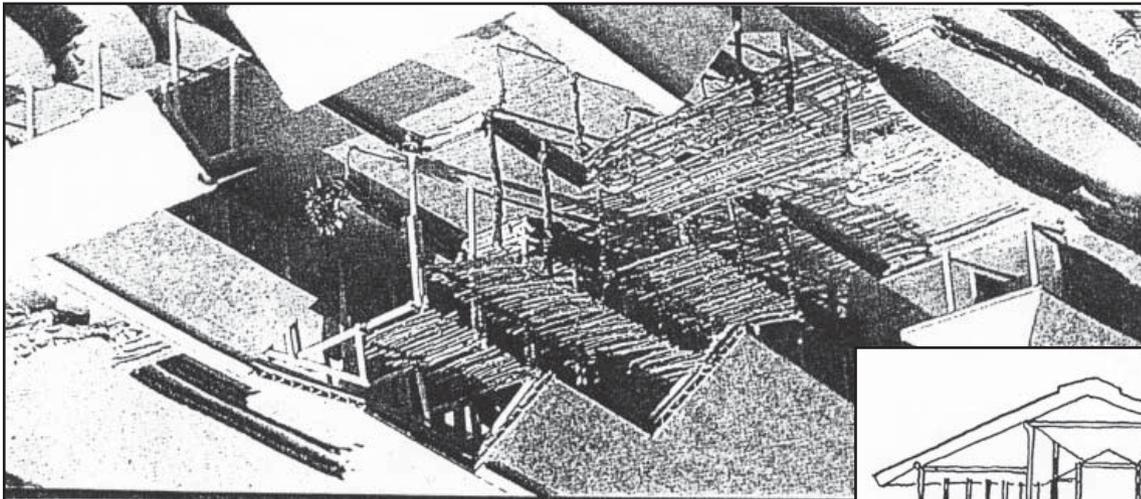

Figure 14
Bopitikelo Molatedi Community and Cultural Centre.
Peter Rich Architects (Source - SA Architects).
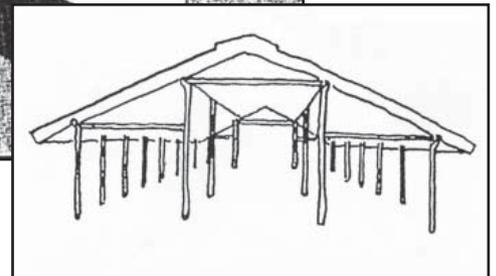
The centre is linked to commercial usage to provide a place for contemporary social interaction.
Architectural elements such as lapa, hall and shade structure.

Lateral Conclusions

The concept of the multi purpose community centre gives a proper answer to one main need, which is combining a variety of services under one roof. Although this concept could create a nice gathering place, concentrating on functional aspects alone misses the opportunity of providing a more meaningful space for the community:

* Shaded areas for people, who wait for formal activities.

* Outdoor spaces for which can cater for formal activities (workshops, classes).

* Spaces for various daily street activities (checkers etc.), for people who do not come for a specific activity.

While combining a few functions, one must consider consider the creation of an overlap between them. It means, activities that complement one another and create a continual process for people who come for one activity and continue to another.

Most of the centres lack the crucial link between daily street activities the centre's and activities. In this type of community, in which pedestrians are active on the streets most of the day, this emphasis must be much more dominant.

The majority of the centres, obviously, deal with the community's basic needs. However, at this stage of suburban development, the community should try to develop facilities for some more "advanced" needs such as art training, in order to expand the variety of activities for the population.

From an operational point of view, many centres offer a set of continue activities for the public.

By providing these activities, people come for a half or full day, experiencing formal and informal activities and meeting each other.

One of the main emphases in new centres is the concentration on training activities. By doing so, people acquire basic skills which can help them to find a job later on. Some training centres help their students to look for a job and to promote themselves.

In all of the centres, a shortage of money for current maintenance is the most bothersome issue, undermining existing activities and future development.

An Israeli Model for Integrated Community Centres

Background

Operating mainly in development towns and distressed neighbourhoods, the CYSC (Culture, Youth and Sport Centre) Company plays a central role in Israeli society. It was established in 1969 by the Israeli Government, following researchers' recommendations, which identified an urgent need for community centres.

Until the establishment of the Company, services like culture, art, youth activities and sport were provided by divisions and departments of the local municipalities.

This system created a narrow view of the community needs, with each department
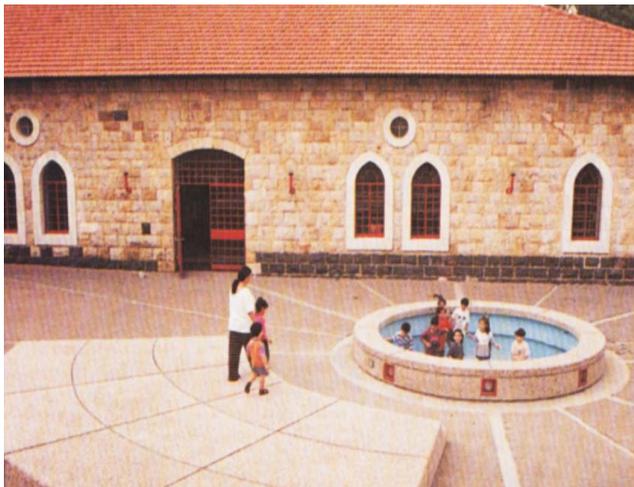
creating its own building for its own use, without having an overall view of individual, family and community needs.

The CYSC provides a three dimensional response to these needs:
First - value aspect - is the creation of a meeting place for the community, responding to different needs of different groups and different fields of interest.

Second - administrative aspect - one management including representation from the community, which decides about the concept according to the local resources.

The management implements the programme through one manager and professional coordinators. This structure enables maximum utilization of resources with maximal use of the buildings and facilities most of the time.

Third - economic aspect - it minimizes the use of public areas, and when built nearby other public facilities (education, sport and others) can make communal use of them.

Figure 15
Art Centre and outdoor Amphitheatre -
Kiryat Shmona.
Reconstruction - Architect D. Kaplan
(Source - Perach. H. 1995).

Operational Concept

As a Government company, it is operated by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport.

The CYSC is a local social creation, based on high involvement of individuals, groups, institutions and organizations working to upgrade the life of the community.

The CYSC is an independent body and operates as a non-profit association, or a limited company. At its head is a management, which is responsible for the administrative programme as well as for the substantial programme as determined by the general concept according to the community's needs.

In light of the company's guidelines, which emphasize the importance of skilled and qualified personnel, the company provides the managements, managers and staffs with professional support and guidance.

As a communal, social and educational institute, the CSYC is open to all members and participants from the community. It is based on active members, professional staff (employee/volunteer) and intensive cooperation with public bodies.

Basic Assumptions

Above all, the CYSC is an administrative system which fulfills the community's needs. Through the flexibility of the system, each CYSC adapts to the specific needs of its community and to periodic updates.

There is a common basis for all the CYSC's, as reflected by their fields of action: informal education, culture and art, social and sport directed at the community as a whole and at specific age groups or interest groups. The unique programmes derive from specific needs and community characteristics in each place.

Figure 16
CYSC Zafed.
Conversion to a CYSC and reconstruction, Architect - A. Frenkel.
(Source - Perach.H. 1995).

Conceptual and Physical Programme

Community Profile

Mapping the population which the CYSC dedicated for Mapping the community services that exist in the area Physical mapping of the site and its framework.

Fields of activities and issues with which the centre should deal

Analysis the community characteristics and needs will be the base for determining the fields of activities for the centre.

Defining the functioning concept of the centre

Defining the functioning concept of the center The common model of CYSC includes united facilities in a site "centre" and other facilities spread over the place "branches".

Figure 17
Art workshop - CYSC Kiriat Shmona.

Figure 18
Children library - CYSC Rishon Letziona.

Figure 19
Sport hall - CYSC Yarca.

Three Common Types of Centres

1. Centre with branches

In that model, the main centre provides the whole community with its basic services and the branches deal with specific services.

In this model there are two basic types of branches:

The Neighbourhood branch

This type of branch serves mainly groups within the surrounding neighbourhoods. The main aim of the branch is to make the basic services more accessible to the relevant population and more tailored to the community's needs. In addition, the branch can reach out to specific groups, which tend to isolate them selves from the community. Sometimes, the decision where to situate a branch is made mainly because of considerations of walking distance, geography, topography and public transport. In the neighbourhood branch, the emphasis is on developing feelings of belonging and autonomy through bilateral relationships of the individual with the community.
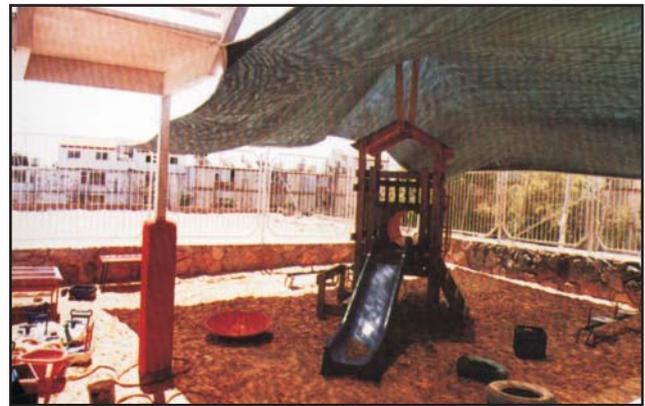
Figure 20
Kindergarten yard - CYSC Eilat.
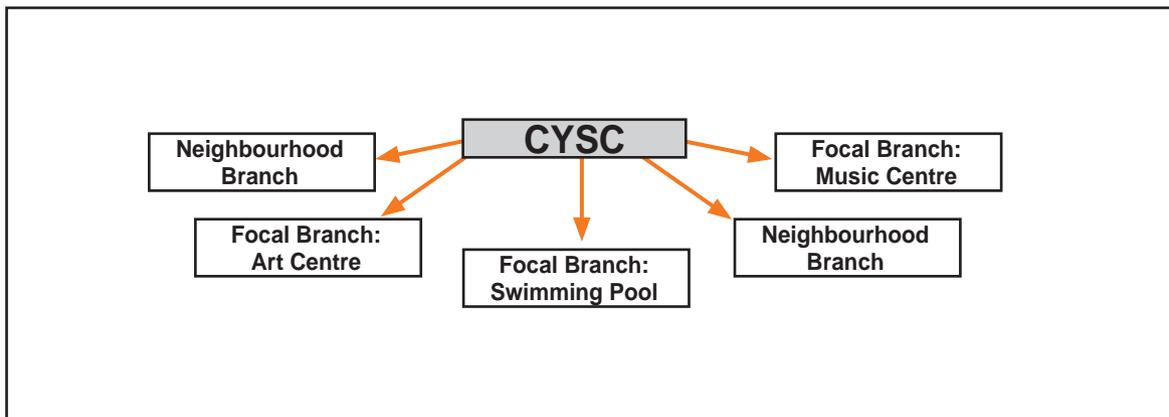
Figure 21
Basic Scheme of Neighbourhood branches.

The Focal branch

This type of branch is dedicated to specific interest groups such as art, biking and so on. Thus, it serves the whole population who are interested in that specific subject. The aim is to create a node for meetings on the base of common interests, as an expression of a social-cultural perception. Some of the focal branches can be used both as neighbourhood branches for the surrounding population and as focal branches for the whole population.

2. Network of centres

A network of centres occurs in towns of up to 150,000 people. The significant characteristics are:
Central management of all centres. Central

such as the main hall, workshops, sport facilities, etc, and the branches would provide for daily functions such as a child and family centre, elderly club, aftercare, studio etc.

3. Urban Company in cooperation with the CYSC Company

Mainly recommended for towns with more than 150,000 people, the characteristics are:
▪ Common management by the City Council and the CYSC Company
▪ One manager for the urban company
▪ One central bank account for money transfers from the City Council and the CYSC Company
▪ The urban company distributes the budgets.
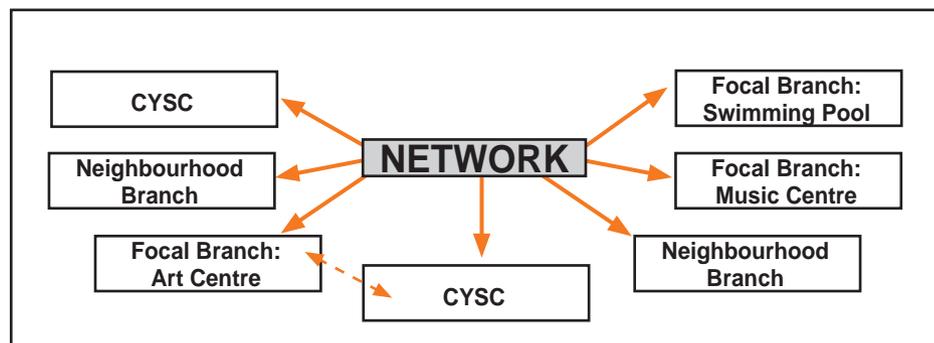
Figure 22
CYSC network

employment, administration, manpower, accounting and maintenance.

In that type of CYSC, it is recommended that the centre should provide for the major activities

among the CYSCs in the city, employs its own management and collects budget and external resources for the CYSCs.

The benefits of establishing an urban company:
▪ An urban company enables the City

Council to implement its urban general view according to its policy.

▪ The City Council delegates to and empowers the urban company management and thus simplifies the decision process.

▪ The urban company respects the CYSC

autonomy which provides the majority of the community needs.

Sports facilities - common use of sport facilities can be very economical to the benefit of all.
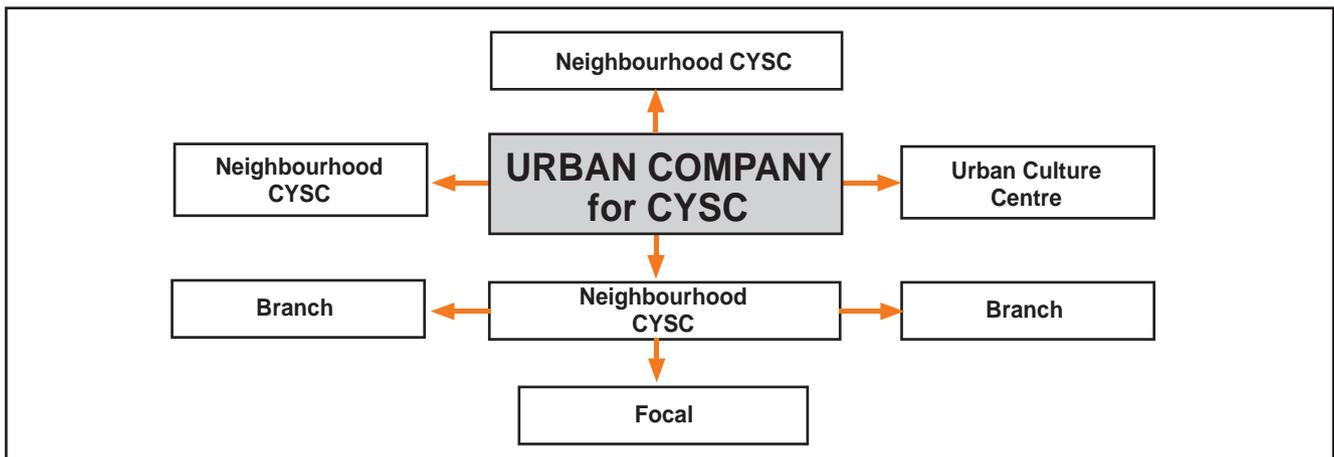

Figure 23
CYSC urban company.

Figure 24
CYSC Shefar'm - old fortress converted to a CYSC.
Architects - Gordon/Amar.

Physical Planning

Connections to public facilities:

First priority connection will be to education, Culture, sport and public facilities:

Schools - common facilities can be used by both the school and the CYSC, and (by operating in different hours) thus, saves in land use. In addition, the CYSC facilities can be used for unique activities as part of the school programmes. In some places, connection to the high school will enable students to stay in the same place for the CYSC activities.

Cultural facilities - common use of library, conservatorium, galleries etc.

Transport - in urban areas there is no problem using public transport. In a small place, where there is insufficient transportation, it is important to locate the CYSC near the neighbourhood.
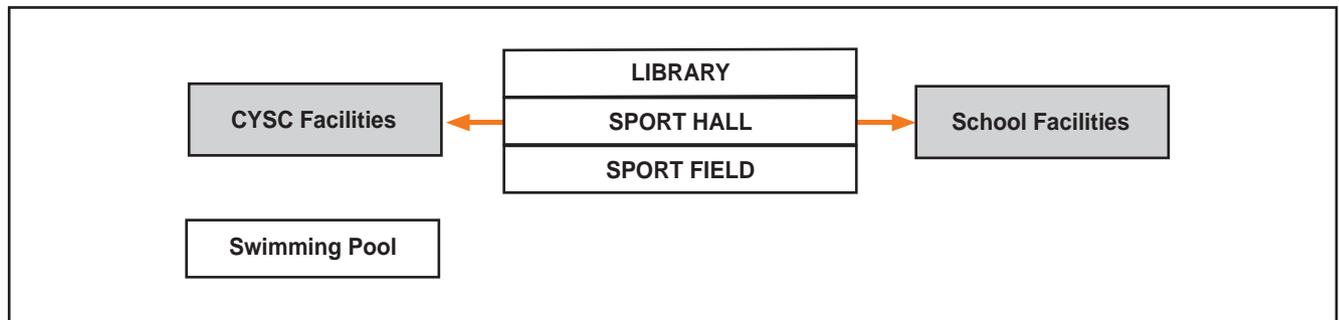
Figure 25
CYCS Physical planning.

Figure 26
CYSC Pisgate Ze'ev - Jerusalem, Architect - P. Keinan.
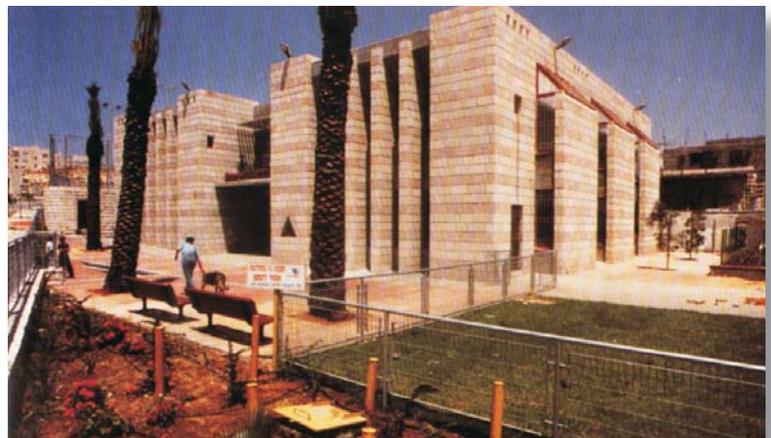
Main Characterisations of Israeli/South African Community Centres

Structure of Networks

South Africa:
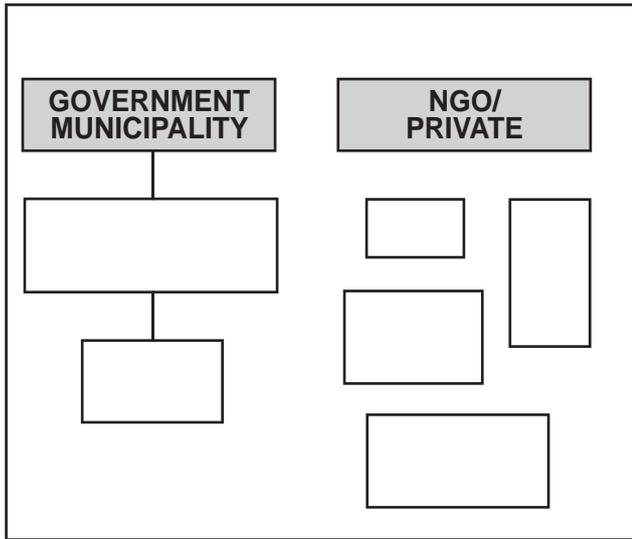
Israel:
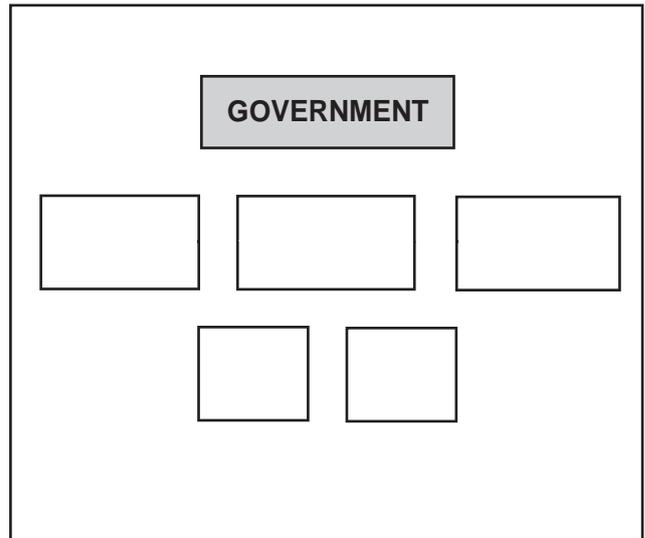
### Gradual Connection Process

South Africa:
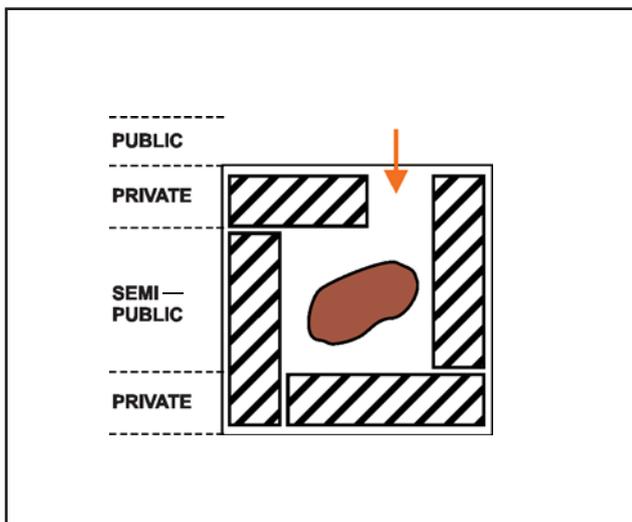
Israel:
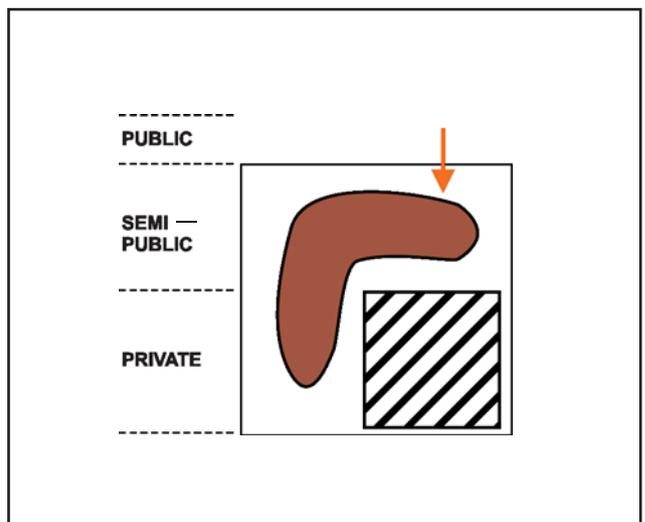
Accessibility

South Africa:
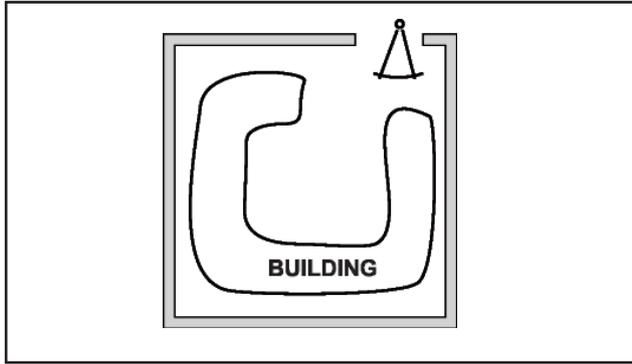
Israel:
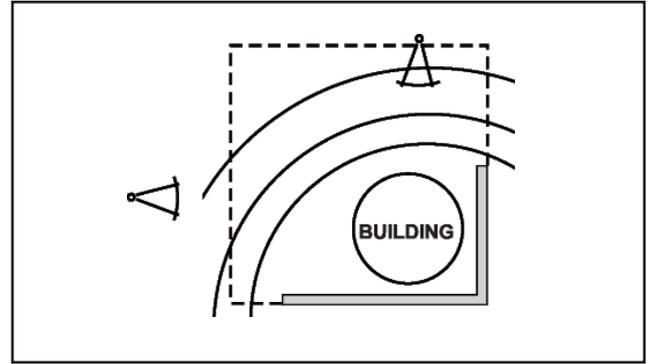
Open Space

South Africa:
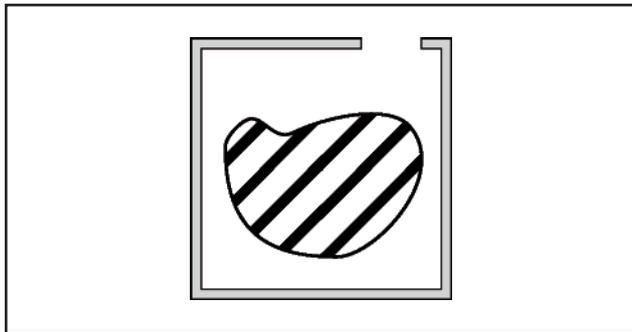
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