Article

Brutalism and Community in Middle Class Mass Housing: Be'eri Estate, Tel Aviv, 1965–Present

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Abstract

Fostering functioning, place-based communities has been a major concern in architecture and planning circles since the mid-1950s revolving the issue of habitat. Using the ethics of European New Brutalism, in Israel the architectural discourse locally developed a Team 10 critique of CIAM, addressing community as the main challenge of modern housing. The failure of modern mass housing to foster viable communities is associated with, and arguably triggered by, the global shift from state-sponsored to market housing that began in the 1970s. Increasing neoliberal policies, which address housing as economic investment, further strip housing off its social role as the site for collectivity and identity. These policies sideline community in housing design. Challenging these assumptions, this study focuses on the socio-spatial dynamics of Beit Be'eri, a single-shared New Brutalist housing estate built in 1965 in Tel Aviv. Marking the beginning of the end of the Israeli welfare state, this estate was produced in the open market explicitly for well-to-do bureaucrats, civil servants, and professionals. Nevertheless, it uses the architectural and urban manifestations of New Brutalism associated with the earlier period of Brutalist state housing. The estate is cooperatively managed since its opening. It consists of a local interpretation of Team 10's call to plan the city as a big house, the house as a small city. Although its cooperative management provokes ongoing inter-resident struggles over its shared spaces, Be'eri represents a long-lasting community, fifty-years strong. Be'eri estate forms a perplexing community, where residents' individual ownership and middle-class identities clash in intricate practices of shared estate management. Based on archival, ethnographic, and architectural field research, this article unravels values of identity and senses of belonging that the brutalist estate provides to its residents. Fostering a critical view of the notion of community, it also examines the residents' persistence in the context of a neoliberal housing bubble. This article portrays how the building allows for shared management of the large estate, shaping and consolidating an active community built upon every-day struggles over shared spaces. Applying Anderson's powerful idea of the imagined community as a cultural product, we ask: Is the strong sense of collectivity in Be'eri imagined? If so, how do these imagined communities form? Upon what are they grounded? How do the intricate practices managing the estate shape its persistent middle-class identity?

1. Introduction

Community has been one of the most perplexing terms in the history of post-war mass housing. The term sparks intense debates within the modern movement.

Arguably, it triggers the articulation of New Brutalism as a new ethics for architecture (Banham, 1955; Smithson, 1962; van den Heuvel, 2015). While Corbusier-inspired Brutalism has been taken up by regimes worldwide for the purpose of post-war mass housing and monumental

government institutions, the ethics and critique of New Brutalism has been incorporated into them starting the mid-1960s. Part of post-war reconstruction and the formation of new nation states immediately after the war, mass housing focused primarily on the production of dwelling units, often using rationalized assessment tools for determining floor area, amenities, cost, and urban infrastructure. While providing good standard dwellings to citizens worldwide, Brutalist mass housing enterprises have generally not attended to issues of associations, identity, community, or sociability—issues formulating the ethics of New Brutalism (Cupers, 2014; Glendinning, 2021; Mota, 2014).

Critique of the Modern Movement—even the one framed within CIAM—has largely revolved around the social consequences of its immense success in producing these post-war habitats. After all, post-war mass housing posed architects and planners with a fascinating paradox: While millions of families who lost their homes during the war or due to large migrations following it were now housed in well serviced modernist apartment blocks, publics were unhappy with their habitats. This had significant social consequences, from France to Israel, to the U.S. and the UK. Post-war new towns and neighbourhoods worldwide were largely desolate social spaces. There, people felt anonymized and isolated. The spaces soon became sites for social and political unrest, associated with state neglect (Holston, 1989; Scott, 1998; Tzfadia, 2006; Vale, 2009; Yacobi, 2008).

As Risselada and van den Heuvel (2005) show, CIAM meetings of 1953 and 1956, focusing on the habitat, shaped the issue of habitability. The meetings labelled the issue as a fault line in the modern movement and the consolidation of an emerging generation of architects seeking to rearticulate its aims and stakes. These architects, most notably Allison and Peter Smithson and Aldo van Eych, participated in CIAM meetings introducing terms such as identity and associations, analytical grills involving scale and typology, and methods such as ethnography and photography. Consolidating into Team 10, and eventually dissolving CIAM in 1959, they aspired to propose New Brutalism as an ethics of architecture that attends to non-material concepts, such as community, as the objects of purposeful design.

Team 10 aimed at producing traditional community in modern architecture by identifying a new set of design problems attending to the challenges of mass housing. In other words, to produce mass housing that would enable viable communal life, New Brutalist architects identified elements of housing estates as requiring design, proposed an agenda for this design, and provided terminologies for these design problems, from "house as a small city" to "threshold" (Engel, 1999; Team 10, 1968).

New Brutalist architecture ethics gained purchase worldwide, with significant impact on Israel's state-sponsored mass housing enterprise. This was especially the case in the country's periphery, in exemplary cases such as Beer-Sheba's "Model Housing." Yet, the real-

ization of New Brutalist design thinking in mass housing estates was quickly meshed with the Brutalist mass housing of new towns of the 1950s. No real distinction in Israeli professional and popular discourse between "Brutalism" and "New Brutalism" deemed both failed attempts in producing viable communities, leading to resident desertion and demolitions (Ben-Asher Gitler, 2021; Hoffman & Nevo-Goldberst, 2017). The local and international shift from state-sponsored housing to market housing, starting in the 1970s, has been largely associated with the architectural failure of modern housing to foster viable communities (Bristol, 1991; De Graaf, 2013; Fishman, 2018). New Brutalist estates were frequently criticized in ways like the housing environments they aimed to improve. Common spaces between buildings, provided to build new community consensus, all too often turned out to be spaces of everyday contestation (van den Heuvel, 2013). Since the 1980s, due to negligence and decay, and supported by neoliberal housing policies, post-war housing environments, are gradually being demolished in Israel and worldwide. They are being replaced by new residential buildings, thus proving modern architecture's failure to foster viable communities (Fishman, 2018; Glendinning, 2021). Increasing neoliberal policies addressing housing as an economic investment disavow former aims for housing as the site for community, collectivity, and identity (Marcuse & Madden, 2016; Mota & Allweil, 2019).

In the Israeli context, however, the term "Brutalism" is identified in both professional and popular discourse with Team 10 inspired critiques of Brutalism—namely with New Brutalism. While the Brutalist architecture of the 1950s–1960s, primarily mass housing in new development towns, is identified with the Hebrew term "Shikun" (literally "housing"). Whereas the historiography of Israeli architecture of the New Brutalist generation identifies the ethical aspects of European Team 10 discourse and their influence on local Team 10 architecture, scholars, architects, and the general public have largely identified the introduction of New Brutalism as the introduction of high architecture into Shikun mass housing, distinguishing it with the term "Brutalism" as shorthand (Zandberg, 2013). The study of Ram Carmi's "Brutalist" and Avraham Yaski's "Concrete Architecture," as well as appeals to UNESCO to recognize Beer-Sheba's (New) Brutalism as world heritage site and the work of Hoffman and Nevo-Goldberst of the Tel Aviv Preservation Department to list the city's (New) Brutalist icons for preservation, all demonstrate this historiographical premise (Ben-Asher Gitler, 2021; Hoffman & Nevo-Goldberst, 2017; Levin, 2019; Rotbard, 2007; Shadar, 2014). The historiography of Israeli New Brutalism therefore discusses it as "Brutalism." This terminological messiness has generated two fascinating historiographical phenomena: (a) a confluence of Brutalism and New Brutalism, producing a critique deeply associated with the critique of mass housing; and (b) the association of (New) Brutalism with the work of renowned

architects as the introduction of high architecture to state-funded mass housing, thus a focus of the material and stylistic aspects of New Brutalism.

Unpacking the terminological messiness of Brutalism–New Brutalism in the context of Israel, this article challenges the popular and scholarly assumption that New Brutalist architecture has indeed failed in producing viable communities. To do so, it focuses on the socio-spatial dynamics of Beit Be'eri, a New Brutalist single-shared housing estate built in Tel Aviv in 1965 on a full urban block, and cooperatively managed by 192 families since its opening. A living example of a long-lasting community for over 50 years, the estate is a local interpretation of New Brutalist ethical call to plan the city as a big house, and the house as a small city. Designed by a team of noted Israeli architects including Arieh Sharon, Dov Karmi, Ram Karmi, Benjamin Idelson, Isaac Melzer, and landscape architects Lipa Yahalom and Dan Zur, Be'eri employs explicit New Brutalist design principles and won the prestigious Rokach Award for design in 1970 (Figure 1).

New Brutalist ethics for mass housing, especially those framed in Britain by the MARS group, associated New Brutalism with public housing and the lived reality
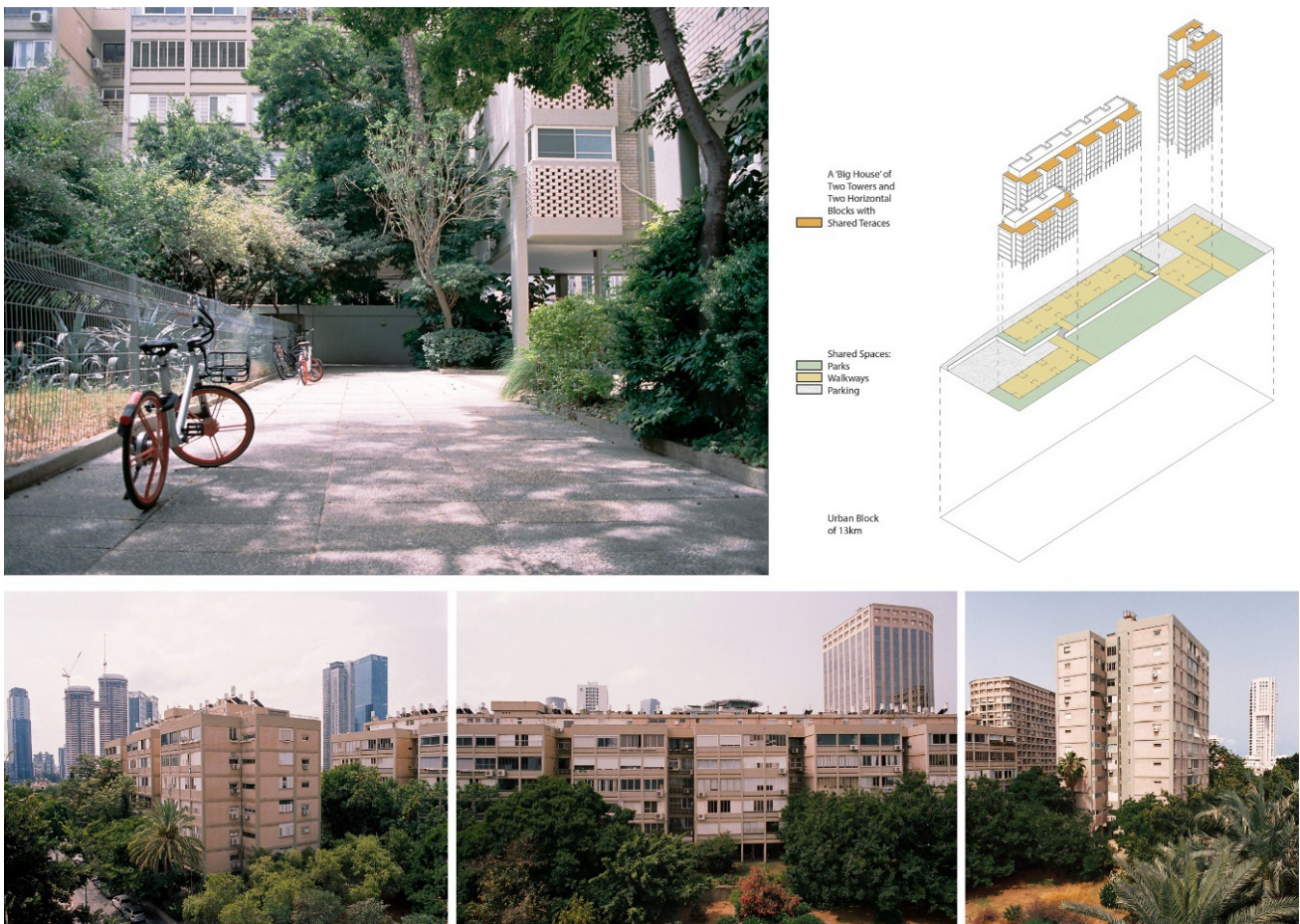

Figure 1. Top: Be'eri estate, 1970. Bottom: Be'eri estate team receiving the City of Tel Aviv Rokach Award for architecture for the estate's design (1970, September 13). Standing at the center, Mayor Yehoshua Rabinowitz. The second figure to the left and further left: Arieh Sharon, Benjamin Idelson, Chaya Karmi (widow of Dov Karmi who passed away in 1962), Zvi Meltzer, and Ram Karmi. Source: "Rokach Award" (1970).

of the working class. These ethics reflected the strong role of the post-war nation state in mass housing, using Brutalist as well as New Brutalist schemes. Therefore, much of the scholarship and popular discourse focuses on state administered public and social housing serving the lower classes. Nonetheless, several important Brutalist and New Brutalist housing estates have come to be populated by members of the middle classes. This phenomenon applies primarily to estates located in central areas of metropolitan cities. Noted examples include Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation in Marseille; Chamberlin, Powell, and Bon's Barbican in London; or Safdie's Habitat in Montreal. At the same time, certain post-war contexts have explicitly addressed the middle class as the target for New Brutalist mass housing, for example Italy (Caramellino & De Pieri, 2015).

Unlike many New Brutalist estates worldwide and in Israel, however, Be'eri was originally conceived as a middle-class housing estate, developed by the market rather than the state. It was constructed at the then-outskirts of the city, on agricultural lands annexed for housing construction for more middle-class urban dwellers. The city's leadership, on its part, supported "extensive organized construction" by providing additional building percentage to enable its reformist plans

(A. Sharon, 1970, p. 2). Close to the estate's completion, Mayor Namir stated: "Recently, Tel Aviv has taken on a new form….Its skyline transformed by…the best of modern architecture" (Namir, as cited in Klir et al., 1965, p. 14). Marking the beginning of the end of the Israeli welfare state, Be'eri was built in the open market explicitly for well-to-do bureaucrats, civil servants, and professionals, including architect Ram Karmi and Mayor Mordechai Namir himself (Hagag, interview, October 29, 2020). The estate is composed of two towers and two blocks, surrounded by five private parks, two parking lots, an inner road, and pedestrian streets on a 13 km² plot (Figure 2). Be'eri estate forms a perplexing, imagined community. It clashes residents' individual ownership and middle-class identities with intricate practices for administrating uses of the shared estate, whose identity is shaped by Brutalist communal ethics and design.

The ongoing viability and the very nature of the community in Be'eri poses important questions: (a) Do housing estates on the open market, serving the self-serving middle classes, include imagined communities of shared homes? (b) If so, how do designed built environments work for (or against) these imaginations of shared community? (c) What is the role of architectural design

Figure 2. Top: Be'eri estate axonometric view (right) and Be'eri estate's internal pathways (left). Bottom: The estate as an urban unit. Source: Photos courtesy of Guy Margolin, 2019.

in sustaining community? Namely, have New Brutalist ethics supported the viability of this middle-class estate?

Renewed international interest in New Brutalist architecture involving the conflict between housing as a lived, social space and housing as real estate commodity points to the importance of the questions posed here (Marcuse & Madden, 2016; van den Heuvel, 2019). We propose two important sets of findings, concerning the architectural articulation of community: (1) Analysing the New Brutalist architecture of Be'eri, we identify the architectural elements enabling resident negotiations over uses of the estate as an object of agonism, forming a non-harmonious yet long-lasting democratic community. We thus demonstrate exactly how the architecture of Be'eri fosters its viable community; (2) analysing the urban, socio-economic, political-economic, and historical context of Be'eri as a middle-class housing estate, we consider both class identity and state-citizen dynamics in mass housing as significant elements in the formation of viable communities.

2. New Brutalism and Community

Community—understood as a key concept to approach housing throughout the second half of the 20th century—has roots in early 20th-century writings on "community lost" and the disappearance of social and emotional ties in urban environments hindering community growth (Lewis, 2016; Mahmoudi Farahani, 2016; White & Guest, 2003). In the aftermath of the Second World War, Team 10 objected to CIAM members' uncritical realization of the welfare state's demand for housing units for the masses via Brutalist mass housing and new towns, producing what CIAM's younger generation viewed as sterile, unlively housing environments. Facing community fragmentation, the diverse voices comprising Team 10 strived to complement two rights of citizens of the western welfare state: the right to unit ownership and the right to genuine identification with their housing environment. Members of this critical group of CIAM, while diverse in their views and approaches, as well as designs (as reflected in the Primer for example), argued that housing architecture should encourage human interactions and foster local communities. Thus, New Brutalism proposed an opposition to modernist planning conventions by questioning CIAM's analytical tools of rational planning, and offering alternatives attuned to typology and scale (De Graaf, 2013; Mumford, 2000; Risselada & van den Heuvel, 2005; Team 10, 1968).

However, what type of community takes shape in Team 10's discourse? In the Doorn Manifesto, Team 10 members discuss community as a built projection of the pattern of human associations, suiting its particular environment (Team 10, 1954). Promoting innovations in housing architecture, they developed housing megastructures—systems of linked building complexes—intending to reflect and enhance the network of human associations in the city (Smithson, 1962). These involved

attending to the dependencies between architectural and urban space, as well as to the social order of the communities inhabiting those spaces (Mumford, 2018; Risselada & van den Heuvel, 2005). Alison and Peter Smithson, discussing the modern city's problem of identity, suggested that a community should be built up from a hierarchy of associational elements. Each level of the hierarchical framework designed as a plastic reality aimed at connecting inhabitants to their environment (Cupers, 2016; Risselada & van den Heuvel, 2005; Team 10, 1954). Van den Heuvel (2015), revisiting Reyner Banham's seminal essay "The New Brutalism," addresses the Smithsons' pivotal shift from aesthetics to ethics as a shift away from singular buildings toward town planning (Banham, 1955).

The ethical, formal, material, and architectural attention to community proposed by Team 10 found great resonance among Israeli architects. The latter were facing similar challenges in the new towns designed for Jewish immigrants in the first decade of state sovereignty, where Brutalist mass housing and modern planning produced anonymity and identity loss which culminated in social unrest (Shadar & Yacobi, 2016). Israeli architects regularly participated in CIAM meetings, nurturing a long correspondence with members of the modern movement. Likewise, they published their built projects in well-circulated modernist journals such as *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* (Ben-Asher Gitler & Geva, 2018; Efrat, 2019; Mumford, 2018; A. Sharon, 1976). Be'eri architecture team members were highly versed in these debates. Architect Arieh Sharon participated in several Israeli delegations to CIAM meetings, including the Team 10-led 1956 meeting on "Scales of Association," which addressed the city as a series of semi-autonomous associational elements (Mumford, 2000, 2018). Ram Karmi graduated from the AA school in London (1951–1956), achieving his architecture diploma amid CIAM's takeover by Team 10, led by British architects Alison and Peter Smithson (Ben-Asher Gitler, 2021). Echoing Team 10 rhetoric, in a 1965 essay Karmi criticized Israel's post-war Brutalist housing environments as socially insignificant arrangements of buildings producing an urban dreariness where no one could find their place (R. Karmi, 1965; Van Eych in Team 10, 1954). Like Team 10, he called for constructing housing as a framework for complete urban life (Ben-Asher Gitler, 2021; R. Karmi, 2001). Akin to Team 10's assessment, and inspired by Clarence Perry's "neighbourhood unit" to foster communal life within the modern environment, Brutalism in Israel served as an architectural critique to the state's post-war massive public housing project (Hoffman & Nevo-Goldberst, 2017; R. Karmi, 2001; Perry, 2020; Shadar, 2016; see Figure 3).

Tel Aviv's urban principle as housing-based urbanism draws from Sir Patrick Geddes' 1925 masterplan for a city of 100,000 inhabitants extending north up to the Yarkon river, now identified as the "Old North" section of the city (Allweil & Zemer, 2019). Since Geddes' interest in urbanism revolved around his conception of

Figure 3. A collection of the *Architectural Design* journal issues found in architect Eli Mashiah's private archive, the team architect of Be'eri at Sharon's office. Sources: Courtesy of Idith Levy.

housing as the building block for cities, his approach to urban planning involved seeing housing and urbanism as one single problem. Geddes famously wrote that "Urban Planning cannot be made from above using general principles...studied in one place and imitated elsewhere. City planning is the development of a local way of life, regional character, civic spirit, unique personality...based on its own foundations" (Geddes, 1915, p. 205). This statement, quoted in the Doorn Manifesto as well as in the Team 10 Primer, has explicitly influenced the work of the younger generation of CIAM (Risselada & van den Heuvel, 2005; Team 10, 1968). Within the Israeli architecture discourse, the critique of Brutalism was therefore also rooted in the local context of Tel Aviv, Geddes' only fully-realized urban master plan (Allweil, 2017; Allweil & Zemer, 2019).

Geddes' urban structure for Tel Aviv laid down a non-orthogonal grid, based on the region's geography and existing routes and landmarks in the landscape. This made possible urban blocks of varied size and character within a unified urban structure for the city. The home-block idea had appeared in Geddes' work as early as his 1915 *Cities in Evolution* (Welter, 2009). Geddes examined cases of superblock design and made an active departure from the cul-de-sac blocks to the use of "homeways" that distinguished main from local roads yet kept inner-block parks and civil facilities as part of the city's civic system

(Payton, 1996; see Figures 4 and 5). Geddes' explorations of the urban block in multiple planning schemes for cities in India, especially in his Indore plan, culminated in his Tel Aviv plan into well-articulated home-block urban units: urban blocks composed of two rings of detached houses, around the inner circumference and the outer circumference of the block. Each block included a small public park with communal facilities such as playgrounds and tennis courts. "Mainways" through traffic surround the home-block. Narrow "homeways" and pedestrian ways lead to the inner block without traversing it (Allweil & Zemer, 2019; Geddes, 1925; Meller, 1990). Geddes' town planning report was adopted into a masterplan containing a colored map and written by-laws, drafted in accordance with the British Mandatory *Town Planning Order* of 1921 (Marom, 2009). The Geddes Plan is addressed in the literature primarily as urban layout, based on the assumption that Geddes' worker housing was never constructed (Meller, 1990; Weill-Rochant, 2003).

Most of the research and discourse of Tel Aviv's worker housing revolves around the few well-known Meonot Ovdim (worker residences) designed by Arieh Sharon. Self-built "worker neighborhood" home-block dwellings all over the city were largely forgotten since they were not designed by architects (Greicer, 2017; A. Sharon, 1937). However, findings uncovered in the archives and the built environment prove that Geddes'

housing scheme was fully realized by the mid-1930s, its realization founded on worker housing via the sweat of the city's disenfranchised worker community (Allweil, 2017; Allweil & Zemer, 2019).

The city as a housing problem and the concerns for Tel Aviv's housing-based urbanism carried over into the 1950s and 1960s. Israel's "first generation" architects critiqued CIAM's urban principles by adopting and appropriating the social values of European New Brutalism (R. Karmi, 2001; Shadar, 2014). Influenced by Team 10, themselves influenced by Geddes, architects aimed to create viable communities related to their own culture and environment (Hoffman & Nevo-Goldberst, 2017; R. Karmi, 2001; Yaar & Eitan, 2016). The concepts of "neighborhood" and "neighboring unit" were highly used in the planning professional discourse in Israel. Often discussed revolving post-war new towns in Israel's periphery (Shadar, 2014), little attention is given to the significance of these planning concepts to the extension of housing-based urbanism in Tel Aviv beyond the scope of the Geddes plan area. Scant research of Israeli New Brutalist housing estates revolves around estates developed in Tel Aviv, incorporated as home-blocks in the East and North of the Geddes plan area, as part of the city's post-war expansion (Hoffman & Nevo-Goldberst, 2017; Marom, 2009). Indeed, prior to designing Be'eri estate, its designers often objected to Tel Aviv's market-driven development, which had altered the Geddes plan's urban fabric. While the city's home-block urban units have maintained through multiple cycles of development, many small garden-city housing designed by Geddes were replaced by apartment houses. The Israeli Team 10 critiqued the growing privatization of civic life and stood against the speculative realization of Geddes' plan, which increasingly replaced self-built home-blocks with multi-story, market-led apartment houses, thus losing much of its communal character (A. Sharon, 1937, 1970). The extension of the city to the east following the annexation of agricultural lands for the development of urban housing led to the development of the "New North" masterplan of 1940, whose principles conversed with those of the "Old North" plan. The group of Israeli Team 10 architects therefore extended their opposition to the New North quarter's homogenous urban planning. Approaching housing as a tool for social reform, architects Arieh Sharon and Ram Karmi—who both served in key positions in the Ministry of Housing—developed novel housing schemes, aimed at creating viable communities within the modern urban environment. Prior critical attempts include (Dov) Karmi's 1946 proposal for overcoming Tel Aviv's insufficient open spaces for communal interactions—the neighbouring problem—by challenging the city's typical urban layout and offering several rearrangements of adjacent plots to provide wider communal spaces between apartment buildings (D. Karmi, 1946; see Figure 4).

Be'eri estate is part of the New North residential quarter at the then-outskirts of the city. The New North master plan of 1940 encouraged market-driven development of four-story apartment buildings, extending the urban fabric and housing typology of the city centre, which is based on 500 m^2 individual plots composing urban
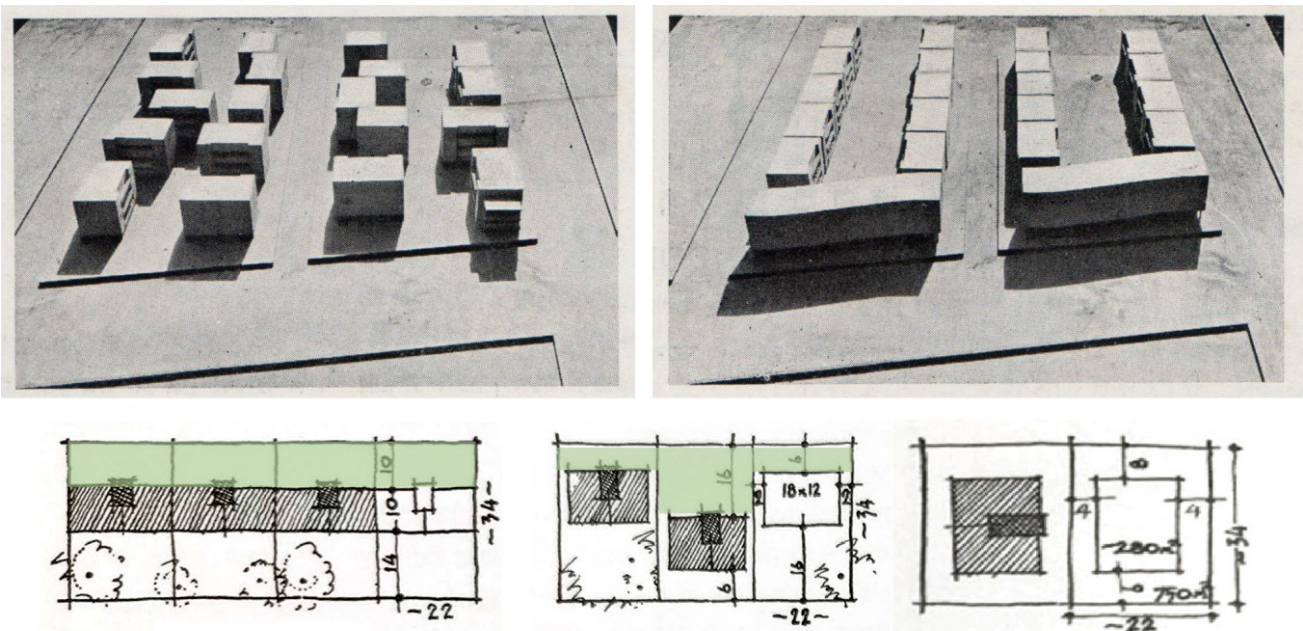
Figure 4. Top: Arieh Sharon's proposal for the extra-large house (right) vs. Tel Aviv's common urban housing blocks (left). Bottom: Dov Karmi's critique of the Tel Avivian house plot (right) by offering two alternative rearrangements of housing parcels in a "chess form" (middle) and a "continuous form" (left). Both alternative rearrangements, providing wider green spaces around apartment buildings, appear later in Be'eri's estate layout. Sources: A. Sharon (1937, p. 2; top) and D. Karmi (1946, p. 3; bottom).

blocks (Marom, 2009; Taba Now, n.d.; see Figure 5). In 1958, the Solel-Boneh semi-public construction company acquired a full urban block of 13 km^2 as part of the privatization of Tel Aviv's medical-centre lands and invited a team of noted Israeli architects, including Arieh Sharon and Ram Karmi, to devise the plan. This unique team of architects, the Israeli Team 10, viewed Be'eri estate as an opportunity to realize its planners' urban critique. Designing Be'eri's urban block as a big house—maintaining one self-managed community—aimed to constitute a framework for community (Figure 6).

Rather than subdivide the large urban block into typical Tel Avivian apartment house plots, as seen across the street, the design team proposed one estate sharing the entire block. Echoing New Brutalist estates of the time, Be'eri planners designed the estate as a big house that
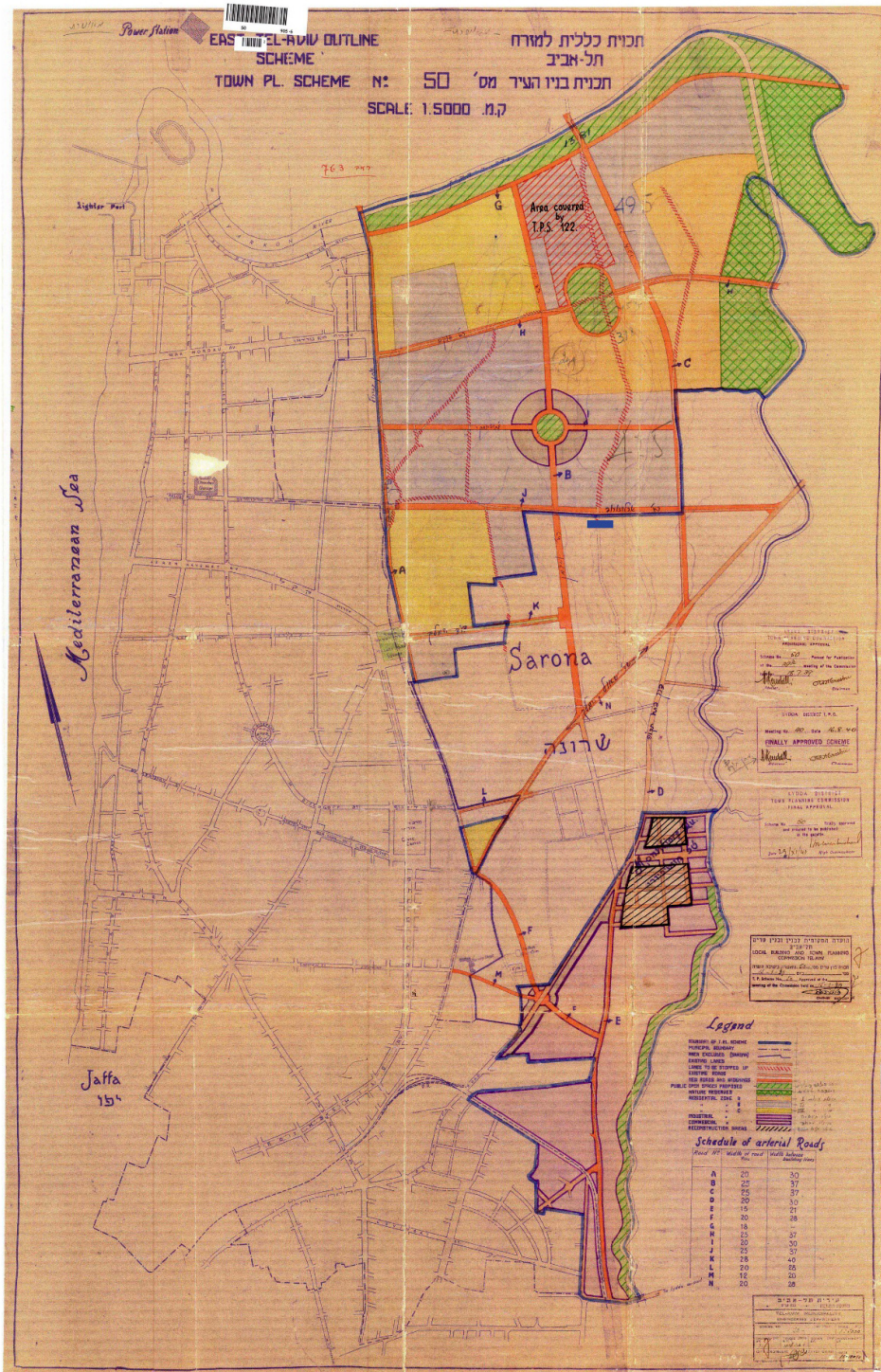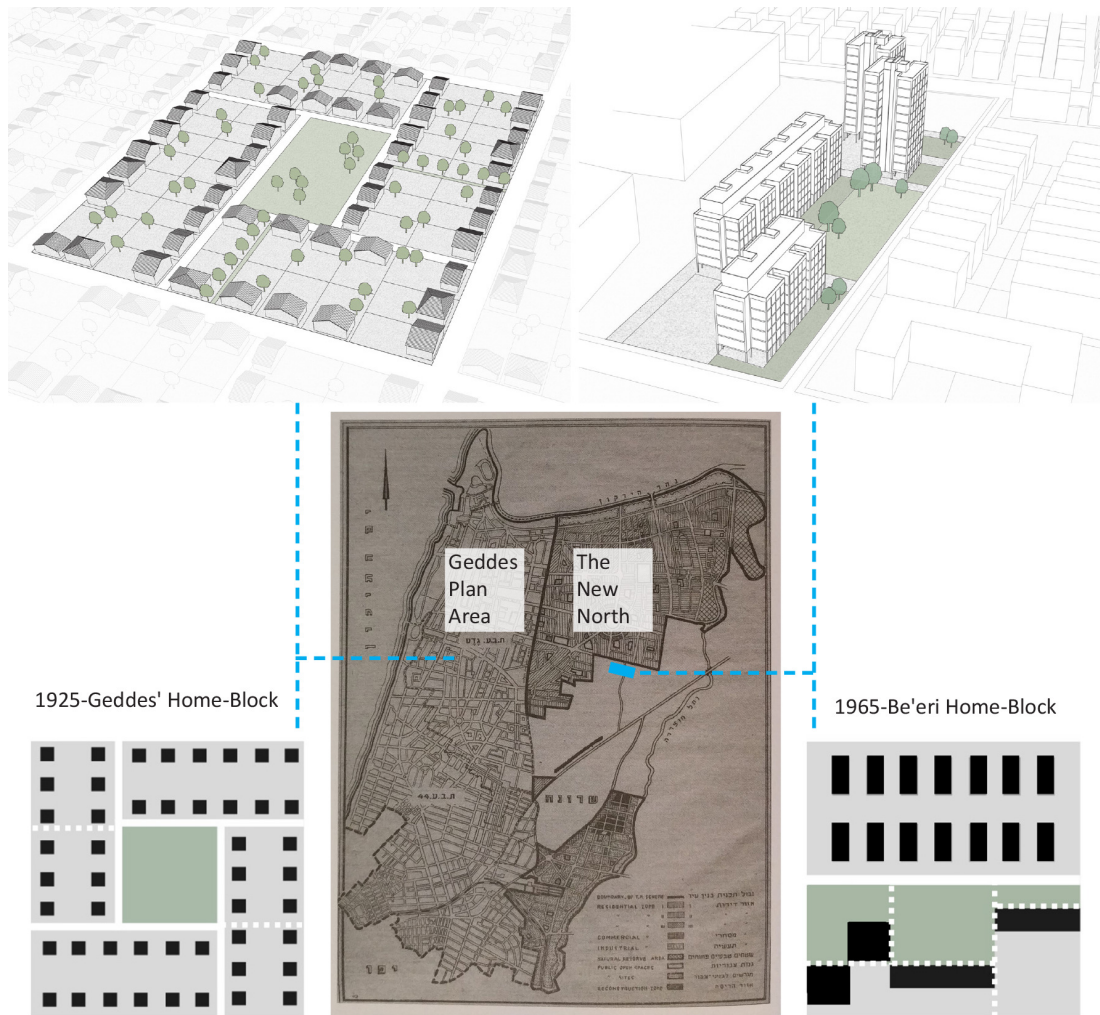

Figure 5. General plan for East Tel Aviv: Master Plan 50, 1940, with location of Be'eri estate in blue. The spots in yellow, orange, and oval define residential land use. Source: Taba Now (n.d.).

Figure 6. Be'eri estate typological criticism of Tel Aviv's urban block.

functions like a small city, involving various city-like common facilities, shared by all residents.

The architect team suggested a new type of urban block, rethinking the existing urban layout—an architectural approach termed by Tafuri as "typological criticism" (Borsi et al., 2018; Tafuri, 1980). An architectural drawing, one of many found in Sharon's archive, attests to the estate's design as typological criticism of Tel Aviv's urban layout composed of 500 m² individual housing plots with no social amenities (Figure 7). The common facilities include an internal walkway connecting between estate buildings, two parking areas, a service road, a large central park, and four smaller parks. Complementing the estate's "architectural separation," the four parks vary in levels—each park attached to a different building (A. Sharon, 1970, p. 1). Granulite-covered walkways frame the different parks, leaving them open for resident appropriation. While the big house constituted an urban-block-sized framework for human contact, its spatial fragmentation encircled within its boundaries four smaller frameworks of human associations, with several scales of social interaction among residents (D. Karmi, 1946; D. Karmi & A. Sharon, [ca. 1960]).

Taking advantage of the site's topography—with level differences of 2.5 m between its north and south edges—the planners sculpted a three-dimensional ground level, allowing the upper-slab's park to overview other common facilities as parks and parking areas, while wide stairways connect between the differently levelled walkways. The walkways reach Be'eri street in four different points, connecting the internal route with the external street network. Additionally, each slab's shared roof terrace functions as a street in the air—an elevated pathway inviting urban intensity up to the thresholds—allowing movement between the slab's different sections. To enhance the sense of privacy, the designers sub-divided the longitudinal slabs by recessed terraces, containing the apartments' service areas. Designing each slab as a merge of several separated volumes, they added yet another, more intimate level to the hierarchy of human associations. They then provided each separated looking volume with an independent entrance, and doorstep—thus echoing Team 10's stress on the threshold—a crucial space for inhabitants to meet and encounter, transitioning between the private and the collective (Figure 8).
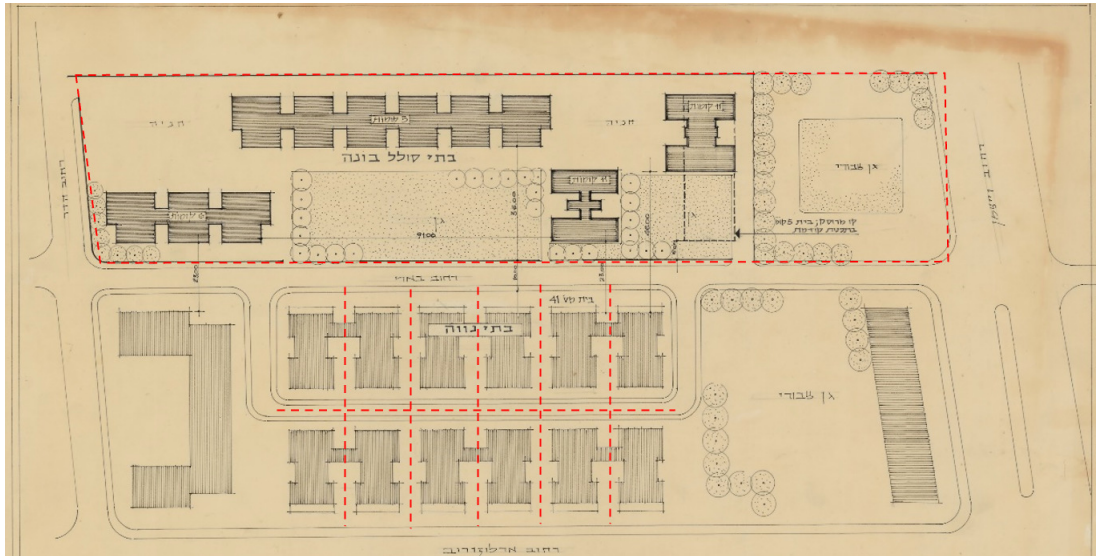
Figure 7. Schematic plan of Be'eri estate, unknown year, with graphic additions by the authors illustrating the difference between the proposed planning scheme for Be'eri estate (top) and Nave houses representing the common urban layout (bottom). Source: A. Sharon (n.d.).


Figure 8. Facades and roof plan of one of the elongated buildings (40–50 Be'eri street). Note in the facades the recessed service balconies (dark grey) shaping the large building as a series of separate-looking volumes. Top: the facades' drawing, 1963; Bottom: roof plan, unknown year, with graphic additions by the authors. The building's design as a series of separate-looking volumes softens the large building's massiveness and produces a colonnade with extensive thresholds for each entry. Sources: A. Sharon (1963); photos by the authors.

In 1970, Be'eri estate won the City-of-Tel Aviv Rokach Award for architecture, recognizing its contribution to the city's development. The award stated that Be'eri's planning "sees architecture as a means towards the creation of a living environment" and expresses "a humanistic approach to architecture rather than a mechanistic or formal one" (Gilbert, 1970, p. 1; Y. Rabinowitz, 1970, p. 5). Receiving the award, Sharon delivered a speech titled "Individual buildings or comprehensive architecture," advocating the latter rather than the former (A. Sharon, 1970, pp. 1–7). Designing a dynamic landscape and leaving certain spaces open for resident appropriation, Be'eri designers aimed to fuel and animate residents' immediate housing environment with life and activity. They thought about environment in both social and architectural terms.

Indeed, the residents of Be'eri have employed the characteristics of this design by appropriating parts of the shared estate. While enjoying environmental advantages deriving from the urban-block-sized big house and its vast open spaces, residents have carried out organizational and spatial rearrangements that appropriate the estate's initial architectural separation. Be'eri's residents have chosen to sub-divide the estate in terms of management, maintaining the estate's buildings and parks through a four-tier democratic committee of elected residents, who represent the interests of each entry within the estate. The estate sub-divided management is spatially evident. Following disagreements over the parking areas' maintenance expenses, the estate residents have divided the shared parking area in half, uneconomically placing two automatic entrance gates— side by side. "We would further split the parking area if it was technically possible," says N. L., who has been residing in Be'eri since the 1970s, and who has served as chairperson for the upper block (N. L., interview, May 9, 2018). Further, the estate's series of differently designed parks reflects how each committee chose to appropriate and control its buildings' open space (Figure 9).

Within the estate's smaller "human associations," intimate relationships have developed. During the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, for example, families sharing the same building celebrated holidays together, and children visited each other's apartment without having to step outside the building. O. W., who purchased his apartment five years ago, says: "Friendships have formed here. Unlike a single building, there are many people—a potential to encounter and get acquainted with each other" (O. W., interview, November 4, 2020). Furthermore, residents testify that they feel closer to residents sharing with them the same slab's sub-section, frequently encountering them in the shared stairway.
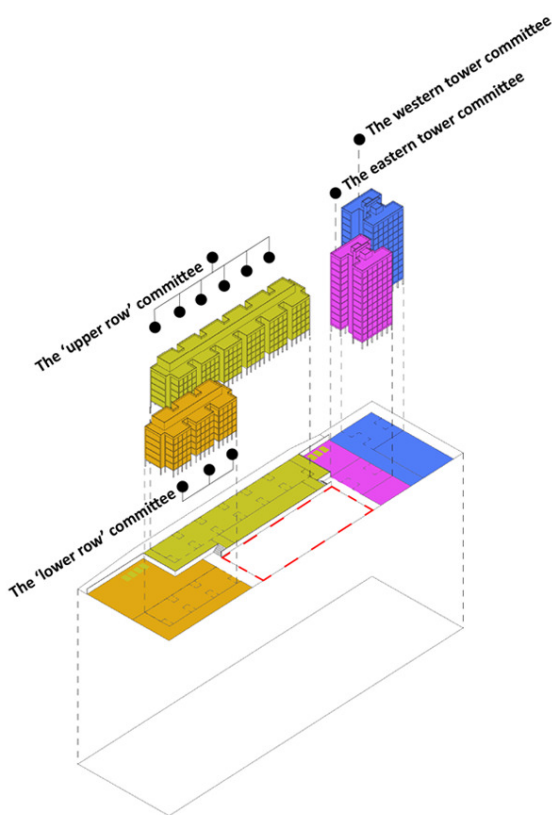

Figure 9. Left: Diagram showing the organizational structure of the Be'eri estate's community. The different colors mark the part of the common space for which each of the four houses is responsible. The red line shows the central park that the tenants have taken out of the equation. Right: The series of gardens at the foot of the buildings provides spaces for children and communal events. Sources: Photos courtesy of Ali Hasan, 2018, and Guy Margolin, 2019.

One resident states: "The friendship and partnership in the complex are special in our alienated world, especially in a big city like Tel Aviv" (survey, May 10, 2020). As these examples show, the estate's sub-divided structure enables residents to operate in smaller semi-autonomous cooperatives, partly breaking from the wide-shared ownership (Figures 10 and 11).

However, although strictly maintaining the cooperative management's sub-divided structure—consistently preventing certain residents from appointing themselves as overall "estate managers"—the estate's separate "human associations" occasionally collaborate over the "big house" maintenance. A renovation process that took place in one of the estate's towers exemplifies how maintenance activities, taking place in one of the estate's

buildings, may draw residents from all around the estate to multi-participant acts. To renovate the shared parking area, the tower residents established an inter-building collaboration involving three building committees, collectively managing renovation works. Shared ownership of the big house, promoting in-house political participation, generates daily communal interactions. Residents cooperate, negotiate, and solve problems, involving individual and group engagements—realizing the estate as a dense network of human relations.

Drawing on Eleb we ask: Is there a link between the form of housing and the middle classes? What vision of society and of family supported developers when they conceived their constructions? (Eleb in Caramellino & Zanfi, 2015, p. 11).
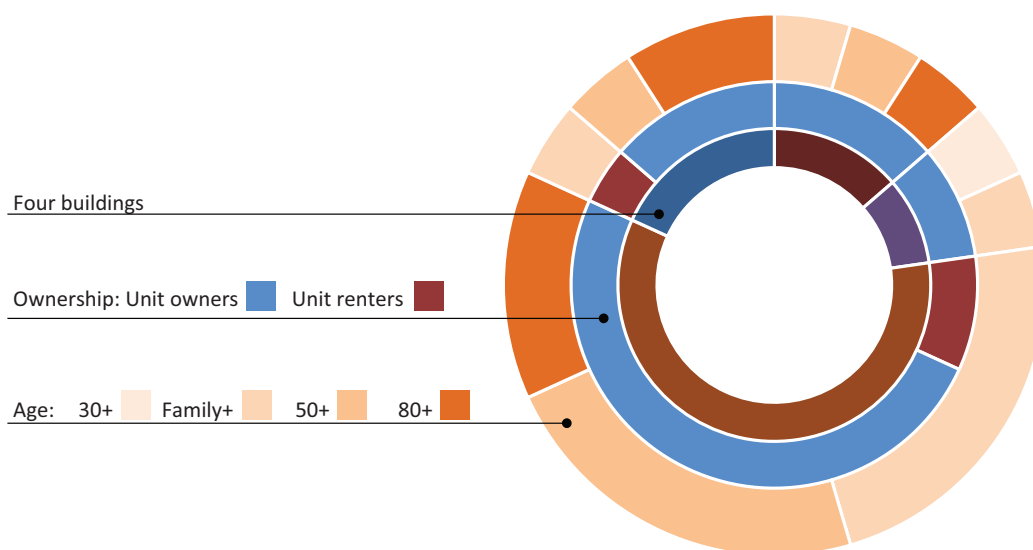
Figure 10. Diagram of the interviews conducted by this study. Interviewees are segmented per residence in each of the estate's buildings, owners vs. renters, and age group.

Figure 11. During the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown residents celebrated holidays together and organized collective childcare solutions.

3. Middle Class Mass Housing: Community and Imagined Community

While social housing complexes are characterized by an explicitly reformist, socio-democratic choice towards lower income residents, the middle class—and middle-class housing—generally lacks a clear definition. This is especially the case when it is constructed and inhabited in the context of real estate development. While access to public housing was typically monitored by the state via various administrative conditions such as income restrictions, private ownership shaped a community in middle class mass housing which is less explicitly defined and remains under-researched to date (Caramellino, 2015).

What is middle-class housing? Although it is one of the main aspects of the urban fabric in Europe, the Middle East, East Asia, and Latin America, middle-class mass housing has been generally underestimated in urban and architectural studies. There is still a lack of comparative analysis and global perspectives to develop a common critical understanding of this phenomenon and a more precise understanding of its different expressions and premises.

While important research exploring the middle-class mass housing phenomenon in the UK, Sweden, the Netherlands, Portugal, France, Belgium, and Italy already circulates, "the construction of a residential environment for the middle classes in the period following the Second World War has been little observed" (Caramellino & Renzoni, 2016, p. 9; Caramellino & Zanfi, 2015; De Vos, 2010; Heynen, 2010; Mattsson & Wallenstein, 2010; Pilat, 2016; Urban, 2012; Wagenaar et al., 2004). This despite the importance of the phenomenon, of the weight that this real estate stock still has in cities, and of the role that the buildings of the period had in contributing to the definition of cultures and housing practices of over a generation (Caramellino & De Pieri, 2015).

As the middle class bears different social-economic and political meaning in various historical and geographic contexts—for example, the middle class in socialist societies—the study of middle-class mass housing involves developing a set of concepts and definitions derived from specific cases and applicable to a wider range of situations.

Be'eri estate, built for the purpose of housing more middle-class urban dwellers, enquires into the very nature of middle-class housing. Marking the beginning of the end of the Israeli welfare state, this market-built development was explicitly directed at a developing section of the housing market: open-market housing for the Middle Class as the "backbone of society," which previously chose detached or apartment housing (Karmon & Chemanski, 1990).

"When observing the architectural quality of some of the collective houses built for the middle classes," writes Eleb, "we are led to the conclusion that the characteristics of the individual house are central, because even the dwellings in high-rises are designed in an attempt to preserve home qualities: outdoor spaces that extend the residential space, attention to storage room, or even bricolage areas, gardens and sports grounds and meeting areas surrounding the residences" (Eleb in Caramellino & Zanfi, 2015, p. 11). As one resident stated, there is direct correlation between the estate's active community and social spaces and its class status: "I would like to point out that when a community of good neighbours is created the [real estate] value of apartments increases" (survey, May 10, 2020).

This crucial balance between the individual and the collective, highly discussed in New Brutalist discourse revolving post-war public housing, was nonetheless relevant in market-led mass housing planned one decade after Israel's consolidation. It was a period that revealed initial cracks in the public's will to individually devote for the common good, and a growing tendency toward individualism (Hoffman & Nevo-Goldberst, 2017). While the shared estate constituted an urban-block-sized framework, its spatial fragmentation encircled within its boundaries four smaller frameworks of human associations gradating between city, neighbourhood, and house.

The legal registration of the four separate buildings as a single shared house under the Israeli Shared Houses Law of 1961 takes part in the architectural balance between private and collective. The estate's legal registration grouped the separate buildings as one big house, encircling a shared habitat of houses and open spaces within the estate's boundaries. The law clearly distinguishes the private domain to the individual apartments only, marking all other elements as shared property, including stairways, walkways, roofs, parks, and other common facilities (D. Rabinowitz, 2007).

Although residents recognize the estate's vast open spaces as the most cherished quality of their estate, they do not necessarily enjoy sharing them with others. Resident interviews revealed that the cooperative management over many shared spaces provokes many conflicts and confrontations, more than once leading to reciprocal prosecutions, possibly due to the legal framework of the estate as a shared home: "The cooperative management has provoked numerous conflicts," attests N. L., who has had to negotiate among residents as block chairperson (N. L., interview, May 9, 2018). "There were times when the building committees did not talk to each other," says D. T., who moved to the estate 10 years ago and led the renovation of one of the tower blocks as chairperson. "Maybe in old-days Tel Aviv it used to be a communal place, now it is not" (D. T., interview, May 13, 2018). G. C., a renter who leads the estate's community garden, states that "there is a thin line between addition and development—everything I add I think whether I cross the line or not" (G. C., interview, November 5, 2020) and N. P. says that "it was a mistake to establish the shared statute" (N. P., interview, April 25, 2018).

Some residents even disclaim the estate's communal character, stating: "No community here, each resident to

himself" (A. S., interview, May 28, 2018); "Only hello and goodbye, nothing more, no community" (A. G., interview, April 12, 2018); "I do not think this place has managed to develop a community" (N. P., interview, April 25, 2018).

Furthermore, original residents were not initially aware of the estate's collective dimension: Be'eri's 1963 newspaper advertisement emphasized its technical specifications and spacious gardens rather than its cooperative structure ("Binyanei Be'eri," 1963; see Figure 12). "When we bought our apartment, we did not think about it. Only when we wanted to apply physical changes, we realized we are bound to each other" (N. P., interview, April 25, 2018).

Different interpretations residents give to the shared spaces are subject of ongoing conflicts and confrontations, provoking constant tension between the individual and the idea of sharing. The upper-slab's park, for instance, is a subject of ongoing inter-generational struggles, with each generation's representatives interpreting it differently. While young families use the open lawn as a gathering place, other residents see it as a decorative garden: "Young families sitting on the grass….It changes the house's character. For me it is a decorative garden, not a gathering place. When residents use the shared lawn

for birthday celebrations or for children water games, the house looks like a slum," says N. L., whose personal photo album includes pictures of her own children playing water games in the lawn in the 1970s (N. L., interview, June 6, 2018; see Figure 13).

Other contested spaces include the shared parking areas and rooftops, which provoke constant disagreements. Some residents consider attempts to privately use the rooftop terraces as "violent acts" (D. N., interview, May 17, 2018). In one case, residents required a rooftop "trespasser" to invest in the estate commons—financing the shared parking area renovation—to compensate for privately using shared spaces: "One cannot do whatever one likes because it is shared space. It is not a private villa—it is a shared house" (N. P., interview, April 25, 2018).

A major conflictual space is the estate's central park—originally the main gathering place—comprising a rare, semi-public green space of over 2 km^2 in central Tel Aviv. Following disagreements over maintenance expenses, and to prevent outsider access, the estate committees decided to enclose the central park with a fence and a locked gate (Figure 14). As a resident claims, "the planning created a natural connection between the buildings

Figure 12. Be'eri estate advertisement. Source: "Binyanei Be'eri" (1963).

Figure 13. Birthday parties and children's play on the upper lawn. Sources: Right photo by the authors, 2019; left photo courtesy of N. L., ca. 1985.

and the small parks. In contrast, the central park was always perceived as something artificial" (N. L., interview, May 17, 2018). Transforming the central park's role from a neighbourhood gathering place to a partly neglected, decorative park, Be'eri residents have converted communal disagreements over maintenance expenses into a spatial advantage of privacy and space from surrounding neighbourhoods. As a result, wildly growing vegetation has gradually hidden the buildings' facades, replacing the open terraces' original sliding shutters as mediators

between the privacy of the individual units and the collective all-shared central park.

Political scientists and urban theorists posit that community is not a static form of association but rather an open political process, in which the meaning of living together is constantly questioned (Harvey, 2012; Mouffe, 2005; Rancière, 2014; Stavrides, 2016). Mouffe offers the concept of agonism, which signals a radical model of democracy, to criticize liberalism's current tendency to promote political consensus and consequently being

Figure 14. The central park, then and now. Left: Top row's facade with original aluminium shutters on the balconies, 1970s. Right: Be'eri estate today, with vegetation hiding the top row's facade. Source: Left photo courtesy of Nava Leibowitz.

unable to adequately envisage the pluralistic nature of the social world, with the conflicts that pluralism entails. From an agonistic point of view, the central category of democratic politics is the category of the adversary, the opponent with whom one shares a common allegiance to the democratic principles of liberty and equality for all, while disagreeing about their interpretation. Mouffe identifies the object of conflict, around which adversaries conduct agonistic struggle, as the very condition of a vibrant democracy—a democracy constantly evolving through confrontation (Mouffe, 2005; Studdert, 2016). Israeli scholars exploring conflict and confrontation in Israeli spaces have often discussed communities as arenas of constant tension between the individual and the idea of sharing (D. Rabinowitz, 2007; Shani, 2021).

4. New Brutalism and the Middle Class

Interestingly, the urban layout and architecture proposed by the architecture team and constructed by the developers—marketed for middle class consumers—employed the urban and architectural vocabulary of New Brutalism to produce modern architecture for a traditional community. We therefore explore the interrelationship of middle-class identity and (imagined) community formed in the estate via and vis-à-vis the architecture, landscaping, and urban block layout, as both community and built environment sustain over time.

The very idea of New Brutalist middle class mass housing—namely, of market housing employing New Brutalist architectural ethics, vocabulary, design principles, and materiality—seems like a contradiction in terms in contemporary historiography. In response, we suggest that New Brutalism indeed addressed issues explicitly relevant for the middle class, such as privacy and identity for individuals within a community.

Be'eri architects argued that a house should promote a sense of belonging within the urban environment. They addressed housing as a framework in which,

as Candilis stated, "man can again be master of his home," applying New Brutalist architecture vocabulary as a style that "leaves itself open to intervention, without itself being changed" (Candilis in Team 10, 1968, p. 76; Smithson in Engel, 1999, p. 41). "Ready for dressing by the art of inhabitation," New Brutalist architecture's often bare structures expressed post-war planners and sociologists' increasing comprehension that individual inhabitants need to be given an active role in making their habitat (Cupers, 2016, p. 173).

Be'eri's architectural image derives from its buildings' exposed reinforced concrete structure—a repetitive framework of columns and beams. The materiality associated with Brutalist state housing blurs the distinction between Brutalism and New Brutalism in both professional and popular discourse of large housing estates in Israel. Usually associated with social housing, the bare concrete aesthetics reflected a "direct and honest expression" of "Tel Aviv's typical building materials'' (A. Sharon, 1970, p. 2). Further, Be'eri designers infilled the concrete frameworks with either one of two filling materials: (1) "Silicate" brick walls, a local building material made from local raw material—sand from Tel Aviv's shore relating the estate with modern Tel Aviv's traditional building technology; (2) open terraces, framing the community's raw material—the residents themselves. The facades' rigid concrete structure, which frame the open terraces, disclose resident appropriation of units through renovation works. Finally, sliding aluminium shutters installed to the open terraces enabled mediating between the very private, i.e., the individual units, to the very collective, i.e., the shared parks, and the city at large (Figure 15).

According to van den Heuvel (2013), designing housing to foster community life meant, for Team 10, assimilating the welfare state's inherently contradicting demands: involving the ideal of a democratic, egalitarian society while acknowledging "human aspirations," namely liberty of personal choice and individuality.
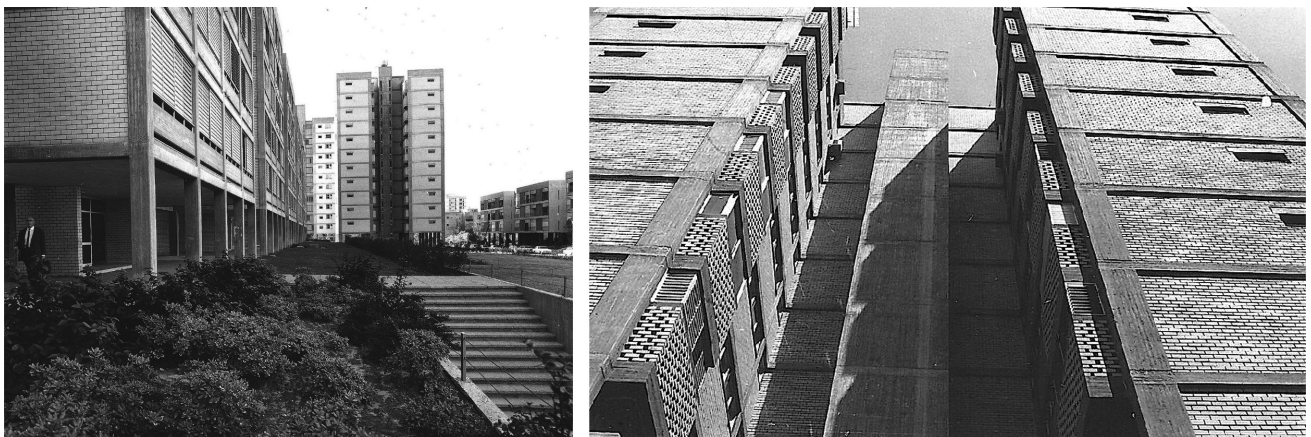
Figure 15. Left: The exposed concrete structure and silicate bricks of Be'eri estate's tower. Right: Be'eri estate, 1969. Note the estate's upper park at the center of the photo, overlooking the central garden and the street, while wide stairways lead to it. At the center-right of the photo, the central park extending Be'eri Street. Source: U. Sharon (n.d.).

Further, van den Heuvel suggests that New Brutalist structural honesty, inviting "affinity between man and building should also be understood as an ambition to redesign the relationships of production and consumption," explaining New Brutalist ethics as opposition to the post-war welfare state production of a controlled consumer society (van den Heuvel, 2015, p. 305). Banham defined one of the main characteristics as the notion of "image" of New Brutalism, and that only "Conceptual" types might be considered image making—an expression of a major conceptual shift in architecture theory (Mould, 2017).

5. Conclusion: Community and Imagined Community in Middle Class Mass Housing

Be'eri estate forms a perplexing, imagined community. It pits (a) residents' individual ownership and middle-class identities with (b) the estate's bare concreate aesthetics associated with Brutalist social housing, (c) the intricate everyday practices for administrating uses of the shared estate, and (d) the now prime real estate location with upper-class amenities. The estate's middle-class identity and everyday life is therefore positioned between lower class association of large concrete estates and shared facilities vs. upper-class access to vast, lush, open spaces and control of a full block at the centre of the city.

Do housing estates on the open market, catering to the self-serving middle classes, include imagined communities of shared homes? If so, how do designed built environments work for (or against) these imaginations of shared community?

Interrogating the strong sense of collectivity in Be'eri and how the intricate practices of managing the estate shape its middle-class identity, this article proposes two key conclusions. In the mid-1960s, the collectively managed Be'eri estate spoke of the civilian ethics of privileged white-collar "workers." Their housing, produced in the open market, enabled them private property and individuality within a collectivity. In neoliberal Tel Aviv, the estate distinguishes Be'eri residents from upper-class gated condominium towers, managed by lower-class service personnel. As more and more middle-class mass housing developments attempt an upper-class identity via gating and service labour, Be'eri community insists on the civilian role of the middle class by relying on self-management, which could have been easily swapped via the market. Self-managing themselves as the "backbone of society," the middle-class estate exercises and communicates middle-class identity, holding some power (rather than null or absolute) and fostering the constant need for negotiation.

Further, when examining the architecture and urban block of Be'eri, we might ask whether New Brutalism indeed offered an architecture for middle class housing rather than social housing for the working class. When we examine noted examples like the Unite, Habitat, and others, now upper-middle-class built environments, what do we learn from their use over time? Examining the process of architectural decision-making, and the life the latter "animated," we argue that Be'eri is an architecture for self-housers rather than for the housed. In other words, Be'eri offers an architecture for the formation and constant re-articulation of the imagined community of the middle class. Be'eri marks a typological and productional shift involving planners, policy makers, and private investors. These stakeholders re-designed the city's urban layout via estate-scale developments. They built a framework for shared community life incorporating New Brutalist social values, usually associated with social housing, with market-led mass housing for the middle class.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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