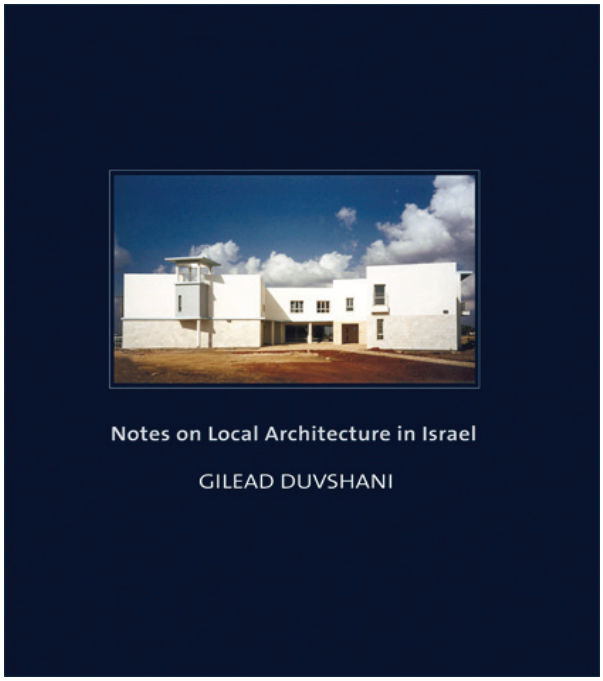


Gilead Duvshani
**Notes on Local Architecture in Israel**

**Wasmuth** Publishing House Berlin
Preface: Rob Krier
Texts: Amos Bar-Eli, Gilead Duvshani, Ran Schechori
Text: English.
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In an era in which the world is becoming one global village, when buildings look the same in New York, Mumbai, Tel-Aviv or Tokyo, is there value to each place's unique culture? Is architecture a consumer product like the automobile, TV and cell phone? Or does it have an extra cultural value that characterizes its place in society? What is local architecture? What are its characteristics in general and in a country like Israel in particular?

In this book, architect Gilead Duvshani lays out before us a systematic creation process for local architecture. The process and approach are important for every student of architecture, architect and whoever is interested in architecture that derives from the essence of a place, as an antithesis to architecture with common denominators that are widespread all over the world today. Taking interest in Israel is both all-encompassing and of special significance – as a society that built within a few decades a new state, as a meeting grounds between different cultures and an area of difficult conflicts.

Gilead Duvshani was born and raised in Israel and studied architecture at the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne. Since 1983 he has run a private practice in Tel-Aviv. He has led research programs, arranged exhibitions and has written extensively on Israeli architecture. He is a professor at the School of Design of the Holon Institute of Technology.

**"The art of integrating oneself in a non-spectacular way has become rare among architects today. I am glad to discover this quality in Gilead Duvshani's architectural work. Although the virtue of this book's approach has become very rare, it remains of fundamental importance for maintaining and continuing the tradition of the art of building."** (**Rob Krier**)

# INTRODUCTION

Fig. 1 Pantheon, Rome 125 A.D.

*"Architecture belongs to poetry, and its purpose is to help man to dwell. Architecture comes into being when a total environment is made visible; in general, this means to concretize the genius loci. We have seen that this is done by means of buildings which gather the properties of the place and bring them close to man. The basic art of architecture is therefore to understand the vocation of the place."*

**Christian Norberg-Schulz – Genius Loci –**
Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture.

Architecture, by its nature, is linked with the ground, with the locale, with the site upon which the building is built. From the dawn of history the ancients attached importance to the union between the building and the physical attributes and spirituality of the site. The ancient gods belonged to the site; they had to be treated with respect when the site was situated in their area of influence. The Egyptians built the pyramids in accordance with the cosmological system, to express their sense of wholeness with the gods and the universe. The Roman Pantheon, the temple of the gods with its rounded structure, domed roof and the oculus at its central point was an expression of the center of the world, the "axis mundis," which signifies the center of prayer to all the gods. In his "Ten Books on Architecture" the Roman architect Vitruvius already pointed out in the first century BC the significance that an architect must attribute to an understanding of the physical and spiritual qualities and nature of the locale, in order to earn the appreciation of man and the gods. The Greek temple with its geometric wholeness

Fig. 1



Fig. 2 Greek Temple at Segesta, 420 BC.

Fig. 3 Lapp's hut

Fig. 4 Typical Vernacular House, Northern Europe

Fig. 5 Architecture without architects, Bergen

Fig. 6 Architecture without architects, Hebron

Fig. 7 Architecture without architects, Mojacar

Fig. 2

expressed the totality of the universe and its relation to man. The "orders" of the Greek temple drew their characteristics from the trees of the forest, from the structure of a simple house for men that became a house of the gods, the primal house that was built wholly in keeping with the surrounding conditions. The primitive house, and along with it the vernacular architecture, were always built in accordance with the site. A combination of financial abilities, topographic and climactic conditions and available materials determined the form and characteristics of the local building. The Bedouin tent, the Eskimo igloo, the Lappe hut and many other buildings in every continent and global region that created the permanent localities of human settlement developed architecture without architects and achieved total compatibility with the different characteristics of the locale.

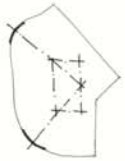
Fig. 3 Fig. 4

Fig. 5 Fig. 6 Fig. 7

Modern living conditions, financial pressure and mostly bureaucratic, commercial construction, abandoned the qualities of vernacular architecture and its connection with the characteristics of the site and human standard and scale.

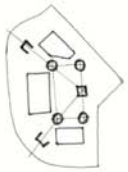
Over the past one hundred years, modern style architecture has strived to create an abstract, formal world lacking historical context as an expression of a new language of architecture without any connection to the true essence of the locale or its history.

**1. Geometry**



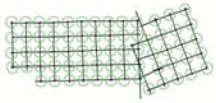
"Rabin" Residence

**2. Composition**



"Rabin" Residence

**3. Natural Surroundings**

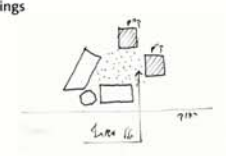


Private Residence, Kfar Shmaryahu

**4. Landscape**

Private Residence, Rishpon

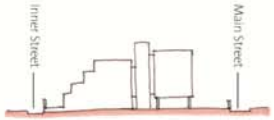
**5. Adjacent buildings**

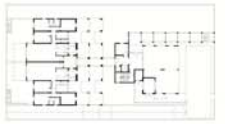


"Neot Shoshanim" Residence



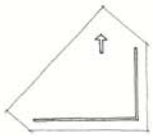
**6. Adjacent Streets**



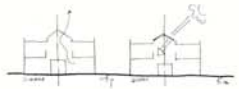
"Histadrut" Residence

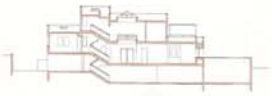
**7. Demarcation**



Private Residence, Caesarea

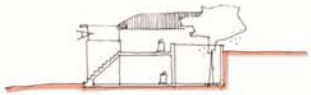
**8. Climate**

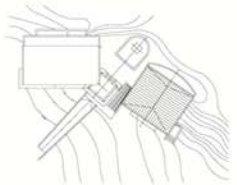




Private Residence, Havazelet Ha'Sharon

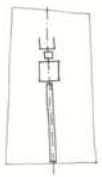
**9. Topography**





Givat Ha'Selaim Civic Center

**10. Circulation**



Private Residence, Caesarea

# INTRODUCTION

Fig. 1 Kabalkin House, Tel-Aviv, Y. Megidovitch, 1924

*"A seat tells me first of all that I can sit down on it. But if the seat is a throne, it must do more than seat one: it serves to seat one with a certain dignity, to corroborate its user's 'sitting in dignity'... Thus to seat one is only one of the functions of the throne – and only one of its meanings, the first but not the most important."*

**Umberto Eco** – Connotation | Function and sign: Semiotics of Architecture.

**The beginning of the architectural creation process is described in the first chapter by referring to the physical components of the site and the concrete reality that prevails there. Components such as the geometry of the lot, nearby buildings and roads, topography and climate can be referred to objectively.**
In fact, these opportunities are everywhere existant, though with different characteristics, and therefore they can be referred to as "objective."
**In contrast, the "metaphor" refers on to an imaginary reality. The metaphor, the story and the image are our poetic explanations of the site's essence. They are anchored in its history, in its hidden nature. It is "subjective". The objective physical characteristic can be universally appropriate as exemplified in Chapter One by built form from the inventory of world architectural history. Hereafter, the discussion regarding metaphor will focus on unique examples that derive only from the Israeli narrative that we are discussing, because they specifically belong to that site.**
Consequently, the introduction on metaphor will show examples of buildings from the history of Israeli architecture, architecture that is laden with metaphors as part of each site's unique, poetic story. Aside from this, I was inspired by different aspects of this architecture, and I hope in some manner that can generate continuity.




Fig. 2 Gymnasia Hertzliya, Tel-Aviv, I. Barsky, 1909.

Fig. 3 Hotel Ben Nahum, Tel-Aviv, Y. Megidovitch, 1921

The attempt to create a connection with the site through the use of local language has prevailed from the beginning of Israeli architecture. Here are a few milestones:

**STYLE AS METAPHOR**
In the 1920's, eclectic architecture made use of a multitude of shapes and imagery aspirating to create an original Hebrew style. The connection between the Israeli and Hebraic character was built of components from historic Eastern architecture. The nation renewing itself in its land identified with the tradition of local architecture from the past, as part of the East's reference to the Biblical period which was understood as a period of independence for the Jewish nation in its own land. There are widespread uses and quotes of architectural motives, mainly in different spectrums.

Fig. 1
Fig. 2 Fig. 3
Kabalkin House, built in 1924 by Y. Megidovitch, is a typical example of the period. His Ben Nahum Hotel and A. Berky's Gymnasia Hertzliya take the same approach, with difference which are related to the site. The Ben Nahum Hotel is laid out with reference to the adjoining streets. One wing faces the garden with a language that longs for the garden. The second wing faces the residential street and is designed as a residential building. The Gymnasia Hertzliya is laid out around a main symmetric axis at the end of Hertzl Street, Tel-Aviv's main street in that period.
Kabalkin House is a picturesque building with extensive décor expressing a naïve, childish dream of the East. The Ben Nahum Hotel is mature and sophisticated, with a three-dimensional presence and references appropriate to the site.

Fig. 4 Rockefeller Museum, Jerusalem, A. Harrison, 1920's

Fig. 5 Weizman Residence, Rehovot, E. Mendelsohn, 1936

During the same period, the British architects who worked under the British Mandate government drafted a distinctive, elegant and established eclecticism. They studied, in a methodical and almost archeological manner, the architecture of Islam. Their built forms are arranged in an orderly manner with hierarchies leaning on geometric and symmetric systems that connect them with the tradition of classical architecture. As opposed to the eclectic architecture of Jewish architects who came from Europe, the British work derives from precision it borrowed from the past and the combination of several architectural themes in a single creation. These included aspects of construction such as: building with stone, the exact elements of style and building plans with closed and open spaces. The Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem by Harrison built in the 1920's, is a typical example of British architecture in Israel during the Mandate period.

Fig. 4

**A HOUSE WITH AN ORCHARD**

E. Mendelsohn, a well known architect in Germany in the 1930's, who escaped when the Nazis rose to power, went on to create some of the most interesting buildings from the perspective of local Israeli architecture. The Weizmann Residence in Rehovot, built in 1936 for the future first President of the State of Israel, is one such example. It became the home of the president and looks out at the surrounding landscape of citrus groves. Mendelsohn described the building in these words: "A house, a palace, rising above the lowlands. The Judean hills and valleys belong to it, it is open to great distances, but retreats to the indoors and cool atmosphere of its inner courtyard." It is a metaphor of a house protected from a threatening environment, though with a desire for openness. Simple building volumes, smooth facades devoid of décor identify the building with Modernism.

Fig. 5



Fig. 6 Talpiot Housing, Jerusalem, Y. Rechter, 1977

Fig. 7 Israel Museum, Jerusalem, A. Mansfeld, D. Gad, 1960's

Fig. 8 Conservatory Be'er Sheba, Y. Rechter, 1969

The inner courtyard relates to the Mediterranean Sea, and the symmetry to antique tradition. The splendor of the location in a meadow of oranges groves and a sense of proportion along with minimalism strengthen the sense of synthesis between East and West, in a new expression of local modernism

**THE ARAB VILLAGE**

The works of Y. Rechter, one of the most influential architects who worked in Israel is of special of interest. He is identified as a modernist and rationalist who tried to create modern architecture without imagery. Yet, a close look at his work reveals a constant use of imaginative metaphor.

In the Talpiot residential project, 1977, he relates to the local topographic structure with terracing inspired by the vernacular Arab village. The spectrums and the changing direction of the building blocks strengthen the image of the Arab village, an image that also inspires the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

Fig. 6

Fig. 7

**PROTECTIVE ARCHITECTURE**

At the conservatorium building in Be'er Sheva, the inspiration of Rechter is that of a protected fortress set against a hostile desert environment. A massive foundation of exposed concrete anchors the building to the ground, the building mass breaks up into vertical components from exposed silicate bricks that

Fig. 8

### 1. The vernacular village

Y. Paldi, Pastorala, 1928, Oil on canvas, 65.5x81 cms

A theme deriving from a lack of continuous, multi-layered, built-up environment. A community of immigrants tends to build isolated buildings as a convenient way of quickly taking control over open space. The vernacular village expresses the need for a spontaneous architectural scheme that develops naturally from the area it is located in. It states the desire to characterize architecture as built-up environment expressing continuity, deriving from an aspiration to provide a lasting sense of belonging.

"Immigrant House"

Vernacular Village

Privat Residence, Havatzelet Ha'Sharon

### 2. The traditional city

Old Jaffa, City Gate, a drawing from 19th century

Like the vernacular village, the theme of the traditional city derives from a desire to express the aspiration for an image of built-up environment created over generations, as opposed to residential neighborhoods in Israeli cities.

The Gate

The Alley

The Piazza

Neot Shoshanim Residence, Holon

### 3. The Inaccessible Arab village/house

Landscape, oil on canvas, 1982, 90x65 cms

From its inception, the Zionist movement had to contend with a difficult dichotomy: on the one hand, the will to integrate with the East, and on the other hand the conflict, along with rejection. The Arab village/house remained objects of desire, especially in the 1920s and the Neo-Orientalism period. The modern movement, and the desire to build a new society with new architecture, completely wiped out all connection with native, traditional construction from our consciousness and architecture. The Arab village/house remained outside the realm of discussion of Israeli society and architecture. They are objects of desire and longing along with rejection; in any case, the Arab village/house remained inaccessible.

First sketch (the wall)

Hidden interior

Private residence, Caesarea

### 4. Protective architecture

Dani Karavan, The Monument to the Negev Brigade, 1963

The conflict of the Zionist movement in opposition to the vast Islamic expanse is expressed by the constant need for self-protection, going back to the days of "Homa Umigdal" (Wall and Tower) and up through the construction of new neighborhoods surrounding Jerusalem as a fortified wall. Here the metaphor relates to two aspects: The protective measure, along with the desire to open up and create a dialogue with the surroundings.

Observation booth

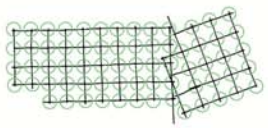
The view

Givat Ha'Selaim civic center

### 5. The orchard

N. Gutman, House in Orchard, 1927, Oil on Canvas

Memories of my childhood are immersed in expeditions between the citrus groves of Hertzliya, orchards that have long been replaced by built form that is estranged and incapable of creating urban fabric. The orchard expresses childhood memories, the naiveté and innocence that preceded Globalization, the authentic Israeli landscape. The orchard with its complexes of orange groves, or with the image of the hidden house between the orange trees, like the magical world of Nahum Gutman, for which the orchard is deeply indebted to him. The white house with the cool inner courtyard, combining the landscape with modernism.



The Grid (Private residence, Kfar Shmaryahau)

The Path

Private residence, Caesarea

# INTRODUCTION

Fig. 1 Typical urban fabric for the traditional city

*"Our description of the city will be concerned primarily with its form. This form depends on real facts, which in turn refer to real experiences: Athens, Rome, Paris. The architecture of the city summarizes the city's form, and from this form we can consider the city's problems."*

**Aldo Rossi** – The Architecture of the City

The urban fabric expresses the relationship between a city's built space and open space. A city's problems, according to Aldo Rossi, can be identified by its fabric. **Israeli cities are characterized by the pattern of isolated buildings and the spaces between them. The size of buildings and open space varies, but the principle remains the same**.

Fig. 1

The story of the Israeli city begins with the migration of Jewish populations from the old cities of Jaffa and Jerusalem and the construction of independent neighborhoods and villages. The fabric of the old city, in Israel and in other parts of the world, developed over hundreds of years as a spontaneous interweaving, a product of social and cultural conditions along with financial and technological capabilities. The urban fabric developed as a system of buildings built in close quarters and a hierarchy of open spaces, from the city square to the private yard, and along the roads and paths that were built in accordance with the flow of pedestrians, horses and donkeys. Top priority was always given to open space for its functional advantages as well as community life in the city. This was the stage



Fig. 2 Achuzat Bayit, W. Stiassny
Tel-Aviv's first neighborhood, 1909

Fig. 3 Typical Built-Form – the modern city

Fig. 4 Typical urban fabric, Tel-Aviv

Fig. 5 Typical urban fabric, Tel-Aviv. Photo: Ran Erde.

for public life took place, the meeting grounds of city dwellers. In the words of the Renaissance architect Alberti: "The city is like a large house, and the house in turn is like a small city." Open city spaces have always been like a city's rooms, with functionality, definition and attention to architectural components.

Fig. 2

From the outset, Jewish settlements developed near a set of buildings that were built apart. In the beginning this development expressed the wishes of the bourgeois who left the crowded confines of the old city to enjoy the private home surrounded by a garden. The passage of time brought the influence of modern urbanism and the development of fabric comprising separate buildings with open space between them. This concept derived from the aspiration to meet the needs of car traffic and parking, together with the desire to expose buildings to air and sunlight.

Fig. 3 Fig. 4 Fig. 5

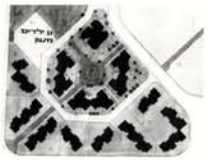
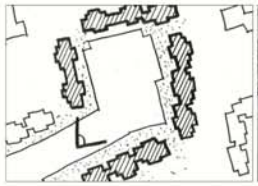


Fig. 6 Typical urban fabric in the Israeli city

Fig. 8 Typical street front in the Israeli city

Fig. 9 Typical street front in the Israeli city

Fig. 6 Fig. 7



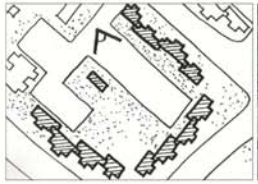


Fig. 7 Typical urban fabric in the Israeli city

**The problem that arises from such urban fabric is primarily the creation of open space between buildings without relating to it as architectural space for all intents and purposes. The creation of open space between buildings requires as much thought, planning and design as the buildings themselves. When open space is left over as a building's excess or as parking space, the open space system is left without a hierarchy from the public to the private domain**, and without an urban or ascetic purpose that benefits the population. The open spaces do not create a square or a yard, traditional urban components that are especially suitable for a Mediterranean climate.

**Likewise, the space between buildings makes it difficult to create a succession of building facades for the construction of a continuous street front as space that serves pedestrians. Accordingly, the open space in Israeli cities is generally left over as wasted space, and as a negative factor that disrupts the development of an urban fabric with relation to the community**. This approach lacks an understanding that open spaces, public and private, are of primary importance for a city's quality.

Fig. 8 Fig. 9

The merging of separate structures enables, in an easier manner than that in a traditional city, enable the construction of buildings that stand out from the existing fabric, thus impeding heterogeneous development with respect to the local characteristics.



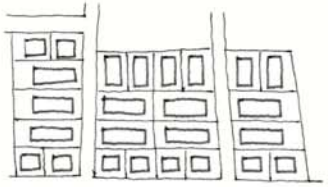


Fig. 10 Typical Tel-Aviv urban fabric intended for workers' residences

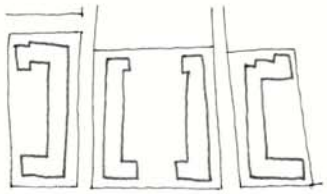


Fig. 11 Completed urban fabric, workers' residences, A. Sharon Tel-Aviv, 1933

Fig. 12 Street front, workers' residences

**From a climactic point of view, when a single building in a crowded complex rules out the feasibility of efficient ventilation. In any case, the construction of separate buildings creates multiple facades, a negative phenomenon from a climactic perspective resulting from a wasteful loss of energy**.

Fig. 10 Fig. 11 Fig. 12

The Workers Residence Project on Frishman Street in Tel-Aviv designed by architect A. Sharon (1933) represents a different approach. Sharon, who studied architecture in the Bauhaus, introduced a concept that strives to create residential plans taking community life into account. He disregarded Tel-Aviv's characteristic urban scheme and created a complex with inner courtyards between buildings in a manner that enables continuous relations with future buildings through shared open space.

The residential buildings at 56 Geulim Street and 20 Y. Rabin Street in Holon, which are presented in this chapter, relate similarly to the issue of the Israeli city's urban fabric. The objective is to create a common fabric with correlations between buildings and develop street fronts as an architectural facade in order to engender an open city space system with hierarchy and architectural and civic harmony.

Fig. 3 Bersky Residence, 10 Maze st., 1922

Fig. 4 Sterling Residence, 14 Lavontine st., 1926

Fig. 5 Mamluk Residence, 55 Yehuda Halevi st., 1932

Fig. 6 Davis Residence,
39 Nahalate Binyamine st., 1933

Fig. 7 Ripshtein Residence, Shenkine st., 1934

Fig. 8 Magnet Residence, 93 Rotchild Bd., 1934

## TEL-AVIV CASE STUDY

**The special interest concerning Tel-Aviv residential buildings is that in spite of the fabric which was constructed from individual buildings, and unlike other Israeli cities, there developed a continuous urban fabric, which derive from a adjacency of residential buildings with a basic common denominator**.

**As Professor Ran Shechori has noted, for a city which was established in 1909 and built mostly in the modern architectural period, Tel-Aviv's fortune was that it was launched from small investments**. The financial capabilities of the city's early builders sufficed only to purchase small plots measuring around 500 square meters, and built residential building 2–5 stories high containing 8–10 residential units. From the early 1920s until the 1960s, residential buildings in Tel-Aviv developed with many similarities regarding the size of the plots, typology and morphology. Nevertheless there were many differences in configuration, style and detail. The style of the residential building was dominated by the International Style and not, as it is commonly described by the Bauhaus style. The influence of Bauhaus and their Socialist beliefs were expressed in the few isolated projects for workers' residences which met the needs of the homogeneous community.

Fig. 1 Fig. 2

Fig. 3-10

*3 - 8 Architect Y. Megidovitz's buildings. For more details see Gilead Duvshani's book on the subject.*



Fig. 9 Zacks Residence, Dov Karmi Architect,
13 Ben Gurion Bd., 1954

Fig. 10 Typical residential buildings of the 1960s

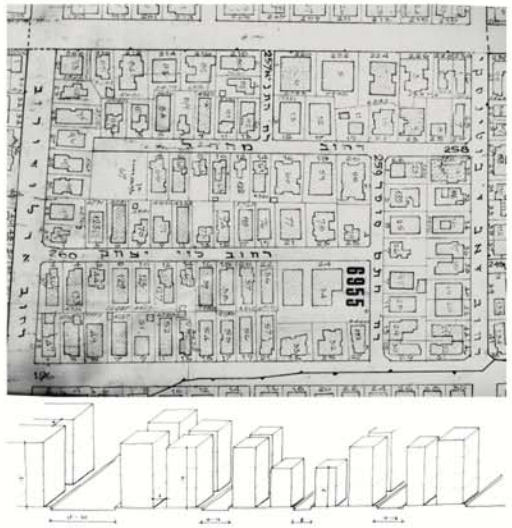



Fig. 11 Detail of Geddess's city plan and typical section

Fig. 11

In 1925, M. Dizengoff, the first Mayor of Tel-Aviv, invited Patrick Geddes to draw up the first master plans for the city. Geddes drafted a plan which suited the economic and programmatic needs of that period, though for the most part he carved up comfortably sized plots, with a hierarchy between main roads and secondary roads. **In accordance with the Geddes plan, the section of the street, the proportion between the width of the road and the height of the buildings along its length were adjusted for the comfort of the pedestrian, the city dweller**. These values together with a similar format for the development residential building and an urban fabric meet the expectations of the city's inhabitants, with simplicity and rare quality.

As the financial center of Israel, Tel-Aviv was subject to economic pressure from its inception. There are almost no traces left of the original houses of Achuzat Bayit, the city's first neighborhood.

During the last few decades rising real estate values have led to the construction of high rise buildings, far exceeding the pattern and character of historical Tel-Aviv. **Since the size of the Tel-Aviv residential building plot is not sufficient for high rise construction, all sites that enable a unification of plots are exploited for tall**

Fig. 3 Bersky Residence, 10 Maze st., 1922

Fig. 4 Sterling Residence, 14 Lavontine st., 1926

Fig. 5 Mamluk Residence, 55 Yehuda Halevi st., 1932

Fig. 6 Davis Residence,
39 Nahalate Binyamine st., 1933

Fig. 7 Ripshtein Residence, Shenkine st., 1934

Fig. 8 Magnet Residence, 93 Rotchild Bd., 1934

## TEL-AVIV CASE STUDY

**The special interest concerning Tel-Aviv residential buildings is that in spite of the fabric which was constructed from individual buildings, and unlike other Israeli cities, there developed a continuous urban fabric, which derive from a adjacency of residential buildings with a basic common denominator**.

**As Professor Ran Shechori has noted, for a city which was established in 1909 and built mostly in the modern architectural period, Tel-Aviv's fortune was that it was launched from small investments**. The financial capabilities of the city's early builders sufficed only to purchase small plots measuring around 500 square meters, and built residential building 2–5 stories high containing 8–10 residential units. From the early 1920s until the 1960s, residential buildings in Tel-Aviv developed with many similarities regarding the size of the plots, typology and morphology. Nevertheless there were many differences in configuration, style and detail. The style of the residential building was dominated by the International Style and not, as it is commonly described by the Bauhaus style. The influence of Bauhaus and their Socialist beliefs were expressed in the few isolated projects for workers' residences which met the needs of the homogeneous community.

Fig. 1 Fig. 2

Fig. 3-10

*3 - 8 Architect Y. Megidovitz's buildings. For more details see Gilead Duvshani's book on the subject.*



Fig. 9 Zacks Residence, Dov Karmi Architect,
13 Ben Gurion Bd., 1954

Fig. 10 Typical residential buildings of the 1960s

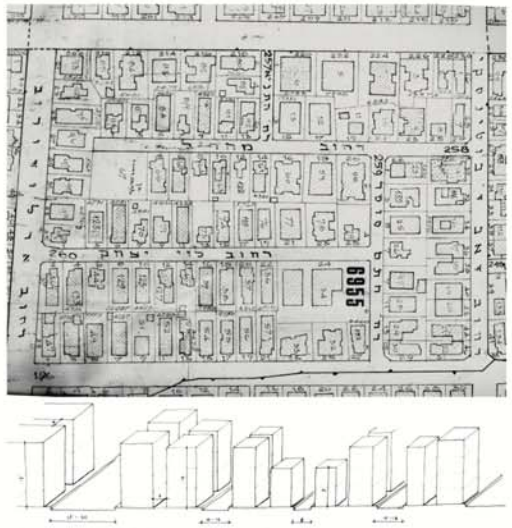



Fig. 11 Detail of Geddess's city plan and typical section

Fig. 11

In 1925, M. Dizengoff, the first Mayor of Tel-Aviv, invited Patrick Geddes to draw up the first master plans for the city. Geddes drafted a plan which suited the economic and programmatic needs of that period, though for the most part he carved up comfortably sized plots, with a hierarchy between main roads and secondary roads. **In accordance with the Geddes plan, the section of the street, the proportion between the width of the road and the height of the buildings along its length were adjusted for the comfort of the pedestrian, the city dweller**. These values together with a similar format for the development residential building and an urban fabric meet the expectations of the city's inhabitants, with simplicity and rare quality.

As the financial center of Israel, Tel-Aviv was subject to economic pressure from its inception. There are almost no traces left of the original houses of Achuzat Bayit, the city's first neighborhood.

During the last few decades rising real estate values have led to the construction of high rise buildings, far exceeding the pattern and character of historical Tel-Aviv. **Since the size of the Tel-Aviv residential building plot is not sufficient for high rise construction, all sites that enable a unification of plots are exploited for tall**

Fig. 12 Hertzl Street, 1925

Fig. 13 Hertzl Street, 1970

Fig. 14 Tel-Aviv street and high rise building, 2007

Fig. 12 Fig. 13

**buildings**. Similarly, there is a determination to take advantage of the demolition of public buildings which occupy sufficiently large plot, for this purpose. Such was the case with the Hertzlia Gymnasia where the Shalom Tower was built, a phenomenon that expresses the most decisive change in values in Israeli society.

Tel-Aviv from its inception set its school as a focus of its main street, a building which expressed the nation's pride in education. The Shalom Tower which replaced the Gymnasium as a representative of new values honored by contemporary Israel. Another case among many is that of the Nahushtan Factory, upon which was built the Neve Zedek Tower. This aggressive construction within the residential framework which characterizes Tel-Aviv brings about the destruction of the existing fabric. Tall buildings are constructed without order or logic, albeit in areas where plots enable such construction. The tower within the existing fabric presents not only an urban planning impediment, but also a negative image of a society which looks after its wealthy and imitates international architecture without any connection to the local characteristics.

Fig. 14

**The phenomenon of building tall buildings is not a negative development in itself. The problem is the location of these structures. The tower amid an historic fabric rules out all possibilities of developing the features of the existing fabric,**



Fig. 15 Aerial view of Tel-Aviv. Photo: Ran Erde

**precludes opportunities to develop open public space of quality and hierarchy, and destroys the street as architectural space with a street front for the pedestrian**. It is a negative factor within the fabric. This is an architectural declaration of weakness: the inability of society and domestic culture to safeguard their values and develop local attributes rather than imitate foreign styles. **Those who support the concept of building high rise bulidings claim that it is the way to fill up the city centers in a state as densely populated as Israel. But the built fabric of the traditional city, with four to six floors, provides the same density with an urban environments of far greater quality.**

Fig. 15

Tel-Aviv is most surely a city with a traditional fabric, character and some qualities. The city must be safeguarded for its entirety and not only for some of its buildings. It is still possible, from an urban perspective, to fill the existing fabric with structures which have the character of the Tel-Aviv residential building, and thereby strengthen the city.

From the standpoint of the urban residential building, of primary importance is the creation of local architecture: Buildings which relate to existing buildings and the urban fabric and which define public spaces, the street and square for the pedestrian.

# INTRODUCTION

Fig. 1 Dizengof square, G. Averbouch, 1934

*"In modern city planning the relationship between the built-up and open spaces is exactly reversed. Formerly the empty spaces (streets and plazas) were a verified entity of shapes calculated for their impact. Today building lots are laid out as regularly shaped closed forms, and what is left over between them becomes streets or parking."*

**Camillo Sitte** – City Planning According to Artistic Principles

From Alberti, by way of Camilo Sitte, Rob Krier and down to Louis Khan, who said, "The plan is a society of rooms," the claim is that from the perspective of architectural theory, the urban fabric is one entity with no separation between built up and open space.

**Public space, the street and the square is where city life happens. These are the meeting grounds for its residents, the city's guest rooms, the places which create the city experience. In fact, from the standpoint of daily life for the citizens and the creation of quality open space for residents, public space is more important than built-up space**.

Modern city planning stripped down the urban fabric down to its functional components and separated built-up space from open space.
The modern Israeli city, regardless of its geographic location, the period in which it was planned, or whether the plans were drawn by the government or by private entrepreneurs, was built according to the worldview of modern planning. In the modern Israeli city, the street was replaced by the highway and the piazza by the parking lot. **Interestingly, most of the Israeli population resides in cities along the**

Fig. 2 Fig. 3 Fig. 4



Fig. 2 Israeli's town typical built form

Fig. 3 Typical left over space between buildings in Tel-Aviv

Fig. 4 Typical left over space between buildings in Tel-Aviv

**shores of the Mediterranean Sea. These cities did not create a fabric that could express their local context in general and their closeness to the sea in particular**, fabrics with hierarchical schemes of open spaces from the city square to the neighborhood square to the private yard. The disregard for climatic adaptation of the street and the square is an important factor leading to our estrangement from the local. This should come as no surprise, when the planning process of a city or new neighborhood begins with plans of the road system, followed by separation into building lots along the roads. Zoning for single buildings on each plot, the construction scope of each building and the required density give little thought to the big picture as one complex system.

In Tel-Aviv, with the exception of Rabin square, which is a national square for huge demonstrations, there are no squares at the neighborhood or structural levels. The city contains several gardens, but no public space that can be regarded as a "piazza", an urban room in a built-up area enabling civilian life. In the past there was Dizengof Square, which was actually a traffic circle, but still fulfilled a role as public space. As usual, instead of thinking about an urban solution for the benefit of the citizen, just as it destroyed the Hertzlia Gymnasia, the municipality destroyed Dizengof Circle for the sake of a transportation solution by turning the square into a bridge, which doesn't have the capacity to function as an urban space. A further example of callous destruction and lack of understanding or sensitivity for "how to build a city" is that of the urban space which was next to the Great Synagogue on Allenby Street. An unintelligible addition of columns surrounding the building completely destroyed the synagogue's wonderful architecture. Together with an encroaching parking lot on the remaining area, the municipality destroyed one of old Tel-Aviv's beautiful squares.

Fig. 1

Fig. 5

Fig. 6

Camilo Sitte, in his book "*City Planning According to Aesthetic Principles*", of which one paragraph is quoted above, sought to methodically investigate urban public