Post-war, low-cost public housing in Israel, built using patio-forms was interpreted by its heterogeneous occupants from the perspective of a Modernist rather than traditional life-style.

Vernacular values in public housing

Hadas Shadar

The crisis in modern architecture in the middle of the twentieth century brought about a reaction to total Utopian solutions and ideas and the realization of the importance of ‘place’ and identity. These notions found expression, among others, in a renewed interest in vernacular construction. Vernacular construction is evolutionary and contains key, a priori, aspects of identity and place. As such it constituted a focus of attention and gained special exposure and popularity after the exhibition ‘Architecture without Architects’, held in MoMA, New York in 1964. As a result of this attention, the patio, that external room constituting the heart of the house in the Middle East, in the Mediterranean basin and in the Far East, gained architectural significance. At the same time it found a place in modern housing in the Western world.

This paper deals with a project for an extendable patio house – a one-storey single-family house. This formed a solution for immigrant populations from both Eastern and Western countries that flooded the State of Israel in its early years. Built by the Public Housing Authority, it was planned with a patio that integrated Western architectural with Mediterranean vernacular characteristics. Focusing on the difference between the traditional and the modern patio in general, this paper discusses the origins of patio houses in low-cost public housing in Israel, and examines their functioning throughout the years. The conclusions address the significance of vernacular housing components in public planning.

The patio: traditional versus modern

A new social awareness emerged after the Second World War where millions of people perished and a large stock of buildings was destroyed. The innocent belief that technological advancements involved a better future for humanity perished as a result. The disappointment generated by urban theories based on technological progress, like those of Le Corbusier, led to an aspiration to re-establish social and human values in planning. This guided a search for formal architectural characteristics that carried social contents, and were essentially different from Utopian ideals. It was understood that traditional architecture, which evolves naturally, contains built-in social patterns, since man and his community stand behind its very creation. Furthermore, as opposed to modern architecture that is ‘right for all’, vernacular architecture encompasses aspects of specific local identity, since it is built of local materials and develops according to local climate and landscape (Scott, 2000).

Vernacular architecture gained maximum exposure in 1964 through the ‘Architecture without Architects’ exhibition, but a clear expression of the connection between the vernacular and the social aspect came four years later, in August 1968, when the Architectural Design journal dedicated one issue to the ‘Architecture of Democracy’ (the August 1963 issue was on ‘Architecture without Architects’). As a result, the role of traditional elements became widely recognized, including the patio. The patio house was originally developed in the Mediterranean Basin, in the Arab peninsula and in the Far East. There was no need to ensure spatial unity against a cold climate in these hot or temperate zones. Hence, the patio constituted a large, central roofless room where family activity was concentrated. The activities that took place in it related to all areas of life: resting, cooking, eating and entertaining guests. Access to the other rooms was apparently via the patio that was inevitably populated by distributing movement from space to space. The development of patios in hot countries emphasized, first and foremost, its climatic role: its high walls protected the outdoor area from the hot sun in the morning and from sand storms in the evening. A tree planted in the yard shaded this area at noon. Since the patio constituted the heart of the house, it provided a dual shelter, protecting its inhabitants both from the outside world and from the community. In Muslim society, it also preserved a woman’s chastity since she could not be seen from the street. At the same time, since the house’s outdoor space was bordered internally, the patio’s external walls faced narrow alleys, which did not have to be important sources of light and air [1].
With the rising interest in vernacular architecture, the patio became strongly integrated into Western plans for dwellings, especially in Denmark, Sweden, England and Canada. Its development was particularly widespread during the 1950s. Many of its qualities were recognized: it was a private piece of land in a very dense urban environment; the closed courtyard facilitated privacy; the reclusive nature of the house created a uniform façade facing the street and allowed planning flexibility within. Its adoption by European cultures, however, changed its meaning.

The modern Western patio divided various spaces within the house: the private from the public areas, or the parents’ room from the children's rooms. It constituted a technical solution for light and ventilation, instead of a large yard surrounding the house. It also saved outdoor space in accordance with living density that was characteristic of Western cities (Schoenauer and Seeman, 1962) [2]. But it no longer served its traditional role as a social centre for the extended family, since the extended family was not relevant in modern Western cultures. Nor did it need to provide climatic protection from the summer heat. The Western patio, therefore, served as a functional solution to house or flat design. It did not change the modern Western planning scheme, but rather enhanced its qualities as a space divider due to its functional and territorial characteristics. It may be said that the modern Western perception of the house consisting of a clear distinction between the interior and the exterior space remained unchanged, even when it included one or two patios. In summary, the patio in the West enhanced the Modernist plan, but functioned as an external part of domestic activity. In contrast, the traditional patio (primarily Eastern) functioned as the heart of the house and formed an integral part of its life.

The Israeli patio house and its planning

The Israeli patio houses were designed by the Housing Wing over a period of two months and built in large numbers between 1956 and 1959 in the country's cities (Menny, 2001, interview). But the one-storey, single-family units were not fully built; only half of the designed house was actually constructed. They formed tiny L-shaped ‘core houses’ without a patio, and were clustered in four to five rows, each being only 5.6m wide. A small entrance yard gave access to a minimal 32m² flat that contained two sleeping spaces with doors opening to a long, spacious area that served as a living and eating space. The kitchenette was located in a nook adjacent to the living space and next to an exit door leading to the backyard. The bathroom was accessed through this yard, so that to visit this space one had to move to the outside.

The intention of the planners was that the residents would extend the core house over time according to an existing plan, so that its final appearance could be controlled (Stoop, 2001, interview). The extension to the L-shaped plan would be a mirror reflection of the existing part of the house, while the open space enclosed between the original unit and the addition would serve as a patio. The front part would be converted into a single living space opening through the back door to the patio. The latter would occupy 16m², provide light, and ventilate the other parts of the house, ie, the living room, the bathroom, an elongated area for work and storage, and the children's bedrooms. The roof was designed to be flat, and the house to be single storey only (Glikson, 1956a; Glikson, 1958) [3].

The choice of the patio as an architectural solution for the extended house raises the question of its cultural character – vernacular-Eastern or Modernist-Western. This question becomes more relevant considering that the house was planned to accommodate refugees who immigrated to the State of Israel after it was established from all over the world: immigrants came from Arab countries on the one hand, and European countries on the other.

A brief examination of the plan of a complete house shows that the role of the patio is similar to that in Western countries. It constitutes a source of light and air and divides the house functionally between the public and private spaces. In addition, it forms the centre of the house design, but not its functional core: only two rooms have direct contact with it – the living space and the rooms of the children. Its primary purpose is to ventilate the service areas rather than to form the main distributor of movement, as in the traditional patio houses. This is not surprising. The extended house was planned by Israeli architects of Western origin or by those who had received a professional European education, and therefore it functioned as a Western patio house.

Yet, a closer examination of the plan shows that the solution is not entirely Western. The kitchenette, elongated at the expense of the original lavatory, opens onto the patio, occupying a location similar to that of the external tabun oven used in Middle Eastern countries. The patio itself is informal, enclosed within the house walls, and can be considered as an external extension to the minimal housing space. But most importantly, it serves as a passageway between the public and the private parts of the house. It is not possible to walk between these parts alongside the patio as in Western patio houses; one must actually pass through it as in the Eastern houses. In other words, the planned patio is highly used and reminiscent of the traditional role of this space.

Historical and theoretical origins of the patio house

This combination of Western and traditional Eastern characteristics raises questions concerning the patio’s origins and significance. This section will address these questions and identify the parameters that shaped its meaning. Written accounts of the planning views behind the extended patio house have not been found. The little evidence that exists provides only a description and does not reveal information about the planners’ difficulties in making decisions (Glikson, 1956; Glikson and Pierdzyn, 1956). Therefore, the attempt to understand the origins of this planning is based on
1 Plan of a traditional patio house in Egypt. The patio constitutes the centre of the house and movement through it is necessary in order to pass between rooms.

2 Plan of a Modernist patio house. The house was developed by Serge Charmayeff and students studying for advanced degrees at Harvard, Boston, in 1956. Aspects of the significance of the patio in developed countries may be understood from the plan: a source of light and air, and a division of the house into day and night areas. Movement through the patio is not necessary.

3 Planning of a patio house before and after enlargement:
   a. Plan of the partial house (the core house)
   b. Plan of the complete house (with the designed patio)
   c. Model of the partial house
   d. Model of the complete house

Plan of a traditional patio house in Egypt. The patio constitutes the centre of the house and movement through it is necessary in order to pass between rooms.

Plan of a Modernist patio house. The house was developed by Serge Charmayeff and students studying for advanced degrees at Harvard, Boston, in 1956. Aspects of the significance of the patio in developed countries may be understood from the plan: a source of light and air, and a division of the house into day and night areas. Movement through the patio is not necessary.

Plan of a patio house before and after enlargement:
   a. Plan of the partial house (the core house)
   b. Plan of the complete house (with the designed patio)
   c. Model of the partial house
   d. Model of the complete house
an examination of the works and proceedings of the head of the Planning Department of the Housing Wing at the time. Artur Glikson [4].

Artur Glikson was born in 1911 in Germany. In 1935, immediately after graduating in architecture from the Technische Hochschule Berlin-Charlottenburg, he emigrated to Palestine. During 1938 and 1941, and 1943 and 1946, he served as City Architect of Petach Tikva. With the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, he held a senior position in the state Planning Wing as head of planning of Haifa and the valley areas. With the decrease in activities of this wing in 1953, he moved to the Housing Wing in the Ministry of Labour, where he established and directed the Planning Department until 1958. The extended patio house was planned in this department during that time (Glikson, 2004).

The decade during which Glikson held senior positions in state planning defined him as a planning and housing official having a Western Modernist professional education. And indeed, as part of his job, he backed the planning of new cities, new neighbourhoods and new types of housing, all in accordance with Western theories. Despite this, one should not view him as a trite state and Western planner. He gained his international reputation through his devotion to man-environment issues and regional planning (Glikson, 1955, 1961, 1967a, 1970, 1971a, 1971b, 1971c). His unusual ecological sensitivity and the connection he saw between planning, environmental and landscape qualities established his unique attitude in relation to the post-technological period in which he was active. This sensitivity, which emanated from humane and ideological values, complied with the warm and intimate relationship he developed with the American historian and critic, Lewis Mumford. They became acquainted in 1950 in New York when they were introduced to each other by the head of the Israeli Planning Wing, Arie Sharon. Mumford described their meeting as ‘love at first sight’ (Mumford, 1971).

Was Glikson’s ecological sensitivity behind the adoption of the patio, which characterizes Mediterranean and Middle Eastern culture? Can a house that incorporates Eastern and Western elements be viewed as an architectural and cultural statement showing a direction in planning? And finally, did the Palestinian construction serve as a precedent to the house’s Eastern characteristics? This question is relevant since traditional Arab construction is based on internal courtyards (patios) (Segal, 1967; Hazani, 1971).

Regarding the patio, it is obvious that Glikson’s ecological insight stood behind his search for ‘local’ principles in housing planning, based on a diagnosis that the European Modernist style successfully adopted in Israel did not necessarily suit the Middle Eastern region. Glikson himself wrote that ‘the experience gained in the world in modern housing planning, the same experience we learned from, is unique to European climate conditions and we need to adapt the planning to the soil and climate conditions of a Middle Eastern zone’ (Glikson, 1959:82). The patio’s climatic characteristics (in terms of cooling and ventilation) served as the reason for which it was chosen. Glikson even hinted at this, saying that ‘this type of house has served in the last few years as a solution for the problem of popular housing in countries having hot climates (French Africa, Mexico, India and others)’ (Glikson, 1967a–1:59).

Describing the patio’s future use, Glikson wrote that, ‘the yard (patio) provides a solution to the problem of external dwelling space, which is essential in outdoor climate conditions’ (Glikson, 1958:156; author’s emphasis). He thus emphasized the patio’s role in forming a direct extension of domestic activity similar to that which took place in the Middle Eastern house. In this sense, the patio may be viewed as a cultural statement in support of a Middle Eastern and Mediterranean living pattern that was opposed in advance by most Israeli planners of European origin.

Answering the question of precedent is not easy. First, Glikson himself did not refer to this issue in his articles. Second, the Western professional education of Israeli architects and their Modernist awareness made most of them view proper living conditions (running water, sunlight, ventilation, etc) as being very important. The vernacular qualities of Palestinian construction did not seem at all attractive. Further, the war that prevailed between the Israelis, the Palestinians and the Arab countries made it difficult to take an objective, let alone sympathetic, view of the Palestinian qualities of construction. Most Israeli planners saw this construction as being primitive, devoid of values, and unsuitable for living. The deserted cities (the Palestinian cities) were – and still constitute – a special planning problem ... the deserted cities, with their narrow streets and alleys, lacked modern...
service facilities and sometimes even elementary services, such as water supply and sewage. It was impossible to put up with such backwardness’ (Zaslavsky, 80:1954). These lines were written by one of the heads of the Housing Wing at the time and reflected the opinion of many planners.

Is it possible that Glikson viewed things differently? He probably did. During the first years of the State, after the bloody War of Independence in 1948 in which Jews and Palestinians fought over the control of Palestine, Glikson participated in study tours of the country with planners from the Planning Department of the Housing Wing. During these tours, they studied the country’s landscape and qualities – a prerequisite for responsible planning. Yet, surprisingly, Glikson and the planners also toured Palestinian villages within Israel’s boundaries (Sheffer and Eitan, 2001, interviews). Not only was the construction of Palestinian villages not rejected, as was commonly done then, but also the approach to it was supportive, seeing it as a source to learn from. Referring to the landscape of the Lahish county, Glikson wrote: ‘The old landscape of the Lahish region, which had been characterized by cactus hedges, villages of dense clay huts, sheep herds, picturesque wells and isolated groups of trees, completely disappeared following the new development … It may be said that the landscape of the Lahish county has lost many of its aesthetic values’ (Glikson, 1967c:39). Glikson felt nostalgia for the Palestinian landscape.

Why did Glikson view things differently? Did he express a political position within a planning context? Did he wish to express, without using words, a certain opinion about East-West relations? Mumford provides partial answers to these questions in the collection of articles he published in his memory. He wrote that, in a letter sent to him in 1952, Glikson expressed his desire to work in India in order to learn about East-West relations, with the understanding that neither imperialism nor neo-colonialism was the solution (Mumford, 1971). Regarding the Palestinian issue, Mumford testified that Glikson expressed his views explicitly, seeing cooperation as the political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (1971).

However, it would be a mistake to regard the tours of the Israeli planners in Palestinian villages or the planned patio as having political significance only. Glikson valued the Palestinian landscape and its aesthetic, structural and climatic values that suited directly the place where they evolved. He did not distinguish between the scenic values of nature and those of construction. To him landscape and architecture seemed complementary.

In a letter to Mumford on 29 July 1961, he wrote: ‘As you know the Neolithic and urban revolutions occupy also my mind permanently, and for some reason I consider the Neolithic as the greater transformation. It is a fantastic bio technique and a comprehensive invention to learn to treat nature in a way that settlement becomes possible, and to transform the human community for all practical purposes into a new species in the larger ecological community, to become dominant without cutting the ecological chain. Man gets not only a physical anchorage, his mind also enters into a relationship – as only the mind can – with the life process’ (Glikson, 2004).

In 1964, Glikson joined a regional planning group to visit Crete, the climate and landscape of which are very similar to those of the Land of Israel (Glikson, 1970: Glikson, 2004). He took photographs, reflecting his love of the local construction that is so similar to Palestinian construction, which he saw as an organic part of the landscape [5]. Unlike other planners, his opinion was affected by prejudices – these being political or detached Modernist perceptions. Therefore, his sensitivity to the land and all its components, could provide an explanation for the Western-Eastern character of the patio.

The Israeli experience and its consequences
Patio houses were built in new urban neighbourhoods throughout the State of Israel between 1956 and 1959 (Menny, 2001, interview) [6]. Intended residents included the many Jewish immigrants, mostly war refugees from Europe and from Arab countries that flooded the State of Israel following its establishment in 1948. The State public housing undertook the responsibility to provide the refugees with shelter. It initiated, planned and built the patio houses and later populated them.

According to Glikson (1958:156), ‘during the stage of the massive wave of immigration from North Africa and Poland, a large number of houses of this type were erected …’ The patio houses were not occupied solely by immigrants from Asia and Africa (Yavin, 2001, interview), although they were apparently better suited to the culture from which these immigrants originated. The yard represented an integral part of the internal space. There was no separation between the functions housed in the roofed space and in the enclosed courtyard. Housing shortages may have forced the settling authorities not to choose the residents intended to live in patio houses.

The dwelling culture of the occupants became confused when they arrived in Israel. Glikson stated that a problem existed in all cultural matters concerning these users, and therefore the desired connection between the type of house and its inhabitants could not be predicted: ‘… housing design in the world is inspired mainly by the living habits of the population of settlers. But when planning housing in new regions, the cultural community from where the settlers will come is still unknown. Moreover, apparently when new immigrants arrive, their housing demands and needs undergo a rapid change. Hence, housing planning in the country should aspire to realize a calculated theoretical optimum of housing forms, and it cannot be based on any type of tradition nor on a final set program’ (Glikson, 1959:82). A social survey conducted later supported his views (Glikson, 1967b:87).

The patio houses were owned by the State since...
most of the immigrants were penniless. Nevertheless, they were encouraged to purchase their houses and could benefit from excellent financial terms: almost no cash payment was required, and this could be supplemented by an interest-free mortgage. Theoretically speaking, extending a house was obviously easier for those owners, but it should be noted that houses owned by the State also required permission to be extended (Glikson, 1967a:1-58).

Did the occupants build the patio as planned? What was the use of the patio – Western or Eastern? Was there a difference in its use by immigrants from Europe as opposed to immigrants from Arab countries? These questions, so relevant to the unique experience of the Israeli patio house, vanished with reality: none of the occupants built the planned patio. Moreover, an examination 20 years after their occupation shows that many of the residents did not extend their houses. In fact, they did not change them at all, apart from an improvised connection of the bathroom to the house (using metal sheeting). The only occupants that built the extension – not according to the original plan – were the new immigrants from Europe who were unfamiliar with the notion of the patio space.

Why did most of the occupants not extend their houses? Why was the patio not built in the few cases where the house was extended? Why did the immigrants from Europe have a better understanding of the qualities of the house, whereas the immigrants from Arab countries – used to living at ground level and understanding the symbiotic relations between indoors and outdoors – failed to understand the house and to use it? Since the significance of the patio is to integrate architectural (the actual construction and its climatic advantages) and cultural meaning (Eastern and Western modes of living), the answers to these questions will be sought by looking at this integration.
The answer to the first question is in its essence architectural and is found in an article published in the Ha’aretz daily newspaper. Under the headline ‘Qiryat Gat – A City without Planning’, Naftali Lavie wrote: ‘...we looked for the pioneers from England and barely got their addresses in the “Train Public Housing” Project. We walked along the railway line to Be’er Sheva and discovered the public housing project located on a high hill. It turned out that the proximity to the railway line did not give it its name, rather the shape of the houses that resembled clinging train coaches ... Most of the residents live in 780 concrete houses and 120 one-storey “Californian huts” [fabricated houses, H. S.] ... It is estimated that over 10 million pounds were invested in the immigrant housing neighbourhoods, but the walls of the houses are already so cracked in the first year after construction that it is possible to pass a newspaper from one house to the next through a crack in the wall. A year ago, the city celebrated the “Festival of Lights” when electric street lighting was installed but the “Train Houses” are still lit with oil lanterns ...

From this article we see that the failure of these houses was not related to the patio but to a poor construction technology that made them look like a temporary dwelling solution. The occupants found no economic reason to invest in these houses, let alone to extend them, and failed to see their potential as unique extendable dwellings with a private parcel of land. Completed houses were actually built on the outskirts of some of these sites, so that the residents would understand the potential of their houses and know how to extend them. However, when the time came this message was not understood (Shvide and Yavin, 2001, interviews).

As to why the patio was not built when the house was extended, the answer is not only architectural but also cultural. As one may recall, the patio penetrated housing schemes in Europe especially

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after the Second World War. It was not part of the housing developments until then, since there was no point in creating an external room in a temperate climate. Since some of the new immigrants who occupied the patio houses arrived in Israel immediately or shortly after the War, it is clear that they were neither acquainted with the patio nor did they view it as an inherent dwelling component. It is, then, not surprising to discover that the extended houses of immigrants from Europe did not include a patio.

The situation regarding the immigrants from Asia and Africa was exactly the opposite. To them the patio was an integral part of house construction. Yet these immigrants did not build a patio either – and this is not accidental. People from Asia and Africa did not regard the patio solely as an architectural component. They knew it as a part of an entire housing culture arranged around it, weaving indoors and out. They understood it as being a part of a culture of local materials, such as mud and stone. They knew it as a part of a full urban network of narrow alleys channelling traffic towards houses that faced an internal courtyard. And above all, they recognized the patio as part of an individual, native and irregular construction.

But, in the Israeli patio house they saw the exact opposite: concrete houses built in small clusters that do not create a real alley, and more particularly, planned and regular houses built and populated by the authorities. In other words, the Israeli settlements contained no components that were reminiscent of the traditional houses, except, of course, the patio. But as mentioned above, this was only planned to be built by the residents in the future. Thus, since the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern notion of life evolving around the patio was negated by most planners (who planned, built and populated the houses, and whose perception of space was basically Modernist), the planned patio was not understood. And indeed, it was not understood even by those residents whose knowledge of it was even better than that of the planners.

The answer to the final question, as to why the immigrants from Europe extended their houses, is of a cultural nature. The patio house was planned as an extendable house, that is, a house that requires the personal initiative of the occupants to be completed. It was difficult to find this initiative among immigrants who had just arrived in the country: naturally, most of their resources were channelled towards survival – finding work and learning the new language. The initiative for extending the house could therefore come from the few who had a culture of origin similar to the culture of the immigration country.

The culture of this country – the State of Israel – was European, like the culture of origin of the veteran immigrants who arrived before its establishment. Therefore, it was the occupants of European origin who understood the potential of the patio houses (Menny 2001, interview). Those who planted social roots in the country had political initiative (and initiative generally speaking), and were the first to individually extend their houses (Stoop, 2001, interview). Unsurprisingly, the majority of these occupants preferred to roof over the space planned for the patio in order to enjoy more spacious interiors, though unventilated and without daylight (Stoop, 2001, interview). The idea of a patio was foreign to them [7].

Lessons from the Israeli experience

The Israeli housing experience relates to intertwining partial and implied vernacular components in low-cost public construction. The conclusions from this experience concern the significance of phased construction and that of vernacular components in the context of public projects. The first conclusion deals with the very idea that it is possible to plan an entire house, build half of it, and depend on the public housing occupants to complete their house by themselves according to a pre-plan or at least a similar plan. The Israeli experience shows that the applicability of the idea depends on several factors, the first of which is the target population.

This type of architectural idea could be realized only with a homogeneous population of occupants having a well-rooted housing and living culture, and especially a population with a solid housing typology. In such a case, it may be anticipated that partial houses will be completed over time by the occupants based on the house type they are familiar with. The houses, needless to say, will not be identical, and will of course not be finished according to the original architectural intentions since weak populations are not in the habit of consulting architects and building according to plans. On the other hand, when the population and its domestic culture are heterogeneous, and the occupants do not share a rooted housing typology, the attempt is doomed to fail.

This failure is accentuated when the occupants are expected to complete their house according to a component from an architectural language that is strange to the core culture. A vernacular element (such as a patio) is so inherently alien to Modernist planning and construction (such as the Israeli core house) that even a homogeneous population would ‘fail’ to understand the planners’ intention. Therefore, the second conclusion is that the missing component in the structure or the expected construction typology, should be inherent to the core house and its design language.

The third conclusion concerns intertwining complete architectural components in an alien context, in this case, vernacular components in Modernist public construction. For that, we must return to the first years of the Israeli patio house and its occupants. As mentioned above, many residents joined the bathroom to the house by enclosing the external passage leading to it, even when the house was not extended at all. One could say that they hastened to ‘fix’ the ‘mistake’ made by the planners of leaving the bathroom outside the house.

This intervention shows us that the users were
Stages in house completion and details of completion:

- **a** Plan of the patio houses in Rishon LeZion in 1979: more than 20 years after construction, most houses remained without extensions, the completed houses were built by the authorities as a model.
- **b** Plan of the patio houses in Rishon LeZion in 2000 (based on an aerial photo). The houses were extended by the occupants after they received government financial incentives. Not one of the extensions included a patio.
- **c** Characteristic plan of an extended patio house in Rishon LeZion in the 2000s: sealed spaces instead of a patio.
- **d** Extension of a patio house in Ashqelon.
- **e** Extended facades of patio houses in Ashqelon.
inclined to view the core house as a Western Modernist house not only in terms of its modern materials and design, but also in terms of its operation; that is, a house in which the bathroom is an integral part of the interior, and especially a house having an internal continuous space. Therefore, it is plausible that even if they were to expand their houses and build the patio as planned, its use would have been Western. The occupants would have not kept the two parts of the house (the public and the private) separated by the external space, as planned by the planners. It is very reasonable to assume that they would have enclosed a passage along the patio and turned its Oriental-Western patio into a completely Western Modernist space.

Therefore, the third conclusion is that entire architectural-vernacular components are also doomed to fail when they are implemented in a modern cultural context. Their estrangement from the ‘ruling’ architecture, from the ‘right’ housing image, and from the dominant culture causes them at best to completely lose their original meaning. At worst, the vernacular components would disappear entirely over time through changes made by the occupants who would tend to ‘adjust’ the structure of the house to match the structure of society and culture (such as roofing over a patio, coating original materials with plaster, etc).

Is it possible to integrate vernacular components in Western modern construction? Apparently, the patio house experience shows that evidence to the contrary is not available. Two public Israeli projects have successfully achieved this integration. The first is a terraced, low-rise, high-density housing project in Upper Nazareth (1961). The architects, A. Ventura and Y. Drecsler, have planned modern flats based on an alley pattern that follows the contours of a hill [8]. The second project is located in the model neighbourhood in Be’er Sheva (1958). The architects, D. Havkin and N. Zolotov, designed modern flats facing well-fenced yards that are also organized along alleys [9].

Why were the vernacular components in these projects preserved over the years? Moreover, why do the vernacular components function as planned? These projects did not succeed just because they were fully-built but also because their vernacular components were part of an urban fabric defined by alleys and not part of the flats. The flats themselves were based on Modernist design principles and so their cultural message was uniform and simple.

The contrast between these projects and the failed attempt of the patio houses lead us to the fourth and last conclusion: the social-cultural significance of the flat and its plan. It seems that this plan silently expresses the dominant social message, the ‘right’ and preferred way of life. The plan of the flat, as one of the significant cultural agents of a way of life, should comply with the main cultural message (so significant in immigrant societies), and primarily it must not be ambivalent. This ambivalence is doomed to fail, as the patio houses proved.
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5 Photos courtesy of Andrew Glikson.


7d From: Tuviahu collection, Tuviahu archive, Zalman Arran main library, Ben Gurion University in the Negev.

7e From: archive of Kishon LeZion city engineer (courtesy of Michal Ungarish and Rachel Stolero).


Personal interviews


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Biography

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