

COMMUNITY, UNIVERSITY, AND RELATIONSHIP IN SPACE: SHAPING REGIONAL IDENTITY IN SOUTHERN ISRAEL

Avinoam Meir and Jaqueline Duenias

Department of Geography and Environmental Development

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Beer-Sheva, Israel

ameir@bgu.ac.il

Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs) have long been recognized as powerful agents of regional development. Yet, the rich literature has overlooked the fact that an IHE may actually be conceived of as a 'place' in its cultural-geographical meaning involving a sense of place, narratives and discourse by its 'population'. This implies that it may develop a system of relationships with other places within the same space, and have a potential of shaping regional or local identity. This role of IHEs is examined here in the case of Sapir College, a small IHE neighboring the small town of Sderot in peripheral rural southern Israel. We examine first the concept of relationships in space between geographical entities, followed by an attempt to extract elements of such relationships from the vast literature on IHEs and their community. We then describe the unique context of Sapir College and Sderot as geographical entities, followed by an analysis of mutual images and narratives which shape the system of relationships and regional identity.

RELATIONSHIPS IN SPACE

The concept of 'relationships in space' is distinguishable from 'spatial interaction' that dominated human geography in the 1960s-1970s (e.g. Ullman, 1980) in that it covers and generates considerably more than material flows among human settlements, and challenges the view of settlements as exclusive organizers of space.

This is related first to the notion of 'place' in human geography (e.g. Mcdowell, 1997; Johnston et al 2000), which may be conceived of as the sum of the various material, emotional and spiritual interactions among its people generating place and communal identity. Yet these interactions take place in space *among places* too providing them with meanings and identities hybridized upon those generated by the place itself. Secondly, relationships in space are generated by *geographical entities* which are not exclusively settlements but include also an industrial park, a hospital, a mall, an army base, an IHE, etc. Each such geographical entity has spatial concreteness as a place through internal social relationships and maintains relationships in space with others. A particular system of relationships is of course highly dependent on the historical and social-cultural contexts enveloping the emotional and spiritual circumstances of the regional or local discourse concerning these entities.

The concept describes thus a multitude of occurrences that are closest to those referred to by theories of self organization of space (e.g. Portugali, 1999). In our view relationships in space are the infrastructure upon which all other economic, political, social, and cultural processes take place. Therefore the nature of space and its identity are a direct product of these relationships and indirectly of the enveloping contexts of forces.

AN IHE AND THE COMMUNITY

While relationships in space between an IHE and its community as geographical entities have not been studied as such, the literature reveals two major dimensions as a possible relevant framework for such understanding.

The regional-economic dimension

Indirectly, an IHE may contribute to a general rise in standard of living of the regional or local population through a strengthened system of education. More directly, but somewhat passively, an IHE is a kind of an economic corporation generating multiplier regional input-output effects in salaries and

employment (Kastinas and Lacey, 1989; Florax, 1992; Felsenstein, 1997; Freeman, Fleischer and Felsenstein, 1998). More directly and actively, an IHE may attract growth of business and industrial enterprises around it either by generating demands to their goods and services and by serving as R&D centres, developing professional manpower, nurturing relationships with the local industry, providing supportive services in consultation and assisting in regional and local planning and public policy (Chapman and Walker, 1987; Sherman, 1996; Kleniewsky and Wooding, 2002; Crumbley and Wooding, 2002). The cases from the 1960s of the University of Norrland in northern Sweden (Trow, 1970; Lane, 1988; and Lazin, 1991) and that of Ben Gurion University of the Negev in Israel (Gradus and Lazin, 1988) are illustrative of IHEs to contribute considerably to regional development. In contrast to old universities and colleges these two universities are typical of the new wave of such 'development' IHEs implanted within communities (Neave and van Vught, 1994; Miyakawa, 1996; Stohr, 1996).

The local-social dimension

The major notion that can be extracted from the literature is related to the degree of balance and symmetry in these relationships. Most fundamentally this concerns the conflict over types of knowledge produced and prioritized by IHEs that is their orientation (Bender, 1998; van der Wusten, 1998; Kleniewsky and Wooding, 2002), resulting in seemingly asymmetrical unbalanced and often tense relationships. Such was the case with Columbia University in New York during the 1960s-1970s which declared academic excellence as its exclusive goal manifested, inter alia, in exclusion of the local weak population from its development plans. The wall surrounding the campus became a symbol of seclusion from the neighboring community (Marcuse, 1988). An opposite case was that of Queens College (Lazin, 1991) which adopted full openness and responsibility toward the community as its major goals, manifested in deep involvement in community affairs and seemingly more balanced and harmonic relationships. Between these

extremes there are many examples of various degrees of social involvement of IHEs within their community (Cahill and Perry, 1974; Barlow, 1998; and Nijman, 1998; Kleniewsky and Wooding, 2002; Crumbley and Tickler, 2002; Lazonick et al, 2002).

The examples cited represent cases of two entities that historically are already sharing the same space. A very unique case of a community and an IHE established together as an integrated social, economic and cultural urban system was that of the new university of Louvain-de-Neuve in Belgium in the early 1970s (Woitrin, 1998). This reflected public recognition that an IHE has no sustainable future without a community with which it maintains symbiotic relationships. The uniqueness of this case contrasts with cases in which such relationships were imposed upon the IHE by its community.

It appears thus that the local-social dimension reflects most fundamentally the groups of people as well as the persons involved, their inclination to encourage mutuality, and their social, cultural and political positions within their respective entities and public at large. The literature on relationships between an IHE and a community is still lacking in describing directly these relationships and explaining how they shape the nature of the region and regional identity of its population. The case of the relationships in space between Sapir College and the city of Sderot will contribute to highlighting this issue.

RELATIONSHIPS IN SPACE BETWEEN SDEROT AND SAPIR COLLEGE

The Contexts

The first major context of the relationships between Sapir College and the city of Sderot is the spatial development of the system of higher education in Israel. Until the 1980s this system consisted of seven major city universities and under supervision of the Council of Higher Education (CHE) whose ideology was that of scientific and technological development of the young State of Israel (Israeli, 1997). Consequently access of populations in

peripheral regions and marginal social and ethnic groups to higher education was highly constrained.

This system gradually began to open up toward these deprived groups only in the mid-1970s. The first to voice their demands were members of kibbutz villages (plural-kibbutzim) in peripheral regions which socio-economically were considered a high quality group. Together with their respective regional municipal authorities they established fourteen regional colleges, Sapir College being one of them, under the academic supervision of the major universities. The public pressure they applied on the CHE to liberalize its criteria yielded in 1995 a revised Law of Higher Education, which awarded them with the desired academic recognition and independence. The decentralizing system increased accessibility of marginal and peripheral populations to higher education and their demands to its products (Eizenman, 2003).

The second context refers to development towns, Sderot included, established during the 1950s-1960s in peripheral rural regions in the vicinity of older kibbutzim. Jewish immigrants, mostly from Arab countries, were directed by the government to settle there. The towns were to provide services for the rural space, and the kibbutzim were to supplement employment sources to townsmen in agriculture and industry (Shachar, 1983; Efrat, 1987; Pavin, 1994).

These kibbutzim and development towns were profoundly different in cultural origins (European vs. Oriental), social orientation (modernity vs. tradition), communal organization (rural cooperative socialist *gesselschaft* vs. urban *gemeinschaft*), freedom of choice (volunteer national frontiersmanship, vs. compulsory peripherality) and economic strength (wellbeing versus poverty and deprivation). It comes thus with no surprise that relationships between these types of settlements were asymmetric, disharmonic and highly tense countrywide. Kibbutz members ('kibbutzniks'), early settlers of the national frontier, were national elite with considerable political power whereas the immigrant townsmen became labor resource for them. The latter have

therefore grown critical and embittered of kibbutzim's double ideological standard of practicing socialism internally but capitalism externally (see also Semyonov and Tyree, 1981; Yogev and Ilan, 1988).

The tension culminated in the 1977 and 1981 national elections when the right wing parties became dominant. This signified the demise of the kibbutzim and a turnabout in their relationships with development towns, whose population voted to right wing parties. The political power of kibbutzim declined (see also Kimmerling, 2001), and many collapsed economically and socially and were compelled into privatization. Individual kibbutzniks have since to struggle individually for their living exactly as did townsmen. Most importantly, they have lost the elite status of national frontiersmanship and begun to assume characteristics of the inferior status of national periphery from which townsmen have suffered until then. Consequently the social and economic gaps between the two sides began to narrow, in part also due to some improvement in economic wellbeing in the towns. The structural tension between them began to calm by the mid-1990s.

Sderot and Sapir College as Geographical Entities

The City of Sderot (pop.~25,000) was established in 1951 in southern Israel to absorb Jewish immigrants mostly from Arab countries and in the 1980s-1990s also from Ethiopia and the former USSR. It never became a significant regional center for the kibbutzim and has a substantial proportion of welfare recipients. The only sources of pride for its population have been few national politicians and three famous rock'n'roll ensembles.

Sapir College (henceforward Sapir) was established in 1975 on the property of and by the rural municipality of Sha-ar HaNegev (pop.~6000) that incorporates ten kibbutzim and two immigrant villages surrounding Sderot. Several neighboring rural municipalities of similar nature joined later into this project. It has today ~7,500 students in academic and semi-academic programs in various social sciences, humanities and engineering. Attracting daily thousands of students, staff, faculty, suppliers, various service users

etc., it generates considerable regional traffic, physical infrastructures, and material and financial input and output flows.

However, Sderot and Sapir are not merely geographical entities, but also 'places' in their cultural-geographical meaning. While Sderot is obviously a 'place', Sapir too, as an institute, maintains internal social and external social relationships amongst its campus 'inhabitants' (staff, faculty and students) who are concurrently inhabitants of neighboring Sderot and kibbutzim. It carries meanings for them as a daily workplace or study place that is also a part-time second home. There evolves a local campus community, with communal collective memory that can generate a sense of place and local sub-identity (see also Nijman, 1997).

Analysis of Relationships in Space

We adopted a qualitative methodology of in-depth open semi-structured interviews with fourteen past and present officials in both Sapir and Sderot, accompanied by a survey of a sample of 150 household heads (3%) in Sderot. We explored self and mutual attitudes toward and images of Sderot and Sapir, their conducts and practices, and their mutual relationships. The interviews were decomposed and classified into component categories with lower level deductions (Meir and Duenias, 2006). These raw representations were then interpreted as images and narratives which are presented here, along with an interpretation of how they shape regional identity and nature through relationships in space.

Imagers and Images

Three groups of persons were analyzed: (1) Top level college kibbutznik senior officials; (2) lower level college townsmen senior officials (inhabitants of Sderot); and (3) inhabitants of Sderot not employed by the college. The kibbutzniks mostly present a united front, but are somewhat self-critical of practices of the kibbutzim and Sapir in nurturing their relationships with Sderot. The opinions of the other two groups vary greatly, tending toward

extreme negative expressions (particularly among the third group), but some also tend to be very critical of their own town.

The self image of the kibbutzniks concerning Sapir's relationship with Sderot is largely homogenous. They regard themselves as highly committed to the regional community and not only to the kibbutzim, arguing that already in the 1970s they voluntarily added regional commitment objectives to the academic ones in the original charter of the college, reflecting their strive for integration with the other regional population. They regard as crucial their own role, denying the other population's competence, in establishing the college. They view the college's involvement in Sderot as maximal, although some would wish for expanding it wider into the surrounding region.

For them Sderot did not assume any significant role in their kibbutz life, and its people tended to be ashamed even with their own affiliation. Its present leadership, unlike past leadership, is viewed as an obstacle in Sapir's intensified involvement in the town, being still imprisoned within obsolete socio-political anti-socialist ideologies and municipal management methods of the 1970s.

For the same reasons the Sderot group of Sapir's officials are too highly critical of their own historical and contemporary leadership's incompetence in improving the image of Sderot. They realize Sderot's peripheral and underprivileged image devoid of any significant prideful resources and the inability of their younger generation to accomplish higher education without significant assistance. They witness Sderot students' fear of surrendering on campus their inferior origin to students from higher standard places and their preference to rent dormitories in nearby kibbutzim rather than in their own low imaged hometown.

All these project upon their image of Sapir. On the one hand they are very embittered over kibbutzim's seclusion. On the other hand, they value kibbutzniks' high regard of higher education as the only possible drive in establishing the college, in being its only students in early years, and in mobilizing support from their institutional establishment in those pioneering

years. These factors guaranteed success of the college which is now viewed by some of them as being a national and not only a regionally-oriented IHE. They regard it as a central junction presently more accessible to them than hitherto for regional and national integrative encounters between social groups. It contributes thus considerably to improving their own self-image. This in their eyes is a significant achievement of Sapir and therefore of Sderot, generating a small trend of Sderot's students returning home after graduation. Moreover, the lower educational level households surveyed in this study, which are the majority in Sderot, even believe that Sapir awards their town with an image of a college town.

These mutual images of Sapir and Sderot are interwoven into the major practical and symbolic issues in their relationships. We highlight the images of Sderot's people, because they are not unanimous. A minority of them, belonging at present to the highest political echelon, are extremely critical and angry at almost every aspect of the college: the very initiative taken by the 'rural people', the 'historically mistaken' decision to support it nationally, its affiliation with Shaar HaNegev kibbutzim's municipality, its location on this municipality's premises, its 'rural' nature, its lack of reference to Sderot in its name, and its 'patronizing' practices toward Sderot. This criticism is substantiated by them with several symbols, such as the regional highway separating between the college and town barring their integration, or Sderot's labor serving the college as 'woodcutters and water-drawers'. These symbols reflect in their eyes the territorial-spatial-social segregative and exploitative attitude of the kibbutzim toward Sderot.

Sapir's senior officials living in Sderot are more modest. For them the affiliation of Sapir with Shaar HaNegev municipality is self-evident. This may be explained by the fact that they are employed by it, by accepting the historical circumstances, and by their realistic awareness of the highly competent college-kibbutz system in this project versus the city system. Most important is their recognition of Sapir's major change as a geographical entity and place since the mid-1990s' academization under CHE's supervision.

While previously they perceived the college as kibbutz-oriented sectoral entity, presently it represents more realistically the regional social mix, becoming an academic home even to extra-region students.

From the perspective of Sapir, the emergent communal image is also an important achievement. This is supported by the household survey in respect to Sapir's role in changing the image of their town (despite its extra-town location) and its rural nature (to which their political leadership oppose). They share these views with Sapir's leadership who wish to retain the nature of a peaceful campus with open rural fields around it rather than adopting one of a conspicuous, expensive, crowded, and squally urban campus surrounded by a built up landscape. Symbolically, in their eyes even the name of the college, replacing in the mid-1990s the original one of HaNegev College, should not be changed as it no longer reflects its original kibbutz orientation, nor should it include the name of Sderot that could impair its image. In contrast to their own town leadership they realize the importance of allowing the college to carry on with its practical and symbolic practices for the benefits of the entire region, Sderot included.

Narratives

Underneath these images of Sapir and Sderot lie the major narratives of their relationships. At the contextual level these are historical and symbolic, interweaving with systems of economic interests at the entity and organizational levels, with local-regional political interests, and still further down with inter-personal tensions and rivalries.

In general there is wide recognition of Sapir's recent emergence on the national map of higher education and becoming a dominant regional geographical entity. The kibbutzniks present it proudly as their regional and collective 'diamond in the crown', a cultural asset whose gravity and sustainability synergize beyond the cumulative effect of their economic enterprises. Their narrative is particularly protruding during their regression as a regional leading socio-political sector, which coincides with yielding

considerable control over the college to the CHE. Yet, this asset is great enough to radiate upon neighboring Sderot as recognized by its people and leadership. However recognition by the latter in the historical necessity of this process is painful. They argue that the very establishment of Sapir was made possible only from the 'heights of the kibbutzim's successful seclusion', as one of them remarked, versus the weakness of their distressful Sderot and its past and present incompetent leadership. For Sderot's political leadership this constitutes even a burning insult.

It is thus possible to screen out a very profound narrative of socio-spatial justice directed toward Sapir, hiding overt and covert sub-texts. The overt sub-text is about the conflict between urban and rural values. Its local roots may be found in the embittered general context of kibbutzim-development towns relationships. Not less important, however, is their demand for reversal in the anomaly of rural superiority and dominance over the urban and that the urban revolution has not yet been completed in this peripheral region. Therefore, according to Sderot's leadership, action should be taken to eliminate all remnants of this historical rural dominance from contemporary national ideology of spatial development.

The covert sub-text is rooted in viewing the college as a fruitful economic asset, subjecting it to inter-municipal competition for controlling its economic policy and practices and their direct and indirect benefits. The direct ones are municipal taxes and the indirect ones are related to various governmentally supported projects such as student dormitories, development grants, and other extra-IHE related supports capable of generating local multipliers. Consequently each municipality mobilizes the overt values described above to protect its practical position concerning various college-related issues.

Even more profound covert sub-text is the deeply disappointing governmental involvement in developing Sderot. As a national symbol of peripherality and marginalization, its people have been recently experiencing governmental nationwide shaking-off its traditional welfare-state public commitments. Aware of responses to this process by the civilizing Israeli

society at large, they cast the burden upon its agents as a substitute for government. Sapir is viewed by them as one such agent due to its centrality in regional life and its emerging national image, but in failing to translate it into practical local terms this status still conflicts with Sderot's low image. This is reflected in a narrative in which Sapir's original goals of developing a local community, regional integration and regional strengthening and development have not yet been fulfilled satisfactorily. From their perspective the college is still 'stuck' in its initial objective of providing general higher education per se, in which they are only gradually beginning to take part. Therefore they are elevating their level of expectations from it into one of *local and regional relevance*, in the absence of which its entire *raison d'etre* becomes questionable.

Sapir is thus perceived by Sderot townsmen as a central development junction of the region with direct and indirect and regional and local roles. On the one hand it should become a regional economic high-tech 'entrepreneur' similar to those establishing industrial parks. Its specific role in such an enterprise is the development of regional human resources as a social infrastructure for nurturing industrial development. On the other hand, being the only competent civic and public agent available regionally, they view the college as a social entrepreneur who should become deeply involved in local community development. Such involvement should go as deep as direct contribution to developing Sderot's school system in similarity with their involvement in Shaar HaNegev municipality's separate kibbutz school system. In other words, they expect Sapir to substitute for government by assuming its regional roles.

While this expectation is contextually linked to the relationship between Sderot and the surrounding kibbutzim, whom Sderot's townsmen still regard as controlling the college, their elevated expectations are rooted in a yet even deeper narrative concerning the college. It reflects a moral local expectation that through its deep regional and local involvement Sapir will return to the local community at least part of the social and economic public debt of

kibbutzim in return to past national supports that as yet are unmatched by similar ones in Sderot.

While these expectations from Sapir are related to the socio-political kibbutz-town dimension, they are also related to the other major context—its role within the system of higher education. The college is expected to meet purely academic standards as the sole reason for state support, constituting quite a heavy task on its young soldiers. This creates a tension between its formal academic relevance which is universal by nature, and informal community relevance which is demanded locally. The college now faces a policy, strategy and tactics dilemma which is not only institutional, but concerns individual faculty as ‘inhabitants’ of this geographical entity. Exclusive emphasis on academic relevance releases them from communal duties, and the college will then become a secluded geographical entity within the periphery, an irrelevant and ex-territorial enclave of the national system of higher education. Such circumstances parallel partially with past similar seclusion of the kibbutzim from the local periphery and their by-passing connection to the national core. On the other hand, exclusive emphasis on deep communal involvement may impair realization of the academic goals, weakening in return its communal capabilities.

In both cases the moral and practical burden upon Sapir is heavy considering the contextual historical circumstances of its establishment, growth and practices. Finding an optimal balance has considerable bearing on its identity as a geographical entity, on shaping its relationships with Sderot, and on shaping regional identity derived from them.

Relationships and Space

Sapir’s regional prominence and the deep gaps in images and narratives with Sderot, affect the intensity and nature of the relationships between them within regional space. In general, these relationships are highly tensed being charged with the heavy historical socio-political sediments. However, as these entities are not homogenous socially and economically, the nature of

relationships is far more complex, depending on the mutual expectations as product of their mutual relevance and historical contextual processes.

These relationships have gone through two phases. Until the early 1990s, due to attempts at academic and organizational consolidation and building its target student population, particularly from the kibbutzim, expectations of Sderot from the college were only minimal. However, faithful to its vision Sapir did not turn its back on Sderot. Rather it participated in the general effort of kibbutzim at that time to hand social support to development towns in order to improve mutual relationships. This was not always welcomed by Sderot's establishment. On the other hand, the low self image of townsmen generated low expectations from themselves, their town and the college, thus passively accepting all of Sapir's practices. Apparently they felt a frustrated awe toward its representations of values of higher education and kibbutznikness. The system of relationships by then was thus quite restful, with low degree of complexity, but hegemonically unbalanced. Therefore, their shared space at that time may be characterized as one of constrained harmonious and symbiotic coexistence.

This system has changed and became more complex since the beginning of the 1990s. The first milestone is the academization of Sapir, entailing a changed identity toward more general rather than kibbutz oriented, coupled with a new leadership being less identified with kibbutzim. The people of Sderot find it easier now to accept this new nature and leadership. Second, for the first time Sapir began to intensively disseminate higher education locally into Sderot, resulting in a primary critical mass of local graduates and even post graduates. Not only has the self image of the town begun to change, but these people became local elite critical of all college issues, the neighboring rural municipality, their own town and its leadership. They thus stand more equally before the classic regional kibbutz elite backing the college. Third, by 2000 a new element was introduced with the election of a new mayor in Sderot. A member of the right wing biggest party in Israel, and personally and ideologically a rival of the kibbutzim, his office has been

characterized as highly militant, manifested in our interviews by extreme statements against them and the college.

The present relationships are thus characterized by greater assertiveness of the elite and leadership of Sderot that are becoming highly demanding of the college. On the one hand they began to screen the initiatives of the college, those whose one sidedness in the past were considered somewhat patronizing, responding to them now only selectively, albeit sometimes motivated by narrow political and personal interests. On the other hand, they renegotiate the terms of the relationships by elevating their expectations from the college. This reflects double meanings: first they demand greater local and regional cooperation and bilateral collaboration; second, they are renegotiating those yet unfulfilled goals included in Sapir's original charter to conform to their interpretation of its regional relevance.

It turns out that the degree of one-sidedness of the relationships is declining and they became more balanced. Yet, it is precisely this process that turned the relationships into more tensed and disharmonic but also less constrained and more liberated. Paradoxically thus, the relaxation of the relationships between kibbutzim and development towns at the national level is paralleled by intensification of the tension locally over the nature and identity of the region and control over its resources. This is a residue of the past structural tension, but it is rooted now in local, personal and institutional interests and rivalries. These have impaired the concrete flow of material interactions within this particular space affecting thus its economic growth. The case of a big high-tech firm attracted to Shaar HaNegev municipality to enjoy the benefits of Sapir is only a single exception of cooperation with Sderot that attests to the opposite.

Relationships and regional identity

These changes entail a crisis of regional identity. Its multi-layered first dimension is socio-economic. The top layer is illuminated by the fundamental changes in the Israeli rural community at large reflecting the spatial dilemma

between rurality and urbanity. Its most universal derivative is the choice of economic orientation in rural areas between primary and secondary versus tertiary and quaternary sectors. The Israeli unique lower layer derivative of the rural-urban value conflict is an organizational dilemma among rural communities between communalism versus individualism socially and collectivism versus privatization economically.

These dilemmas entail identity reconstruction of Israeli rural space. The northern Negev region shares this process, yet this reconstruction there is dependent also upon local processes, particularly the changing relationships between Sapir and Sderot. In general a college and its universal values of higher education most fundamentally symbolize urbanism. On the one hand, in its pivotal position as regional geographical entity, Sapir projects universal values of higher education on peripheral Sderot, enhancing thus its urbanity. On the other hand, through changes in its own nature, in partial response to relationships with Sderot, it also pours these urban values into the rural communities and furthers their reconstruction.

The second dimension of identity crisis of the northern Negev is the lost status of national border frontiersmanship by its kibbutz people implying a socio-political regression in their status. Inflicted upon by the identity of Sderot this is coupled by becoming part of the national periphery. In the absence of substitutes, Sapir College has become a dominant geographical entity shaping their regional identity. Being a focus for identification and identity for the people of Sderot adds thus to its becoming a central identity pivot in the life of both rural and urban regional communities.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationships between Sapir College and the city of Sderot through the new theoretical framework of relationships in space between two geographical entities and their impact on regional or local identity. While this spatial framework requires further elaboration (see Meir and Duenias, 2006), our concern in this conclusion is the relevance of the

case study to the issue of relationships between an IHE and its community and their impact on regional identity. Eventually this identity has considerable impact on the future of both entities and therefore the region as a whole.

This impact depends on the contextual frameworks of the relationships. They relate to the immanent tension between the universal academic role of an IHE in furthering values of science and knowledge, and its unique and local social and economic roles developing the community. This tension serves as an infrastructure for these relationships. However, an IHE is embedded within society and therefore there are other culturally unique contextual linkages on top of this general one that shape these relationships. Obviously, changes in these contextual frameworks and linkages influence the nature and intensity of the relationships between the entities, having also an impact on how the people at the local level identify themselves. We have demonstrated these issues in our case study, showing how the system of relationships in space and its dynamics have contributed considerably to reconstructing the regional identity of the people involved and to changes in the nature of these geographical entities themselves.

A major question is the role of the identity and affiliation of the IHE itself in these relationships. In our case study Sapir College has been affiliated with the kibbutz community which shaped its nature, at least in early stages of its development, and its relationships with Sderot. IHEs elsewhere may be affiliated in various ways: military vs. civil, public vs. private, business-corporate affiliated vs. affiliation-free, secular vs. religious, religious-specific affiliation etc. These orientations and affiliations may produce variations in the nature of IHEs as geographical entities with different impacts on the nature of relationships and the region or community, and require further investigation. A second major question concerns the various types of communities and populations involved, such as urban vs. rural, ethnic minority vs. majority, social classes, and so on, and how these interact with the various types of IHEs. Understanding these issues will add considerably to elaborating further the proposed theoretical framework for studying

relationships in space between an IHE and its community and their impact on regional identity.

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