'We came to this land to build and be built':

How architecture influenced the formation of national identity of Israel and vice versa

History Thesis

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Abstract

Aliyah, the great Jewish migration resulting from popularization of Zionism, brought end to the Jewish diaspora in the form, in which it was known before. The massive migration brought large numbers of new settlers to the area of Palestine with the aim of (re)creating their country – Israel. A new country required new infrastructure, architecture and a new national identity which would unify Jews after 2000 years of diaspora. This paper aims to examinate the interrelations of the last two; architecture and national identity as well as the other, main factors influencing the development of architecture in Israel.

The research is set up around six preselected architects of European background. Each couple represents a different era-style in Israeli architecture. For each of the architects a few buildings will be selected and analyzed for: relations to the architect's background experiences, upbringing and their period of education, influences from the preexisting architecture of Palestine, adaptation to the local climate new to the European architect, and finally, the State defined laws and trends as a means of building national identity. The paper includes also a discussion regarding the development of Palestinian architecture in context of the Israeli influence.

The analysis is conducted using primary sources, mainly building photographs, but also drawings, diagrams, postcards, street signs and literary sources. Simultaneously, an investigation regarding what role these aforementioned factors played in the process of building the national identity of Israel is supported also by secondary sources – books, articles and journal publications.

The main results suggest high dependence of the Israeli built environment on the State defined laws and trends. A less intense dependence is found in the context of the rest of the factors. As a consequence, however, the built environment and national identity in context of architecture seem to be mainly influenced by the State defined laws and trends and the architecture of Palestine, as the various, individual backgrounds of architects cannot create a uniform identity, while the continuous references towards the Palestinian architecture can.

Keywords: Jewish immigration to Palestine, architecture, national identity, Israel, Palestine, Jewish-European architects, Zionism in architecture.

Introduction

Following the sociopolitical instabilities of the late 19th century Russia, the first wave of migrants, so the first Jewish Aliyah, left Europe and initiated one of the largest group relocations in recent history.[1] In Palestine, the immigrants faced living conditions which they were not prepared for. Their survival, and the ability to live according to the Zionist principles, depended on the capability to adapt to the climate, produce their own food, create shelter and peacefully coexist with Palestinians which held the majority in the region at that time. The act of building and hence architect's profession became strongly embedded in Israeli culture. 'We came to this land to build and be built', is an old Zionist expression, conveying the belief, that physical work in agriculture, construction of neighborhoods will 'build' the immigrants' characters but also bind the emerging nation with the acquired land.[2] It is one of the first evidences of the role which architecture played in building Israeli identity.

Over time, as the architectural trends developed, the importance of the aforementioned role remained, yet its character kept changing. Initially, architecture bound immigrants to the land.[3] As the country formed, an architectural style as a national expression, Modernism, became the medium of building a uniform national identity.[4] The built environment of Israel became strongly politicized with clear guidelines regarding which architectural styles are desirable and preferred.

However, the State defined laws and trends were not the only force governing the Israeli built environment. The influx of immigrants brought a workforce of builders and architects from different part of the World. Each one of them had their unique background. The surroundings which accompanied their upbringing as well as the education and experience gained before emigration contributed to their own architectural style. The local climate, foreign to many of the newcomers, forced them to adapt. The preexisting architecture of Palestine was for some

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[1] Artur Jasiński, *Architektura i Urbanistyka Izraela* (Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza AFM, 2016), 21.
[2] Artur Jasiński, "Między Orientem a Lewantem. Architektura jako narzędzie budowy izraelskiej torzsamości narodowej", *Journal of Urban Ethnology*, 13, (2015) 194.
[3] Jasinski, "Między Orientem a Lewantem. Architektura jako narzędzie budowy izraelskiej torzsamości narodowej", 194.
[4] Alona Nitzan-Shiftan, "Silencing Palestinian Architectural History in Israel: Reflections on Scholarship and Activism", *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* 10, no. 1 (2021), 235.

of them an inspiration to achieve that climate adaptation[5] but also to convey genius loci,[6] becoming another factor influencing the new-built architecture.

Especially the last one, the architecture of the region, became a great influence on the first Israeli architects. Pursued and developed by Alexander Baerwald, Eclectic Orientalism, aimed to draw upon the historical Jewish architectural style to produce new forms.[7] Its resemblance of the broadly defined Arab architecture, however, was deemed inappropriate by the Zionist discourse. In result Modernism was selected and implemented as the new 'national' architectural style. Various authors put forward different explanations to the reasons standing behind these claims and actions. Polish associate professor at Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski Kraków Academy, Artur Jasiński, suggests that the Jewish immigrant were not accustomed with the historical Jewish architecture style which, during the 2000 year Diaspora, became associated directly with Arab culture. Thus, an application of a style unfamiliar to the immigrants from Europe created a risk of 'cultural shock and psychological alienation'.[8] On the other hand, Haim Yacobi, London-based Israeli scholar and professor at UCL, argues that introduction of Modernism was utilized as a means of 'altering Arab space' or 'depriving Palestinian memory of its political contents'[9] which could not be achieved with a style resembling the Arab architecture. The reasons behind this choice are going to be briefly discussed and speculated on further in the text.

The aim of this paper is to examine the factors influencing Israeli architecture putting focus on the aforementioned personal experience and education of immigrant architects as well as the climate adaptations and the inspiration drawn from Palestinian architecture. Politics of the built environment, so the State defined laws and trends, will be evaluated as an important background notion affecting architects' freedom of expression and as means of building national identity. In order to create a complete overview, architecture from different times was selected and will be examined for all the previously described factors.

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[5] Or Aleksandrowicz, "Appearance and performance: Israeli building climatology and its effect on local architectural practice (1940–1977)", *Architectural Science Review*, 60, no. 5, (2017) 372.

[6] Jasiński, *Architektura i Urbanistyka Izraela*, 213.

[7] Jasinski, "Między Orientem a Lewantem. Architektura jako narzędzie budowy izraelskiej torzsamości narodowej", 196.

[8] Jasinski, "Między Orientem a Lewantem. Architektura jako narzędzie budowy izraelskiej torzsamości narodowej", 197.

[9] Haim Yacobi, "Architecture, Orientalism, and Identity: The Politics of the Israeli-Built Environment" (*Israel Studies*, 13, no.1, Spring, 2008) 96.

Additionally, the choice of Modernism as the national architectural style of Israel shall be placed in context. This selection created a problematic connotation between the International Style and rejection of the Eclectic Orientalism or contradiction against the Palestinian architecture often perceived as 'primitive', 'vernacular' or even the 'underdeveloped native' as described by Yacobi.[10] In fact, however, Palestine before, but also under the Israeli governance, cultivated its own Modernist Movement, which is often forgotten both in context of Israeli Modernism and in general. Although the Palestinian Modernism is not the topic of this paper, it shall be acknowledged and briefly discussed considering the mutual influence of Israeli and Palestinian identities and architecture as a direct result of Jewish immigration.

The volume of existing research on the topic of development of Israeli architecture does not yet present a comprehensive analysis which would aim to address all the factors presented in this study. The tools employed by the State of Israel in the process of building the national identity are seldom discussed in the context of architecture. It seems that this topic is directly approached, researched and published solely by Yacobi, and another Israeli scholar, associate professor at Technion, Alona Nitzan-Shiftan. The implementation of Modernism as the 'national' Israeli architectural style is also rarely mentioned at the same time acknowledging the Palestinian Modernism, to counteract the untrue perception of Palestine as an 'underdeveloped' and 'empty' land, prior to Jewish immigration.

Eclectic Orientalism

Jewish immigration was divided into waves, or Aliyah's. Each wave consisted of a different mix of immigrants with different professions, coming from different countries. The second Aliyah, between 1904 and 1914, consisted predominantly of Russian Socialist workers.[11] Among them arrived Joseph Barsky – a Russian architect born in 1876 in Rzhyshchiv near Kyiv.[12] Barsky studied Architecture at the Odessa School of Arts and later also at the Imperial Academy of Arts in Petersburg. In 1906 he decided to take a break from the university and travel to Palestine for educational purposes. After a year and a half spent in Middle East, Barsky asked the Academy for an architectural license by referring to his course in Petersburg, a five

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[10] Yacobi, "Architecture, Orientalism, and Identity: The Politics of the Israeli-Built Environment", 97.
[11] Jasiński, *Architektura i Urbanistyka Izraela*, 22.
[12] Sergey Kravtsov. *Joseph Barsky (1876–1943) and His Search for a 'Hebrew' Architecture*. Center for Jewish Art. Hebrew University of Jerusalem. 2021, 1.

year long apprenticeship with architects Mikhail Kondratiev, Boris Girshovich, and Mikhail Songailo as well as supervision of multiple constructions in Palestine. This presented experience earned Barsky a license by the end of 1908.[13]

Early on, the Zionist movement rejected the culture of the Eastern European Diaspora due to ideological issues, therefore, rejecting also the architecture of the region.[14] Thus, Barsky was unable to draw from his Eastern European personal background. It is unclear whether this played a direct role in Barsky's selection, however, it certainly guided him and other architects of that time to base their designs on the popular at that time, emergent, 'historical Jewish style'.

This 'historical Jewish style' was called by some Eclectic Orientalism,[15] by others National Romanticism or 'Hebrew' Architecture.[16] The style was based upon excavations and iconography as well as descriptions of buildings found in the Bible[17] for example of the Temple and Palace of Salomon.[18] As Adolf Friedmann, Zionist campaigner, described in 'The Land of Israel', according to the 'Hebrew' architecture ornamentation shall be 'stylized in the old oriental way', 'animals and products of the country' should be incorporated.[19] This way 'oriental' appearance and the use of natural stone, abundantly available in Palestine, became the symbols of Eclectic Orientalism. The broadly defined 'stylization in the old oriental way' suggests, however, affiliation with the architecture of 'Orient', in this context Middle East, rather than purely the Bible, this way associating Eclectic Orientalism with the preexisting architecture of Palestine and Levant in general.

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[13] Kravtsov, *Joseph Barsky (1876–1943) and His Search for a 'Hebrew' Architecture*, 1.
[14] Jasiński, "Między Orientem a Lewantem. Architektura jako narzędzie budowy izraelskiej torzsamości narodowej", 194.
[15] Jasiński, "Między Orientem a Lewantem. Architektura jako narzędzie budowy izraelskiej torzsamości narodowej", 196.
[16] Kravtsov, *Joseph Barsky (1876–1943) and His Search for a 'Hebrew' Architecture*, 1.
[17] Jasiński, "Między Orientem a Lewantem. Architektura jako narzędzie budowy izraelskiej torzsamości narodowej", 194.
[18] Kravtsov, *Joseph Barsky (1876–1943) and His Search for a 'Hebrew' Architecture*, 1.
[19] Kravtsov, *Joseph Barsky (1876–1943) and His Search for a 'Hebrew' Architecture*, 2.

TELL-AVIV
THE GYMNASIUM "HERZLIAH".

תל־אביב, הגמנסיה העברית "הרצליה".

גימנסיה הרצליה. מימין – ד״ר חיים חיסין רכוב על חמור. שנות העשרה המוקדמות.
הצלם: אברהם סוסקין. אוסף ד״ר ירמיהו רימון

Figure 1. Herzliya Hebrew Gymnasium in Tel-Aviv, color postcard, date unknown. Muza Eretz Museum Tel-Aviv.

One of the most iconic applications of this style became Barsky's Herzliya Hebrew Gymnasium in Tel Aviv (fig. 1). The strong geometrization and almost obsessive symmetry of the façade are the first, most conspicuous attributes of Eclectic Orientalism. One could argue, that the shadow projected on the right side of the facade ruins the beauty of its symmetrical perfection. Further, characteristic pointed arches surrounded by reliefs are incorporated in the gallery and window openings can be directly associated with the Levantine architecture. Crenellations and sculptural, geometric attic over the entrance crowning the façade also trace back to the Middle Eastern tradition. These typical, 'oriental' references are strengthened by placement of large pylons framing the entrance, according to Sergey Kravtsov, researcher at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, borrowed from the ancient Egyptian architecture.[20] Finally, the use of natural, local stone underlines the tight relationship between Eclectic Orientalism and the area of Palestine.

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[20] Kravtsov, *Joseph Barsky (1876–1943) and His Search for a 'Hebrew' Architecture*, 3.

Figure 2. Hotel Palatin in Tel-Aviv, sepia postcard, interwar period. Archiwum Allegro.

Eclectic Orientalism is represented also in the façade of Hotel Palatin designed by a German architect Alexander Baerwald (fig. 2). Pointed arches with reliefs in window openings and in the entrance bay appear once again as a recurring element of the 'Hebrew' architecture. Also in the case of Hotel Palatin, the façade is strongly symmetric and geometric, the symmetry, however, is interrupted by the accentuated entrance located on the right side. The shallow, in this case, corner window bay and roof terrace further represent typical characteristics of Eclectic Orientalism. Many features of this building correspond with the appearance of the Herzliya Hebrew Gymnasium, however, the form of the Hotel Palatin has a more contemporary expression revealed i. a. in the compact massing or the emphasis put on the asymmetry of the entrance placement. In that sense, Baerwald's understanding of Eclectic Orientalism resonates more with the description provided by Jasiński who suggests that the style utilizes elements of historical architecture to create 'new forms'.[21] The form created by Barsky, on the other hand, was much more historicizing.

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[21] Jasiński, "Między Orientem a Lewantem. Architektura jako narzędzie budowy izraelskiej torzsamości narodowej", 196.
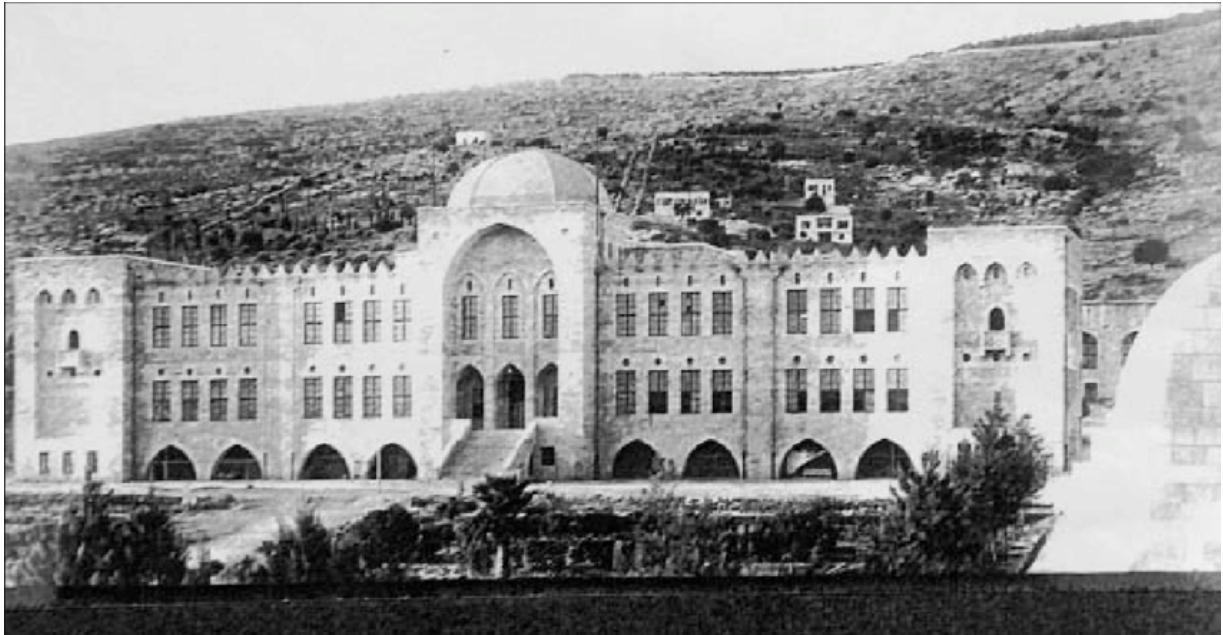
Figure 3. Technion building in Haifa, grayscale photography, circa 1920s. Kolodziej-Durnas.

However, also Baerwald designed façades of more historical appearance. His proposal for the Technion University building, where he later lectured as a professor of Architecture, reminds more of the Herzliya Gymnasium than Hotel Palatin. Symmetry and geometry, pointed arches, crenellations and the use of natural stone as well as the recess in the entrance bay creating two monumental pylons on the sides crowned with an enormous dome clearly show the references to the Eclectic Orientalism. However, according to the CDA archive entry on Alexander Baerwald, his design involves also elements of the Belin's Wilhelminian style[22] which Baerwald could observe already during his upbringing and education in Berlin. It is unclear from the source which aspects of the building exhibit the Wilhelminian style, however, one could speculate, that the influence can be found for example in the square shape of the windows placed flatly on the façade (Eclectic Orientalism would suggest an arched or point-arched shape and at least a slight recess to hide the interior from harsh sun) or in the accents placed above the windows which could relate to the decorative Wilheliminan window headers. In this case however, the accents are in fact ventilation openings,[23] aiming to regulate the interior climate of the building.

Baerwald was known for his interest in regional building technology, the architectural style of the area as well as the local materials and climate adaptation solutions which later on he

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[22] The Centre of Documentary Architecture. *Alexander Baerwald.*
[23] Anna Hägele, *Cultural transfer and Orientalism in Palestine. Alexander Baerwald, Technion, Haifa*, 2019.

investigated as part of his research role at Technion.[24] Before that, however, soon after his arrival to Palestine, Baerwald began to explore the local built environment which resulted in a detail report of his findings called 'Die Welt'.[25] His overall involvement in the establishment of the new 'Hebrew' architecture earned him a tile as the 'creator' of Eclectic Orientalism.[26]

Over time, however, the connotations of the 'Hebrew' architecture have changed and the style was abandoned during the twenties.[27] As Kravtsov suggests the National Romanticist architecture after WWI experienced a universal downfall as the aim of National Romanticism was to create a national identity and 'the nations that attained their statehood after the First World War were no longer interested in such narratives'.[28] Israel at that time, however, still strived for identity building, especially as their statehood was achieved only after the Second World War. Therefore, this theory of 'natural decline' of interest in the national building styles could hardly apply to the case of Israel. Another reason presented by Kravtsov is the 'decay of positivist paradigm' which propagated drawing from the past knowledge, so traditional building solutions, and genius loci in creation of national styles.[29] This, however, does not explain the eventual tearing down of the Herzliya Hebrew Gymnasium in order to put a high-rise, modern Shalom Tower or the recent renovation of Hotel Palatine, which intervened in the main façade of the building removing the entrance bay and adding new elements. These acts suggest a certain deterioration of value held in the Eclectic Orientalism which allow for such drastic alterations in heritage buildings. The reason behind rejection of Eclectic Orientalism suggested by Alona Nitzan-Shiftan provides also an answer which could explain the rapid devaluation of the style. The researcher claims that after the 1930s, architecture associated with Palestine and historic Israel lost its popularity due to tension and conflicts with local communities.[30] These circumstances rendered Eclectic Orientalism unable to represent modern Jewish community and left a widespread aversion towards the style.

Nowadays, according to Nitzan-Shiftan, the natural stone (and therefore Eclectic Orientalism is a symbol of the radical right-wing camp, while concrete (implying Modernism) symbolized

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[24] Jasiński, "Między Orientem a Lewantem. Architektura jako narzędzie budowy izraelskiej torzsamości narodowej", 197.

[25] Or Aleksandrowicz, *Daring the Shutter: The Tel Aviv Idiom of Solar Protection*. (Public School Editions, 2015), 11.

[26] Jasiński, "Między Orientem a Lewantem. Architektura jako narzędzie budowy izraelskiej torzsamości narodowej", 196.

[27] Kravtsov, *Joseph Barsky (1876–1943) and His Search for a 'Hebrew' Architecture*, 6.

[28] Kravtsov, *Joseph Barsky (1876–1943) and His Search for a 'Hebrew' Architecture*, 6.

[29] Kravtsov, *Joseph Barsky (1876–1943) and His Search for a 'Hebrew' Architecture*, 6.

[30] Alona Nitzan-Shiftan, "Contested Zionism -- Alternative Modernism: Erich Mendelsohn and the Tel Aviv Chug in Mandate Palestine", *Architectural History* 39 (1996), 156.

the democratic political movement, which strongly argues in favor of finding a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.[31] This poses an interesting dissonance when paired with the opinion of Yacobi, already mentioned in the introduction, which proclaims that the aim of Modernism in Israel was to "alter Arab space" or "deprive Palestinian memory of its political contents".[32] Therefore, an architectural style which, according to Yacobi, was supposed to become a tool of warfare is currently associated with finding common peace, according to Nitzan-Shiftan. This presumptive dynamic development of associations, but mainly the variety of opinions regarding the topic, reveals to what extent the Israeli built environment is depended on the political discourse of the country.

Modernism

The same political discourse, years earlier, deemed Modernism as the best choice for the Israeli 'national' architectural style. 'New form for a new country' suggested detachment form tradition and heritage of Jewish immigrants.[33] Considering the variety of traditions brought to Palestine by the Diaspora, it seems like a choice of one style to unite all the people was a necessity in order to form a common national identity. This style could have, however, embraced that variety of cultures, creating architecture of inclusion instead of rejection. Eclectic Orientalism could have served that goal if the style was further diversified. This solution, however, would not be accepted by the Zionists, as the Diaspora negation and Orient negation were one of the main objectives of Zionism.[34] In result the Modernist style was selected and integrated into the built environment of Israel, especially Tel-Aviv. Since then Tel-Aviv gained the title of the 'White City' or the 'Bauhaus city'.[35]

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[31] Jasiński, *Architektura i Urbanistyka Izraela*, 209.
[32] Yacobi, "Architecture, Orientalism, and Identity: The Politics of the Israeli-Built Environment" 96.
[33] Jasiński, *Architektura i Urbanistyka Izraela*, 71.
[34] Yacobi, "Architecture, Orientalism, and Identity: The Politics of the Israeli-Built Environment", 96.
[35] Philipp Oswalt, *"The Myth of the White Bauhaus City Tel Aviv"*, (*Bärnreuther*, Andrea (ed.), Taking a Stand? Debating the Bauhaus and Modernism, Heidelberg: arthistoricum.net, 2021), 399.

Figure 4. Building at 65 Hovevei Zion Street, grayscale photography, 1935. ArchDaily.

One of the Bauhaus Alumni strongly contributing to the Tel-Aviv's Modernist architecture was Pinchas Hutt, a Polish-Jewish architect. His building at 65 Hovevei Zion Street follows the Modernist style quite closely. The simple white mass, based on strongly geometric forms, rejects ornamentation of any kind (fig. 4). Concrete, as the main material of the structure allows for quick and easy mass production. Hutt's axonometric diagram shows the emphasis put on functionality of the buildings floorplan and the rejection of symmetry in the façade, broken however, with the regularity of strip window placement. (fig. 5).
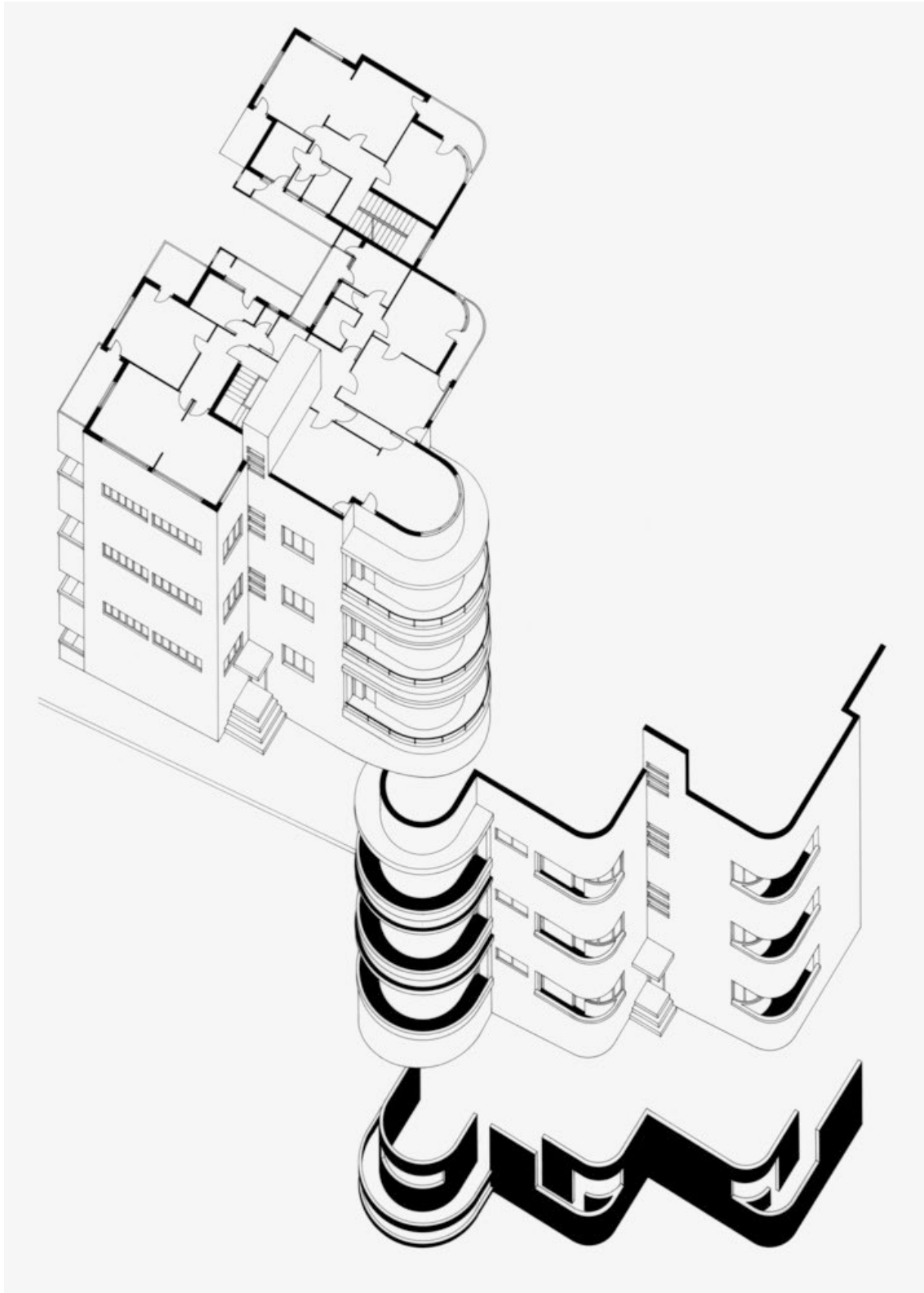
Figure 5. Building at 65 Hovevei Zion Street, grayscale axonometric diagram, 1935. Archdaily.

Figure 6. Building at 24 Levontin Street, street sign color photography, 2022. Eli Zvuluny.

However, not all the designs of Hutt were strictly Modernist. According to the street signs of the 'buildings for conservation' in Tel Aviv, there is a number of less known designs by Pinchas Hutt which apart from pure Modernism, exhibit also characteristics of the Eclectic Orientalism or Art Deco. The sign in the picture taken by the local photography enthusiast Eli Zvuluny (fig. 6) presents the façade drawing of the building at the 24 Levontin Street which according to the description incorporates both of these styles. The building is located within the 'UNESCO-

declared White City preservation zone' and was designed alongside other buildings which façades include more 'Bauhaus' characteristics. This shows that Tel-Aviv's Modernism is more of an International Style mixture, rather than pure 'Bauhaus',[36] therefore, proving certain freedom of choice left to the architect despite the political influence. In context of the architect himself, the designs exhibit the stylistic flexibility of Pinchas Hutt, thus his interest in and understanding of styles, other than the one, that dominated his education.

Also the designs of Erich Mendelsohn, German architect known for creating the Einstein Tower in Potsdam, exhibit strong influences of Eclectic Orientalism. According to Nitzan-Shiftan, Mendelsohn's Modernism with its 'oriental' references became the representation of Ahad Ha'am's Cultural Zionism, while architecture of the other, more 'Bauhaus' Modernists stood for Herzl's Political Zionism, adding another layer to the already politicized context.[37]

Figure 7. The Weizmann Estate, grayscale photography, 1937. Yad Chaim Weizmann.

Mendelsohn's modernism was a careful combination of elements, both modern and oriental resulting in forms not quite belonging neither to the East, nor the West.[38] The Weizmann Estate was Mendelsohn's first commission in Palestine.[39] The building's mass consisting of simple

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[36] Oswalt, "The Myth of the White Bauhaus City Tel Aviv", 399.
[37] Nitzan-Shiftan, "Contested Zionism -- Alternative Modernism: Erich Mendelsohn and the Tel Aviv Chug in Mandate Palestine", 151.
[38] Nitzan-Shiftan, "Contested Zionism -- Alternative Modernism: Erich Mendelsohn and the Tel Aviv Chug in Mandate Palestine", 168.
[39] Nitzan-Shiftan, "Contested Zionism -- Alternative Modernism: Erich Mendelsohn and the Tel Aviv Chug in Mandate Palestine", 168.

geometric forms, their simplicity and rawness, however, suggests more associations with Modernism rather than Eclectic Orientalism (fig. 7). The front façade 'suspended in the air' supported only by the thin columns and the lack of straightforward ornamentation point towards Modernist architecture. On the other hand, one could say, that the vertical strips placed on the centrally located tower serve a function of a visual, decorative accent, and therefore, become an ornament, and a reference towards the Eclectic style. Also the strong symmetry of the main façade and, most importantly, the centrally located courtyard with a pond of water relate to what one could describe as a traditional Arabic house typology, thus belonging to the Eclectic Orientalism. This inspiration, in case of the pond, becomes also an adaptation to the local climate drawn from existing regional solutions. The most evident illustration of the attempt to unify Modernism and Eclectic Orientalism is the use of materialization and building technology which incorporates beams and columns typical for a concrete building, but is actually made of masonry covered with plaster.[40]

The quest to develop a new style which would merge Modernism and Eclectic Orientalism came to Mendelsohn at a cost of rejecting certain characteristics of his already existing architectural style – for example the famous rounded corners.[41] Paradoxically, around that same time, these rounded corners entered the cannon of Tel-Aviv's Modernism and became a standard practice in the main Jewish Modernist circle of Palestine, as for example in case of the building at 65 Hovevei Zion Street (fig. 5). Mendelsohn, however, did not agree with incorporating Western architecture in Palestine. The mainstream Modernists associations with Political Zionism, and therefore, the mismatch between their objectives and the objectives of Mendelsohn caused him to grow disappointed with the direction in which Zionism in Palestine developed. In 1941, the disappointment combined with the WWII crisis and lack of commissions caused Mendelsohn to leave Palestine and permanently settle in the US.[42]

Nonetheless, his contribution was appreciated in the other Zionist circles. In February 1941, Salman Shocken, for whom Mendelsohn often worked in the past, informed Chaim Weizmann about Mendelsohn's plans to leave Palestine. Weizmann was at that time the President of the Zionist Organization. Despite his difficult relationship with Mendelsohn caused by

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[40] Nitzan-Shiftan, "Contested Zionism -- Alternative Modernism: Erich Mendelsohn and the Tel Aviv Chug in Mandate Palestine", 168.
[41] Jasiński, *Architektura i Urbanistyka Izraela*, 60.
[42] Jasiński, *Architektura i Urbanistyka Izraela*, 63.

complications in the building process of Weizmann Estate,[43] Weizmann suggested to offer Mendelsohn his own chair at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in order to keep Mendelsohn in Palestine and 'secure his service for country' (fig. 8). Although Weizmann's reservations towards Mendelsohn showed in the phrasing to create 'utmost' a chair for the architect, the suggestion itself still exhibits Weizmann's recognition of the value held by Mendelsohn's work. From Weizmann's point of view the value was probably not only architectural but also political, as Weizmann strongly appreciated Ahad Ha'am's views and opinions (Ha'am was Weizmann's 'intimate advisor'),[44] thus also the Cultural Zionism proclaimed by Mendelsohn.

Figure 8. Weizmann's telegram to Schocken regarding Mendelsohn. Weizmann Archives.

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[43] "A Dream House at Minimal Costs", Weizmann Institute of Science. Accessed, March 29, 2023: https://wis-wander.weizmann.ac.il/people-and-events-science-culture/dream-house-minimal-cost.
[44] "Ahad Ha'am". Encyclopedia Britannica. Accessed, March 29, 2023:
https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ahad-Haam.

Post-war Modernism

Another well-known architect of European origin who designed in Palestine and later in Israel was Arieh Sharon. Raised in Poland and Educated in Bauhaus, Sharon similarly to Mendelsohn, did not adapt to the mainstream Modernism of Tel-Aviv, in Israel known as the 'Bauhaus' Style, but practiced Brutalism instead.

The inspiration Sharon took from his education was substantial. Title of the book, he wrote, describing the key concepts of Israeli architecture and his own most important projects, 'Kibbutz + Bauhaus: An Architect's Way in the New Land', makes the importance of this relationship clear, underlining also Sharon's impact of the Kibbutz architecture.[45]

Sharon was also a key contributor to the urbanism of Israel. His plan created after the establishment of Israel in 1948 determined the spatial organization of the whole country and was supervised directly by the Prime Minister at that time, David Ben-Gurion.[46] Sharon's work primarily aimed to accommodate large numbers of immigrants incoming to the freshly created country. However, the other aspects of the plan revealed political priorities of the Israeli government involved in the planning process. The expansive character of the settlement was organized in a way that would help Israel claim the previously Palestinian soil and ensure the maintenance of control over the area.[47]

As Yacobi mentions, also Sharon's housing blocks and idea of housing unit incorporated from the Western architecture has political implications. He emphasizes that Sharon's Plan specifies three aspects-dimensions of design which facilitate creation of a uniform space – land, people and time. These aim to promote assimilation and integration of different kinds of inhabitants to create a unified group, therefore bringing the nation together.[48] What Yacobi points out, however, referring to Yehuda Shenhav, Israeli sociologist and critical theorist, is that effort of the Israeli government to unify the immigrants had an effect of transforming them through a certain process of de-Arabization, especially in context of 'Oriental Jews' or Mizrahim. He reveals that the Modernist housing units often did not answer the cultural norms and needs of the users, thus forcing them to adapt to Western culture.[49]

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[45] Arieh Sharon, *Kibbutz + Bauhaus: An architect's way in a new land* (Kramer Verlag, 1976).
[46] Zvi Efrat, *Constructing a Sense o f Place: Architecture and Zionist Discourse* (London: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2004), 75.
[47] Jasiński, *Architektura i Urbanistyka Izraela*, 102-103.
[48] Yacobi, "Architecture, Orientalism, and Identity: The Politics of the Israeli-Built Environment" 104.
[49] Yacobi, "Architecture, Orientalism, and Identity: The Politics of the Israeli-Built Environment", 105.

Considering the level of political involvement of Sharon, his architectural designs could not contain references to Orientalism like the works of previously described architects and remained predominantly Brutalist.
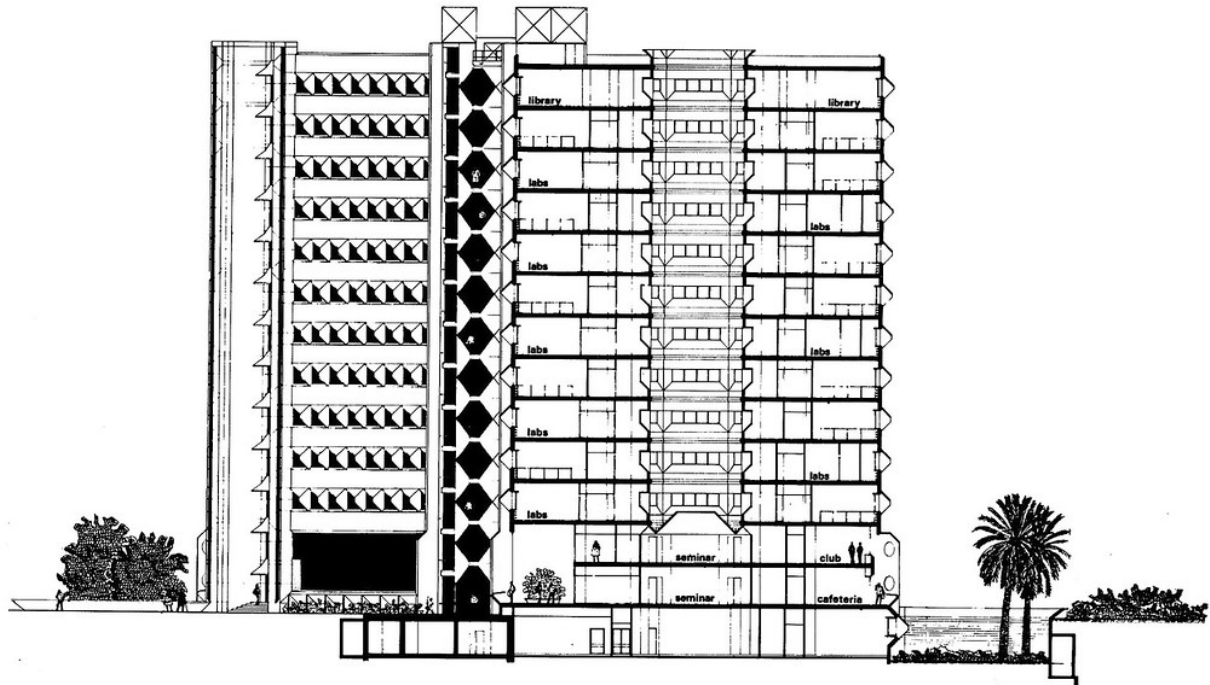

Figure 9. The Medical School, Section Drawing, 1970. Ariehsharon.org.

His Medical School building for the Tel-Aviv University is a monumental, thirteen-story high structure of raw, exposed concrete – clearly Brutalist. The fixed window covers, act as a Brise Soleil and an integral part of the façade regulating the interior climate of the building. Inner courtyard visible in the center of the section (fig. 9) opens up to offer natural ventilation in the nearby rooms.

Ventilation and insolation played an important role as a climate adaptation in designs of Israeli architects.[50] Initially, in early 30s, the emphasis has been put on the building orientation and its configuration with the Western winds in order to achieve optimal interior ventilation. This theory was also propagated by Sharon until argued and eventually proven wrong by Werner Joseph Wittkower, German architect with particular interest in climate adaptations.[51] The theory of building orientation kept returning in the architectural discourse, but in the context of insolation. The research of Rudolf Feige, another German architect, from 1952 demonstrated

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[50] Aleksandrowicz, "Appearance and performance: Israeli building climatology and its effect on local architectural practice (1940–1977)", 372.
[51] Aleksandrowicz, "Appearance and performance: Israeli building climatology and its effect on local architectural practice (1940–1977)", 373.

that buildings with longer facades oriented to the North and West exhibit better climate adaptation than the ones focusing on the East-West axis, therefore, debunking the theory of 'opening towards Western winds'.[52] The North-South orientation was successfully introduced in Sharon's Medical School building (fig.10).
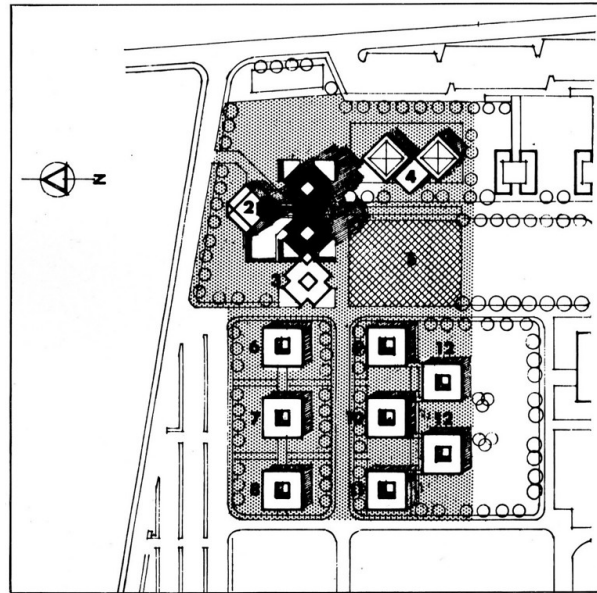

Figure 10. The Medical School, Site Plan, 1970. Ariehsharon.org.

Another architect who designed to some extent in the realm of Brutalism is Zvi Hecker. Especially his early projects which he pursued together with Eldar Sharon, the son of Arieh Sharon, have a strongly brutalist expression.

Their cooperative design, Dubiner Apartment House (fig.11), created together with Alfed Neumann, another new-wave Israeli architect, forms a heavy, concrete residential block. The geometry of the project is based on the shape of an elongated hexagonal prism, together constructing a repetitive, modular, cell-like structure. The interior of the block hides a courtyard which aims to provide a climate adaptation through reducing insolation, and thus, also temperature. As Zvi Hecker claims, this space holds also another important function, it provides a place for interaction between the inhabitants, therefore, replicating 'the local, Arab private housing' as a part of a greater 'communal set-up'.[53]

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[52] Aleksandrowicz, "Appearance and performance: Israeli building climatology and its effect on local architectural practice (1940–1977)", 373.
[53] "Dubiner Apartment House", Zvihecker.com. Accessed, April 4, 2023: https://zvihecker.com/projects/dubiner_apartment_house-70-1.html#4

Figure 11. The Dubiner Apartment House, color photography, 1963. Zvihecker.com.

The strong geometry of the façade, which for some may call to mind an Arab mosaic, for others it may remind of Japanese Metabolism thanks to its prismatic modularity. In this case the modules were more conceptual and could not be actually disassembled or replaced. The structure could not be adapted over time as it was built completely in concrete, thus proving not to be a part of the Metabolist movement. Theoretically, this adaptation could, however, be achieved with another building by Zvi Hecker, one of the first modular, prefabricated structures in Israel – The Ramot Polin Complex.[54]

The shape of the complex is also implementing the theory of geometry and geometry in nature (fig. 12). As Zvi Hecker describes, the façade of the building is more than its dodecahedral shape often researched by architects and students. The project actually revolves around the phenomenon of Golden Section and the way in which it can be observed in the arrangement of sunflower seeds as well as in the pentagon, which became the base for the prefab elements.[55]

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[54]   "AD Classics: Ramot Polin / Zvi Hecker", ArchDaily. Accessed, March 29, 2023: https://www.archdaily.com/416666/ad-classics-ramot-polin-zvi-hecker. ISSN 0719-8884
[55] "Ramot Housing", Zvihecker.com. Accessed, April 4, 2023: https://zvihecker.com/projects/ramot_housing-113-1.html
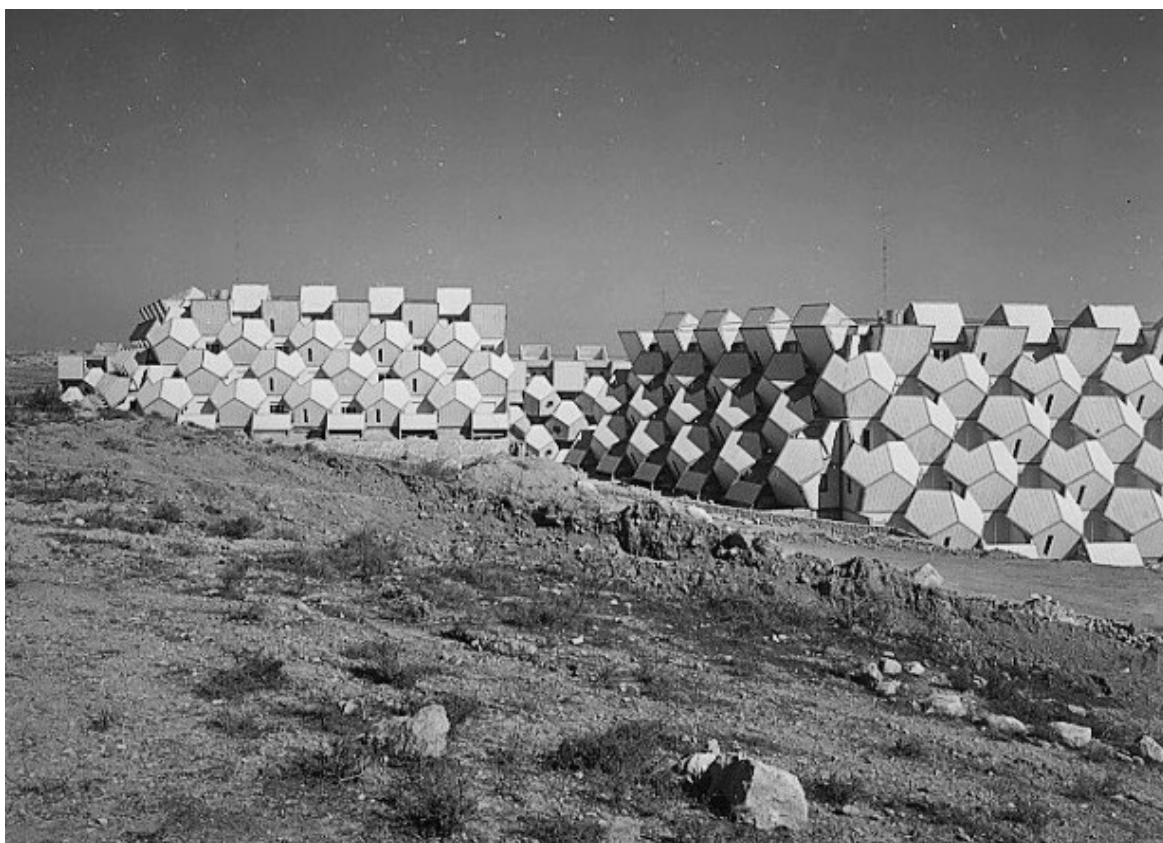
Figure 12. The Ramot Polin Complex, grayscale photography, 1970s. Merin.

The design once again reveals Hecker's interest in geometry which can be traced back to the times of his upbringing among the rich Islamic architecture of Samarkand in Uzbekistan.[56] These references have been embedded in his personal style so strongly that they reappear in every project just like the implementation of courtyards as means of climate adaptation and social gathering space. This can be observed in case of the Ramot Polin Complex, but also the famous Spiral Apartment House, created much later – in the late 80s of the last century.

The Spiral House passes all the aforementioned requirements of a typical Hecker project. The design is based on the natural geometry – in this case – of a sunflower.[57] It also incorporates a shaded courtyard surrounded by a curved staircase (fig. 13). What is especially interesting, however, is the way in which it relates to the local culture and architecture and how the description provided by the architect himself treats about this topic. Hecker mentions that '(the house) speaks Arabic about the human condition, (…) argues in Hebrew about the sheer necessity to bring the muscles and materials together, but it is quite fluent in Russian when

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[56] Bogna Świątkowska, *Adrichalim: Architekci* (Warszawa: Bęc Zmiana. 2016), 65.
[57] Hernan Casakin, "Metaphors as a Unconventional Reflective Approach in Architectural Design", *The Design Journal*, 9, no. 1 (March 2006), 41.

construction becomes architecture'.[58] The multiplicity of sources of inspiration shows architects varied background, however, his frequent references towards the 'Arab' architecture relate him to the movement of Orientalist revival which gained popularity in the 50s, 60s and 70s and aimed to once again bring out the 'genius loci' drawing upon the 'Oriental heritage' of Israel.[59]

Figure 13. The Spiral Apartment House, color photography, 1980s. Zvihecker.com.

[58]   "Spiral Apartment House". Zvihecker.com. Accessed, April 4, 2023: https://zvihecker.com/projects/project_titel-30-1.html
[59] Jasiński, *Architektura i Urbanistyka Izraela*, 123.

This revival of Orientalism was an attempt to further strengthen the relationship between the people and the land, cultivated mainly by the new wave of Israeli-born architects.[60] The first returns towards the, so called, 'Oriental' style, date back to 1950s when Marcel Janco established an artist's colony in the Arab village of Ein Hod which he preserved from being demolished 'for security reasons' by the government of Israel.[61] The establishment of the colony, which interestingly enough aimed to produce Israeli 'folk' art in 'an "abandoned" Arab village', initiated a period of romanticization of Arab architecture[62] – the Israeli architects began to widely appreciate the 'local' and 'authentic' for the way it conveys the 'spirit of the place' and binds the architecture with the place for example by using local materials.[63] This way certain features of the vernacular Palestinian architecture labeled as 'local' or 'vernacular' were incorporated into the Israeli buildings to strengthen this binding of architecture, so people, to the place, thus land. Even after multiple Arab-Israeli Wars, which clearly divided the rival nations, leaving no doubt regarding their mutual enmity, this architectural discourse was continued further incorporating features of the opponent's architectural style in the Israeli architecture.[64]

Discussion

What shall be mentioned, is that often drawing inspiration from Palestinian or Levantine architecture originated mainly from the interest in the style and not necessarily from a quest to intentionally assert dominance over a certain piece of land. Although, this seems to be the case for many of the researched architects, what must be considered, in this context, is the process of large scale cultural appropriation which happened as a direct result of these actions. The aforementioned incorporation of the features mixed the Palestinian and Israeli architecture, appropriating some of the features of the architecture and placing them as a part of the still forming Israeli architecture, thus claiming pieces of one culture or identity and making them become part of another, building one's national identity on top of another.

Further, presenting the features of vernacular architecture as a historical building type originating from a region is certainly not problematic. Conversely, labeling all the architecture

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[60] Jasiński, *Architektura i Urbanistyka Izraela*, 124.
[61] Yacobi, "Architecture, Orientalism, and Identity: The Politics of the Israeli-Built Environment", 110.
[62] Yacobi, "Architecture, Orientalism, and Identity: The Politics of the Israeli-Built Environment", 111.
[63] Jasiński, *Architektura i Urbanistyka Izraela*, 124.
[64] Yacobi, "Architecture, Orientalism, and Identity: The Politics of the Israeli-Built Environment", 113.

of an area as 'vernacular' becomes an issue as it connotes with 'primitive' and suggests absence of architects in the design process. Refencing Arab architecture as 'vernacular' or 'oriental' creates a discourse of colonialism laced with dominance and superiority, and is an example of concept of Orientalism in the definition of Edward W. Said, Palestinian American professor of literature at Columbia University.[65]

In context of Palestine specifically, this discourse is often paired with connotations of 'vernacular' or even the 'underdeveloped native' which further strengthens the dual aspect of superiority and inferiority. On the contrary, Palestinian modern architecture is far from underdeveloped. It is, however, silenced, not recognized, blended and concealed in the context it is surrounded with, and faced with restrictions.

Firstly, the silencing of the Palestinian Modernism is a practice present in Israel as pointed out recently by Nitzan-Shiftan. The book called 'Sundry Modernism' by Oraib Toukan, an American artist and scholar, presents an overview of the existing Modernist architecture built between 1948 and 1967 in Nablus, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Ramallah and Jericho, and is one of very scarce sources on this topic.[66] According to Nitzan-Shiftan this scarcity is a result of both the 'silencing regime' as well as 'its uncompromising critics'.[67] While it is in the interest of 'the regime' to be the one who writes history, the critics believe they simply do not have a right to speak on behalf of Palestinians, even though Palestine often does not have enough financial and historical resources to speak on their own.[68] Subsequently, the voice of Palestinian architectural history is not supported from either side and thus continues to remain silent.

Secondly, what must be acknowledged is that a large part of Palestinian modern architecture built before 1948 is currently located on the Israeli soil, thus it is often not recognized as Palestinian.[69] Although Toukan's work does not focus on the areas lost in the 1948 war, she briefly mentions the al-Hamra Cinema designed by Elias al-Murr and built in Jaffa in 1937 as one of the most known examples of Palestinian Modernism on the Israeli soil (fig. 14).[70] Even though the al-Hamra Cinema is famous enough for its Palestinian origins to be recognized, many Modernist villas and less known public buildings quietly became a part of the Israeli built environment.

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[65] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York City: Pantheon Books, 1978), 3.
[66] Oraib Toukan, *Sundry Modernism* (London: SternbergPress, 2016), 9.
[67] Nitzan-Shiftan, "Silencing Palestinian Architectural History in Israel," 235.
[68] Nitzan-Shiftan, "Silencing Palestinian Architectural History in Israel," 235.
[69] Toukan, *Sundry Modernism*, 10.
[70] Toukan, *Sundry Modernism*, 10.

Figure 14. The Al-Hamra Cinema, grayscale photography, 1937. PalestineRememebered.com.

Thirdly, Palestinian Modernism is characterized by the use of natural stone which makes it more difficult to differentiate from other architectural pieces concealing it in its context. The style was developed under the British Mandate law which has not been lifted despite the Mandate has come to an end. In result 80% of the building's facades must be clad in natural stone.[71] On the one hand, this regulation created an interesting variation of Modernism in a way reminding of the works of Frank Lloyd Wright. On the other hand, the style blends in with the rest of Palestinian architecture concealing the Modernist characteristics. Palestinian architects attempt to navigate around the law, yet effectively most of the projects still end up built in limestone.[72]

Finally, the whole built environment of Palestine is faced with restrictions regarding issuing of building permits. The Israeli governing body, which stays in control of the Palestinian territories would restrict the permits 'by advocating for a green space here, or the first commercial elevator in town there' right in the potential construction site.[73]

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[71] Toukan, *Sundry Modernism*, 12.
[72] Toukan, *Sundry Modernism*, 12.
[73] Toukan, *Sundry Modernism*, 12.

Despite all the struggles Palestinian Modernism persisted and reveals itself in the works of architects like Hani Arafat, Fouad Sayegh, Sayed Karim, Jafar Tukan and Rizek Khoury whose projects were given a voice by Oraib Toukan. Nevertheless, apart from Toukan's work, the body of literature on the topic is minimal, and so is the archived historic data and photographic documentation of the buildings, which was often lost during wars. This identifies a topic for further research which, however, would require an extensive process of investigation and documentation. The task would involve considerable funding and work on a site where the conflict currently flares up. Thus, the chances of pursuit of this kind of research nowadays are rather slim. This further fuels the process of silencing Palestinian architecture.

This silencing negatively affects the formation and development of Palestinian national identity, which is an advantage to the State of Israel. Formation of a strong national identity with a historical heritage which is researched, documented and widely spoken about would over time force Israel to recognize Palestinian nationhood. However, as Herbert Kelman, Professor of Social Ethics at Harvard University, once wrote 'acknowledging the other's nationhood is seen as acceptance of the other's right to establish a national state in that land, which each side perceives as relinquishing or at least jeopardizing its own claims to the land'.[74]

The claims to the land are especially important in the context of the identities of both Palestinians and Israelis. Menachem Klein, senior lecturer and researcher of political science at Bar-Ilan University, mentions in his book 'Lives in Common: Arabs and Jews in Jerusalem, Jaffa, and Hebron' that the identities of both groups highly rely on the land the communities are bound to, which seems to be even more important than the 'religious or ethnic components' of the identities.[75] Thus, the growth of Palestinian historical heritage and national identity become a threat not only to Israeli statehood but also to their identity, which is highly dependent on the land, and the land is not a given.

Conclusion

The ongoing threat compelled the State of Israel to employ various tools in order to ensure their autonomy and authority – among them urbanism and architecture. Urbanism became a means

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[74] Herbert C. Kelman, "The Interdependence of Israeli and Palestinian National Identities: The Role of the Other in Existential Conflicts", *Journal of Social Issues,* 55, no. 3 (1999), 588.
[75] Shanna Orlik, "The Relational Shaping of National Identities in the Early Israeli-Palestinian Conflict", International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (2018), 5.

of land development and architecture, a tool to build national identity. Both aimed to bind the group together and to the acquired land.

The influence of the Israeli government on the architecture and the built environment turned the state defined laws (like the Sharon's plan) and trends (like 'Bauhaus' Modernism as the predominant style of Tel-Aviv) into the most influential factor examined in this paper. Quite interestingly the Israeli State influences are also one of the most important factors acting upon the Palestinian built environment nowadays, strongly politicizing the entire architecture of the region.

When it comes to the other factors investigated in this research, the personal background of architects, their education, the climate adaptations, and Palestinian architecture as an inspiration, these seem to have a similar influence, secondary to the state defined laws and trends.

The backgrounds of the immigrant architects and their education, which brought various identities and personal experiences, exhibited themselves in certain stylistic influences of their architecture. Starting from the Berlin's Wilhelminian style in the works of Alexander Baerwald, through Art Deco elements and Bauhaus education in the buildings of Pinchas Hutt, ending with Zvi Hecker's geometric architecture as a result of his upbringing in Samarkand. These examples prove the importance of architects environment and education in the early years of cognitive development as a preference-forming and style-forming factors which later on greatly manifest in their professional career.

A conscious attempt to develop similar identity and personal experience, in this case for the architects born on the Israeli soil, was the 1950s and 1960s revival of Orientalism. It was an effort to determine their own, personal heritage and this way form a guideline for their designs. In this case, however, the style drew upon the architecture of Palestine, and not the actual heritage of the Israeli-born architects.

This underlines the importance of Palestinian architecture in the context of Israeli architecture. The influences of the first one on the second can be observed on all the stages examined in the research. Firstly, the Arab architecture from various regions inspired the Herzliya Hebrew Gymnasium and other Eclectic Orientalist buildings on top of the research that aimed to revive the 'historical Jewish architecture'. Secondly, these references to Eclectic Orientalism are visible also in the 'Bauhaus' Modernist designs. Finally, these elements later on openly spoken about as drawn 'locally' from Palestinian architecture, were widely implemented in the post-

war Modernism era. In all cases these references seem to either aim to act as the climate adaptation solutions or to strengthen the 'genius loci'. What is definitely achieved as a result, however, is the inseparability of the Israeli architecture from the Palestinian influences which will always remain either in the built environment or in its history, and certainly in the national identity.

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