EVOLVING LEGACY

An Exploratory Path into Uncovering and Sustaining a Practice's Accumulated Knowledge

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Barbara Anna Aronson

BLA (Fachhochschule Weihenstephan) 1987

MLA (Harvard University) 1991

School of Architecture and Urban Design

College of Design and Social Context

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Fig. 01. Plan showing the proposed path connecting multiple underground caves, Beit Guvrin National Park, circa 1990

Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, this research is that of the author alone; the content of this research submission is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

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Barbara Anna Aronson

February, 2022

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Shlomo Aronson, who cast such a bright light on the practice and on us as his family, we remain a coherent group as his family and successors to his legacy. We go forward with the optimism that he carried with him throughout his life. His professional contributions are a big part of why I undertook this research, to share with others the positive impetus towards his goals and the environment at large.

Thanks go to our past and present staff who were and are part of building the reputation of the practice and who continue to sustain its ongoing success. Their insights contributed to the findings of this research as the result of many informal conversations, and as part of our work through the open dialogue between us. Our staff is an inseparable part of the critical reflection process and future creative development in the office.

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Abstract

What kind of professional knowledge helps sustain an architectural practice over time? What are the decisions and key moments that make projects happen? This research explores what constitutes critical knowledge within a practice and how this body of knowledge can be passed down when contemplating succession in creative leadership.

In 2019, Shlomo Aronson Architects celebrated fifty years of existence. A great deal of professional knowledge has been accumulated by the firm over time, which is fully known and understood by the lead designers only. As part of this research, the office acts as a case study to provide answers about the inner workings of managing projects and people, mentoring staff, and designing and growing creatively. Evidence is presented based on reflections on the practice's design archive, the lead designers' creative backstory, outside influences on the practice, and through informal conversations with past staff members and colleagues, all of which provide a historic perspective of the tacit and explicit knowledge held within the practice. This research offers a framework of how to consider succession by putting forward a wide range of professional knowledge and skillsets deemed pivotal when leading a practice and discussing methods of transferring this knowledge to others.

PART A

01 OPENING
02 THE PRACTICE
03 WHO WE ARE

Fig. 02. Our project wall and office cubes at the entrance to the Jerusalem office

01 OPENING

01.01 Introduction
01.02 The PhD Journey

"When I first worked with Shlomo in my San Francisco office, it was during the exuberant and creative 1960s. We were unimaginably busy and we worked with an idealism and optimism that exemplified those heady times. There were no ecologists or environmentalists in those days and the concept of a holistic worldview was very New Age. [...] When my office undertook extensive environment and climate studies and designed the master plan for 'living lightly on the land' at The Sea Ranch, it was considered a very novel idea. [...] It was not until many years later that this approach to master planning was accepted universally. Shlomo, however, embraced these ideas and experiences and returned to Israel to expand the concept into arid landscapes."

Lawrence Halprin, in the preface to Shlomo's book 'Aridscapes' (Aronson, 2008, p.11)

This research is the result of a passionate appeal by landscape architect Marti Franch for me to join the RMIT Research in Practice program. His argument was simple, and it echoed Shlomo Aronson's lifelong view that one must put thoughts down on paper, because only then do they become tangible ideas. These then can be understood, shared and further developed by oneself and others, holding the potential to make us better architects.

Marti talked about the influence that Shlomo had on his own professional development, by being the ultimate role model of a courageous landscape architect with a clear agenda for the profession and the field of landscape architecture. He also convinced me that the legacy of the practice was well worth researching.

The conversation with Marti took place during a particularly hectic period at our practice, a time of expansion, with fantastic work opportunities, but with little free time to think, share or learn new things. There was a growing concern that we may be becoming complacent in our designs. In the midst of all this, and possibly as a reaction to it, Ittai, my partner at work and in life, and I started thinking about our exit strategy: preparing the way for the next generation, and coming up with a plan which would enable us to retire, while allowing the practice to continue onwards, along a new path.

From this point it only required a short time to realize my research interest, and to formulate my initial research questions:

Is knowing the sum of all knowledge that has sustained the professional and financial success of a practice over the past 50 years instrumental to its future success? If so, how is it possible to transfer this knowledge to the new leaders and staff of the office?

How can design knowledge be taught within the framework of an architectural practice?

How can we engage the younger generation to generate new knowledge?

Fig. 03. Office founder Shlomo Aronson, around 1980, Shlomo, Barbara and Ittai Aronson in 2010, Barbara and Ittai Aronson in 2017

Evolving Legacy: An Exploratory Path into Uncovering and Sustaining a Practice's Accumulated Knowledge

01.01 Introduction

"You are an office, not of theoreticians, but of doers. The legacy of theoreticians is quite different. In your case, there are the ideas, the values, the sensibilities that Shlomo brought to the world, but also the methodologies, the knowledge of how to analyze the land, how to study a site. How to consider issues of water, microclimate and so on". (Safdie, 2020, appendix, p.284)

Creative work, in particular in the field of architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design, thrives on experience: expertise and knowledge gained from the repeated process of designing, communicating, building, and reflecting on design. Years of work typically provide designers with the confidence to do their job professionally, continuously refining their artistic, technical, and social skills. In practice, the process of reflection is often the weak link in this course of professional growth. Although reflection is strongly recommended as a tool with which to learn from past successes and failures, it is not a core requirement for architectural design. Within the framework of their daily activities, it is a real challenge for most practitioners to invest the time necessary in describing their creative process, identifying their accumulated knowledge, and finding ways of explaining these intangible yet critical elements of their work to others.

RMIT's Invitational Program in Design Practice Research encourages practitioners to explore the nature of their mastery: becoming aware of their mental space, researching their architectural ideas through the medium of architecture itself, and speculating about the future of their work and practice (Schaik & Johnson, 2011).

This research reflects on the multiple layers of knowledge defining the modes of practice and design of a predominantly landscape architectural practice.[01] It discusses what formed and influenced the practice while presenting methods of making the amassed knowledge comprehensible to others. In particular, it investigates the role of mentoring and presents methods of knowledge transfer. The research thus lays the foundation for the future creative growth and development of the practice within its sets of professional beliefs. In this line of investigation, Shlomo Aronson Architects acts as a case study to provide insights into a locally acting design practice sustained for over 50 years, substantiated by a large body of work, today understood primarily by the lead designers, and discusses how established and new knowledge may be exchanged between staff members and colleagues.

In the case of our practice, it was the request by one of our young architects, *"teach me all you know"* that highlighted the perceived knowledge gap within the practice and the need to explore more ways to mentor the staff. This in turn raised the general question of how we could improve access to the knowledge of the practice and its lead designers. It emphasized the need to create a structured record of knowledge held in the practice. This would not only provide learning opportunities through access to the understandings gained in practice but also enable greater involvement of different staff members making substantial contributions in the design process. On reflection, it also called into question whether we were able to define and formulate what constitutes the critical

01. In the context of this research, and in keeping with the practice's interdisciplinary approach, the term architecture is applied to represent works of architecture, landscape architecture, infrastructure, and urban design unless specified separately to highlight differences between professional fields.

knowledge and essential design approaches of the practice to be passed on to others.

Sustaining a practice requires different types of expertise attained through professional training and practical experiences collected over time. This knowledge includes office-specific background information and professional reference material, but much more so, creative design and technical skills, communication, leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving skills alongside practical knowledge in how to manage a business. Some of this represents explicit knowledge that can be described, cataloged, and pointed to. A great amount of it signifies tacit knowledge that can't be bracketed and needs to be experienced and understood through doing. While formal architectural education provides the foundations for the creative and technical aspects of designing and communicating architecture, the profession relies implicitly on practices to provide the framework for further professional learning in all fields of expertise. In contrast to the well-structured syllabuses of academic programs, learning in practice is dependent on the personal aptitude of the lead designers to share professional insights. This underlines the importance of 'learning by example' and the challenges of teaching knowledge in practice when a structured reflection and documentation process is often not in place. In midsize offices like ours, the challenges of the mentoring process are further aggravated by the fact that direct learning opportunities with the lead designers are limited.[02] The extended office hierarchy impacts the staff's exposure to the practice's inner workings.

As part of the core incentive of RMIT's PhD program, practitioners are asked to share their professional experiences and provide insights into the making and practicing of architecture. As such, this thesis and the entirety of the program's PhD research contribute to the practice-based understanding of architectural knowledge. With specific relevance to this study, Carey Lyon's research presents the act of discourse as a method for creative knowledge exchange as well as an open working method inviting creative complexity and wider cultural relevance within the context and conditions of a large-scale, commercially operated design practice (Lyon, 2018). Few practitioners outside the program provide personal observations on their creative design processes and the role of mentoring as part of creative design and growth. Outstanding examples include Guenther Vogt who, in the form of interviews and reflections on his projects, offers insights into the interconnecting relationship between modes of creating, discussing, and teaching in his landscape architectural practice (Vogt, 2015; Vogt & Kissling, 2020); James Corner, who discusses contemporary modes of theory, creative thinking and designing in his extensive scholarly writings, as well as synthesizing the complexities of practice (Corner & Bick Hirsch, 2014); Michel Corajoud, who synthesized his professional approach and learnings as a practitioner and teacher in an open letter to his students (Learning from Michel Corajoud, 2016); the architectural firm BIG who provide detailed explanations about their design ideas and process in innovative formats like project-specific videos (8H-The 8-House, 2009) and 'archicomics' (BIG, 2009); and Ian McHarg, who elaborated on his personal experiences and design thinking as an introduction to understanding the origins of his new methodology to landscape planning presented in 'Design with Nature' (McHarg, 1971).

02. The concentration of information within the "knowledge elite" is a common problem within large offices (Cuff, 1992).

Evolving Legacy: An Exploratory Path into Uncovering and Sustaining a Practice's Accumulated Knowledge

Three general studies stand out in their attempt to look at the architectural practice as a whole. Dana Cuff's study of architectural practice, defined as *"the customary performance of professional activities"* (Cuff, 1992, p. 4), elaborates on the important sociological aspects which constitute the practicing of architecture, looking beyond the customary focus on modes of design or the final architectural product. Walter Rogers' textbook "The Professional Practice of Landscape Architecture," offers an in-depth compilation of strategic considerations involved in developing and managing a private practice, touching on practical and ethical considerations for practicing landscape architecture (Rogers, 2011). Thomas Fisher's powerful discussion of 50 dilemmas of professional practice puts ethical behavior forward as a decisive element in making and practicing architecture, using case studies to explain the personal obligations of architects to their staff, the public, and the environment (Fisher, 2010).

When discussing the reasons for initiating the Research in Practice Program back in the late 1980s, Leon van Schaik appealed to Melbourne's architects and argued that the research *"would capture evidence about the nature of the mastery that their work displayed, [and] reveal its local authenticity, […]"* (Schaik & Johnson, 2011, p. 19). The aspect of local authenticity is worth discussing in more depth when considering that designers of all professions operate increasingly outside state borders, or even on a worldwide scale. Reflecting on design and practice within this context is of special relevance to works of landscape architecture and urban design: reviewing the creative design process of interventions against the background of their historical, social, political, and environmental setting and discussing the characteristics and potential advantages of working locally.

Within this study, the research into the context of a practice's design work is extended to include its work environment and mentoring culture. Practitioners often acknowledge the challenges involved in the executive aspects of running an office: how to acquire new projects, dealing with money, clients, politicians, and managing and teaching their staff; yet they rarely write about them in the framework of their creative work. In fact, these dealings represent an essential part of everyday responsibilities which impact directly on a practice's design output. This case study offers the viewpoint of a predominantly landscape architectural practice that chooses to act as generalists, facilitators, and mediators rather than specialists, as their preferred means of implementing their professional vision. This approach aims at creating spaces that strengthen the sense of community within a multi-faceted society and enhance the bonds between people and their cultural and natural environments. The practice's strategic goals also include building a professional community through open dialog within the office and discourse with colleagues, as well as with society at large. The practice aims to operate on all scales of planning and design in an integrated approach of landscape architecture, infrastructure planning, urban design, and architecture intended at handling the far-reaching consequences of development in a small, extremely diverse country with a rapidly growing population.

This study uses a mixed-methods strategy of research. Methods of inquiry include data collection produced through reflection on the practice's design archive, the lead designers' creative backgrounds, modes of design and practice, preferred modes of creative expression, and office structure and culture. The case study analysis of three seminal projects from different times provides project-type specific approaches, explaining their respective creative design process and formative achievements against the background of the practice's principal modes of design. Informal conversations with past staff members and colleagues provide a historic and personal perspective of what they have learned and/or an understanding of the practice's creative work process.

The documentation produced as part of this thesis points to explicit knowledge and presents opportunities to teach tacit knowledge. As a result of some of the insights gained through this research, new methods for knowledge exchange have been initiated, starting the process of making our accumulated learning more accessible to our staff and other professionals. The ongoing effects of the research include providing a window into the mechanisms, thought processes, and social skill sets necessary to produce works of architecture. The documentation has been extended to building a digital online library presenting seminal office projects, offering an alternative view into their creative design approach through the presentation of photographs and uncensored graphic material produced throughout, from the planning stage until completion. Sketches, studies, diagrams, illustrations, details and selected working drawings express the process of developing ideas. The great variety of graphic expression and content presents many different methods and changes in approach over time.

Evolving Legacy: An Exploratory Path into Uncovering and Sustaining a Practice's Accumulated Knowledge

The structure of this document reflects the sequence in which the larger picture of this thesis unfolded, echoing the way that the research was carried out. It starts with descriptions of our professional environment, documenting our project typologies and reviewing the ideas and motifs previously defined by us and others. At this stage it also presents the professional development of the lead designers. Formulating our present-day modes of design and creative design process could only be approached after passing the first period of reflection. The subsequent critical review of three seminal projects was completed in the third leg of the PhD. Informal conversations with past staff members and colleagues produced a wealth of personal recollections, confirming intuitive assumptions that I had about our professional environment.

The chapters in Part A provide an introduction to the PhD methodology and the background information for understanding the practice as a whole and the lead designers' creative backstory. 'The PhD Journey' offers insights into the investigative path from the initial exploratory period to the completion of the final thesis.

The chapters in Part B present the background and theoretical construct to understanding the ways we create. Our creative environment and teamwork are discussed with respect to their influence on the architectural output. The overview of past and present evaluations of our design motifs and work, together with an exploration of our modes of practice and design through examples from seminal office projects define the foundations of our designs. The description of the modes of expression through which we communicate our ideas presents key examples and discusses personal contributions to the evolution of our designs over time.

Part C examines our creative processes and modes of design through in-depth presentations of three case study projects. Each project is described using a similar method. Starting by explaining the project's general context, background and history, I continue with outlines of the genesis of the project, and descriptions of how the concept and design were developed. Each case study ends with reflections according to the inferences presented in Part B. The second chapter in this part explores the topic of professional knowledge and mentoring. It investigates the various ways of how we can assess and transfer the practice's tacit and explicit knowledge to others. The third chapter describes the findings, lessons learned, and contributions of the research, summarizing the conclusions gained through this PhD investigation.

Appendices in Part D complete the research documentation with a general overview of the practice's work. Short descriptions of the 20 most seminal works, listed according to periods of practice, offer a comprehensive picture of the office's creative output over time. Transcripts of all informal conversations provide first-hand accounts and often very personal memories of what former staff members and colleagues experienced and learned in, or from the practice: listening, observing, caring, designing, creating, arguing, talking and reflecting.

01.02 The PhD Journey

My journey started four years ago with a visit to Barcelona to check out RMIT's Research in Practice program. The previous year, fellow landscape architect Marti Franch had suggested that pursuing this PhD was what I needed at this point in my career, as it would provide me with the framework to reflect, understand my professional situation and ultimately grow as an architect. I convinced my friend, architect Ari Cohen, to join me. We returned from Barcelona in April 2017 with little understanding of the program's methodology, yet with a clear conviction that Marti was right about the potential contribution of the PhD's path to our personal development. We also embraced the program's goal of building a community of practitioners and with it a broad network of knowledge. Now, four years on, the initial state of confusion has given way to a clearer understanding of my professional self, and our practice as a whole. Unfortunately in 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic took away the opportunity to meet and to share our ideas in person, regrettably transforming the overall experience into a private exploration. In Marti and Ari, I had found my personal support group right at the beginning, but the importance of community building should not be forgotten when we eventually leave the restrictions of the pandemic behind us.

Identifying my research interest happened early on. A brainstorming session with Ari Cohen and one of his employees at the time, Yaara Rosner-Manor, who was in the middle of her PhD, advanced the initial personal questions around which the research would evolve: how can this research contribute to the improvement of my practical work? What are my dilemmas? How do we re-invent ourselves as designers and what do we want to achieve over the next 10-15 years? How do we maintain excellence? How are we able to recognize what we don't know? Does our intuitive, experience-based first sketch or design approach, crystalize the 'central question' or brilliant idea, or does it define and limit from the outset the extent to where we are willing or capable of going?

These questions helped me to define my research, organized around three hypotheses that raised specific research questions:

Firstly, the understanding of all components of legacy in an architectural practice is critical to its continuing success. Do we have a clear idea of what constitutes this legacy, or knowledge, of an office? Furthermore, how can we amalgamate the essentials of our legacy and synthesize them into a transparent and applicable part of our office management and design processes?

Secondly, the personal design knowledge of the partners dominates the outcome of our designs. What were the principal professional influences on each of the partners? What are the prevalent design approaches used in the office?

And thirdly, mentoring is an integral part of sustaining design excellence and is key to innovation. How do we ensure a regular process of knowledge exchange, adaptation and creative growth? Are there clear design processes in place for teaching the staff? Are the junior staff given enough opportunities to contribute to the design process at all stages of design?

Evolving Legacy: An Exploratory Path into Uncovering and Sustaining a Practice's Accumulated Knowledge

I wanted to understand the connection between our established designs and design approaches, which are fully understood only by the most senior staff, and the ability to innovate through establishing a link between existing design knowledge and mentorship. Furthermore, I was interested in analyzing our design approach, and how it impacts on our mentorship style, office culture and office structure, and vice versa. It was also important for me to understand the underlying processes that govern our decision making. Having explored all of these, I searched for learning scenarios that will help everybody in the office understand and apply the design principles of our office philosophy. Finally, I hoped to be able to generate a higher degree of office 'resilience' and ensure continuing design excellence while relying less exclusively on the experience and design knowledge of the lead designers.

I thought initially that this research would produce clear procedures for knowledge exchange and the teaching of design knowledge, and help put together up-to-date approaches to sharing explicit and tacit knowledge about design. Our staff continuously voice their desire to learn more about the place where they work, and they are always looking for more practical design tools. As my investigation progressed, I realized that the teaching of knowledge is a widely studied field providing directions, rather than proposing fixed procedures to follow. It was in my last year of research that I discussed the issue of knowledge preservation with Dr. Nachum Fossfeld, an independent consultant to large banking and IT companies, facilitating the knowledge transfer from key personnel to their replacements (Fossfeld, 2021). He stated that the first and most important question to be asked is which knowledge is worth being retained and conveyed. This hit a nerve that had been troubling me for a while: is it really critical for the next generation to know about every aspect of how we run the business and how we design? The culture of practicing architecture is changing so fast, and new ideas and ways of designing are popping up all the time. Are we taking our past learning too seriously? This question directed my research towards organizational learning, organizational memory, organizational culture, knowledge management, and the direct and indirect transfer of knowledge. (Hajric, 2010; Liebowitz, 2009). Clarifying the mechanisms behind knowledge retention and development helped define the many forms of knowledge, data, and information existing within the practice.

My research path has been predominantly one of reflection. The general idea of decoding 50 years of office legacy, and the strong shadow cast by Shlomo Aronson's internationally acclaimed achievements, steered the research in the initial period of exploration into efforts of categorizing the work and understanding the practice's history. The panel of critics responded by raising questions about the influence of our projects on the fast-growing country and the profession at large, about transformative triggers, our power and privilege in educating so many young designers who go through our office, and about Shlomo as a groundbreaking role model of a powerful landscape architect.

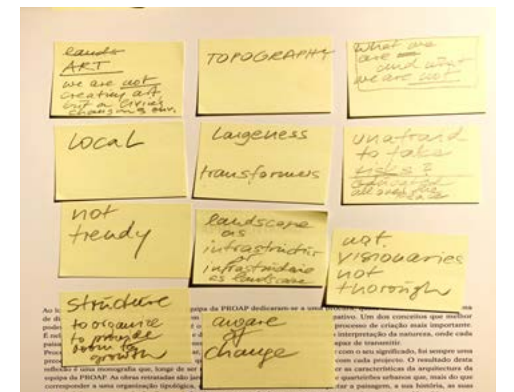


Fig. 04. Early brainstorming session about what does and doesn't characterize us, 2019

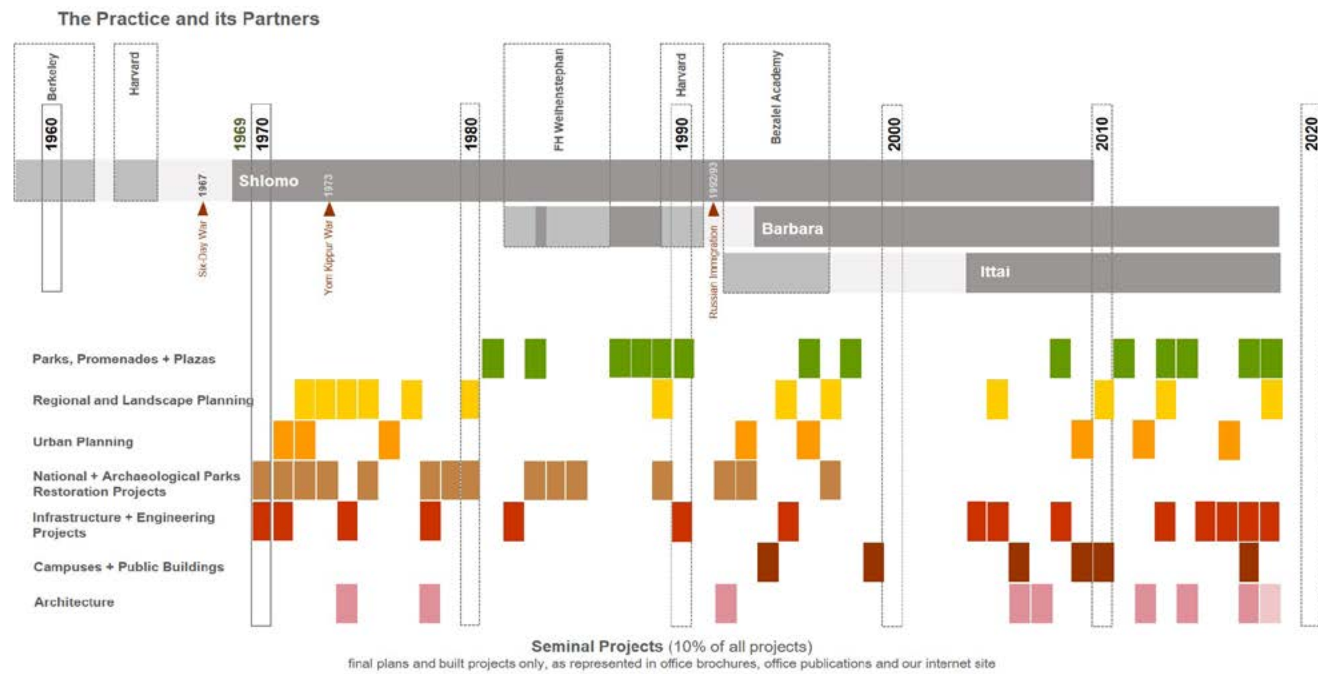


Fig. 05. Diagram showing active periods of the three partners and distribution of project types over 50 years, 2019

For the first of three milestone presentations required by the program, I started unpacking the components of our legacy with descriptions of the office's history, project diversity, and reflection on 'red threads' that define our work. Seminal projects were identified to both highlight commonalities and differences concerning design program, language, and scope. I made the first attempt to create a diagram listing the 'red threads' or 'reoccurring motifs' as defined by Shlomo in the past and updated by Ittai and myself to reflect more current ideas in the office.

Fig. 06. A preliminary list of the 'Red Threads' or reoccurring motifs as defined by the three partners, 2020

The central critique of the second progress presentation was that I talked about what I was doing and why, but not how. I approached thinking about 'how' in two ways. My first approach was to provide an understanding of our office environment, how the office structure had evolved over time, and to map the working relationships between lead designers and staff. The second line of inquiry showed the creative process within the practice, and the creative output of a design team throughout all planning phases using a case study project. My research was still very much focusing on the social aspects of our design culture and planning process. The presentation of this exploratory path left the panel of critics again wanting to know more about the 'how', and reiterated that the practice as a business entity and social structure was of less interest to them. It took me another year and a half to understand what Martyn Hook called 'the lifting of the blanket', providing insights into our modes of design thinking.

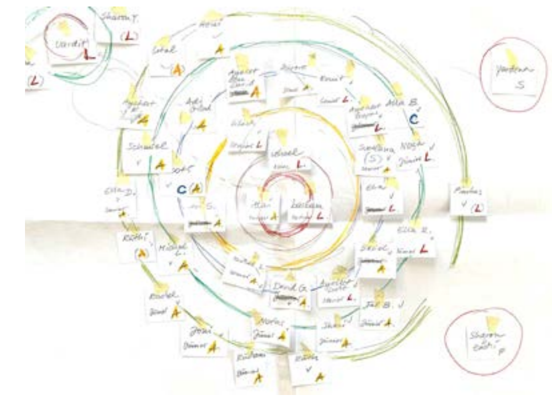


Fig. 07. First attempt at mapping my intuitive understating of the Jerusalem main office structure, while categorizing our northern branch, financial service providers, and office manager as satellites of the overall concentric organization. Seniority of staff is expressed by their proximity to Ittai and myself at the center of the operation. This reflects my reading of the practice as a studio, where all staff have direct access to lead designers, 2019

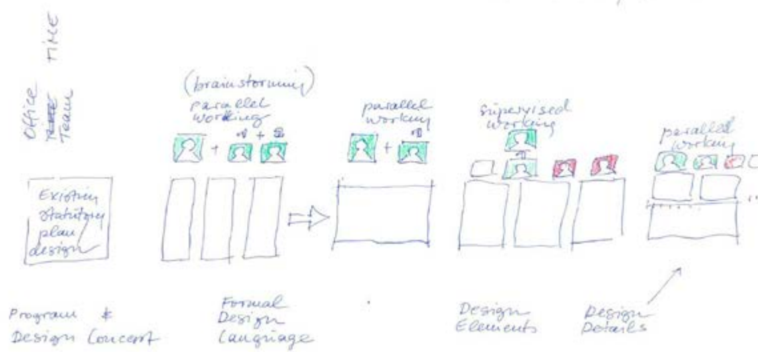


Fig. 08. Diagram exploring the creative process within the office, by mapping participation of team members throughout the various planning phases of the New City Center of Modiin. Landscape architects are represented in green, architects in red

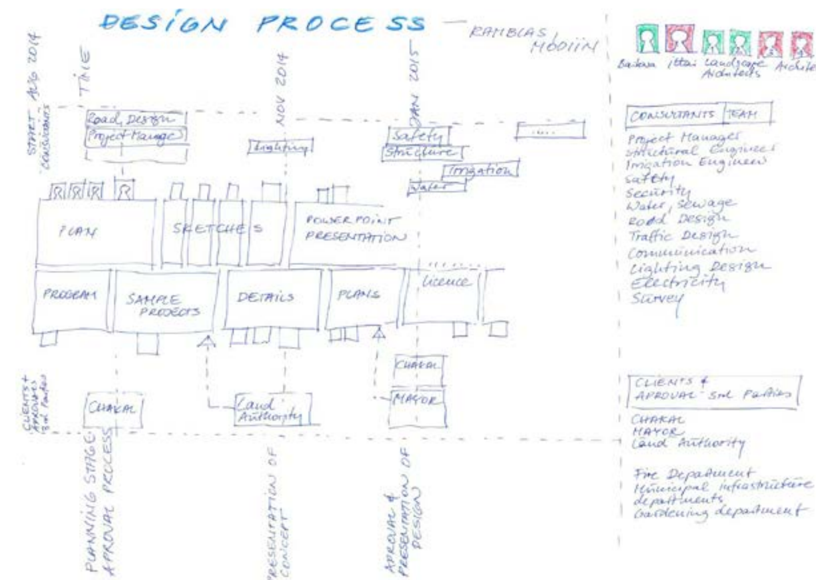


Fig. 09. Diagram mapping our architectural output in relation to required input and approval by the client, consultants, and 3rd parties categorized by the various planning phases all of which reflect the complexities of planning. Case study: the New City Center of Modiin

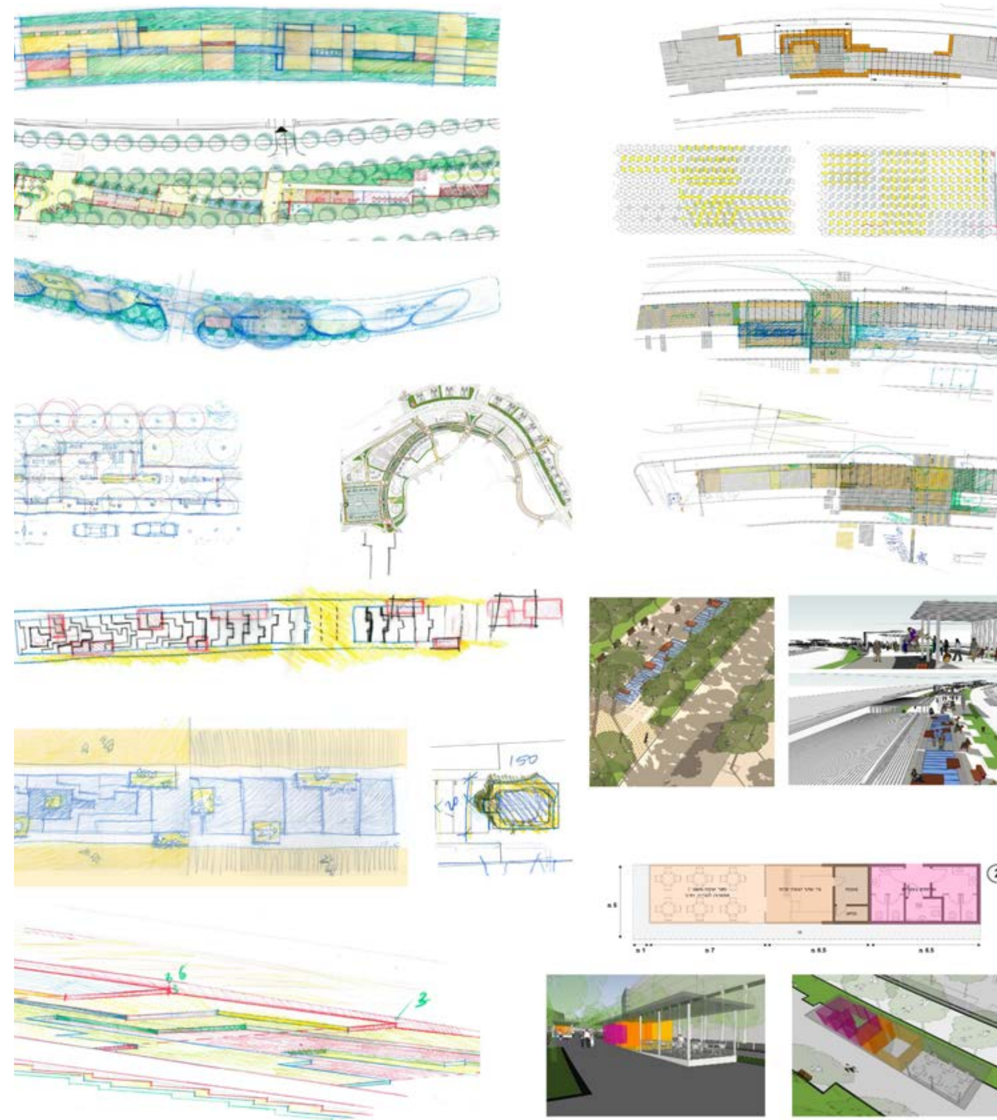


Fig. 10. Drawings produced by different team members throughout the early design stages, illustrating the collaborative effort within the design process via their input on design alternatives, architectural elements and details, New City Center of Modiin, 2014-2017

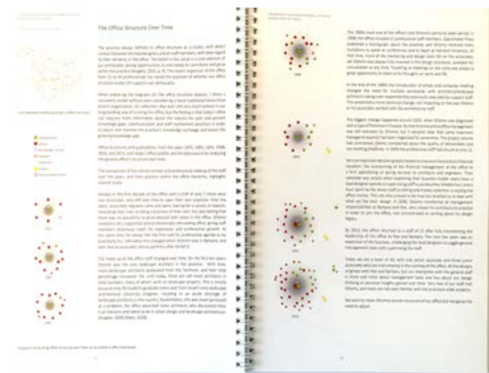


Fig. 11. Analysis of the practice's office structure as presented in the thesis draft for the second milestone presentation, in an effort to understand constants and changes in our working relationships over the years

My second milestone presentation focused on providing a comprehensive overview of the final thesis, outlining the skeleton of the research rather than providing fully developed chapters. The review of historic material and project typologies produced a list of our seminal projects. My supervisors Charles Anderson and Paul Minifie strongly advised me to focus on a small number of three or four case study projects to explain our design approaches. At this stage, I had included brief descriptions of 20 projects illustrating particular achievements in the practice and earmarked 5 case study projects for an extensive review, developing one project in more depth. The legacy of projects was still weighing heavily on me: there were so many stories to tell and so many different types of projects to choose from. Informal conversations with past staff members and colleagues substantiated my reading about office culture, leadership style, and learning opportunities, but were also part of providing a historic overview. I realized that my research priorities had to shift and that with it, it was necessary to move the focus of the research towards a more personal, present-day perspective.

In my third year of research, I experienced a breakthrough when tackling the chapter on design approaches and methods, when I realized that this was the key to understanding how the architectural outcomes of our ideas develop. This chapter proved to be the most complex topic to decode and present. I had been encouraged to define the seminal moments for one of the case study projects, in order to explain our creative design process. This was the first step in identifying those decisions and actions that make projects happen. The mapping exposed different types of moments that shaped the process. These included critical design decisions and presentations, internal-office choices concerning the assemblage of the team, insights gained from public participation and workshops, and political decisions and procedural/ bureaucratic considerations.

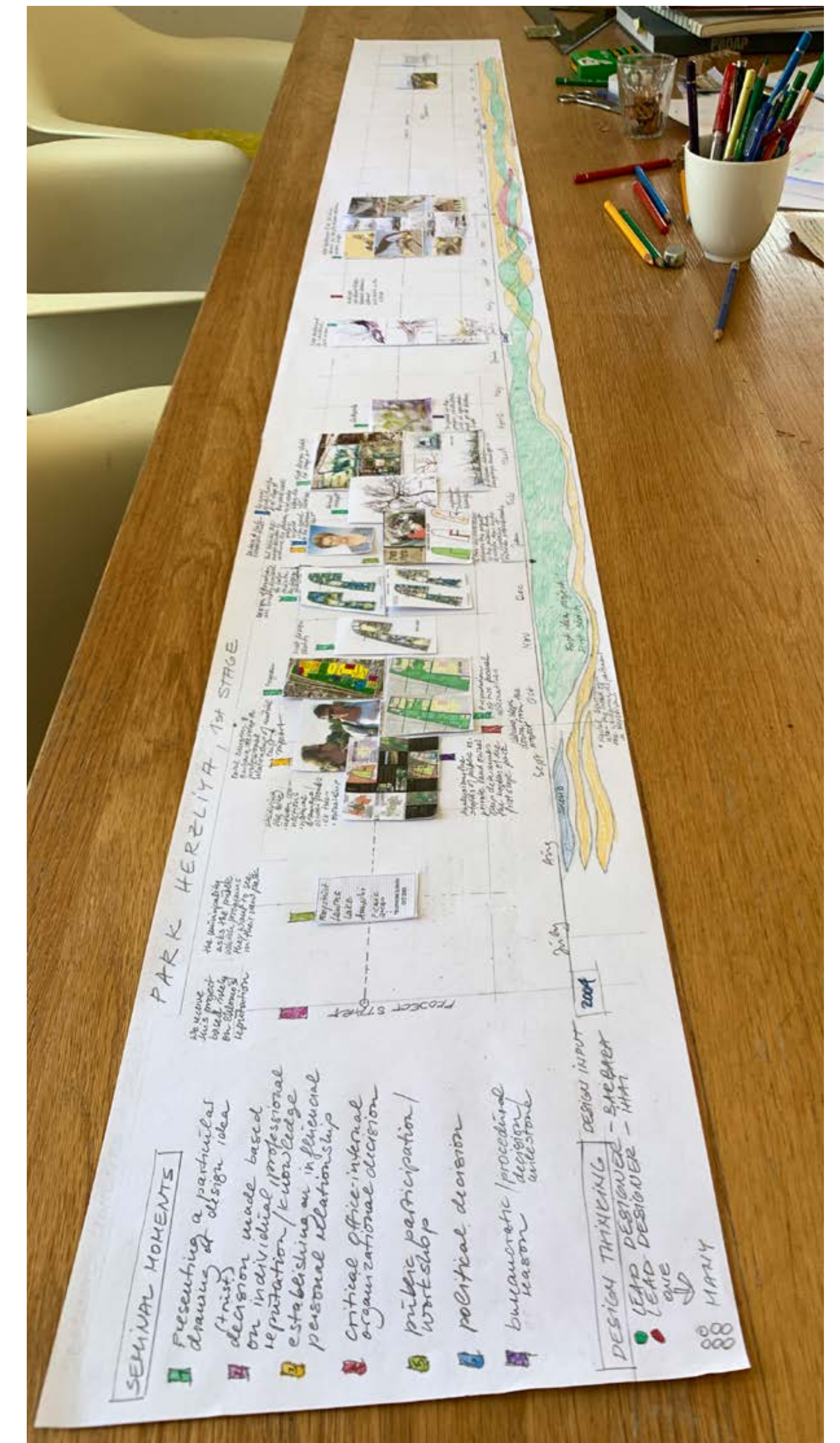


Fig. 12. Mapping of seminal moments by type and relative importance throughout the different planning phases. Case study: Park Herzliya

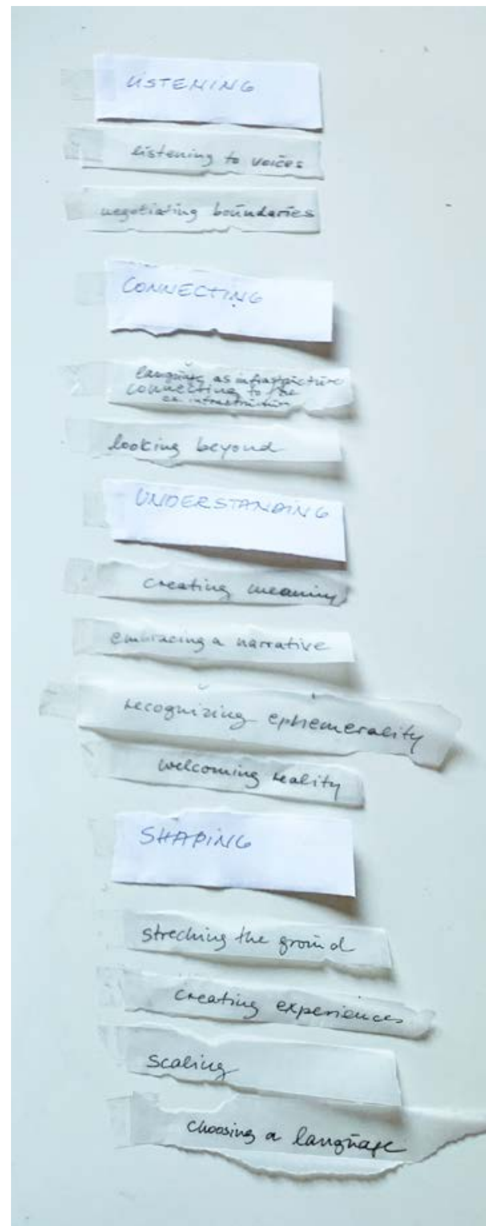


Fig. 13. Arranging our modes of design according to different periods of creative engagement

The next step was to formulate the office-specific constructs and ideas that guide our design thinking. Providing a comprehensive description of the activities that deliver designs is a challenge for any designer. Finding the right method to describe our creative working process became a journey including reviewing established frameworks of design thinking and methodologies as well as researching theories and reflecting on our work and that of others.[03] It proved difficult to frame a new viewpoint from that of previous categorizations formulated by ourselves and others and to focus on today's way of designing. In search of a framework to express our modes of design, I studied and compared the writings of three peer practitioners and landscape architects, Marti Franch, Joao Nunez and Anton James. (Franch, 2015; James, 2013; Silva, 2010).[04]This investigation was key to identifying individual, and general approaches shared by all of us, helping me spell out our intrinsic design thinking. The outcome of this exploration was a tentative compilation of our modes of design, expressed within five periods of listening, connecting, understanding, shaping and reflecting, and the description of explicit design actions associated with each design period, illustrated through examples from seminal projects.

Applying these modes of design to case study projects for comparison was the next step. Starting the process by developing a diagram seemed the obvious choice, yet the exact method was unclear. How could a relationship diagram which typically presents quantitative information as part of its graphic setup express qualitative values? For example, the listening process for the design of an archaeological park is different from that of a public consultation process for an urban park design. For both projects, 'listening to different voices' would be graphically shown as an important aspect of the design process, but the project-specific type of 'listening' would not be expressed at all. Many architectural relationship diagrams tend to be visually intriguing, yet hard to understand. Anton James' 'looping diagrams', recording the 'imaginative mentors' of his projects (James, 2013), and Charles Eames' famous design process diagram of 1969 served as inspiring examples.[05] Both integrate project-specific verbal information within the diagram's generic graphic format, allowing for qualitative evaluation of particular aspects of the design and comparison with other projects. Their approaches helped me develop a diagram that lists a project's special design considerations according to our periods of designing, expressing the fact that the outline of our creative design process is similar for each project, but that the considerations and actions are not. This also informed the approach to the case study project presentation: moving beyond project descriptions to showing and reflecting on the full design and implementation process according to design periods.

03. I re-read the classics as well as temporary writings on design theory and methods (Baljon, 1992) (Corner & Bick Hirsch, 2014) (Girot & Imhof, 2017) (McHarg, 1971) (Swaffield, 2002) (Treib, 1993) (Waldheim, 2006). What proved to be most helpful was the review of other practitioner's efforts to define their creative work processes (Franch, 2015) (James, 2013) (Orff, 2016) (Silva, 2010) (Vogt, 2015).

04. I reviewed Marti Franch's 'Review of Candidature' document produced for PRS.4 as part of his PhD studies at RMIT, Anton James' Phd thesis, and Joao Nunez' thoughts on the topic expressed in the monograph about PROAP's work, published in 2010.

05. Eames prepared this diagram for an exhibition held in Paris titled 'What is Design?'

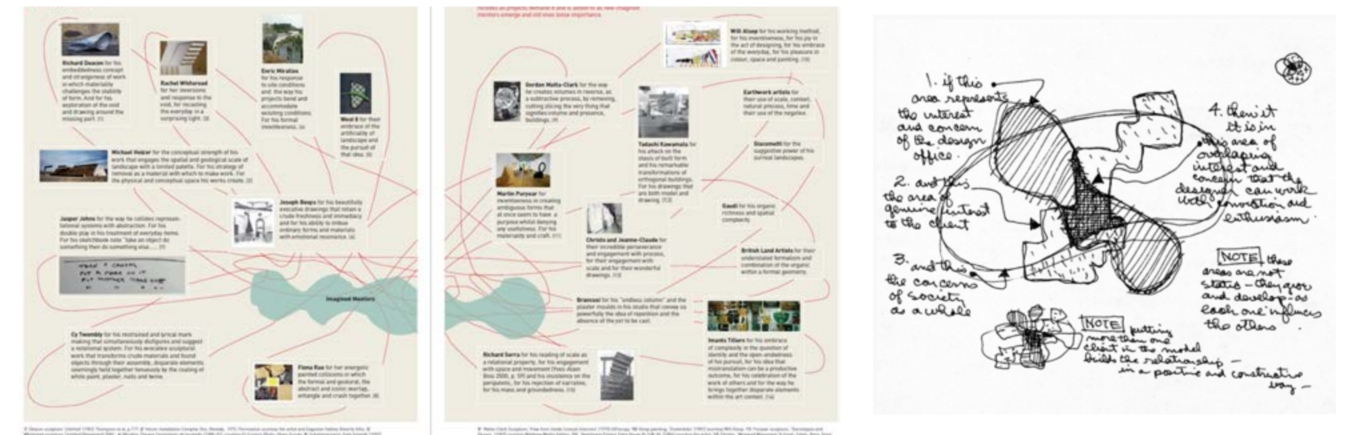


Fig. 14. Inspirational design diagrams by Anton James (left) and Charles Eames (right)

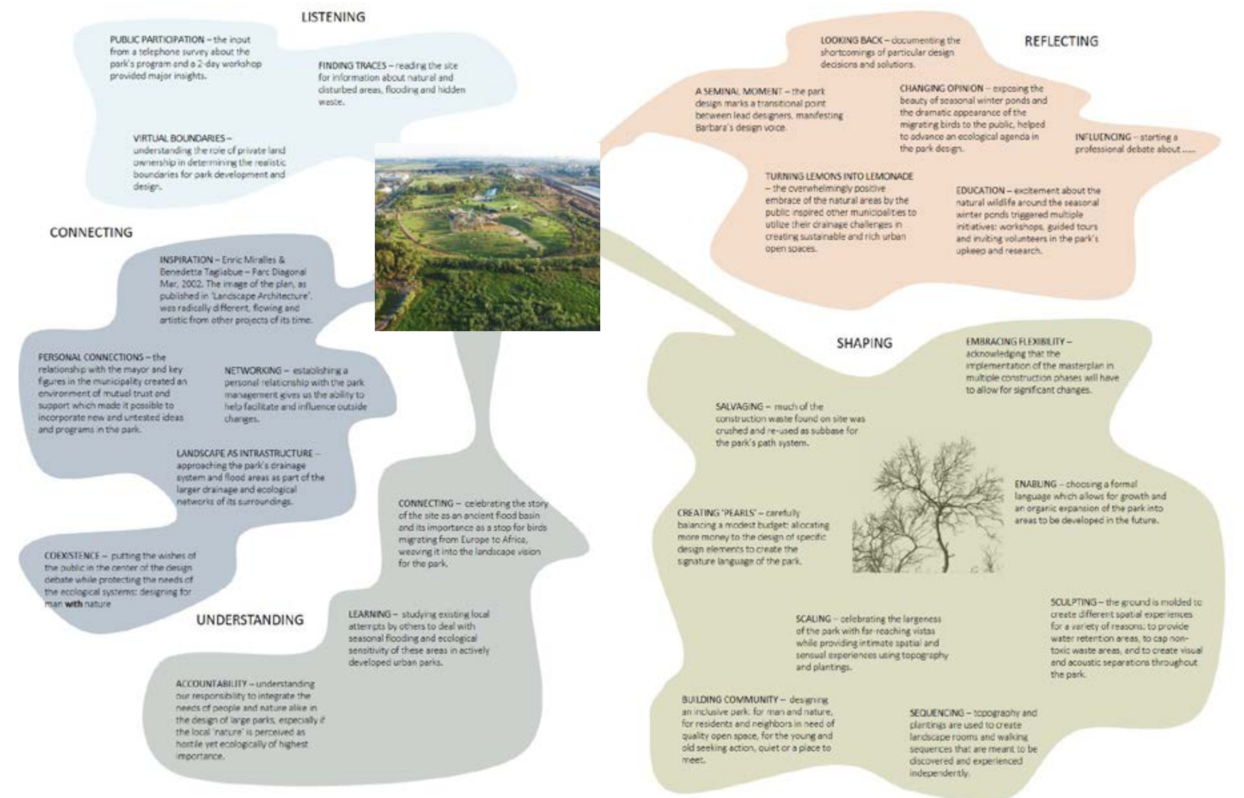


Fig. 15. Prototype of the project diagram designed to expose project-specific considerations corresponding to the five stages of listening, understanding, shaping, and reflecting. In the final version, listening and connecting merged into one. Case study: Park Herzliya

The thesis draft submitted for the third milestone review provided a full outline of the research around the principal topics of situating the practice within its local setting, defining who we are, the way we create, the discussion of knowledge and mentoring, and the presentation of case study projects. I felt that the research was moving in the right direction, but the panel critics pointed rightly to a lack of critical reflection and precision in the writing. The discipline required in compiling the final document, writing and rewriting thoughts almost every day, and the regular input I received from my supervisors, proved instrumental in finding the right voice and contents of my thesis. Disconnected pieces of the research fell into place while bringing personal understanding to the program's method of evolving our practice and explaining our mastery through the research in the medium of design: the discovery of our mental space, the revelation of transformative triggers, threshold moments, and self-interrogation (Schaik & Johnson, 2011). I finally understood RMIT's research methodology, although its phraseology and vocabulary remain foreign to my language and way of thinking.

This investigation has been a constant path of revelation. I learned to look beyond our achievements and critically review the actual state of our design and teaching processes. I found many treasures in the archive, hidden from our collective memory. The material revealed the source of the core beliefs that define our professional positions in light of today's manifold challenges. On the most personal level, peeling away the layers of our organizational knowledge has provided me with a sense of clarity about where I am in my professional life. Many of us start in the profession by working for others, absorbing knowledge, and defending our design ideas with the chutzpah of beginners. With growing confidence in our abilities, our desire to control the design process and outcomes becomes part of proving our worth as designers. Typically, in our mid-career stage, we realize the advantages of delegating tasks and enjoy the contributions of others in the production process. This research has helped me reach what I consider now the final and most satisfying stage of my professional development: learning how to be the creative link without blocking the innovative contributions of others, letting go of control in favor of directing the outcome through creative discourse. I had witnessed this ability in Shlomo but had not yet figured out how to align this way of creating with my more controlling style of designing. I experience now the positive results of this new approach; it is a little unsettling when I see how well designs are being developed by others, but very much welcomed when considering the future of the practice.

At the very end of my research, I looked at Karin Helms's film about Michel Corajoud's nine-step design process methodology which he recorded in 'Letter to the Students in landscape architecture' (2000) upon retiring as the director of the ENSP at Versailles (Learning from Michel Corajoud, 2016). This proposition offers a comprehensive list of actions that should guide the creative design process of landscape projects. I had not been familiar with his writings, and to the best of my knowledge, Shlomo did not know Corajoud or his work. The exactness of Corajoud's language and message is extremely powerful and I envy the students who received his wisdom early on in their careers. In addition, I was astounded and a little rattled by how many of his ideas resonate with ours. It was time to remind myself that the aim of RMIT's practice-based research is about discovering, sharing, and exchanging personal knowledge with others, and to compile an inventory of the many ways of exploring design.

02 THE PRACTICE

02.01 General Background and Local Context
02.02 Office Ethos

Evolving Legacy: An Exploratory Path into Uncovering and Sustaining a Practice's Accumulated Knowledge

We must acknowledge the fact that there isn't one landscape, but many overlapping ones.
Our challenge is to be politically conscious when we design, since even a tree is not always as innocent as it seems.

Yael Bar Maor, Landscape Architect (2009, web)

02.01 General Background and Local Context

"Shlomo is the most shining example of what can happen when a person works locally. He's the original practitioner of acting locally and thinking globally". (Schwartz, 2010, p. 57)

The first task in building a framework for understanding creative work is to establish its general context. This chapter outlines the background of the practice and the local context of its work environment. It reveals how the designers and their creative outlook developed over time and how the practice was molded by the specific conditions in Israel.

The office of Shlomo Aronson Architects, with its core business in landscape architecture, is an interdisciplinary office with a tradition of creating a wide variety of projects with a strong environmental and aesthetic agenda. It was founded in 1969 by landscape architect Shlomo Aronson, who retired in 2011 and passed away in 2018. Today the practice is led by architect Ittai Aronson, who joined the office in 2004, and by myself, after I first entered the office as a student in 1984. All three past and present partners are family-related: father, son, and daughter-in-law. In 1967, Shlomo Aronson returned to Israel to settle in Jerusalem after finishing his studies in America via a short stopover working in England. He started the practice right after the Six-Day War during a period of national optimism and extensive development. There was great international interest in the country's socialist experiment at this time, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem after the reunification of the city under Israeli rule caught the attention of many in the field of urban design and architecture (Kutcher, 1973). From its outset, the practice worked mainly for the public sector [06], with many projects initiated by government agencies, regional councils, and municipalities as part of the planning needs for housing, infrastructure, and open spaces for a fast-growing population. Other projects came as a reaction to the ensuing massive building activity; the need to protect Israel's natural, mostly fragile environments, initiated a number of landscape studies and statutory plans. Some of these projects were stopped in the initial design phases, others went all the way from the statutory planning phase to full construction and completion. The office's work portfolio has always been characterized by great project diversity, with changing focus on particular project types: more archaeological and national parks between 1970-1985, with museums and university campuses starting in the 1990s as a result of the practice's growing design reputation, and a large number of urban planning projects and large park designs since 2010 due to Israel's increased effort to provide housing and recreational outdoor spaces for its fast-growing population. To date, the office has about 600 documented projects.

Shlomo Aronson Architects is fundamentally a local practice. Our work environment is defined by inadequate planning time, low project budgets, low construction standards and techniques, sub-standard maintenance, political pressures, and the special circumstances characterizing working in a contested land – all within a unique cultural and natural environment. Over the years there were sporadic ventures into working abroad, yet most of our past and present projects are located in Israel.[07] Now and then we felt envious of those practices who work extensively abroad, exploring different cultures, design opportunities, and design conditions. However, with time we realized that working locally provides us with the unique opportunity to operate within cultural and natural environs that are familiar to us, where we base our designs on the accumulated knowledge within the practice and on a wide range of information available from peers and local experts. When talking to colleagues abroad, we understood that their reasons for working outside their country were motivated not only by choice, but at times by the necessity to find work in other geographic locations. Especially after the global economic crisis of 2008, we learned to appreciate the special economic conditions of Israel which enabled most architectural firms to recover quickly and to sustain their practices. Public investment in infrastructure and housing during economic downturns proved instrumental to sustaining the building sector, and the economy at large.

Climatically, Israel's landscapes stretch over three distinct climatic zones: Mediterranean, semi-arid and arid. Israel's average annual rainfall varies widely from 30mm in the south on the Red Sea, to 1200 mm in the Northern Galilee. Israel's geomorphology and its general geographic location on botanical and climatic junctions are responsible for the country's rich biodiversity. Roughly half of Israel's population of 9.1 million people is concentrated within the Tel Aviv metropolitan area and the Greater Jerusalem area, with vast, sparsely populated areas in the Negev Desert. Israel is today a multi-ethnic society with a Jewish majority.[08] With a current population growth rate of 2.0%, Israel is expected to have expanded its population by 70% over the next 26 years to reach 15 million by 2048 (Sadeh, 2018). This high growth rate accounts for Israel's constant and real demand for new housing, infrastructure, and recreational open spaces. Finding the balance between providing for this growth and doing so in a sustainable and egalitarian way while protecting the country's natural ecosystems will be a big test for Israel's planning authorities and professionals. All this exists within or in relationship to the many ongoing challenges arising from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Fig. 16. Outline of Israel according to the 1949 Armistice border. Satellite image of the region. Source: Google maps

Working locally requires a heightened sensitivity to all factors influencing the locale, raising questions about our social, ethical, cultural, political, and environmental responsibilities in our work. Israel's history goes back thousands of years, with multitudes of different ethnic groups settling, conquering, and/or occupying the country, with traces of multiple cultures to be found throughout the entire region. Planning is inherently a political act involving the change of land. In our work, we have to constantly consider the past, the status-quo, and the future needs of all factions of Israel's multi-ethnic population and the environment. Which issue deserves the most attention in any given project? Which layer of the past are we choosing to expose? Whose cultural narrative will be emphasized in the design? In which ways are we referencing the past? Which borders do we refer to, which are off-limits to us? How do we incorporate or reinterpret different cultural elements in our modern-day projects? Looking back at 50 years of practice, professional attitudes and political realities have changed, and it is important to review projects within the framework of their time. The emphasis of local context in our work has been praised but also judged as naïve, patronizing, romanticizing, nostalgic, promoting orientalism (Zandberg, 2015), and criticized for using symbols of cultural/ political importance outside what is deemed their politically correct employment (Zandberg, 2013). Advocating the concept

06. The Ministries of Housing, Defense, Interior, and Transportation; the National Transport Infrastructure Company; Israel Railways; the Israel Land Authority; JNF; municipalities; regional councils; the Jewish National Fund; the army; the Antiquities Authority; the Israel Nature and Parks Authority; and others.

07. Office projects abroad: 1975 Iran: Arya Mehr, National Botanical Garden (design); 1981 Canada: Montreal EXPO, Jerusalem garden and pavilion (built); 1990 Japan: Expo 90, Osaka, the Israeli Garden (built); 1991 Italy: La Selva master plan for recreation and tourism (design); 1992 Egypt: Suma Bay master plan for a resort development on the Red Sea (design); 1999 China: EXPO 99, the Israeli Garden; 2001 USA: Competition entry for Wurster Hall Courtyard, Berkeley University.

08. In 2020, Jews accounted for 73.9% of the population, Arabs for 21.1%, and others for 5%. (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2020)

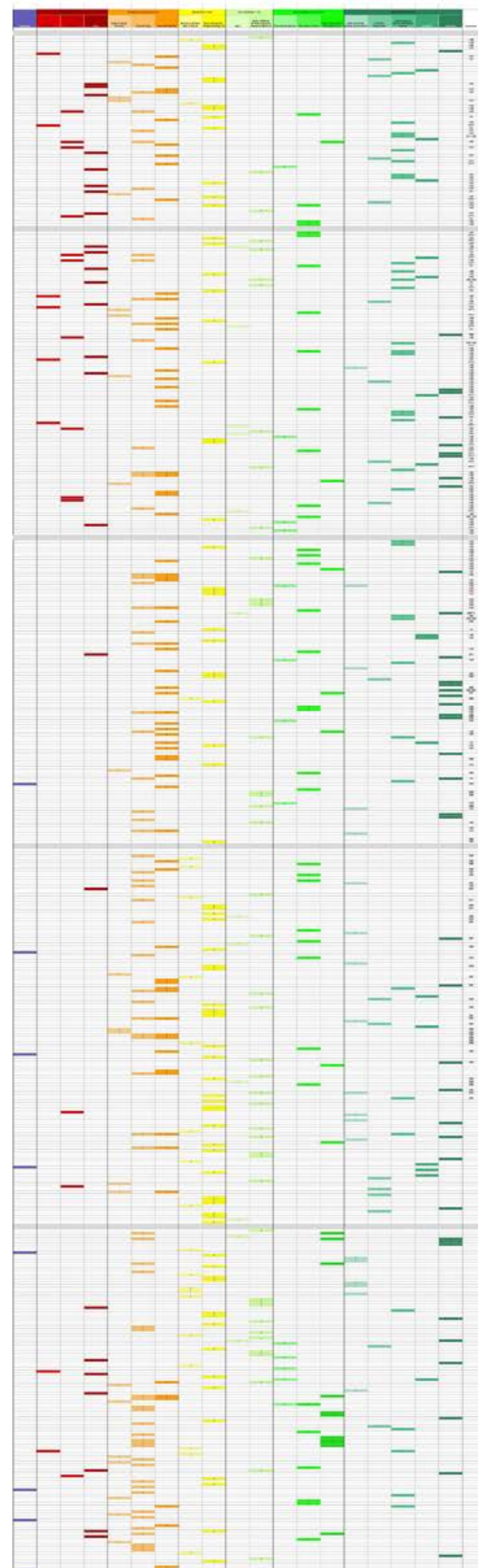


Fig. 17. List of all recorded office projects organized by category and year of completion

09. Warren Buffett's quote *"It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. If you think about that, you'll do things differently,"* reflects the practice's experiences. (Buffett, n.d.)

10. We published a new office brochure which was sent to all our public clients, showing recently completed projects, with emphasis on Ittai's and my new role in the leadership of the office.

of local authenticity in today's world of global aesthetics and popular criticism requires us to constantly re-assess our professional values and beliefs.

Over the past 50 years, the practice has earned a local and international reputation, recognizing its contributions to the field of landscape architecture, and to society at large. Despite all the accolades and prizes attesting to Shlomo Aronson Architects as a leading practice, it is still worthwhile to talk about the fragile nature of reputation.[09] When looking at the reputation of a practice, one has to differentiate between the recognition received for built works and the evaluation of the practice within the professional community of clients and project managers in the present. The reputation of architects and landscape architects is composed of several factors: good designs, in-depth understanding of the political and administrative processes which make projects happen, leadership, and a good record of keeping time schedules and budgets. Award-winning or innovative projects attest to a practice's design excellence and potentially invite more clients. However, one project mishandled, especially in a small country like Israel where word gets around quickly, can cancel out the creative credit of previously acclaimed work. Around 2005, our practice became vulnerable during the time of Shlomo's failing health and the resulting change in leadership. The practice was seemingly at the height of its prime, with the management of the office still in Shlomo's hands, while Ittai and I were concentrating on the designs under our direct responsibility. Due to the effects of Shlomo's health situation, unknown to us but felt by our clients, several projects were suffering from neglect. We later learned that word was out that we had done fantastic work in the past but that our office was not delivering anymore. We finally took notice when much less new work was offered to us. It came as a shock and a wake-up call, and we took steps to announce to all existing and potential new clients that there were new leaders in place, who would continue the excellence the practice had been known for.[10] It took five years to reinstate trust in our abilities, not least by gaining new credit through projects designed and executed under my and Ittai's leadership. There are so many potential factors impacting the reputation of a practice: has the office grown too big to be looking for design innovation? Are the lead designers available enough to apply their personal design expertise to all projects? Is the office too busy, can it handle more work? Is the office's design knowledge too general or too specialized to receive works in all realms of the profession? We operate in a small country where one's personal and professional integrity is widely known. We experienced the fragility of reputation but learned that we will continue receiving challenging work if we maintain three things: a high standard of service, design excellence based on the practice's design record, and producing innovative designs.

The practice's wide variety of project types and clients is key to maintaining its financial stability by diversification of possible sources for new work. Israel has no tradition or law stipulating that public works must be awarded through competitions. About 70% of our work is awarded to us through contracts with standard fee agreements received by rotation, or through invited bidding processes[11], making the acquisition of new work easier for us. Many architects acknowledge their lack of interest in the administrative aspects of managing a business. The desire to unceasingly improve our designs at every stage of the creative process may appear

to conflict with considerations of profitability. In reality, it is the financial security of the business that gives us the freedom to invest in our creative work. In 2002, our practice experienced a crisis when our veteran office manager of 15 years retired. Help came through a suggestion by former staff member Yair Avigdor: based on the positive results in his own office he recommended hiring a newly formed start-up firm that would take over all administrational aspects of the business. Their fees seemed expensive at first but their basic argument made sense: 'Every hour you spend on design and supervision of the staff is a profitable hour, every hour you spend on writing proposals and fee collection is costing you.' They saved the practice and with time proved to be an incredible help in the profitable and smooth running of the office.[12]

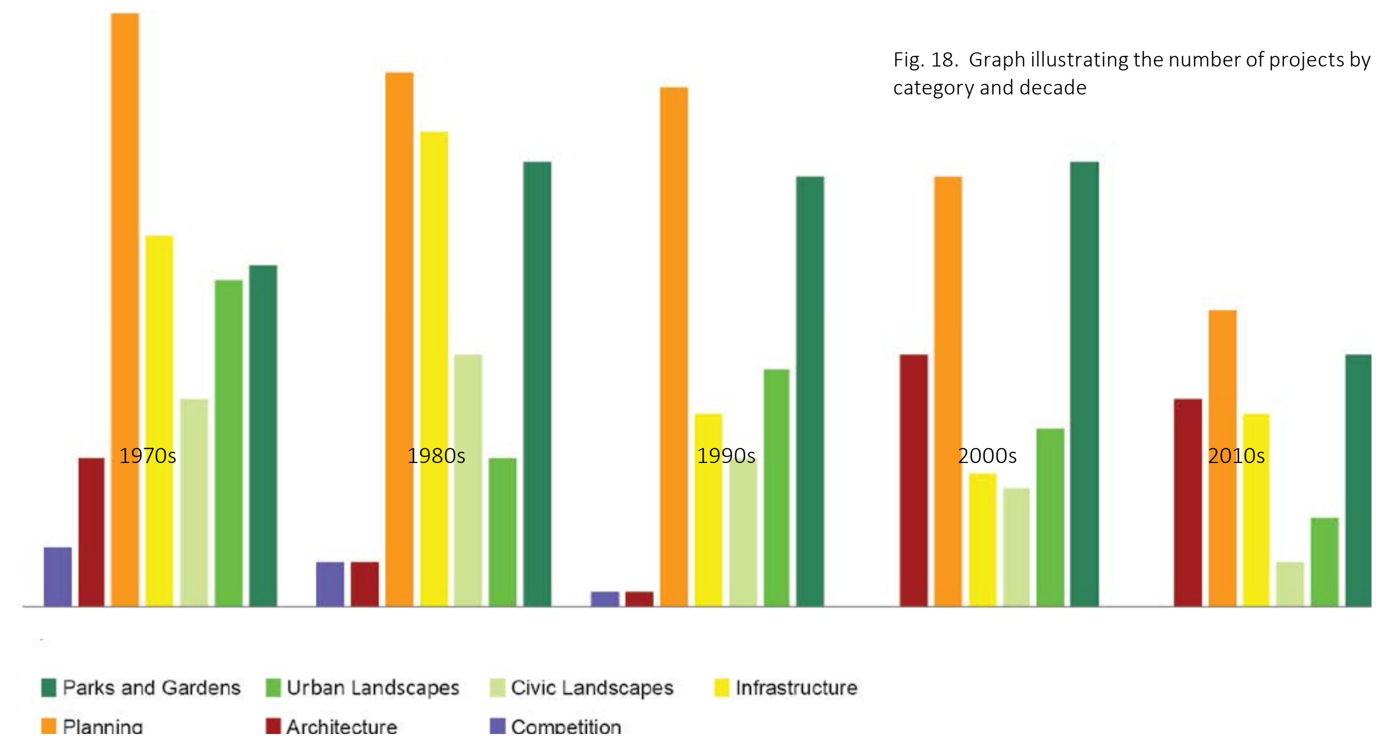


Fig. 18. Graph illustrating the number of projects by category and decade

11. All government agencies and ministries implement policies of awarding contracts to eligible offices as part of an automatic rotation, with the size of the project influenced by seniority, professional experience, and office size. Contracts for the planning of large infrastructure systems such as light rails and metro lines are awarded as part of public bidding procedures to planning teams that concentrate all necessary consultants under one leadership. The selection process considers the overall experience of all team members and their financial bid. Municipalities typically work with standard contract fees, awarding contracts in two ways: asking offices for a fee reduction, bestowing the project to the lowest bidder; or by inviting five to ten practices to participate in limited design competitions, awarding the job to the first prize winner. Judging is typically based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative criteria. Other projects use the fee schedule developed by the Israel Association of Architects and Urban Planners, typically applied with varying reductions.

12. Our practice was the fifth architectural practice that 'Precise' took on. Since then they expanded greatly, with branches in the US, England and Greece.

02.02 Office Ethos

Changing the environment responsibly, being accountable for the well-being of the public and the livelihood of our staff, and spending large amounts of public money are all actions that require us to adopt a clear position concerning our professional conduct. The need to reflect on this issue is part of the ethical dilemmas associated with our obligations to the public, the client, the profession, colleagues, the environment, and in regards to general issues of practice.[13] (Fisher, 2010). The following outlines our attitude toward dilemmas based on universally shared concerns, and those arising from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Before discussing the ethical predicaments shared by architects around the world, the special conditions of working in Israel need addressing. Practicing landscape architecture and architecture requires compromises to be negotiated when proposing design intentions, mitigating the impact of our projects on people and the environment, while representing the interests and values of all. In our particular working environment, it also includes setting the limits and physical borders which outline our work, and defining our position within the discourse on cultural appropriation of certain landscape elements. At times our compromises are questioned and criticized, by others and ourselves, and it is an aspect of our practice which we are aware of and for which we have to find answers for, one project at a time. Defining these compromises is one of the fundamental challenges we face: how to insert our professional and ethical positions into the design process.

The status of Israel as a contested land is part of the issue. While working in the occupied territories outside the Green Line [14] is today generally out of the question for us, we consciously crossed the line when planning a light rail system in East Jerusalem as part of bringing public transportation and public service to all Jerusalemites. Reviewing 50 years of practice has to be undertaken against the background of the country's development which has included: wars; Israel's on-going occupation of Palestinian Territories following the Six-Day-War of 1967; and the general political shifts that have brought about dramatic changes in attitudes towards land, the landscape, and specific landscape elements that have become symbols of cultural identity for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

During one of my presentations, a panel member asked me how it is to practice architecture in Israel. My spontaneous answer was 'not exceptional' because I was thinking about our every-day dealings with protecting the environment when planning and building projects for a fast-growing population, the professional reality shared by many other practitioners who work in places with similar conditions. The panel's irritation to my response was immediately palpable and I realized that I had been asked to refer to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in our work. Reflecting on the influence of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on a predominantly landscape architectural practice no doubt deserves a detailed answer.

Shlomo started his office in 1969 during a period of general optimism and political support for Israel by the Western World. Shlomo loved the natural landscapes of Israel, especially the desert. From the beginning, he identified the protection of Israel's natural and cultural landscapes as

13. In "Ethics for Architects," Fisher exposes the basic moral principles behind each dilemma by discussing it from different standpoints, making it a seminal study and recommended reading for established and aspiring architects and landscape architects alike.

14. *"The Green Line, (pre-)1967 border, or 1949 Armistice border, is the demarcation line set out in the 1949 Armistice Agreements between the armies of Israel and those of its neighbors (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria) after the 1948 Arab–Israeli War. It served as the de facto borders of the State of Israel from 1949 until the Six-Day War in 1967. […] Most commonly, the term was applied to the boundary between Jordan-controlled Jerusalem and the West Bank and Israel. The drawing of the Green Line superseded entirely the partition lines proposed and voted on by the United Nations in the Partition Plan of 1947 and which Israel had accepted in the Israeli Declaration of Independence. The Palestinian and Arab leaders had repeatedly rejected any permanent partition of Mandatory Palestine."* (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021)

one of his professional goals. Shlomo recognized the country's landscape as a palimpsest of the multiple cultures that shaped thousands of years of human settlement in the region. As such, he understood Israel's cultural landscapes as places that sometimes signify the achievements and values of one culture, while in other cases the accumulative contributions of multiple cultures carry meaning for many. He strived to protect and enhance the presence of these diverse landscapes holding values to Jews, Muslims, Christians and Druse. Later in his career, he advocated the recognition of landscape ensembles to protect landscape areas that didn't meet the criteria of nature reserves or national parks but hold great meaning as part of a collective or group-specific narrative. The landscape ensemble defining the visual corridor of the ancient road ascending to Jerusalem, today's main highway connecting Tel Aviv-Jaffa to the capital, is a prominent example. Every day, tens of thousands travel this historic road on their way to work, while millions of tourists experience this dramatic ascent as part of their travels around the country, or as a part of their spiritual journey visiting the Christian, Muslim and Jewish sites in the old city.

Shlomo employed landscape elements from these landscapes in his projects, believing in the universal local relevance of stone and traditional agriculture. From today's perspective, his beliefs are viewed by some as romantic and naïve. (Zandberg, 2015)

Nothing encapsulates the discussion around cultural identity and its ideological appropriation more than the olive tree. In a recent newspaper article explaining the reasons why the olive tree does not deserve to be Israel's national tree, Tomer Dekel recalls how the myth of olive groves as the arch-typical biblical landscape became part of the Zionist narrative, both representing ancient belonging and return to the land. (Dekel, 2021; Alon-Moses, 2020). The romantic visual resurrection of olive groves by painters of the early 20th century was in fact based on the agricultural landscape created by local Arab farmers in more recent times. It is also a fact that the cultivation of olive trees has been a central part of the local economy and landscape for thousands of years, substantiated by innumerous archaeological finds from different periods and cultures.

In recent years, the olive tree has become the symbol of Palestinian resistance, due to the criminal, yet mostly unpunished burning and cutting down of olive trees in the occupied territories by Israeli settlers who propagate messianic Judaism. These actions are particularly hurtful, causing great long-lasting financial damage to the livelihood of its Arab owners, and attacking their cultural values as farmers tending to often centuries-old trees. Seen from both the Palestinian and Israeli viewpoints, the olive tree became an inseparable part of the land's history and their respective claims to it. How does this knowledge translate into our professional use of olive trees? Are we to reject the olive tree as a symbol of ideological appropriation and political oppression, in fear of performing an act of politically incorrect behavior? Should we disregard the olive tree's most basic role as an ancient fruit tree species, very much part of contemporary commercial agriculture around the Mediterranean and modern agriculture in Israel? We believe that the answer to these questions has to be more nuanced and to relate both to the way we

Fig. 19. Recent photograph of olive and carob tree groves, located at the Nesharim interchange, planted originally as small trees sourced from tree nurseries

Fig. 20. Olive groves define the limits of the visitor area around one of the archaeological excavation sites in the Beit Gurvrin National Park

use olive trees in our designs and how these trees are sourced. In his projects around Jerusalem and the Judean Hills, Shlomo used olive tree plantings to enhance the existing agricultural landscape creating a link to, or continuation of, traditional farming patterns, a novel idea at the time. Today, we use young olive trees mostly in our infrastructure and transportation projects, grown for commercial use, as part of planting schemes with indigenous and agricultural species that do not require extended artificial irrigation and maintenance, integrating these large-scale interventions into their natural or agricultural surroundings. Our references are not limited to the events of the past 100 years and we don't believe that we should surrender the olive tree to ideology when it has been part of the region's landscape for many cultures, and for thousands of years. Excluding olive trees in landscape rehabilitation does not cancel out or provide an answer for societal and political wrongs committed.

The use of natural limestone is another disputed issue. In their article about a practice-led approach to reclaiming space and identity in Palestinian towns and villages through the regeneration of traditional cultural heritage, Golzari and Sharif offer the Palestinian perspective:

"It was not only the land that was contested; so too were the materials for building. Stone has ever since then become a political tool under Israeli occupation to create a sense of false identity and supposed 'roots' to the land: stone is thus both a subject and a cultural currency to be fought over." (Golzari & Sharif, 2011, p. 123)

Stone is the oldest and only traditional building material of consequence in the region, used since ancient times by changing empires and cultures like the Canaanites, Israelites, Romans, Crusaders, Mamluks, Arab Muslims, Ottomans, British, and local Palestinians. The rich built heritage from all these different periods attests to the strength and resilience of stone as an extremely long-lasting material, showing both the timelessness and trans-cultural use of local stone. Can any one of the country's past and present cultures lay claim to its original use?

That said, the economy of quarrying and building with stone raises significant concerns about sustainability and fair trade. Most of the local stone used in Israel is sourced from quarries in the occupied territories, representing the largest Palestinian export item to Israel. Quarrying stone is dangerous work and harmful to the environment; Israeli state regulations control imports to Israel, raising red flags about economic fairness (Elagraa, et al., 2014). In general, it is part of a widespread global problem, where great economic inequality exists between those who extract raw materials and manufacture finished products and those consuming them.

Fig. 21. Different sized natural stone pavers emphasize specific areas within the sunken courtyard, Yad Vashem, 2008

Our practice has a long history of using stone as part of the local context, embracing its history, durability, beauty, and versatility. Limestone from the highlands of the region and Kurkar stone from the ridges along the Mediterranean coastline are the traditional types of stone used for building.[15] As a part of Jerusalem's municipal law requires all buildings to be faced with limestone, (a law introduced during the British Mandate) many of our public projects in and around the city are designed with stone. We modify its use according to different types of projects: the stone language chosen for the open spaces at Yad Vashem is modern and

15. The use of Kurkar stone is today strictly regulated due to depleted sources.

refined, while in the Soreq Stream bed rehabilitation we rebuilt stone terraces according to ancient techniques that withstand the forces of flash floods. In a professional environment where low building standards are the norm, choosing local stone means getting good workmanship: the knowledge of how to work with stone is held by skilled Israeli Arabs and Palestinians who work for contractors in Israel. They perform almost all types of stone laying and cladding with local stone, knowing their craft and taking pride in it.

Fig. 22. In the Soreq stream bed rehabilitation, solid stones of different sizes were used for the thick walls lining the stream bed, to withstand enormous lateral water pressure during flood events, 2016

Outside the areas of Jerusalem and the Judean Hills, we use alternative concrete products as a modern and cost-effective alternative. Yet the question remains: is concrete a more sustainable and culturally sensitive alternative when most of the gravel for producing concrete comes from the same areas? Does a real sustainable alternative exist in a country that has no tradition or the possibility of working with wood, bricks or clay?

Practicing architecture, in particular landscape architecture, involves taking a position on political, social, and environmental issues concerning ownership, land use, and the consideration of physical, virtual and ideological borders. We live in a multi-cultural society, and for that reason, we avoid using nationalistic narratives in our work. However, we have no control over how different factions of society appropriate the meaning of our projects to fit their views. A good example of this is how the central garden of Israel's International Airport is branded by some as a garden representing the seven species mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, supporting views that aim to emphasize Israel's bond to the land while provoking criticism that associates the garden design with efforts to create a narrative for political ends:

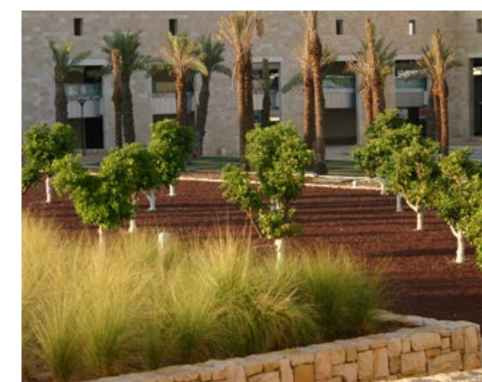


Fig. 23. The central garden in the Ben Gurion International Airport, 2004

"One of the most beautiful gardens in the airport is the Land of Israel Garden, located in front of Terminal 3. This garden pays tribute to Jewish tradition, with date palms, olive trees, grape vines, citrus trees and The Seven Species representing the land of Israel all planted in it." (Israel Airports Authority, 2021, p. website).

"[…] the State of Israel leverages landscaped space as an ideological tool in the struggle for control over symbolic expressions of national identity" (Weiss, 2010, p. 199).

In contrast, our design concept had been to create a 'preview' of the agricultural landscapes seen along the ascent to Jerusalem, meaningful to people of all different backgrounds and beliefs: an experience connecting all people arriving for the first time or returning home. It proves that there is no neutral ground in Israel. Our professional strategy is to be as inclusive as possible: we aspire to design projects that are accessible and meaningful to all segments of the public, irrespective of their cultural, religious, or social background. If all the public can enjoy the outcomes of our projects and have a better life for them, then our work is worthwhile and ethically defendable.

Considering the generic ethical dilemmas of professional practice adds many more issues to the list. Like medicine and law, architecture and landscape architecture are defined as liberal professions, emphasizing the importance of observing professional standards, including ethical conduct.[16] I started this research into the practice's ethos with a certain

16. All these professions are required to obtain professional licensure to practice, true for all OECD member countries, including Israel. Specific codes of ethics and conduct can be found in international and national professional organizations, e.g. the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA), the International Union of Architects (UIA), the Israeli Association of Landscape Architects (ISALA), the Association of Engineers and Architects in Israel (AEAI), with codes typically defined with respect to public interests, clients, the profession at large, and the environment.

pride in our policies: encouraging equal opportunities, social equality, fair pay, and just work hours;[17] socially, environmentally, and economically responsible designs, and fair competition toward colleagues.

Studying Thomas Fisher's list of 50 dilemmas of professional practice takes the reader on a path of progressive disillusionment about his or her professional conduct: it seems impossible to fully meet the extent of his definitions on all ethical issues. To mention only a few, Fisher talks about the obligation to consider in equal measure personal circumstances and professional contributions of staff members when lay-offs are required; to consider the working conditions of the people who supply building materials or work in the construction industry in our design choices; to defend public interests over the expressed wishes of clients, even if it might mean losing a project; and challenging environmental hypocrisy when distinguishing between the sustainability of projects and one's personal environmental footprint (Fisher, 2010).

17. Since 2015, young Austrian architect Chris Precht has been posing questions about professional conduct and ethical behavior as part of his popular Instagram account (233,000 followers, as of February 2020). In March 2019, to name just one example, Precht posted the following question: "unpaid internships - opportunity or exploitation?" eliciting 11,054 likes and 917 comments (as of Feb. 2020). The overwhelming number of responses confirmed and/or condemned the practice as a worldwide phenomenon, often led by large renowned firms, who exploit the status of their professional reputation to attract 'volunteers'. The post revealed more facets to the problem of unpaid work and ethical conduct: no appreciation for architects, creating work opportunities only for those who can afford to support themselves independently, internships as college requirements, unemployment as the alternative (India).

Evolving Legacy: An Exploratory Path into Uncovering and Sustaining a Practice's Accumulated Knowledge

In the design work itself, we are often confronted with conflicting interests when pursuing our creative vision vis-a-vis public interests. Do we truthfully always listen to what clients and the public ask us to deliver? This issue frequently surfaces when considering how to use the budget to meet the design brief. In a park project, for example, we might propose an elegant, yet expensive, design for shade structures to create a signature design element in the park when our clients are actually asking us to provide as much shade as possible, prioritizing the expanse of the shade over elegance. In the design for an urban space, we might be interested in using beautifully crafted street furniture imported from abroad when the ability of the maintenance staff to repair or replace them in the future is more than uncertain. Another example relates to today's popular and sometimes populist request by clients to design open spaces with multiple 'attractions'. How much do we give in to a client's aspirations, when her/his specific idea presents an interesting professional challenge for us, but its cost and benefit to the overall open space design are questionable, or simply not of lasting interest to the public? We see the answer to these predicaments not in the 'dumbing down' of our designs or in surrendering to every whim of our clients. We seek to define the balance between addressing the design brief and finding the creative concept for producing resilient designs that can be enjoyed by many and survive the test of time: 'being expansive rather than expensive' as Marti Franch put it in one of our conversations. This strategy is tested again and again, and uneasy compromises are part of the learning process. Other times they are simply part of accepting reality. On the other hand they raise the uncomfortable question of whether we are still challenging ourselves creatively: trying hard enough to create new and innovative designs and formal expressions in our efforts to conciliate between everybody and everything.

Reviewing these ethical conundrums reveals the extent of our professional responsibilities, and the need to adopt a clear position within global discussions about sustainability, social equality, and public interests. Being aware of these issues is the first step toward acting on them.

03 WHO WE ARE

03.01 The Lead Designers:
Shlomo Aronson, Barbara Aronson, Ittai Aronson
03.02 Design Philosophy

"… if you talk about something that I took with me [from the office] for life, it is the fact that you can be good and still succeed. […] First of all, it has to do with being a 'person', but also, practicing architecture in a way that derives straight from that, […] trying to rehabilitate. Rehabilitation has many other aspects. It's not only about the architecture, it's also about rehabilitating memories that people have with the country and with places where people were killed and wounded, and places that were destroyed."

Eitan Eden (2020, appendix, p.267), former worker, 1985-89

03.01 The Lead Designers: Shlomo Aronson, Barbara Aronson, Ittai Aronson

"You [Barbara] asked me before about the change between the original Aronson and the next generation, your generation. I think that the original Aronson went through several stages. It was an office that every 10 years had a very different focus, so in a way I think that the developments of Barbara and Ittai are another stage, although it's a big jump. The previous transitions were more moderate and more of a continuation. Let's say, in history we speak about processes of change and processes of continuity. So, in the first 35 years the office developed with continuity, with minor changes of focus. And then, when you and Ittai took over, it was a process of change with continuity." Nurit Lissovsky (2020, appendix, p.289)

It is one of the premises of this study that the presentation of the lead designers' creative backstory forms an important link to the understanding of the practice as a whole, and its design philosophy in particular. This chapter explores the transformative triggers and influences on the three past and present partners/lead designers, and by extension on the practice. It discusses the impact of role models in their personal lives and during their professional education, inspiring encounters with peers, and influences gained from prominent theoretical works or projects on their respective understanding of the profession. Each lead designer developed their own personal design approaches and formal preferences. Shlomo pursued his studies abroad and worked for Lawrence Halprin in America, before starting his business back in Israel. By contrast, I left my native Germany and joined the office and the family after studies in Germany and the US; and Ittai chose to become an architect and built up his own practice before joining it with his father's. This amalgam of American, European, and Israeli design influences converged together and has sustained and expanded the fundamentally local practice of Shlomo Aronson Architects to this day. As members of one family, Shlomo, Ittai, and I have undoubtedly influenced each other profoundly. It appears to me now though that the basic set of beliefs and modes of design initiated by Shlomo grounded not only our individual talents but created the lasting foundations of the practice's design legacy.

Reflecting on what influenced our creative design thinking, Shlomo, Ittai, and I always mentioned people first, followed by experiences we gained at university, our first office, and works of theory and retrospectives. We recognize mentors and role models who were – or still are - professional icons, fellow designers, teachers, and family members, whose personality and knowledge inspired us. They challenged us to be curious, courageous, to strive for excellence, and to stay passionate about what we do. Our experiences at university marked the second step of creative expansion, providing us with the professional tools to practice our profession and very much laying the foundation of our specific interests and knowledge of architectural discourse. All three of us were lucky with our first place of employment, working in offices led by inspiring designers and learning about all the levels of engagement necessary to make a design reality. Probably because of the people we met and the education we received, we attach great importance to learning from past and present insights of others, and engaging in professional dialog with our peers and young staff.[19]

18. Designed for the Olympic games in 1972 by landscape architect Guenther Grzimek, with architects Behnisch & Partner and Frei Otto.

19. The office owns an extensive library pointing to the likely influence writings had on the partner's design thinking, starting with Shlomo: early editions of all the international architectural classics show that he kept in touch with what was happening beyond the bubble of Israel's professional realities, e.g. writings by Jane Jacobs, Lewis Mumford, Ian McHarg, Kevin Lynch, Anne Whiston Spirn, Lawrence Halprin, Gorden Cullen and Galen Cranz.

Influences gained at one point in our career often come back to us and re-enter our professional understandings. We collect information received from people, projects and written material in a similar way to the human sensory nervous system detects external stimuli. However, in contrast to the autonomous nervous system, our professional responses are not triggered consistently in the same way, as simple reactions to information received previously, but instead cause alterations to our understanding and responses at different times and places. Going back in time to remember my seminal experiences has revealed some new insights. Munich's Olympic Park [18] is one such example. I had visited and loved this park long before appreciating it professionally. It felt like a modern version of a 19th-century park with its sweeping lawns, beautiful trees and vistas over the lake; a landscape that created a calming background to the dramatic roof structures of the venues. How much its sophisticated formal concept of interweaving curvilinear paths, dramatic topography overlayed with a strict grid of trees left an imprint on my formal preferences became apparent to me only now. My connection with Shlomo is another good example: my initial admiration for him as an inspiring and outstanding human being and landscape architect developed toward the end of our collaboration into a more competitive relationship, with me being less responsive to his professional insights. Now, after my in-depth review of the practice's design archive, my appreciation for him is coming full circle: I am again learning from his professional versatility and straightforward approaches that guided his site-specific designs.

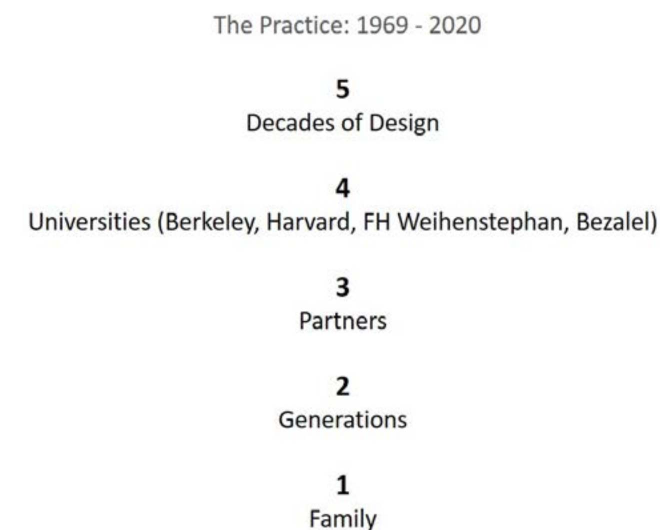


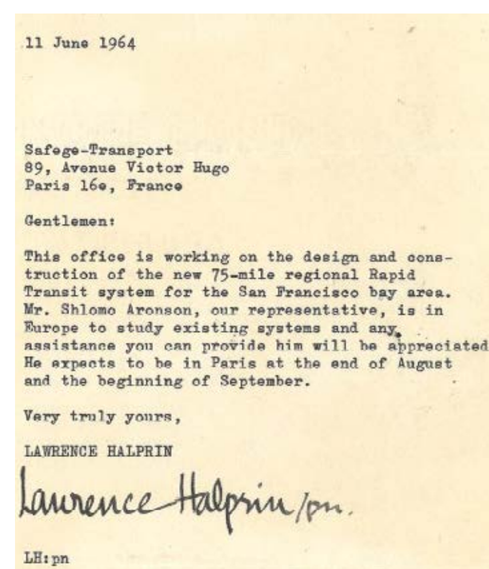
Fig. 24. Central characteristics of the lead designers and the practice

Shlomo Aronson

Fig. 25. Shlomo with a model for his final project at Berkeley, 1965

Shlomo Aronson was raised in Haifa, Israel, born to immigrants from Europe and America. He was named after his grandfather, who had immigrated in the 1920s to Israel from Kyiv via Berlin. As former Grand Rabbi of Kyiv, and later Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, his grandfather, and his family were part of the educated elite. Shlomo's uncle, Boris Aronson, who had immigrated from Europe to America and became an award-winning set designer on Broadway, was a lifelong role model to Shlomo and, at that time, the only other Aronson who chose an artistic profession. Shlomo's interest in history, literature and biblical texts can be traced back to his family roots. Shlomo grew up in a middle-class household with his father working for the Electric Corporation of Palestine. After high school, he joined 'the Schechterists' in Yodfat, a secular commune founded by Dr. Yosef Schechter, who introduced his followers to philosophical and religious texts in search of defining a new spiritual way of life. There, while pursuing his interest in wood carving, a fellow member of the group gave him the idea to apply for architecture studies at Berkeley.

Shlomo started his bachelor's degree in 1959. In his first semester, he attended a lecture by landscape architect Lawrence Halprin, whose passion for the landscape impressed him so deeply that he switched his major to landscape architecture. The time between 1963-1965 when working for Halprin created the foundation for Shlomo's outlook in the profession. He learned from him about designing on all scales while paying attention to the smallest details; about the power of integrating the natural environment in all types of projects; the advantages of working with teams of experts; and about being a leader rather than a follower. Halprin understood landscape architecture as an overview profession – rather than a specialized field – uniting social, ecological, and architectural concerns into defining design strategies for interventions in the environment. This and his particular involvement with infrastructure projects informed Shlomo's understanding of landscape architecture as an inter-disciplinary profession and of the landscape architect's obligation to engage in all situations where man and nature interconnect. The studio atmosphere and professional relationships formed during this time shaped his ideal for a creative work environment.



11 June 1964

Safege-Transport
89, Avenue Victor Hugo
Paris 16e, France

Gentlemen:

This office is working on the design and construction of the new 75-mile regional Rapid Transit system for the San Francisco bay area. Mr. Shlomo Aronson, our representative, is in Europe to study existing systems and any assistance you can provide him will be appreciated. He expects to be in Paris at the end of August and the beginning of September.

Very truly yours,

LAWRENCE HALPRIN

Lawrence Halprin/pn.

LH:pn

Fig. 26. Remarkably, Halprin chose to send Shlomo on a research trip to France, clearly trusting the abilities of such a young member of his team to compile a report about existing transportation systems in Europe, 1964

Shlomo admired Halprin's general and professional knowledge and his talent for talking extemporaneously about any topic, as well as his larger-than-life personality and self-confidence. He talked about Halprin's way of reading the landscape, walking around the sites of his projects, always interested in all aspects of the site, and curious about its past, capturing his on-site inspirations in quick sketches. Both shared a love for Israel which had developed for Halprin when living on a kibbutz for a year in the mid-1930s.[20] In time, Halprin became a friend and collaborator and returned to Israel on many occasions, joining forces with Shlomo on two projects: the study for the Tel Aviv Rapid Transit System (1973), and the design of the Haas Promenade in Jerusalem, both with Halprin as the lead designer (1986).

Shlomo was fortunate to experience the creative energies of Halprin's office in the 1960s, when projects like the Sea Ranch, the Lovejoy fountain park and Ghirardelli Square were on the drawing boards. Halprin's analysis methods of urban environments and the importance he placed

20. In the oral history about the Sea Ranch project, Halprin talks about how this experience sparked his social interests which would later influence his design considerations (TCLF, The Cultural Landscape Foundation, 2012).

on ecology, participatory processes and organizational thinking must have been a strong part of Shlomo's experiences.[21] In his most acclaimed projects of the 1960s and 1970s, Halprin used geometric forms expressed in concrete to interpret nature's poetic qualities, using abstraction as a tool to realize his Modernist artistic vision. (TCLF, The Cultural Landscape Foundation, 2012).[22] Abstraction of nature also became a central motif in Shlomo's work, albeit with different formal expression.

It is hard to assess particular influences from his studies at Berkeley university since no drawings and only one paper survive from this period. Shlomo did talk about Geraldine Knight Scott whose historical sense and 'Californian and European outlook' he admired (Aronson, 1998). Encouraged by Halprin, Shlomo went on to pursue his master's degree studies at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard.[23] He left for Boston with his future wife Sandra who would become the center of his private life and his professional support for the next 50 years.

Fig. 27. Graduation Day from Harvard, Shlomo with wife Sandra, 1966

No drawings survived from Shlomo's time at Harvard, but course papers provide insights into his design thinking at the time. For a course at M.I.T.'s Department of City and Regional Planning, Shlomo presented a highway criticism using Boston's Central Artery project as a case study. It shows his fascination with transportation projects, but more importantly, reveals his attitude toward planning infrastructure projects.[24] In conclusion, Shlomo voiced one of his lasting beliefs:

"We have to stop thinking about an urban highway merely as a large scale engineering work, like utility lines. We must see it rather as an important and dominant civic structure with all the responsibilities of such a structure not only to the immediate driver but to the city as a whole." (Aronson, 1965, p. 16)

Experiencing the scenic values of driving along the Blue Ridge Parkway left a lasting impression on him and he studied the landscape principles behind its road design. At the same time, he experienced and lamented the dramatic effects of Robert Moses freeway systems on the connectivity and functioning of New York City's open space system. While at Harvard, he studied Olmsted's work and especially valued Boston's Emerald Necklace for what it was then and still is now: a unique blue-green infrastructure project that created and interconnected a sequence of spectacular inner-city parks along the Muddy River. In his paper "The Future of Landscape Architecture", Shlomo advocated a 'total idea' approach, taking responsibility for everything that happens in the environment, mentioning Philip H. Lewis Jr.'s 'environmental corridor' concept, regional planning, the rise of computers, and aerial photographs, as possible new methods for analyzing the complexities of human settlement in all its forms (Aronson, 1966). Of his professors at Harvard, he always talked about the influence of Prof. Sekler, Prof. Akerman, and Prof. Newton on his understanding and life-long appreciation of architectural and landscape architectural history and theory, and classical architecture in particular.

After returning to Israel, his biggest influence became the rediscovery of the local landscape through the eyes of a planner. Shlomo had come back to Israel's internationally recognized modernist designs of the Zionist generation of architects and promptly rejected them. A romantic and classicist at heart, Shlomo appreciated the work of Israel's Modernists but

21. Halprin explained his design interests and approaches in several publications during the 1960s. 'Cities' (1963), 'Freeways' (1966), and 'The RSVP cycles; creative processes in the human environment' (1970), outlining his communication feedback system developed together with his wife Anna Halprin.

22. At Harvard, Halprin had learned from and socialized with some of Modernism's biggest icons in architecture and landscape architecture, talking about the influence architecture had on his thinking. Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer, Paul Rudolph, Philip Johnson, I.M.Pei, Christopher Tunnard, and subsequently worked for Thomas Church before starting his own practice (TCLF, The Cultural Landscape Foundation, 2012).

23. Possibly based on what Halprin described as his 'wonderful experiences'. (TCLF, The Cultural Landscape Foundation, 2012) there *"[...] I hope any educational system would ever do, that is, to install in me the love of doing what it is that you are gonna do for the rest of your life. That's what I got out of Harvard."* In turn, Shlomo described his own time at Harvard as a most formative experience and convinced me to go study there as well, making me the third person to agree with Halprin's assessment of the Harvard GSD.

24. His criticism referred to the socio-economic/ environmental and architectural problems of such an urban intervention, further on elaborating on the evaluation criteria and possible actions to remedy negative impacts (conscientiously excluding the driver's experience of the highway itself): impact upon the city grid, topography, views, structural appearance, what happens under the freeway, pedestrian circulation and architectural details.

searched for the sources of his creative expression elsewhere. He looked to the cultural history of the country and its landscapes for inspiration, studying local traditions and building knowledge. His deep appreciation of Israel's natural and cultural landscapes and his knowledge of the past made it possible for him to navigate politics and planning policies when merging his newly acquired ideas from abroad with the realities of Israel at the beginning of the 1970s. Working with archaeologists, geographers and architects expanded his field of expertise. In his work, Shlomo combined diverse influences in his creative approach, often choosing a classical formal language for the built elements while following the topological aspects of the site when designing the overall structure of paths and plantings, in the sense of Christophe Girot's approach to landscape planning.[25] (Girot & Imhof, 2017). Prominent examples are the Sherover Promenade (1989), Suzanne Dellal Dance and Theater Plaza (1989), Kreitman Plaza (1994), and the South Beach promenade in Eilat (1999).

In general, Shlomo cited 'Masters from the Past' as his community of practice: whether they were unknown builders from the Nabatean, Roman, Turkish, or local Palestinian culture. Human presence in the Middle East had been dependent on understanding the local climate and on the manipulation of all available natural water sources for agriculture and in daily life for thousands of years. The practice's understanding of local sustainability started there: learning from traditional building techniques and ancient water harvesting and retention methods. Shlomo also loved the pastoral and picturesque landscapes of North America and England, and he greatly admired Capability Brown and Frederick Law Olmsted, professional masters from the more recent past. The design language of the English gardens of the 18th century and the American public parks of the 19th century permeated many of his national park designs. Olmsted's holistic view of landscapes as natural systems, his advocacy for the conservation of historical or exceptional natural landscapes, and the protection of natural resources resonated with Shlomo's concern for the preservation of Israel's cultural and natural landscapes.

Of Shlomo's contemporaries and international colleagues, he most admired Peter Walker and Laurie Olin for the consistent design excellence of their work. Shlomo was deeply impressed by sculptor Isamu Noguchi. Noguchi's design for the sculpture garden of the Israel Museum in Jerusalem represented for Shlomo a timeless masterpiece, using topography and walls to create a powerful landscape full of sculptural moments, engaging the landscape beyond as the perfect setting to offset the Modernist exhibits of the art collection. Of his colleagues in Israel, Shlomo valued the pioneering works of landscape architects Lipa Yahalom and Dan Zur; he felt great professional affinity to architects Arieh Dvir, Shamai Assif, and geographer Arie Shachar, all of whom shared with Shlomo an enormous love and knowledge of the country. Jerusalem-based architects David Resnick, Gobi Kertesz, Arieh Rachamimov, as well as Moshe Safdie, were valued collaborators and friends. During the later years of his career, Shlomo sustained an open dialog with colleagues and friends at home and abroad, learning from others while sharing the insights of a landscape architect, a 'Southerner',[26] who had spent a lifetime working in dry and challenging conditions. This group included Carl Steinitz, Martha Schwartz, Peter Walker, Mario Schjetnan and Moti Kaplan and Gideon Sarig in Israel.

25. *"Topology, in the sense of landscape architecture, is not only about descriptive geometry, it pays greater attention to the making and modelling of ground surfaces leading to innovative topographies. Topology is about the making of a landscape and its intrinsic beauty, it therefore requires a deep poetic and aesthetic engagement on part of the designer."* (Girot, n.d.)

26. Marti Franch points to the lack of documentation available 20 years ago about the work of landscape architects practicing in dry climates, of 'Southerners' from Meditteranean countries, Australia or Africa. (Franch, 2021)

Barbara Aronson

Similar to how Shlomo found his way to landscape architecture, my path toward the profession also came about by the accidental intervention of outsiders.[27] I started my four-year bachelor's degree at the FH Weihenstephan in 1982. The emphasis in our practice-oriented studies was about learning from applied and empirical data, acquiring technical skillsets, and becoming 'competent' designers, with little opportunity to develop complex design schemes. Freehand drawing and drafting were an integral part of our syllabus and were developed further during excursions to other European countries. Ecology was the trend of the 80s in Germany: from cherishing whole wheat noodles, eating muesli, voting Green, to seriously studying the subject as part of our degree. I left school with in-depth knowledge in botany, principles of landscape planning and ecology, and an understanding of building materials used in landscape design, all with an emphasis on the local landscape.

The internship at Shlomo Aronson Architects in 1984, halfway through my studies, was a seminal experience. There were many reasons for this: the enormous scale of many projects, the level of design explorations and thinking that went into them, and the generosity of people who shared their thoughts and ideas. It was a fun place to be. The pinnacle was meeting Shlomo, his associate Judy Green, and Lawrence Halprin, all of whom embodied in the most inspiring way what it meant to be a landscape architect with a clear creative agenda. At that time, work on the Haas Promenade in Jerusalem was in full swing. I remember Halprin's visits in the office, everybody being in awe, and I had never even heard of him! The three of them let me take part in their design sessions, asking me to draw a fast wall elevation or detail for their discussions. A ten-meter-long mock-up of the full promenade section was built on-site to help make final decisions about general proportions and different types of stone dressing. This showed the level of perfection that they wanted to achieve. I was most impressed by the magnanimity of Halprin and Shlomo: relating to everybody on eye level, always sharing their insights with others. I was fortunate enough to spend several afternoons with Judy and Halprin walking around the Old City of Jerusalem, admiring their knowledge of history and architecture. The internship made clear to me what I was missing in my studies: learning how to approach design conceptually. For my final project at Weihenstephan, I asked special permission to undertake a research thesis instead of a design project. The research topic, "A Comparative Study of Theory and Practice in Postmodern Architecture and Landscape Architecture," opened up a whole new world of thinking about design. My most influential read was probably Robert Venturi's "Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture", with his call for a pluralistic approach while respecting the existing, offering a radically new alternative to Modernism, which was loathed at the time. His ideas seemed to me particularly relevant to landscape architecture:

"I am for richness of meaning rather than clarity of meaning; for the implicit function as well as the explicit function. I prefer "both-and" to "either-or," black and white, and sometimes gray, to black or white. A valid architecture evokes many levels of meaning and combinations of focus: its space and its elements become readable and workable in several ways at once" (Venturi, 1977, p. 16).

Fig. 28. Final thesis, 1987

27. From early childhood, I was interested in plants and gardening, yet I had never considered pursuing these interests as part of a profession until a friend introduced me to the subject of horticulture three months before our high school graduation. All of a sudden, I realized that working with plants was not limited to the hard work of gardeners. I abandoned my plans to become a school teacher and applied instead for horticulture studies at the FH Weihenstephan. It was during my six-week mandatory internship before commencing my studies that someone there suggested switching to landscape architecture, a field that in his opinion offered a wider range of interests and work opportunities. Luckily for me, I recognized good advice when it presented itself, and promptly changed my study subject.

As part of my research, I discovered the works of Louis Le Roy, Dieter Kienast, and Bernard Lassus, each in his own way developing new aesthetics for landscape design with special concern for ecology, self-determination of nature, art, minimalism, design excellence, and choreography of spaces.

Shlomo had left me an open invitation to re-join the office and after graduating in 1987 I returned to Israel and the practice. I spent the next two years absorbing design knowledge, but also realized my limitations as a designer. I was lacking the tools to incorporate architecture in my design work, and had little understanding of how to develop a comprehensive idea for large-scale projects. Shlomo and Judy encouraged me to pursue a master's degree in the States, recommending Harvard and Berkeley.[28] I left Israel with the goal of studying subjects that I had little or no knowledge about: architecture, urban design, and computers. The time spent in Israel was influential on my future in more than one way: Shlomo's oldest son Ittai and I had started dating and he joined me for a while in the States before pursuing his studies back in Israel. We had no idea that we would end up married with three kids and running an office together.

The studies at Harvard's Graduate School of Design were a revelation about what learning could be like. The eye-to-eye teaching style of the professors created enthusiasm to engage with the vast amount of knowledge available to be discovered. For the first time in my life, I felt that I was studying for myself, not because it was a requirement. The courses I took with Bill Mitchell, Stephen Ervin, Mirka Benes, Elisabeth Meyer, and Carl Steinitz, have stayed with me to this day. Critical thinking and rigorous discourse linked all subjects, whether it was about GIS landscape analysis, 3-D computer modeling, case study analysis of prominent landscape works, or evaluating the visual impact of projects. I remember in particular the lectures of two young women, Martha Schwartz and Zaha Hadid, inspiring role models who presented their novel and radically different design approaches at a time when architecture was completely dominated by men. My main motivation to pursue a second degree had been to learn how to conceptualize and think about design on all levels of scale and program. A key moment happened at the end of my first design studio: a friend asked me how I had decided on the formal language for my design for a botanical garden set within a vast forest site, and I realized that I had no right answer. Painfully for me to admit, he was pointing to the lack of a central idea in my design. I had produced colorful drawings with (now looking back on it) clear formal references to the work I had seen in Shlomo Aronson's office without developing an overall design concept. It showed that learning can happen with teachers and peers alike: pointing to the importance of receiving feedback from different sources and listening to it.

Fig. 29. Design of a botanical garden, first-semester design studio, 1989

Fig. 30. Graduation Day from Harvard University, with classmate Phoebe Crisman (MAUD), 1991

I left Harvard for a long trip out west to see the great landscapes of the national parks, and to visit contemporary projects of landscape architecture on the way. Jean Baudrillard's 'America' made the perfect travel literature. As a fellow European, I related to his concept of a 'hyperreal' America and experienced the same sensation of enormous contrasts. (Baudrillard, 1988). For me though, the scale, variety, and sublime beauty of the natural landscapes were truly original and they overshadowed all other impressions. Amongst the many wonderful places I visited, one man-made landscape stood out: George Hargreaves'

28. Again, I listened to good advice, applied, and was accepted two both. Shlomo's and Halprin's recommendation letters were probably instrumental in getting me accepted to both.

Byxbee Landfill Park in Palo Alto, which was nearing completion. The seemingly effortless way in which land art, ecology, topography, and path systems came together as one was magic and completely fresh. With almost no planting, it was raw and extremely refined at the same time, soft and poetic, and it left a deep impression on me. It felt like a true 'landscape answer' to open space design, complimentary to the equally exciting yet very architectural designs of Barcelona's new urban parks and open spaces which had been developed as part of the vast construction activities necessitated by the Olympic Games of 1992, and which had been published recently: there, it was exclusively architects cooperating with artists who created new types of plazas and urban open spaces with art installations, novel urban furnishings, and restrained use of plantings, all with great attention to detail (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 1987).

Before returning to Israel in 1994, I spent two years in Germany, working for Schreckenberg and Partners in Bremen. It was the euphoric period after the fall of the Berlin Wall, with lots of government funds to be spent on projects in the east. As a result of lacking roads connecting West Germany with East Germany, we had some memorable site visits flying in small propeller planes to projects, offering a unique perspective of how the landscapes to the east and west of the former border had changed as a result of the division of Germany.[29] We worked on urban renovations and sea promenades of small towns that had not seen much change since World War II, often mediating our vision to retain local identity with our client's desire to modernize and create something that represented their newly discovered contemporary tastes. In Charlie Schreckenberg I discovered another role model of an office leader who was extremely generous and supportive to his staff, and like Shlomo, always encouraging independent thought and ideas.

Fig. 31. On site for a project in former East Germany, 1993

A spontaneous visit to Jerusalem in the fall of 1993 brought Ittai and me back together: this time, the timing was right and we decided to get married. In January 1994 I re-joined Shlomo Aronson Architects. I had been fortunate enough to develop a working relationship with Shlomo before joining the practice as a family member, and our experiences at Harvard created an additional bond of understanding and mutual appreciation. Over time, my interests in urban ecology and informal design merged with Shlomo's site-driven design approach. It took 10 years though to find my independent creative voice next to Shlomo and to crystallize my own formal and conceptual ideas. Adjusting what I had learned from my professional education and experiences gained abroad to the specificities of working in Israel was the first step on this path. It was a painful process of trial and error, and my general lack of practical building experience and local knowledge contributed to the challenges I was facing. It was also about scaling back unreasonable or even naïve architectural aspirations, but most of all it was about emancipating myself from the much-admired designs of the practice's lead designer. Around 2004 I came across an article on Enric Miralles' Parc Diagonal Mar in Barcelona which included a small colored plan of the park, overlayed by a more conceptual representation of its branch-like path structure connecting to the surroundings. This drawing represented something that for some time I had searched for, and that I found also articulated in the works of Kathryn Gustafson, Michael Van Valkenburgh, Joao Nunez, and Reed/Hilderbrand: an original and strong independent formal language, artistic, poetic, flowing, and at the same time respectfully engaging with the ground. At

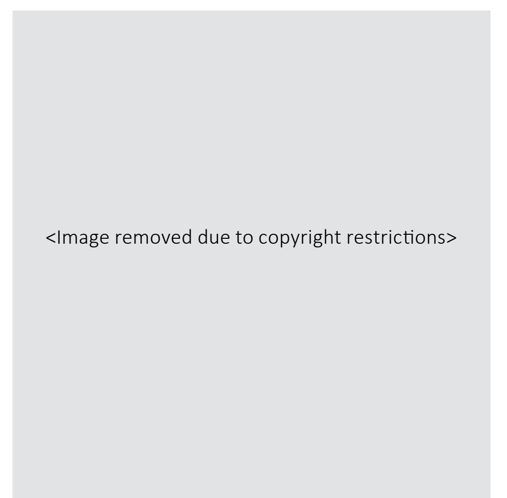


Fig. 32. Illustrative plan of Enric Miralles' Parc Diagonal Mar in Barcelona

29. I most remember the sight of enormous brownfield sites in the east, amid vast agricultural and wooded areas, and the smell of burned brown coal in the air.

the time I was working on design alternatives for the Herzliya Park: seeing this drawing helped me to develop the organic signature design language for the park layout and its architectural elements, finally freeing myself from the formal bounds of Shomo's designs.

Another important influence at this time was Fieldoperation's winning entry for the Freshkills Park competition in 2003. They took a very innovative approach to park design based on the analysis of the site's complex ecological systems combined with the presentation of a long-term implementation and maintenance strategy. Their proposal initiated a new way of mapping, evaluating, and designing large landscapes as part of understanding them as natural and man-made infrastructures. the design concept echoed our practice's approach to landscapes as infrastructures, but their design methodology took planning to an inspiring new level that influenced landscape architects around the world. The writings of Fieldoperation's founder James Corner's complete his far-reaching contribution to theoretical landscape discourse and practice, and they resonate with many of our experiences and goals. (Corner & Bick Hirsch, 2014). Around the time of these discoveries, I started taking Shlomo's place when invited to judge competitions and to give lectures about our work. In 2007 I spent five days with Bernardo Secchi and Inaki Abalos judging a competition in Sardinia. It was a great experience of receiving personal support, working with these two intellectual giants who treated me as an equal and shared their insights in the most congenial way.

Fig. 33. At work with Bernardo Secchi and Inaki Abalos

My local community of practice represents peers who work in the same environment and who share the knowledge of what it takes to produce a successful project in Israel. Their influence is two-fold: through the exchange of experiences and knowledge between us, and by encouraging healthy competition and raising the bar of what we can achieve as designers. This group includes practitioners Rachelle Wiener, Alisa Braudo, Ram Eisenberg, Tamar Darel Fossfeld, Lior Lovinger, Shlomi Zeevi, and researchers Nurit Lissovsky, Tal Alon Moses, and Hatzav Yoffe.

Keeping up with new ideas has always been part of staying informed and expanding my professional horizon. Today, I find Christophe Girot's call for a topological approach to landscape design most relevant to our work:

"Beyond the explicit physical properties of a site, topology always poses the question of the cultural limitations given to a designer, of the language and concept of nature that are at hand in society and that he or she has to bear and promote." (Girot & Imhof, 2017, p. 143).

I profoundly admire two representatives of the younger generation of landscape architects for their theoretical contributions and built work: Kate Orff and Marti Franch. They are both exceptional thinkers, incredibly serious professionals, and generous human beings with an infectious passion for the landscape. Their work reminds us of our professional responsibilities towards nature and people alike. Kate Orff's feminist approach to inclusive design sends a powerful message to women, and groups of minorities, in the profession.

Ittai Aronson

Practicing architecture had not been Ittai's first choice for a profession. Throughout his childhood, the practice had been a visible part of his life: located above their home, the Aronson kids would visit their father almost every day at his desk, just saying hello or calling him to lunch downstairs. They knew how much Shlomo loved and lived for his work. Ittai recalls project openings, field trips, and many stopovers at building sites on the way to somewhere else, enjoying his father's explanations about the history of these places. Yet despite Shlomo's passion for his work, he never suggested to any of the children that they should follow in his footsteps. Instead, he encouraged them to find their own paths.

Fig. 34. Shlomo, Sandra, and Ittai during site supervision of the Ein Feshcha Ein Gedi Road, Dead Sea, 1971

Ittai arrived at architecture after a year of studying biology and an attempt to get into medical school. He chose architecture because he was already familiar with the general field, but also because it fitted his universal interest in understanding the structure and mechanics of things. Ittai describes his experiences at the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design as particularly formative during his first years. A design course with painter and architect Arthur Goldreich brought together previous interests when exploring spatial concepts as part of weekly exercises. Students were asked to give form to abstract ideas within strict formal parameters. Ittai's perfect 3d-imagination and his background in biology and chemistry turned these initial creative explorations into an inspiring introduction to conceptual space making. Architect Shimon Shapira's classic approach to architectural design through repeated explorations in plan, sections, and through details grounded Ittai's design process. It resonated with his desire to examine and understand his design intentions from the very beginning of the creative process. It also fitted his natural tendency to explore architecture simultaneously in detail and as a whole. A semester spent as an exchange student at the Helsinki University of Technology TKK in Finland opened Ittai's horizon towards architectural theory, and case study research through painting and printmaking. Tom Simons' course about readings in architecture, covering writings from Aristotle to Louis Kahn, left a lasting impression: every week, assigned texts were discussed in class, using critical discourse as a tool to explore architecture and design thinking. Ittai remembers how it made him realize that architects have been concerned about the same issues for thousands of years: how to define the parameters that would allow their work to contribute to the sustainable coexistence of people with their environment. Today, Ittai prefers to read monographs about architecture as told by architects who reflect directly on their design ideas and their craft. 'Detail' magazine is his favorite professional publication because it explores architectural intent from the smallest component to the overall design concept. It was during his time in Finland that Ittai visited the Woodland Cemetery in Stockholm when the gently undulating topography of the cemetery grounds was covered by a heavy blanket of snow; and then seeing it again a few years later in the bright colors of summer, this time with me. For both of us, it remains one of the most poetic man-made projects of all time.

During his studies, Ittai worked for the urban design and architecture firms of Kolker, Kolker, Epstein, and later for Moshe Safdie Architects where he stayed for four years until 1999. Both offices are headed by strong designers dealing with projects of all sizes from the masterplan phase to construction, with a clear vision to create innovative designs

for the better use of people, while paying utmost attention to building details and construction excellence. Ittai acquired a lot of new practical skills and experienced what makes a project happen throughout all design phases. Observing Moshe Safdie's phenomenal command of all details in his projects, and his ability to inspire everybody around him to make the most complex designs become reality were seminal experiences for a young architect.

Following a similar path to his father, Ittai decided to open his practice only two years after graduating from university. Like Shlomo, he wanted to pursue his professional ambitions on his own terms. He started his business by designing private houses for family members and friends, mostly in and around Jerusalem, while slowly moving towards larger-scale jobs through work referred to him by his father.[30] Ittai names the work of architects Edouardo Souto de Moura and Glen Murcutt as the most dominant influence on his designs, admiring the formal restraint that their buildings exhibit, working mostly locally, using local building materials and techniques, and developing a strong dialog with the surrounding landscape in their climate-responsive and site-specific designs. Formally he also reveres the clean lines of the modernists, the early works of Philip Johnson, and the work of American Architects Craig Ellwood and Charles Eames for their Midcentury Case Study Homes of Los Angeles. Most of his favorite architects are 'Southerners' by Marti Franch's definition, working in Mediterranean or semi-arid climates. Ittai sees little connection to his general appreciation of their work, but I would argue that the conceptual and formal responses to the physical characteristics of their projects' environment exemplify specific values of contextual architecture that are close to his heart.

In 2004, Shlomo asked Ittai to join forces in continuing the family business and to merge their practices. Without much hesitation, Ittai took on landscape projects in addition to his architectural work. Maybe due to the way that Shlomo had taught his children to read and understand their environment, and the way he encouraged everybody to apply their talents and skillsets outside the 'narrow' definitions of their professional background, it came naturally to Ittai to adopt his father's interdisciplinary vision of the creative field of urban design, architecture, and landscape architecture. Working with his father was not easy at times and it took Ittai several years to find his place as the third partner in the practice: negotiating mutual expectations, sharing responsibilities, and most of all working together on new designs, all that against the background of his father's failing health. Ittai's decision to study oil painting happened around the same time: he felt the need to pursue an artistic activity that would be completely personal and dependent on his creative choices alone. Ittai approaches both painting and architecture with the same seriousness and attention to detail. Both fields are sources of great personal satisfaction but understood by him as separate activities, architecture during the week, painting on the weekend. It is clear though that painting will become the focus of his creative interests when retiring from architecture.

30. Some projects were jointly designed with former classmate Tova Dagan.

The backstories of Shlomo, Ittai, and I reveal cultural differences and different professional outlooks, but working together as family members created a symbiotic relationship that made us never question our commitment to the practice, and each other. The mutual respect and family bond between us always intermediated the most heated design arguments and decisions we had to work out in the practice. We were always good at leaving work concerns at the doorstep of our office, defining clear boundaries between our professional personae and our roles at home, and disagreements about work never impacted our family life. Shlomo loved the fact that he could share with us his passion for design and the landscape, and as the second generation in the practice, Ittai and I learned a lot from him. I believe that this special aspect of our professional setup influenced our understanding of other people and that of our environment.

Fig. 35. Ittai with Shlomo on our yearly office trip, 2013

03.02 Design Philosophy

Our present-day design philosophy is a continuum of the professional beliefs and aspirations of the practice's founder, who advocated 'thinking big', engaged in interdisciplinary work as part of teams, and promoted a total encompassing design approach instead of a narrow, specialized way of response. One significant difference exists: the profession is not only that of men anymore.

Fig. 36. A confident Shlomo at Halprin's office, 1964

Shlomo's interest in working on all scales of landscape architecture, town planning, and architecture started when working for Lawrence Halprin in the 1960s. Halprin's work on large-scale projects involving infrastructure planning and master planning of communities, combining environmental and climate studies in their design concepts (i.e., the Sea Ranch, Freeway Park) greatly influenced Shlomo's design attitudes. When returning to Israel in 1969, Shlomo chose to settle in Jerusalem, recognizing the city and its historical environs as the center of new development and professional discourse, with incredible opportunities to shape and protect the cultural landscapes of Israel. Untypical for a young architect starting his own practice, but in total sync with his professional goals, his first projects spanned all scales: Judean Hills Master Plan for Tourism and Recreation (1972), National Master Plan for Afforestation of the State of Israel (1972/ 1975), Edges of the City of Jerusalem, Rapid Transit System for the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area (1973, a joint venture with Lawrence Halprin & Associates), and a master plan for new housing in Mevasseret Zion (1970s).

For the first 15 years, Shlomo was the only landscape architect in the practice due to an acute shortage of landscape architects in Israel. In response to this situation, and inspired by his experiences in Halprin's office, Shlomo assembled a varied team of professionals around him that included architects, urban planners, and geographers. This integrated approach enabled him to take on a wide range of project types that extended well beyond the traditional boundaries of landscape architectural design.

Fig. 37. Excerpt from the original paper with comments from Prof. Newton in red, 1966

Good luck to you! 9
Get rid of the undergraduate professional curricula!

I see the future landscape architect as a man who is capable of dealing with problems in their abstractions, who believe in certain values, who operate with a small but creative staff, who use computers to reduce the amount of work done by draftsmen, who are very flexible and can work with other offices like his on certain projects or problems and then dissolve the joint venture and start another.

In short, the profession is the creative man, and not a set of roles one is supposed to perform. Because of the complexity and sophistication of the future, the future landscape architect should be educated and trained to understand the new problems which are bound to come more and more in his lifetime. Instead of the specialist that marked our age, we need a Renaissance-type man. Not a man who knows everything--that is impossible. But a man who can always learn and who can try to understand everthing which he has to. And above all this man should have a philosophy of life and of design.

Shlomo's professional vision can be traced back to a course paper entitled "The Future of Landscape Architecture" (Aronson, 1966) that he wrote in 1966 while pursuing his master's degree at Harvard. In this paper, Shlomo defined his ideal of the modern, responsible, powerful and visionary landscape architect of the future, and how the field of landscape architecture should distinguish itself as a leading profession facing the challenges of the next century. Shlomo laid out the basics of his credo as a designer, teacher, and owner of a practice.

"I see the future landscape architect as a man who is capable of dealing with problems in their abstractions, who believes in certain values, who operate[s] with a small team but creative staff, who use[s] computers to reduce the amount of work done by draftsmen, who [is] very flexible and can work with other offices like his [….] Instead of the specialist that marked our age, we need a Renaissance-type man. Not a man who knows everything—that is impossible. But a man who can always learn and who can try to understand everything which he has to. And above all, this man should have a philosophy of life and of design [….] (Aronson, 1966, p. 9)

"It seems to me that there are in the first place three main obstacles to the ideal development of landscape architecture.

1. Specialization. This is a phenomenon shared with other professions. The landscape architect feels he ought to study and act only on a limited basis since he might be encroaching on somebody else's field. So do the other specialization[s], and at the end you get a fine team of experts but no total idea — and the results look like that.

2. Size of offices. Most of the leading offices in landscape architecture are big, which causes two main problems. First, a great deal of the creative process is being lost in the big bureaucracy and the chain of command in the office. Second, the large office has a large overhead which demands that it accept all kinds of work, many times projects he would not accept otherwise.

3. Education of the landscape architect. […] In most schools the student is not taught the basics of his culture, the history of thought, the history of the arts or the basic patterns of Western culture of which he should be a part. […] In schools students are not taught how to think, to have their own ideas of things, or about the creative process." (Aronson, 1966, p. 7)

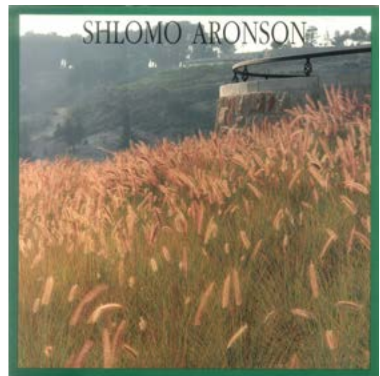
This manifesto became the roadmap to Shlomo's professional career. Over the years, Shlomo's multi-scale and interdisciplinary approach revealed itself as a central component of the practice's DNA and its design philosophy. The review of the office's credo, as stated in office brochures, reflects the retention of all initial values until this day with minor adjustments implemented as part of the new leadership's design beliefs.

1969-1975 First Brochure (in English)

The basic approach of our office is to deal with every design project in its broadest environmental context. Each project coordinates and integrates the professional skills of a twelve-man team which represents the areas of architecture, landscape architecture, geography and planning.

1975-1981 Second Brochure (in English)

Our office specializes in being unspecialized...we like to do our work from the beginning to the end. Our favorite projects are those, such as the Judean Hill Master Plan, Mevasseret Zion new town, or the City of David archaeological area, in which we were responsible for all stages from the regional planning level down to the last detail of construction. The majority of our work falls into this category and certainly the most satisfying work is from this portion. We believe that our preference for doing the whole job gives us a great advantage in doing any one of its parts.



1981-1991 Third Brochure (in English)

Our office specializes in being unspecialized. We prefer to assume responsibility for the entire job, from beginning to end. Our favorite projects - the Judean Hills Master Plan, Mevasseret Zion new town, City of David archaeological area, Jerusalem promenades, and the Eilat Master Plan, have been those in which we were responsible for all stages of the task, from the regional planning down to the last detail of construction. The major, and most satisfying, part of our work falls into this category. We believe that our preference for doing the whole job gives us a great advantage over doing any of its parts.

1991-2006 Fourth Brochure (in Hebrew)

Shlomo Aronson Architects, headed by architect Shlomo Aronson, has been active for about four decades, during which he has undertaken extensive planning of hundreds of different and varied projects in Israel and around the world. Over the years, our firm has gained rich and extensive experience in varied areas of expertise, from national master plans, through district and local master plans to detailed planning of landscape architectural and architectural projects. This expertise enables our firm to accompany the projects from their initial stages - from the preparation of the BOQ, to the completion of the project execution stage. The projects are carried out in our office by a team of experienced and skilled landscape architects, currently headed by the company's landscape architect Shlomo Aronson, landscape architect Barbara Aronson and architect Ittai Aronson, who have been part of the firm for many years. Our office is currently undergoing a structural change, whereby Barbara and Ittai Aronson will join Shlomo Aronson as managing partners.

Fig. 38. All images in this subchapter show the front covers of office brochures or the project page of the practice's website

2006-2013 Fifth Brochure (in English and Hebrew) "Between Landscape and Architecture"

The firm of Shlomo Aronson Architects was founded nearly five decades ago. Throughout these years we designed and developed hundreds of projects, mainly in Israel but also abroad. Over the years our multi-disciplinary office has acquired a varied and rich expertise in different fields of architecture and landscape architecture, from national, regional to local master plans to the detailed design of landscape architectural projects, architecture and project supervision. We believe in practicing architecture and landscape architecture jointly and on the widest platform possible: it is much more productive to design a landscape or a building complex as part of a comprehensive design philosophy that you help to formulate at the scale of policy making. The objective of our work is to plan projects from their conception, from the master plan phase, to their construction. Good planning influences good architectural design, and vice versa. The projects are designed and executed in our office by an experienced and skilled team of architects and landscape architects, headed jointly by Landscape Architect Barbara Aronson and Architect Ittai Aronson, advised by Landscape Architect and office founder Shlomo Aronson.

2017-ongoing Shlomo Aronson Architects Website

Our office was founded almost 50 years ago by Shlomo Aronson: today Barbara and Ittai Aronson continue and expand the professional legacy of a practice which creates responsible designs of all types, scales and at all stages of planning. We look towards the uniqueness of our historical, cultural, and natural surroundings to provide inspiration, while continually evolving to integrate new understandings. Over the course of our office's history, we have had a broad-scale influence on creating projects with a unique local sense of place across the country. Our office continues this tradition with a multi-disciplinary team of 30 landscape architects, architects and urban designers who are perpetually testing past experiences and our distinctive design language against new professional insights and innovations. Ecological, cultural and social responsiveness has been at the heart of the practice from the beginning. Our very broad lateral and integrative approach to designing sustainable interventions in the environment, from large engineering to infrastructure projects, archaeological and regional parks, neighborhoods and public buildings, afforestation projects, promenades and urban plazas, strategic and statutory plans, has gained our practice local and international recognition. As we look forward, we are taking advantage of our accumulated knowledge to approach the extremely varied projects we are asked to design and to reach our goal of creating site-specific, resilient, and lasting projects.

At the beginning of the PhD journey, I expected that the insights gained from reflection on our practice would suggest adjustments to our present-day office philosophy. In retrospect, I came to the conclusion that our office philosophy, as expressed on our website in 2017, remains a true representation of our professional credo, and an organic continuation of our original convictions and aspirations. Our professional goals have not changed, but the road to achieving them has evolved significantly. Our working environment has become more complex, with extensive data-based information available on many planning issues. In comparison to previous declarations, the website text alludes to the heightened challenges we face in our work today: the cultural, social, and ecological responsiveness required from us to create sustainable and lasting projects. Shlomo was able to implement his professional convictions and artistic visions in a much more direct way, at least in the first 30 years of the practice. Trained abroad and coming back to Israel with the most up-to-date professional insights, he was immediately respected as an expert, and his word carried far. Projects were typically charted and analyzed during multiple site visits: sites were meant to be physically experienced before design ideas were to be advanced. In many of his built projects, Shlomo put great trust in the construction expertise of local craftsmen. Substantial changes implemented on-site were the norm: working drawings provided the armature of the design, the building process was regarded as the real tool to get the designs 'right'. The pace of work was much slower, and the bureaucratic requirements infinitely smaller. Starting at the end of the 1990s, emails, CAD, GIS, 3D-renderings, standardization of graphic output, and endless quality control procedures changed our design and building protocols. Today planning attitudes reflect a heightened awareness of the importance of environmental and social issues, but Israel's general development pressure puts incredible strain on planning processes. The advanced communication and mapping/analysis tools of today are key to helping us manage the ever-growing pressure to provide fast and data-based insights according to standardized methods. On the other hand, these structured methodological approaches keep us detached from the ground and the people for whom we plan. Moreover, tight planning schedules reduce the available time to 'read' our project sites, and great efforts are required to convey the importance of these intuitive deductions to others. In our built projects, changes on site are a luxury of the past. Endless review and approval processes aspire to have total control over the budget, making it extremely difficult to justify the often necessary adjustments required on site.

Ittai and I are not anymore in the unique position that Shlomo experienced as a groundbreaking professional in an emerging field, a storyteller who frequently used simple yet powerful narratives to convince others of his ideas. We inherited Shlomo's courage to make our professional agenda heard, popular or not, and we are still regarded as experts who strive to lead the professional discourse in projects of all types and sizes. It happens though, that we are part of large projects with other experts and stakeholders who promote their agenda of development and expansion equally forcefully: without a strong mediator, this plethora of voices is not always conducive to achieving a balanced outcome. In addition to having great ideas, realizing our design and planning aspirations requires us today to be team players and smart diplomats.

PART B

04 THE WAY WE CREATE

Fig. 39. Sketching session with Ittai about the design language for the restaurant in the EcoSport Park in Ashkelon

04 THE WAY WE CREATE

04.01 Our Creative Environment
04.02 Creative Teamwork
04.03 Modes of Practice and Design
04.04 Modes of Creative Expression

"If we can convince people through our work that a desert landscape – as an example - has beauty because of its intensity, its ability to make us focus on the essential, but also because of its fragility and role in preserving biodiversity, we increase our ability to defend it against development pressures and advocate it as an aesthetic model for designed landscape projects in arid areas.
Striking the equilibrium between the degree of intensive landscaping specific to the type of project and its natural setting is the most important and basic goal we strive to achieve."

Barbara Aronson (2010, p.309)

To understand the way we create, this chapter explores our creative environment and teamwork, dominant modes of design, and our modes of creative expression. Different viewpoints are presented to describe our design motivations and mode of practice. These include a review of past and present evaluations of our design motifs and work, describing our present-day modes of design and creative design processes through examples from seminal office projects, and reflection on the impact of creative teamwork on the architectural output.

As part of the discussion about the way we create, I define our mode of practice as the sum of all that encompasses the process of creating. Design motifs describe a recurring element or pattern in our work. Design concepts express the core idea around which we develop the design of each project. Design strategies comprise the approaches that help us turn our design concepts into reality. The creative design process describes the activities that occur mostly within the office, involving decisions about how to conceive a design concept in the all-important initial design phase, choosing the make-up of the team, and which tasks to assign to individual team members. We understand our modes of design as the ideas that guide our design thinking while design actions represent the translation of our modes of design into tangible design moves and tasks, guided by intuitive preferences. Design methods embody the tools we use and procedures we follow when designing.

04.01 Our Creative Environment

"Are you aware that your office is a rare ecosystem?" Adi Noy Ivanir, former worker, during an unrecorded conversation.

Every workplace should provide an environment where people feel secure, respected, professionally challenged, and socially integrated. In a design practice, it should also encourage creativity, the exchange of ideas, and the desire to excel. Such was the atmosphere that Ittai grew up in with the office above their home, that I encountered in Shlomo's office back in the 1980s.[31] It determined our understanding of how we want our practice to operate, a place where people feel free to voice their opinions, take responsibility for their projects and exchange experiences with their colleagues. Providing everybody with opportunities to contribute and grow within the practice is a core element of our philosophy (Avigdor, 2020). With time we also realized that a happy office makes our job as managers easier. The reflection on the origins of our office environment and its development over time examines the characteristics that make it a place of creativity and social engagement.

Fig. 40. The office in the 1980s. Above: Shlomo at his desk.

According to a recent poll in Israel, well-being in the workspace has become the most important criterion for workers when judging their job, overtaking money which is now in second place (CofaceBDI and TheMarker, 2020).[32] Yet staff and office management is not part of any architecture school's curriculum, and most senior management-level architects develop their 'skills' and attitudes as part of their personal experiences at the workplace.[33] The practice of Shlomo Aronson Architects is no exception. Shlomo set the base tone from the outset: he organized his practice as a studio, with fluid connections between senior and junior staff, as he had experienced at Lawrence Halprin's office. When asked about what is most important for him in life, his answer was straightforward: family and work. For Shlomo, the office was his place of creativity, but also his second family. He regarded his staff as family and made his family become part of his work (Eden, 2020; Avigdor, 2020). Our reputation for providing a supportive and pleasant working atmosphere is part of our ability to attract new talents. Our practice is not the only place in Israel that offers interesting work, and due to the country-wide shortage of architects and landscape architects, we receive typically only a handful of applications when looking to hire new people. We engage our staff in the recruiting process, and at least half of our present team joined through recommendations or personal invitations.

We have a policy of throwing new people in at the deep end: generally supervised by experienced staff members, newcomers are expected to show initiative and learn from their colleagues around them. Everybody in the office knows that they are expected to make her or himself available to others, irrespective of their seniority. This includes Ittai and me: our doors are always open for consultation. We make it clear during job interviews that this organic teamwork is part of our organizational setup: helping each other out, sharing knowledge, and jumping in when somebody is overwhelmed by his or her workload. This interaction between staff members compels people to take responsibility and develop self-confidence. It also teaches them to speak up for themselves and on behalf of others. From an organizational viewpoint, this system of mutual support results in fast problem solving and higher standards

31. In 1984, when I joined the office as a student from Germany for a 5-month internship, it was this amalgam of exciting professional work, Shlomo's affability, and this feeling of being instantly welcomed into a family, that formed my understanding of what a supportive working environment should feel like.

32. Studies worldwide show that a supportive professional and personal atmosphere substantially increases productivity, highlighting the importance of the subject for the employer (Awan & Tahir, 2015) (Cuff, 1992)

33. I asked office staff, representing graduates from each one of the four Israeli Architecture universities: none of them recalled attending any lessons about the practical and sociological aspects of running a business in landscape architecture or architecture.

Fig. 41. One of many holiday celebrations

in our architectural output. Occasionally though, new staff members feel overwhelmed and not sufficiently supervised, and it might take a relatively long time to realize that there is a problem when assuming that everybody feels free to share their concerns. This is a risk that we are willing to take, and we encourage everybody in the practice to come to us and intervene on behalf of co-workers who need help. Eating lunch together is another platform for sharing experiences: catching up on news about family and kids, discussing politics, but also sharing anecdotes from work, or offering personal insights on how to handle challenging relationships with consultants. Our lunches started with one person on rotation doing shopping, posting the mail, and on occasion preparing a salad for everybody (Nevo, 2020). It expanded into several people taking an hour off to prepare multiple dishes until we became so big that we needed a chef to do it for us. We come together for holiday celebrations, weddings, and farewell parties for colleagues, and once a year we take the entire office on a trip. We still take the family aspect of the practice very seriously.

The comparison of the overall number and general organization of the staff over the years, tells the story of a practice that experienced constant changes in its professional team.[34] A great number of people went through the office, leaving for a variety of reasons: relocating their lives, seeking other professional experiences or building a business of their own. Shlomo created a very supportive and professionally stimulating office, giving staff members enormous room for expression and professional growth. At the same time, he always understood the firm and his professional agenda to be essentially his. As a result, some of the senior staff members felt that there was no possibility to grow beyond their place in the office.

At the start of his career in the 1970s, Shlomo was the only landscape architect in a practice with a total staff of seven, working on several high-profile projects that proposed planning policies for the future development of large urban and rural areas.[35] To manage the complex design challenges in this pioneering period, Shlomo had assembled an exceptional staff of foreign-trained architects and one geographer. Again going back to his experiences in Halprin's office, where designing and brainstorming with an interdisciplinary office staff and outside experts was the norm, Shlomo placed his confidence in people's ability to adapt their creative talents to the design challenges at hand, a point of view that still prevails. This mode of working became the standard for our approach to design that starts within the practice. With time, more landscape architects joined, but even so, there are still more architects than landscape architects in total.[36] Over the years, the office absorbed many architects whose professional knowledge helped enrich projects, and who in return discovered their true interests to be in urban design and landscape architecture (Avigdor, 2020; Eden, 2020). In our experience, excelling in working on large scale projects, conceptualizing complex design briefs, or detailing particular design elements are very much part of a person's intrinsic talents and personal preferences, and less related to their educational background. The 1990s marked one of the practice's and Shlomo's personal peak period,[37] with a team of 21 professionals working together by the end of the decade.[38] More mentoring and design tasks fell on the associates, but Shlomo was always fully involved in the design process, available for consultation at any time. Traveling to meetings or site visits became a great opportunity to listen to his thoughts on work and life. This tradition

34. Office brochures and publications from the years 1975, 1985, 1991, 1998, 2006, and 2013, and today's office profile, are the data source for analyzing the general office's structure over time.

35. Building guidelines for the development of Jerusalem's new central business district in the center of the modern city (1971); Study for the renovation of the Western Wall area in Jerusalem's old city (beginning 1970s); The Judean Hills Master Plan for Tourism and Recreation (1972) Erosion control through Limanim and Ravines in the Negev Desert (1977).

36. This is mostly because only 20 students graduate every year from Israel's only landscape architectural university program, resulting in an acute shortage of landscape architects in the country.

37. Spacemaker Press published a monograph about the practice, and Shlomo received many invitations to speak at conferences and to teach at Harvard University.

38. In the end of the 1990s the introduction of emails and computer drafting changed the need for multiple secretaries with architects/landscape architects taking over responsibilities previously executed by support staff. This presented a more technical change, not impacting on the way Shlomo or his associates worked with the architectural staff.

has been continued by both Ittai and myself. After 50 years of practice, there are always projects to be found along the way, opening up their successes and failures for discussion.

The biggest change happened around 2005 when Shlomo was diagnosed with a type of Parkinson's Disease. At that time the entire office management was still overseen by Shlomo, but it had become clear that some important managerial aspects had been neglected for some time. The project volume had contracted, clients complained about the quality of deliverables and missed deadlines. By 2006 the professional staff had shrunk to only 12. It was then that Shlomo transferred all management responsibilities to Ittai and me, and concentrated on writing about his design legacy.[39] By 2013, the office returned to a staff of 21, reflecting the restoration of trust in the new leaders' abilities.[40] The next few years saw a continuous expansion of the business to today's size, increasingly challenging our ability to juggle general management tasks with supervising and mentoring of the staff. This realization was one of the triggers of this investigation.

Today we are a team of 45, with two office branches in Tel Aviv and in Tivon the north, managed with the help of five associates who are instrumental in the running of the practice. Most of our designs still originate with Ittai and me, but we see the future of the practice in the full integration of the next generation of designers, which was another of the main reasons for instigating this research.

Landscape Architect
Architect
Office Manager + Assistant
Geographer
CAD Specialist
Economist
Personal Assistant to Shlomo

39. With the help of his wife Sandra, Shlomo wrote 'Aridscapes', a reflection on 40 years of working in dry climates (Aronson, 2008). With staff member Adi Noy Ivanir and landscape architectural researcher Nurit Lissovsky, he conducted and recorded round table discussions with colleagues, and compiled personal memories about his favorite projects, resulting in the publication of 'Conversations on Landscape'. (Aronson, 2015)

40. One important decision greatly helped to improve the practice's financial situation: the outsourcing of the financial management of the office to a firm specializing in giving services to architects and engineers.

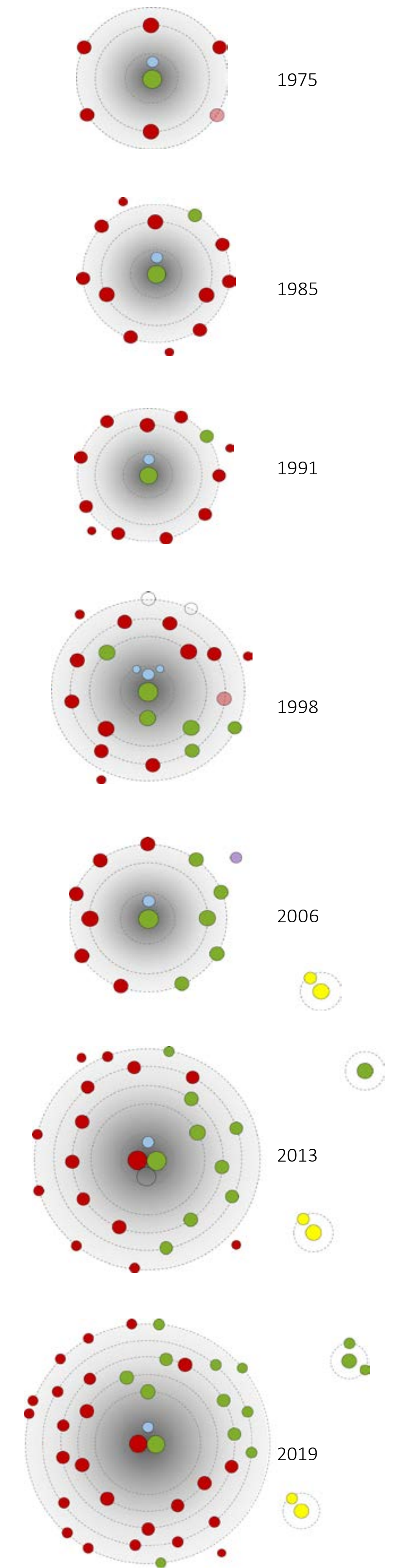


Fig. 42. Diagram illustrating our office structure during different periods as documented in office brochures

Fig. 43. To explore different compositions and concentrations of shade structures throughout the Sde Dov coastal park, we prepared modular segments to be arranged on the plan in a trial-and-error process; collaboration with Marti Franch and his team, 2021

Fig. 44. Staff members with intimate knowledge of the existing park are invited to help create a new path system which will provide the missing links in the existing layout, renovation of Jerusalem's Independence Park, 2022

04.02 Creative Teamwork

Creative teamwork and the individual input of team members are most valuable in the initial schematic design phase of any project. Brainstorming sessions with changing groups of senior and junior staff members typically kick off the design thinking for larger projects after the initial mapping phase. Under the motto that 'all ideas are good ideas', everybody puts their thoughts forward, and all input is recorded and presented to the client. Brainstorming with outside consultants is also part of creative teamwork: it ensures the feasibility and practicability of our architectural designs from the outset. These sessions are then followed by round-table design discussions among the actual project team members, developing design concepts and drawing out design alternatives.

Thinking about the creative process in the practice made me aware of the 'beautiful moments' that happen as part of unplanned teamwork: when a spontaneous design meeting with randomly invited staff members brings forth a breakthrough, exactly because it was unscheduled, and team members put their ideas forward extemporaneously. These 'eureka moments ' may occur when somebody contributes insights gained from unrelated projects that provide relevant information; when somebody takes a colored pencil and draws out the essence of a design when sharing ideas on the same drawing; and when the usual lack of time makes us discover unorthodox methods to formulate our design intents, such as using children's building blocks to explore modular street furniture. Expressing our ideas as part of informal design sessions by talking about them, sketching, folding paper, collaging, using whatever materials are available around us, all challenge us to be direct and not to overthink our creative responses. These moments encapsulate the highlights of working with other people, discovering, and learning together.

Fig. 45. Using colored pencils to simulate green and blue infrastructure during a brainstorming session with Ari Cohen, Marti Franch, and the team, Yarkon River open space master plan in the Petah Tikva area, 2019

Fig. 46. Folding and trimming paper to simulate the path of an undulating wall. The light is used to assess potential shade cast by the wall. An early study which led to the design of the light sculpture in Modiin, 2015

Fig. 47. Wooden pieces of a children's game helped us explore, and ultimately reject, different configurations of modular seating elements for the Wine Park Ashkelon, 2017

Conducting a comparative analysis of the flow of creative dialog for the Herzliya Park and the New City Center of Modiin was a revealing exploration into the creative teamwork within the office. It reflects a change in attitude about participatory teamwork which has developed over time. Herzliya Park was my coming-out project, and it developed during the transitory phase of the office in 2005 when Ittai and I realized that we needed to step in and fill the void of leadership due to Shlomo’s illness. In this project, the creative process of the early design phases and the production of design material very much originated with me, with supportive staff members joining the project in the development phase. It turned out to be a process that produced a successful project, allowing me to apply my accumulative experience to develop original ideas, while the younger staff with their new knowledge of 3D modeling enabled these ideas to become reality. As I was taking over more responsibilities as a lead designer and managing partner in the business, it became obvious that this process would not be sustainable in the long run: I simply wouldn’t have the time to invest so much effort on one project. I also started to understand how Shlomo had managed to leave his creative footprint in so many projects: through sharing his ideas with the project’s staff at the start, steering ideas throughout the design stages but allowing for the design to change and take form through a participatory process. Ten years later in 2015, we started the Modiin New City Center project. This time around, I decided to involve a large group of senior and junior architects from the very beginning, allowing them to develop independent design ideas, learning from our discussions, a process that made it a better project. It is a good example of how Shlomo’s model of creative directing can be integrated with my way of hands-on designing. Both projects mark formative achievements, but the latter contributed much more to the overall goal of teaching the next generation and inviting new and innovative ideas to the practice’s existing design knowledge.

Many times though, the creative teamwork process is still preset by organizational decisions about who and how: which staff members work in what way on a particular project. The reality of constantly working under time pressure makes us often go to the staff members that will be the fastest and most competent to address specific design tasks and problems. Our default setting shows that good intentions are not enough: providing opportunities for creative exchange has to be part of a rigorously enforced plan to do so. Part of successful teamwork is also about the lead designer’s willingness to receive the ideas of others, releasing control, and allowing for improvisation.

Evolving Legacy: An Exploratory Path into Uncovering and Sustaining a Practice’s Accumulated Knowledge

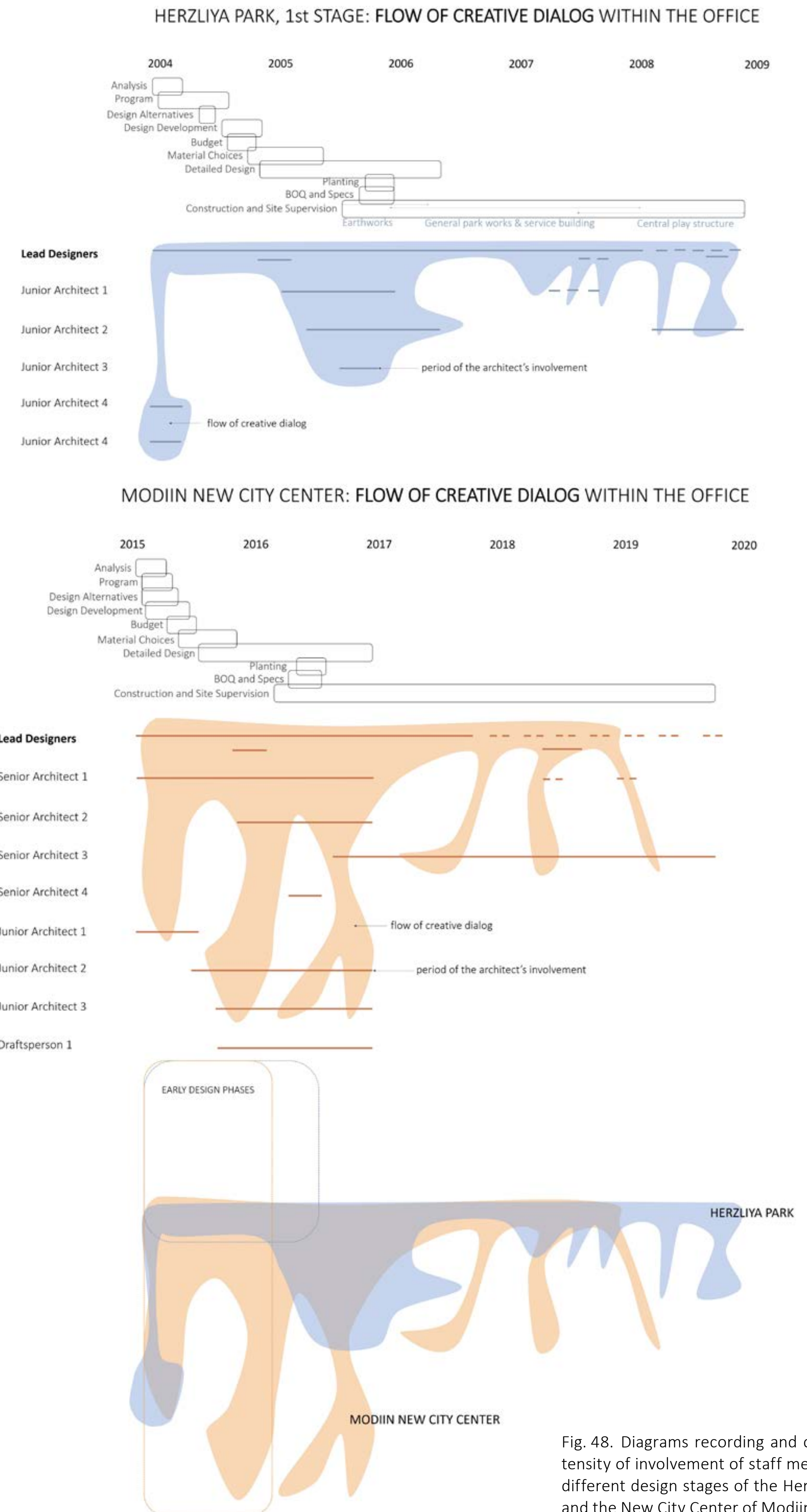


Fig. 48. Diagrams recording and comparing the intensity of involvement of staff members during the different design stages of the Herzliya park project and the New City Center of Modiin

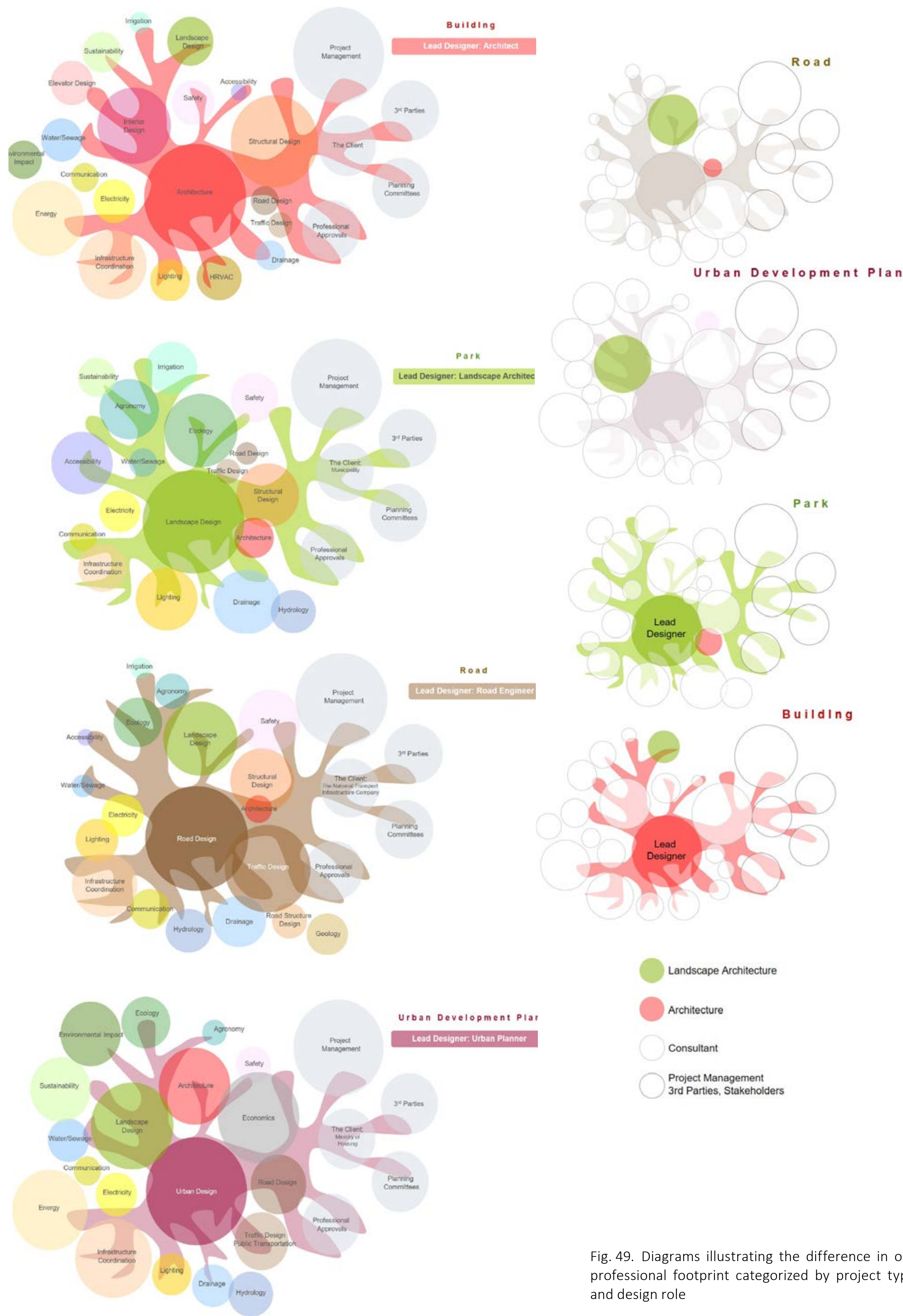


Fig. 49. Diagrams illustrating the difference in our professional footprint categorized by project type and design role

04.03 Modes of Practice and Design

"Aronson has found a way to 'write on the landscape' with a clear and simple language, to cultivate a unique aesthetic of silence and 'emptiness', and to produce a harmony of beauty". (Lissovsky, 2010, p. 7).

There are universal characteristics to our work that are shared by all our projects. We strongly believe in delivering 'functional' projects that are program responsive, cost-effective, easily maintainable, and socially responsible. Our concern for context guides our design thinking in every project when considering the social, political, and ecological consequences of our design interventions. More than that, working in dry lands requires us to balance the fragile conditions of the natural environment with the expectations of the people we design for. Exploring the role of beauty and meaning in creating sustainable new landscapes has been an integral part of the practice's designs. The desire of the public for lush green open spaces is no less present than in temperate or tropical climates, but its realization comes usually at a price, both environmentally and economically. Part of creating resilient and lasting projects means finding alternative design models separate from common stereotypes of 'green' beauty. Our designs are based on the assumption that new, less green open space types will be embraced by the public and seen as **beautiful** if they are perceived as **meaningful**. We aspire to evoke an emotional bond between newly created landscapes and the people that experience or view them. As a general strategy, we engage with the locale to generate more resilient approaches and sustainable formal expressions by referencing agricultural, natural, and cultural landscapes, typically conceived by the public as productive, awe-inspiring, or familiar, and therefore meaningful (Aronson, 2010).[41]

On the most basic level, our practice is defined by its project diversity, requiring us to develop varied design strategies and design methods. Our professional role varies for different types of projects: as lead designers on buildings, promenades, plazas or parks, and as members of the core team of consultants in statutory planning, infrastructure and urban design projects. The size of our professional footprint does not necessarily reflect the importance of our involvement: projects of the latter types typically have a great impact on the wider public and landscape, rendering our input particularly critical in reaching better outcomes. The design processes of these project typologies are typically more regulated. Most government agencies require us to work according to design protocols developed for each design profession.[42] It is easy to mistake procedural requirements as a method to reach architectural solutions: these protocols provide unified methods of analysis and data presentation, defining the specific output required for each design stage, supporting yet in no way generating creative concepts. In contrast, the design of classical landscape architectural works like parks and civic open spaces tends to follow a heuristic design approach that provides us with a wider range for creative expression throughout all design phases.

41. Elizabeth K. Meyer's pioneering manifesto from 2008 confirmed our own conclusions. It was a call for a necessary shift away from landscape beauty stereotypes and aesthetic preconceptions when aiming at creating sustainable designs to be embraced by the public (Meyer, 2008).

42. This is true for the Ministry of Housing, the Israel Land Authority, the National Transport Infrastructure Company, and Israel Railways.

Past and Present Evaluations

The following represents a collection of past and present reflections on our work. With today's design thinking grounded in the ideas, principles, and designs shaped in this period, these evaluations provide a historic perspective for comparing past and present modes of design.

In 2010, Nurit Lissovsky identified the four leading design motifs in Shlomo Aronson's work as follows (Lissovsky, 2010, p. 7):

- Exposition of the dimension of time during the conservation, interpretation and representation of historical and archaeological sites, with due deference to the past and ancient civilizations.
- Use of formal abstraction and counterpoint on the play between the natural and the man-made.
- Use of agricultural, traditional and modern patterns, based on drought-resistant vegetation, controlled irrigation and water run-off collection.
- Recognition of the importance of the broader landscape and environmental context of every project.

Shlomo himself further condensed these four motifs as part of a more personal retrospective review of his work (Aronson, 2015): [43]

- The Past as a Client.
- Creation of a Design Language through Abstraction of Nature.
- The Agricultural Landscape and 'Landscape Ensembles'.
- Peace with the Land.

Not every project conceived by Shlomo fits this mold, yet he felt that these motifs best summarized his most significant design attitudes and approaches to his work throughout his career. Synthesizing ideas into their most essential and poetic characteristics was his great strength: making them readable, recognizable, and with time well-known. These motifs are as much bound to the practice's design philosophy as they are to the particular design opportunities that presented themselves in different periods in Israel's development. They can be traced back to the design responses developed for the large-scale landscape planning and archaeological and national park projects of the first 20 years of the practice, which then influenced the design projects of the later years.

43. In 'Conversations on Landscape', Shlomo recalls very personal memories about his projects and the people that were involved, and it is the last publication in which he was still actively involved.

In 2014, we formulated an alternative viewpoint when explaining our goal to create responsive designs through the introduction of five design concepts:[44]

- 'Structured Flexibility' in the design process refers to built-in flexibility within master plans, avoiding specific formal or programmatic requirements while outlining a clear conceptual vision for the open space.
- 'Guiding Trends' addresses the need to manage the introduction of new ideals, such as sustainability, with all their functional requirements and aesthetic ramifications when working in dry climates, to achieve the highest possible degree of public acceptance.
- Programmatic Phasing' is based on the idea of on-going activation of open spaces through the exchange of temporary and permanent uses until final completion of the entire project.
- 'Emotional Evocation' promotes achieving long-term sustainability of landscapes and the preservation of natural and cultural resources through establishing an emotional bond of the public, its present and future stewards, to the place.
- The final concept of 'Sustainable Narratives' calls upon the re-connection of the public to historical and local landscapes to create site-specific landscape narratives.

At the beginning of this research, the first brainstorming session to identify what defines our present-day designs produced a list of characteristics that highlight the aspect of perceived continuance in the practice's work. It was an attempt to look beyond design motifs and common concepts and to reflect on our overall mode of practice:

- An interdisciplinary design approach to landscape architecture, urban design, and architecture.
- Working on all scales. Embracing collaborative design processes.
- Integrated design approach between senior and junior staff as part of an office structure operating as a studio.
- Balancing the needs of man and nature. Site and concept-driven designs: pragmatism over metaphor. Mediating between the past and future.
- Straightforward design language with emphasis on the local. Using agricultural & natural plantings to strengthen the cultural landscape and local ecologies.
- Celebrating geomorphology: unearthing/revealing layers of the historic landscapes and shaping new interpretations of local landforms and ecotones.
- A quiet aesthetic. Material simplicity & low-tech, local solutions. Pushing boundaries of design within proven parameters. Retaining design integrity in the face of budget, regulations, construction, and time constraints.
- Teaching the next generation, and learning from them: within the office, and as part of teaching at university.

44. This was presented as part of a text written for the 'Re-Enchant the world' exhibition, Global Award for Sustainable Architecture 2007-2014, produced by Cite' de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine and LOCUS Foundation, Paris, France.

In conversations conducted as part of this research, Moshe Safdie and Marti Franch emphasized what they consider the central motif of our design approach:

- Understanding and designing landscape as infrastructure.

The entirety of these past attempts to classify our work offer interpretations on how we approach our work while pointing to continuities and divergencies over the years. Evolving our legacy appears to best describe the path of our design thinking. Instead of offering an updated version of our design motifs, I propose therefore an additional assessment, or perspective, on what motivates today's designs:

- Reverence for context: embracing the social, political, historical, cultural, and natural locale; understanding landscapes as infrastructure.
- Building communities through dialog.
- Evoking meaning: referencing existing landscape values and creating narratives.
- Formal restraint: quiet aesthetic; preference for local materials.

Modes of Design and Design Actions

Through the course of this research basic characteristics have emerged that apply to the creative design process in all our projects, invoked with variations when designing different typologies of open spaces. Finding the language to express and visualize our creative design process started for me with studying other designers' efforts to do so, and in Michel Corajoud's nine-step design process methodology, I discovered a formidable example (described in chapter 01.04 My PhD Journey). There are no ready recipes using ingredients that, when combined in a certain order, will produce the design for a park, a road or a new housing development. However, our modes of design operate within stages that we adhere to throughout any project. These stages include periods of (a) **listening**, (b) **understanding**, (c) **shaping** and (d) **reflecting,** the findings of which are often overlapping and interconnecting.

ACTION	MODES OF DESIGN
	LISTENING
listening to people, clients, nature, and to voices from the past.	Respecting voices
embracing and questioning cultural, social, geographical and political boundaries.	Negotiating boundaries
	UNDERSTANDING
infrastructure as landscape.	Landscape as infrastructure
understanding the singular as part of the larger; identifying and promoting 'Landscape Ensembles'. considering borrowed landscapes, forgotten landscapes.	Seeing the larger picture
designing for lack of building knowledge and maintenance; marrying the need for instant results with slow growth.	Welcoming reality
talking to colleagues, researching related works.	Collecting knowledge from others
	SHAPING
designing and creating on all scales.	Scaling
folding the surface to separate, integrate, hide, surprise, protect and enable.	Stretching ground
enabling natural processes to occur.	Repairing nature
matching the design language with a project's essence.	Choosing a language
creating through abstraction, referencing and story-telling.	Embracing a narrative
putting the budget and the design 'pearls' where they are most effective.	Concentrating efforts
establishing bonds between different segments of society and providing richness for people, fauna, and flora alike.	Building community
	REFLECTING
documenting and sharing failures and successes.	Acknowledging
sharing design knowledge with staff and colleagues.	Generating dialog
involving policy makers and stake holders in generating change in landscape perception, expectations and maintenance.	Changing opinion

Fig. 50. Our modes of design and the actions that describe them

Listening

Listening refers to the considerations around who we are designing for. Our goal is to reveal all voices that are invested in a project and to become their advocate. While some of these voices are silent, others are very outspoken and contradictory, and we understand our role as mediators that make everybody seen and heard. These voices represent our clients and target audience who might be people, ecosystems, cities or infrastructure, the ancient and recent past, and disputed voices representing conflicts of land ownership, or social and political boundaries. Project investigations habitually start with intensive background research. We collect core data on ecological, hydrological, geological, social, historical, and archaeological issues concerning the site and its interconnecting environs, as part of stipulations in statutory documents. Our methods of listening include meeting face-to-face with different factions of the public: as part of public consultation or participation processes during various planning phases, in the framework of regulated public review procedures, while talking to private citizens whose life is directly influenced by our designs, or by actively seeking conversations with people to learn from their local insights. We listen to administrators and politicians, review historic maps, texts and images for traces of the past, and capture on-site experiences. Our analysis process is not that different from that of many other practices, yet differences appear when adding the special voices that emerge from our challenging local conditions. Conflicts invariably emerge as a consequence of politics and ensuing design policies, and when weighing individual interests and the needs of nature against those of the larger public. Our strategy is to adopt a clear professional position and to advocate it with honesty. We have learned that this is key to instilling trust in the design process and reaching compromises that are acceptable to many.

Fig. 51. The Potash conveyor belt

The design actions we employ to listen to and retrieve different voices vary extensively from one project to the next. For the potash conveyor belt project to the Dead Sea Works (1986), Shlomo spent weeks reviewing all 40 kilometers of the planned alignment traversing the dramatic topography of the Negev desert to discover the intricacies and vulnerabilities of the fragile desert environment, sometimes on foot, sometimes on jeep trips. Like this, he was able to experience and understand the ground, and to suggest adjustments to the alignment to respect important views, save a riverbed or a rare tree, ensure the connectivity of wildlife corridors, and decide where to replace an area of land fill with a bridge.

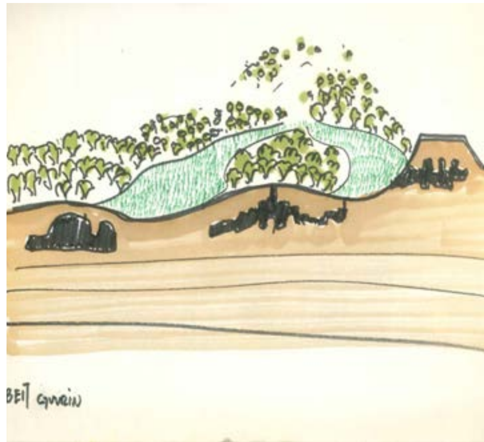


Fig. 52. Sketch by Shlomo highlighting the inter-dependent relationship between the agricultural landscape above and the archaeological finds below, Beit Guvrin National Park

During Shlomo's tenure, a substantial number of archaeological parks were excavated and opened to the general public. The involvement of the office typically started during the excavation phase, actively contributing to the discussion on which areas of archaeological finds should be shown to the public. 'The Past as a Client' was part of Shlomo's belief that our responsibility as designers is to expose the contributions of the many different cultures that flourished on the land of what is today Israel. Reading the context of the site and considering the finds as part of their larger historical and cultural environs, created the basis for choosing the landscape narrative for many of the parks. It marked a departure from looking primarily at the archaeological content when considering the design of the overall park. Examples include the Beit Guvrin National Park (1988-1998), a World Heritage Site exhibiting the remains of the ancient

town of Moresha with hundreds of surviving, bell-shaped underground water reservoirs, burial caves, a Roman-Byzantine amphitheater, and a Byzantine church. Shlomo, and associate Anat Sadeh in particular, spent many days on-site discovering the different excavations sites, often crawling on all fours through the labyrinth of underground spaces to decide which ones could ultimately be accessed and become part of the overall park experience. They also explored the large area of the above-ground landscape, discovering special points of interest and reading the agricultural landscape that had enabled human settlement in this region in the first place, while searching for the contextual framework that would ultimately inform the organizational structure and landscape concept of the park.

Fig. 53. The central axis of the Sherover Promenade with a view toward the Mount of Olives. The axis was excavated approximately 7 meters down to the original topography

Former associate Judy Green recalls analyzing historical surveys for the Sherover Promenade project (1989) to determine the original topography of the site in order to restore sightlines along natural ridges and valleys. She also remembers reading historical texts to discover the landscape memory of the site with its breath-taking views towards the Old City of Jerusalem (Green, 2020).

For the Park of the Groves project in Tel Aviv-Jaffa (2013) we reviewed old aerial photographs to discover different historical land uses as part of our intention to reveal the multiple layers of the site's history in today's park design. Beyond the remaining fragments of well-houses and irrigation pools within the park, the analysis of the historic material made it possible to find on-site traces of the agricultural use of the area between 1850-1948 when Arab farmers from Jaffa worked the land and tended to their citrus groves before being driven away as a result of Israel's Independence War. Uncovering the site's history helped re-establish a meaningful connection to the park for both the city's Jewish and Arab populations.

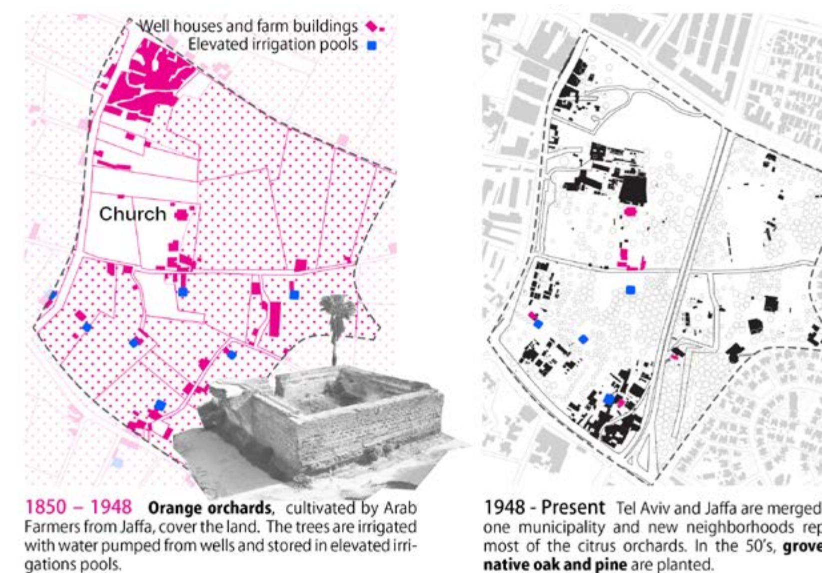


Fig. 54. Diagrams revealing the network of well houses, farm buildings, and irrigation pools which existed as part of the orange orchards prior to 1948, and the remaining agricultural structures and contemporary buildings, Park of the Groves

Talking to the public includes another form of listening. Some of our large-scale projects undergo public presentation and consultation processes typically managed by specialized public relations firms. Seeking active involvement of the public in form of workshops as a tool for activism and civic engagement, as demonstrated in the most inspiring way by Kate Orff (Orff, 2016, p. 12), is only applied to large-scale park designs.

The Green Line lightrail project in Jerusalem (2014-ongoing) stands out for the intensive role that public engagement played during the design process and construction phase. Many different public voices were and are still heard and considered. No other project demanded our office to take a more prominent role in the dialog with stakeholders, third parties, and the public, taking the project from the statutory phase to the construction of the lightrail corridor. Designing the landscape architectural and architectural aspects of the project were obvious tasks, but Ittai spent much time coordinating with other design disciplines, and convincing policymakers, ministerial offices, design committees, politicians, municipal department heads, and the public to embrace this vast public effort to bring a comprehensive public transportation system to Jerusalem.

Fig. 55. Ittai delivering one of many public presentations of the Green Line to residents of neighborhoods located along the light rail corridor

Understanding

Understanding relates to the processing of a project's **conditions** and **context**. All projects are part of something larger: physically, environmentally, socially, culturally and politically. It takes great effort to always consider the bigger picture: clients are often not interested in acknowledging the influence of their project on the environment and subsequently their responsibilities to remediate potential negative impacts.

Understanding the role of our landscape interventions as part of green and blue infrastructures as well as of social structures has been present in our design thinking from the beginning. An early example of this realization is Shlomo's participation in the erosion control projects of the Northern Negev desert (1977) as part of a team of experts from the Jewish National Fund. The aim was to create growing conditions for desert afforestation without irrigation. The solution was extremely simple: flattening seasonal drainage ravines through grading allowed for greater water retention, providing growing conditions for desert forests that had been previously unsustainable. Through this project, Shlomo learned a lot about low-tech solutions when working in desert conditions; he also saw the potential of these desert forests to become the green infrastructure for future generations living in the Negev and added recreational areas as

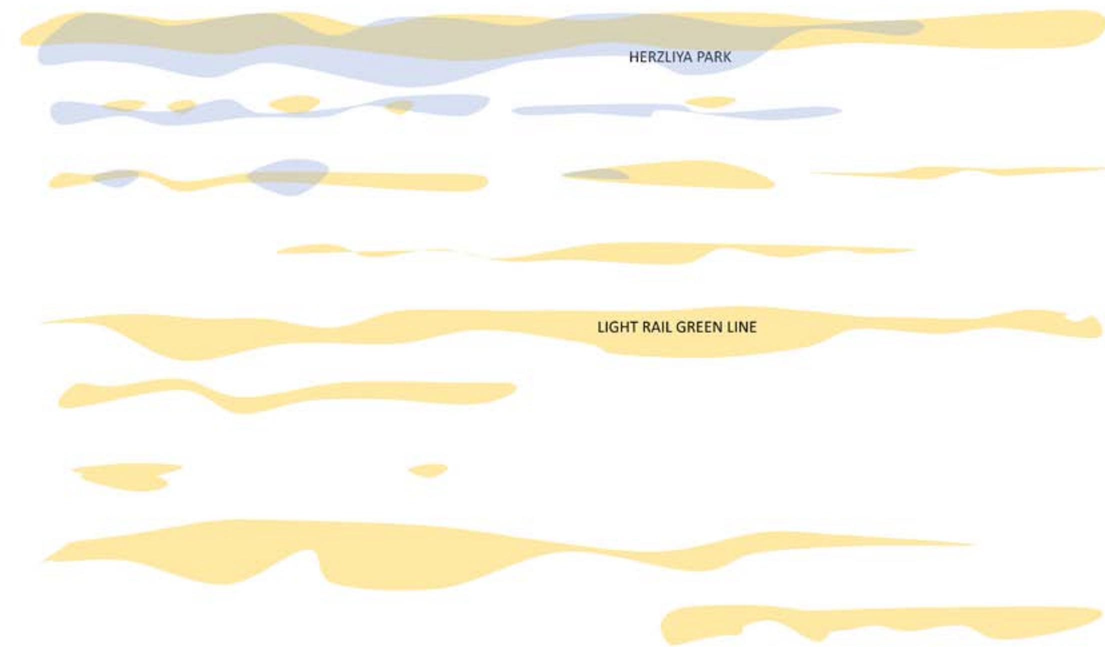


Fig. 56. Diagram illustrating the difference in the overall volume of dialog with different stakeholders and the public for Herzliya Park and the Green Line Lightrail system (discussed in more detail as part of chapter 05.03)

Fig. 57. Mature trees growing within a system of drainage ravines planted in the 1970s in the Negev desert

part of the afforestation effort. In a similar way of thinking, we approach our transportation and infrastructure projects by considering how they connect to their environment: what constitutes their physical and visual impact on the surroundings; what tools are available to us to improve existing situations, e.g. how a lightrail system can initiate a renewal process of the open space system and the built urban fabric of a city; how a particular mode of transportation integrates with general mobility; and how it can contribute to the ecological functioning of a landscape and become part of its larger environs.

Considering the bigger picture and understanding the singular as part of something larger is another reoccurring design consideration. Early on in his career, Shlomo recognized the need to acknowledge and protect landscape ensembles that include natural and man-made landscapes, representing cultural values to one or multiple groups of people. As part of his work for Israel's National Outline Plan of 2005, he identified

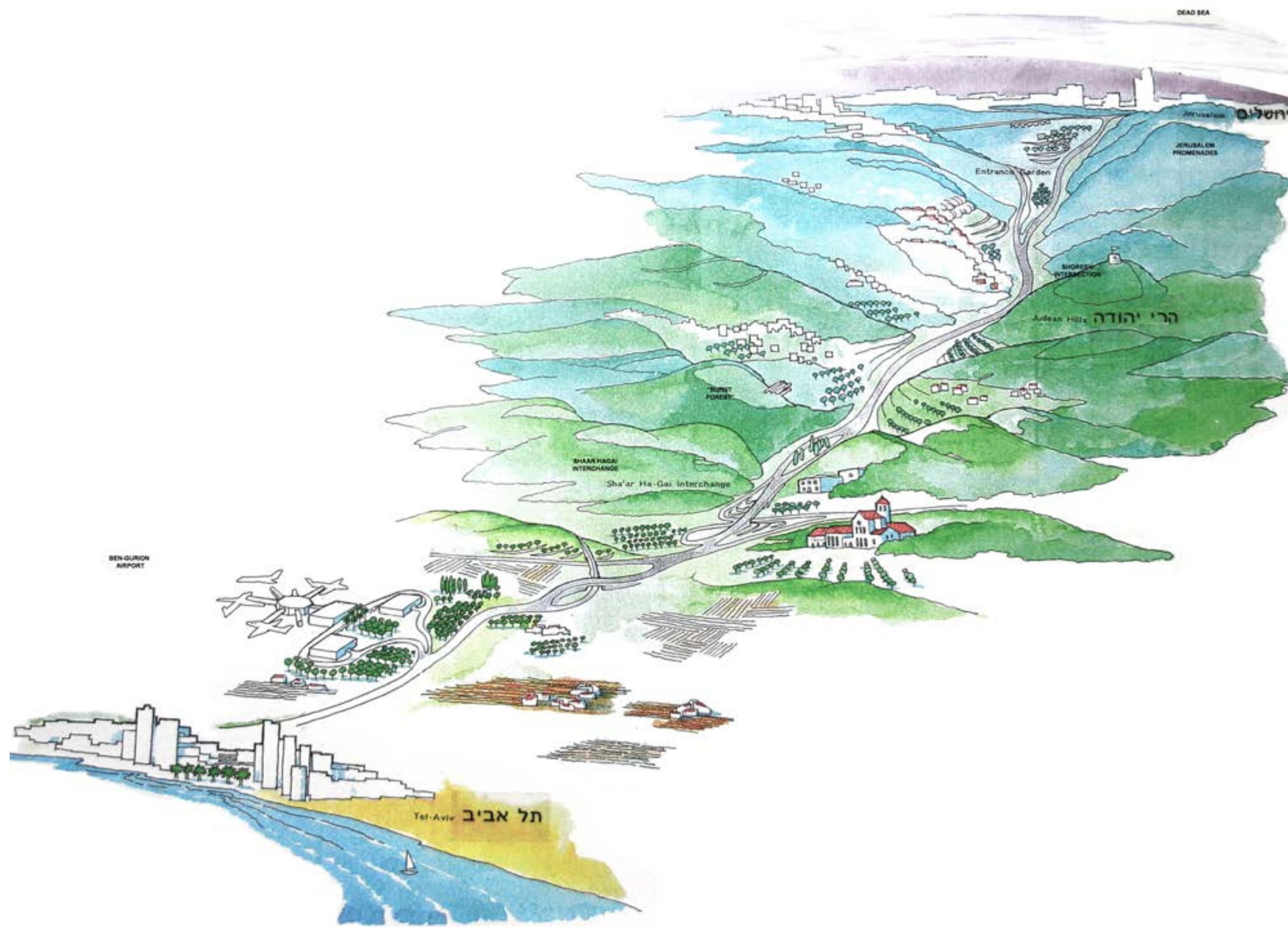


Fig. 58. Illustration portraying office projects along the historic route between Tel Aviv-Jaffa and Jerusalem

45. For further insights into the history of Israel's changing attitudes toward landscape planning, see Tal Alon-Moses research into the role of landscape planning in Israels' national schemes (Alon-Moses, 2020).

31 landscape ensembles (Aronson, 2005) to be considered in any type of future development.[45] One of these ensembles is the landscape along the historic road to Jerusalem which starts at the foothills of the Judean Mountains and finishes at the gates of the old city of Jerusalem. This historic ascent to the holy city has been part of the emotional experiences and collective memory of pilgrims, tourists, and locals alike. Over the past 50 years, the office worked on several separate projects along the route. While each project had its specific programmatic requirements, the overarching landscape concept for all was to strengthen the different landscapes along the way and to complement the experience of traveling this unique road.

Fig. 59. The roof garden plantings of the National Campus for Archaeology appear to become one with the landscape and its surroundings

The general goal to connect to the surroundings can be pursued in many ways. For the roof garden of the National Campus for Archaeology in Jerusalem (2017), we created an interpretation of a natural garden planted with native trees and decorative grasses and perennials. Viewed from within, the surrounding landscape beyond becomes the visual extension of the roof garden, making the new campus garden feel like a part of the larger setting. 'Borrowing' the existing landscape, making it an integral part of the visual experience of a project, is a concept that we engage frequently.

Welcoming reality is part of understanding and embracing the local conditions of our work environment. It relates to designing while taking into account the lack of building knowledge and maintenance, but also to the necessity of mediating the demand for instant results with the naturally slow development of our designs toward maturity. Municipalities

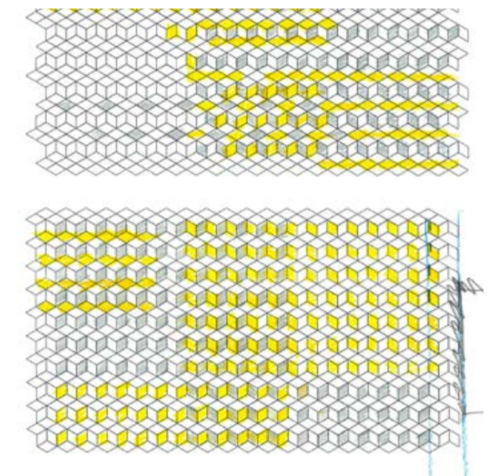


Fig. 60. Photograph showing the completed monochrome paving pattern as compared to two of many color studies produced during the detailed design stage of the New City Center of Modiin project

are especially susceptible to these types of public criticisms, always looking for an instant solution to any real or perceived problem. In the New City Center project for Modiin (2020), our budget, and the support of the mayor, allowed us to design the central boulevard to a high standard, expressed in design elements like fountains, pergolas, and street furniture. Still, considering maintenance issues and poor building knowledge played a central role when deciding on building details and materials, avoiding complicated on-site assembly, using durable materials and ready-made furnishings. When it came to choosing the paving type and pattern, we selected a one-tone concrete paver laid in a simple way. We loved the quiet quality of the pavers but were also afraid that the city would not be able to deal with repairs of a complex floor pattern.

In many urban projects, we have no choice but to surrender to the requirements of municipalities when designing plantings, for example when arranging groundcover areas in large groups to make them 'easy' to understand and maintain. This is part of coping with the approval process and sub-standard maintenance of landscaped areas for which we have no operative answer. One of the most common challenges we face is the need to provide sufficient shade. Common popular criticism includes 'there is not enough shade and the trees you planted are tiny'. The problem is two-fold: Israel has no professional tradition of planting large trees; nurseries don't grow them because nobody in the public sector wants to pay for them. In addition, small trees acclimatize faster and better to changes in conditions, making them the preferred choice for large-scale projects. We aim in our park projects to provide shade structures to the extent that the budget allows, but emphasize the fact that there is no

Fig. 61. Marti Franch and I leading a brainstorming session regarding the design of Sde Dov's coastal park with representatives of Tel Aviv's municipality, colleagues, project managers, team members of our joint Aronson/EMF team, and architect and collaborator Ari Cohen, 2021

46. The professional community of landscape architects in Israel is particularly supportive of each other, frequently sharing insights with each other.

47. I encouraged Marti to propose a concept independent from our creative thoughts until this point. Our practice had worked on the Sde Dov urban design scheme since 2012, primarily looking at issues of connectivity, program, and general distribution of the open space matrix while preparing planning guidelines for their development as part of different statutory plans. Marti's design proposal proved my instincts right that an outsider's point of view would produce a fresh approach to this latest Tel Aviv waterfront park: his idea of creating seven parks in one is both an original and site-specific reaction to the different conditions of the park's future urban edges. Our cooperation connects the best of our outlooks and knowledge of the project, and the professional trust between us makes this joint venture a true pleasure to work on.

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substitute for the cool shade provided by trees. Our approach is about telling our clients the truth upfront: that we cannot deliver everything on opening day, helping them to convey this reality to their community as part of public information processes.

An essential part of understanding is to admit one's knowledge gaps. Researching topics through literature reviews and learning from experts and colleagues is standard for most professionals, but it has to be mentioned as an important part of how we approach new designs.[46] Learning from others can also happen through design cooperatives. Our office recently invited fellow landscape architect Marti Franch to work together on the design for a large new coastal park in Tel Aviv. We recognized the opportunity to achieve a better result by approaching it from the background of different experiences and viewpoints: the unfolding design process proves the point.[47]

Shaping

Shaping refers to the design methods we pursue when **creating designs**. Moving between and acting on all scales greatly impacts our design thinking and helps develop the broad planning knowledge that is needed to convince others to support our professional goals. Shaping design policies on all levels of planning holds the potential to provide the framework for better design solutions in the realization phase of projects: decisions made when working on regional landscape plans, design schemes for new neighborhoods, infrastructure and landscape rehabilitation projects inform the designs of parks and new urban streets, and vice versa. A good example is our ongoing involvement in the redesign of Tel Aviv-Jaffa's former Sde Dov Airport into Israel's most dense, mixed-use urban quarter.

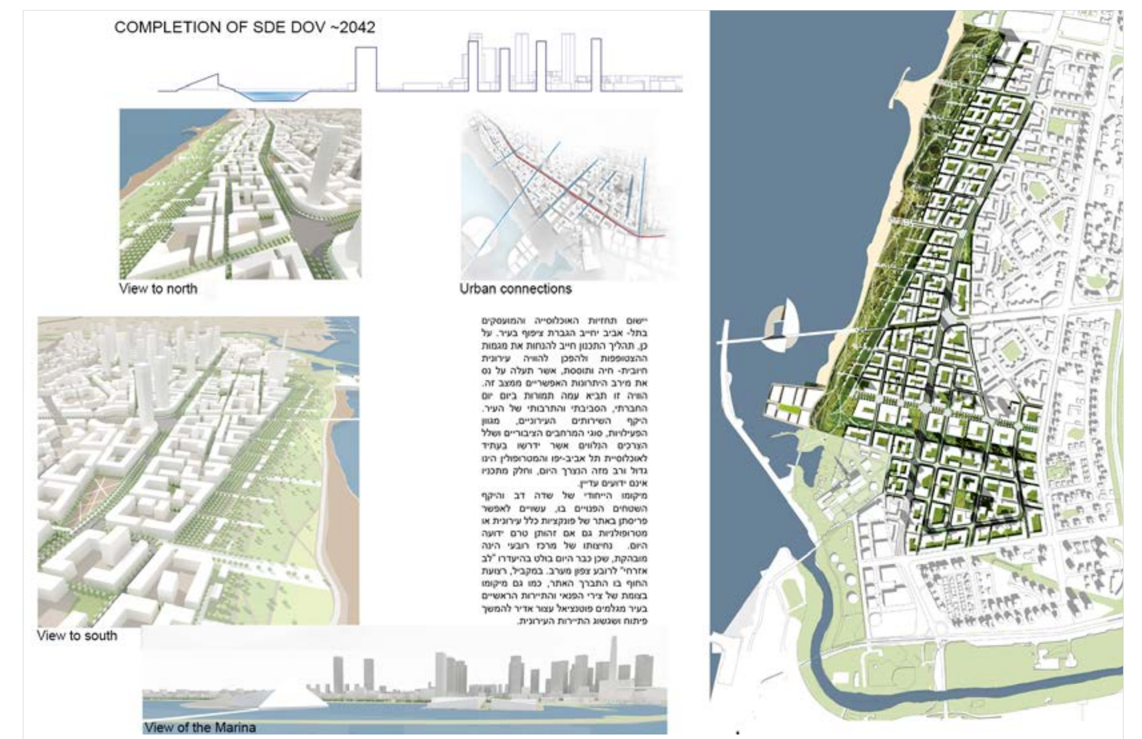

Fig. 62. Drawing panel submitted for the winning competition entry in 2012, reflecting all major design decisions regarding roads and open spaces presently reaching the first phase of construction

Awarded to us through a competition win in partnership with Ari Cohen Architects in 2012, we are working today on the detailed design for the roads and parks of the first development phase. Issues of sustainability, connectivity, personal mobility, and the right to high quality open space promoted as part of our first ideas were translated into binding planning documents, making it now possible to turn these early visions into reality. A perpetual cycle of reflection allows us to examine first-hand what works and what doesn't, and to adjust our professional attitudes accordingly.

Fig. 63. The Negev Phosphate works project: vision and reality in the 1990s. Since the photograph was taken, the shape of the initial deposits has been mostly wiped out as a result of ongoing mining activities

The most basic tool available to shape our designs is to work with the ground: to separate, integrate, hide, surprise, protect and enable experiences to happen. The most dramatic example of that is the Negev Phosphate works project (1990). The office was hired to suggest approaches to mitigate the negative visual impact of the large, rectangular excess material deposits, leftover from the excavating process of phosphates. Shlomo based his remediation concept on the main characteristics that had shaped the natural desert landscape: its geomorphology and wind erosion. He found the inspiration for his design solution in the sculptural qualities of the landscape and suggested depositing the excess material in free-form layers, echoing the shapes of the surrounding mountains, and counting on the wind to erode and sculpt the edges of the deposits over time.[47]

Another small-scale example highlights the effectiveness of working with topography in intensifying spatial perceptions of spaces. As part of the arrival sequence to the entrance building of Yad Vashem (2008), the ground plane of the entrance plaza was raised at a 5% angle, heightening the anticipation of the approach while still providing universal access for everybody. Minimal gestures like these are part of orchestrating experiences in the spaces we create.

Repairing nature and enabling natural processes to occur is an important objective in a country where urban areas co-exist alongside natural and agricultural landscapes as part of complex land-use patterns. This is true for infrastructure projects which rarely enhance existing landscape values; yet their landscape rehabilitation can contribute to biodiversity and provide access to new green open spaces for recreation. As part of the 3 km long Red Line light rail extension to the Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem (2021), close to a thousand native trees, and 120,000 ground species were planted to strengthen the local flora of the surrounding

48. This project started a new way of thinking about landscape remediation in desert conditions. Later research showed the ecological importance of collecting the thin upper layer, or crust of the natural ground before starting the excavation process, and to use it cover the excess deposits at the end.

landscape. A new path below the elevated light rail line has become a popular destination for the areas' residents. In another example, the wildlife overpass over the Tel Aviv - Jerusalem highway (2017) reconnected deer populations that had been separated for many decades, allowing for greater genetic diversity.

Fig. 64. New slopes along Red Line light rail project are planted with indigenous plant species to support local biodiversity

For the Glil Yam Park (2021), we were asked to relocate the seasonal Glilot river as part of an active neighborhood park, designing the intensive park uses around the new riverbed as its central spine, with an additional 35,000 cum of water retention pools to help reduce flooding downstream. With not enough traditional floodplains on agricultural land left in Israel's densely populated coastal areas, and climate change and hundreds of thousands of planned housing units and employment areas further contributing to the flooding problem in the future, the need to provide drainage solutions as part of intensively used open spaces turned the park into an immediate case study. The design we provided represents a first attempt to find a landscape solution for the ecological and hydrological functioning of urban water systems, a work in progress that exposes the design and maintenance challenges of such a park. Municipalities are apprehensive when realizing their new responsibility of managing the often conflicting interests of residents and the need to provide drainage solutions. This onerous responsibility includes addressing personal safety during each flooding event and in clean-ups after them; maintaining the depth of the retention areas; and educating the public about the ecological values of their changing appearance with water and wildlife in the winter, and dry, spiky fields in the summer. Ecologists on the other hand welcome the opportunity to leave engineered drainage solutions behind and to provide green-blue infrastructures connecting increasingly detached natural areas in the region.

Fig. 65. This picture, taken after a flooding event in the winter during Israel's rainy season, shows the retention pools filled to maximum capacity in Glil Yam's new park

Fig. 66. Local plantings and natural stone used in all architectural elements constitute the quiet design language at Yad Vashem

Finding the right formal concept for a new project sometimes starts by putting one's professional ego aside and aligning the design language to support a project's core intent. For Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem (2006), the goal for the landscape design around the new museum complex (designed by Moshe Safdie Architects) was to provide a supportive and quiet outdoor environment as a counterpoint to the intense museum experience. Formal restraint and minimalism in the choice of materials guided all design decisions. Pathways planted with non-flowering plants connect a series of plazas designed for gathering and contemplation. Local limestone is used for paving and walls, applied with subtle differences in shape, size and surface treatment to create a signature language for each space. The use of local materials and plant species consciously references the site's surroundings to ground the history of the past in the present.

Fig. 67. The -200m contour line wall along the road from Arad to the Dead Sea

Other projects provide us with a more neutral canvas to work on. Creating a narrative by storytelling and the abstraction of nature to define a design concept has been employed in various projects. For the project of the Contour Lines on the way to the Dead Sea (1996), the Ministry of Tourism asked to make the dramatic descent from Jerusalem and Arad to the Dead Sea, at 400m below sea level, 'visible' to travelers on the road. Shlomo's solution was minimalist: building stone walls along real contour lines, marking 100 meter jumps in elevation where the terrain allowed it. The accumulative effect of discovering these walls revealed the message. Over the years, many people told us how looking for these lines in the desert landscape became part of their childhood memories of visiting the Dead Sea.

Designing a central outdoor meeting space for students at the Ben Gurion University in Beer Sheva posed one principal challenge: how to create a comfortable microclimate that would invite people to spend time outdoors in the harsh desert climate of the campus. Shlomo evoked the imagery of a desert oasis and intended the design of the Kreitman Plaza (1994) *"[...] to reflect the tension between the structured, rational thinking of academia and the unexpected, free-form qualities of nature."* (Aronson, 1998, p.109). Shade provided by trees and a surrounding covered walkway, lawns, desert-like plantings, and the cooling effect of a central water feature abstracting a desert stream, all work together to create a moment of calm and refreshing otherness in the heart of the campus.

Fig. 68. Detail of water channel inspired by the desert streams of the Negev

Fig. 69. Aerial photograph of the Kreitman Plaza located at the center of the university campus

Our ability to shape our designs depends in part on a project's budget. This is most felt in park designs, where the cost of different design elements influences decisions about the overall design. Our strategy often calls for the concentration of funds on important park elements, creating design 'pearls' that help establish quality and a sense of distinctiveness, while saving on large-quantity items like pavement materials. This approach includes the use of agricultural plantings to reduce costs and to strengthen people's connection to the traditional cultural landscape. For the 60 ha

large Wine Park in Ashkelon (construction start 2021), we developed a design concept around the landscape motifs of agriculture, nature and cultural history based on archaeological finds and present uses of the site. Incorporating natural and agricultural plantings in large parts of the park allowed us to focus the budget on a system of activity points, or rooms, that are interspersed over the entire site and provide points of interest for all ages and types of visitors.

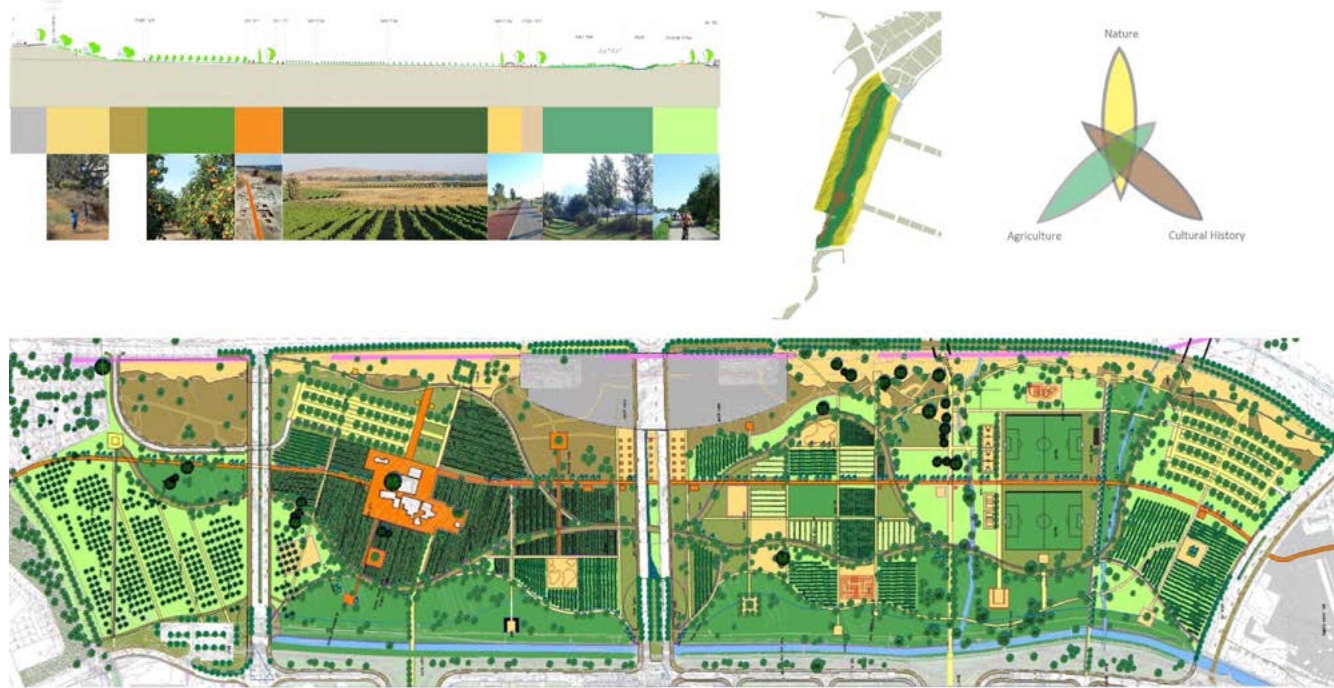

Fig. 70. Schematic design plan and section of the Wine Park in Ashkelon

Building community is the common thread that connects our different approaches. It relates to our aspiration of establishing bonds between different segments of society and providing richness for people, fauna, and flora alike.

Reflecting

Reflecting refers to the processes of evaluating our achievements and failures, teaching design knowledge, and generating discourse. If not for this research, and the realization of how important reflection is for the creative growth of a practice, it would not have been included as the fourth pillar of our modes of design.

During this research, I had many spontaneous conversations with different staff members about my interest in understanding and teaching the practice's knowledge. Consistently, they expressed their desire to know more, in particular asking for more time with Ittai and me to hear about our experiences and 'see' us at work. It clarified the need to acknowledge and document both our successes and failures as part of everybody's professional growth through office talks, design sessions, site visits, and conversations over lunch. Many mentioned how much they learn from their more experienced colleagues, and we started lectures given by team members sharing their specific insights. As a result of the informal

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dialog that the research initiated in the practice about learning from each other, people feel more at liberty to join in on design meetings and make suggestions to encourage social/professional exchange. Last week one of our junior architects proposed installing monthly mini-charettes about imaginary design problems, an idea we adopted immediately. Maintaining a high-frequency level of exchange though within the practice over time remains the hardest goal to achieve, irrespective of all our good intentions.

Generating dialog as part of public lectures, articles, and sharing design knowledge with colleagues and students is another valuable platform for exchange: this mode of exchange is most relevant for the more senior staff who participate in these activities. Site visits with university students are particularly rewarding. During these walks, we share our enthusiasm and insights, but their questions present us with alternative readings of the project, and sometimes criticism that we don't receive from others. Their often unintended directness reveals their concerns and what is important to this next generation of designers.

Reflecting extends to sharing what we have learned with our clients. The management of the Herzliya park serves today as a case study for municipalities that are commissioning large parks. We regularly connect new clients with the maintenance staff of Herzliya, to help them understand what is involved in the upkeep of large parks, and how these issues are addressed in our proposed designs. Establishing lasting relationships with our clients and keeping in contact with the future stewards of our projects allows us to influence decisions about changes that will invariably occur.

Finally, we are interested in advocating for our professional goals and actively changing opinions, involving policymakers and stakeholders in generating change in landscape perception, expectations, and better maintenance. Working on all levels of planning is key as the powerful tool to involve the widest section of decision-makers in promoting and explaining the need for change.

04.04 Modes of Expression

"[...] all the history of information displays and statistical graphics - indeed of any communication device – is entirely a progress of methods for enhancing density, complexity, dimensionality, and even sometimes beauty." (Edward R. Tufte, 1990, p.33)

Drawings have always been the most dominant form of architectural documentation and representation. This chapter examines the practice's extensive graphic output as an additional tool to understanding our legacy: our different modes of expression, design interests, creative sensitivities over time, and the influence of key personnel on the practice's creative thinking. It highlights the fact that throughout the years a wide variety of different graphic approaches were applied to express the same core design beliefs that were formed in the beginning but are still relevant today.

Reviewing the office design archive reveals moments of powerful insights, innovation, and exceptional beauty of drawings, and an overwhelming preference for using drawing over model making. It also attests to a loss of knowledge when key designers left the practice: more often than not, their artistic creativity found no continuum in the creative expression of the next generation of designers. Our drawings reflect the many ways in which we, individually, make our creative process seen: articulating our imagination and vision of the landscape and of buildings to be constructed by others. The lack of model making as an explorative tool reflects the personal preferences of Shlomo, Ittai, and myself. Although not discouraged, there are very few examples of models built as part of the creative process, mostly attesting to the creative urges of specific staff members.

Choosing from the wealth of archived drawings was tough. Many designers have contributed to the practice's creative output over the past 50 years, elevating the level of quality through their particular skill sets. However, as part of exposing dominant and influential examples of graphic expression within the office's design culture, the chosen works cover the lead designers' preferences of expression,[49] and that of key staff members whose exceptional graphic talents added to the multi-faceted 'style' of the office. We are aware of the warping effect that beautiful drawings have on our acknowledgment of personal achievement. In the same way that the impact of planning policy documents and written guidelines on design decisions are often underappreciated, so too the wide-ranging critical importance of the contributions of various staff members to the architectural outcome is often not sufficiently recognized. Inescapably though, the presented selection of drawings showcases the work of only a few.

Drawings from different periods of the office reflect, as would be expected, global trends and fashions in illustration techniques, analysis methods, and changes in expression with the appearance of computer-aided design. Great differences are also apparent concerning the specificity of graphic material required for different project types, and landscape architectural and architectural projects in general. Yet most eloquently, they tell the story of key staff members who brought with them their professional background and talents, who were encouraged to shape the design process and graphic visualization of projects during their respective time in the practice. The story told by the practice's drawings highlights the practice's preference for individual-driven expression over standardization of design methods and style, seeking excellence through the exploration of personal knowledge. The lead designers, Shlomo, Ittai, and myself, are part of this group with individual styles of expression that define our design thinking but have never suppressed parallel ways of conceiving architectural designs. Other practices successfully design and express themselves within defined, reoccurring parameters. Shlomo's mentor Lawrence Halprin serves as a prominent example: Halprin's modes of expression and design thinking remained the dominant voice in his practice until he decided to close it when retiring. Opposite contemporary examples are American office SCAPE, led by Kate Orff, and Catalan office EMF, led by Marti Franch. The former developed a groundbreaking signature drawing style that communicates their practice's ecological and social agenda with the notion of time (Orff, 2016). The latter produces award-winning landscape projects by encouraging individual-oriented exploratory design processes, resulting in varying graphic articulations for their designs. Other inspiring practices that opt for a multi-faceted graphic approach in response to the wide range of their different design tasks include Norwegian/ Colombian landscape firm LCLA office, Vogt Landschaftsarchitekten, and French Agence TER.

49. As part of mapping out the lead designer's creative development in more detail, the review of drawings extends back to student work.

In his essay 'Drawing and Making in the Landscape Medium', James Corner explores the ideal state of architectural drawings projecting both artistic/ conceptual ideas and notational information. He talks about the misuse of drawings when either too much emphasis is placed on the drawing itself (ethereal drawing), or in contrast, drawings are used in a strictly functional way to convey technical information (instrumental drawing). In conclusion, Corner calls for a type of metaphorical/analogical drawing:

"such a drawing is less a finished "work of art," and even less a tool for communicating instrumental ideas, than it is itself a catalytic locale of inventive subterfuges for the making of poetic landscapes. In essence, the drawing is a plot, necessarily strategic, maplike, and acted upon." (Corner & Bick Hirsch, 2014, p. 191)

In line with this way of thinking, the small selection of drawings presented here from the office's and lead designers' pasts represents different attempts to breach, or at least address, the dichotomy of graphic representation presented by Corner. I believe that they are evocative for different reasons: because they represent a beautiful and informative presentation of quantitative data, because they establish a sensual connection to an existing situation or a proposed design, or simply because they convey an inner truth about the design through their artistic representation. Sometimes this is achieved by combining different drawings to tell the story of one design.

Fig. 71. The Negev Phosphate Works, study model by Eitan Eden, 1988

Naturally, this retrospective starts with Shlomo Aronson. According to his wife Sandra, Shlomo came to terms with what he conceived as his artistic drawing limitations early on in his career. As an answer, he developed fast 'napkin' sketches to convey his design ideas to his staff. He also used sketchbooks to record his ideas in colorful design diagrams, and to develop and record his design processes, as in the case of the Concept Plan for the Forests of Israel (1973), or the National Outline Plan for Israel (2005). Shlomo's sketches possess both originality, beauty and clarity.

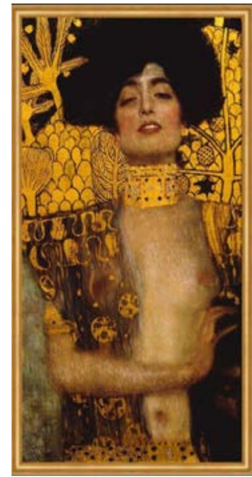

Fig. 72. Judith and the Head of Holofernes, Gustav Klimt, 1901

Fig. 73. Sketchbook painting, Shlomo Aronson, 1965/ 66

Fig. 74. Sketchbook drawing, Shlomo Aronson, 1965/ 66

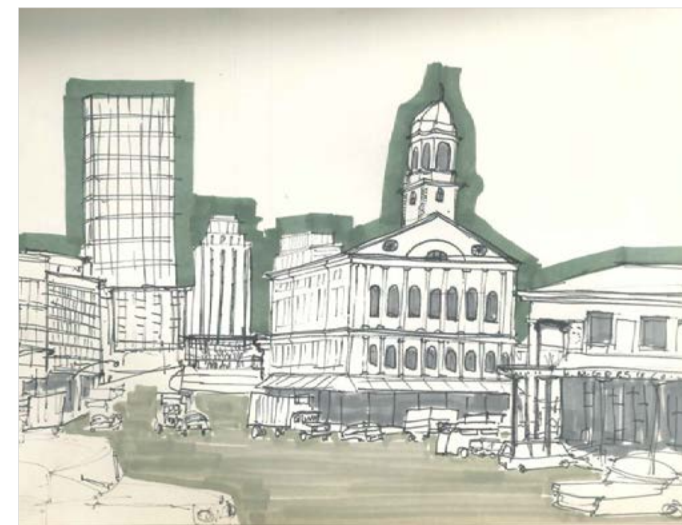

Fig. 75. Sketchbook drawing of Faneuil Hall Marketplace in Boston, Shlomo Aronson, 1965/ 66

They provide insights into his design thinking but above all, they reflect the importance he placed on formulating design concepts at the onset of new works. Shlomo himself understood his sketches to be an important tool, but always questioned their quality when comparing them to the drawings of his 'more artistic' peers.

Looking at Shlomo's earliest sketches, Sandra points to Gustav Klimt as Shlomo's inspiration. His stylized depiction of landscape elements were influenced by the painter's technique of outlining ornaments and by the orientalism of the 19th century. His architectural sketches and diagrams remained consistent throughout his entire working life: simple, expressive, drawn with a thin black marker, and, when recorded in his sketchbooks, colored with felt tip markers of strong brilliant colors. Combining his sketches with text points to a possible influence from Lawrence Halprin's sketches (Halprin, 1981)[50]. It became Shlomo's favored way of transmuting his ideas. Through the ensuing design dialog with his staff, his ideas were further developed by others, shaped and translated into architectural drawings to be shown to clients, and to record analytical design information of planning documents. Astonishingly nevertheless, no standard architectural drawings by Shlomo can be found in the office archive!

50. Jim Burns about Halprin's sketches: *"Many times, words and drawings meld into a synergistic image wherein the drawing becomes the expansive illustration of verbal commentary or non-drawable ideas and the words form an explanatory armature within which the drawing occurs as the visual exemplar of Halprin's observations, feelings, and ideas"* (Halprin, 1981, p. 11).

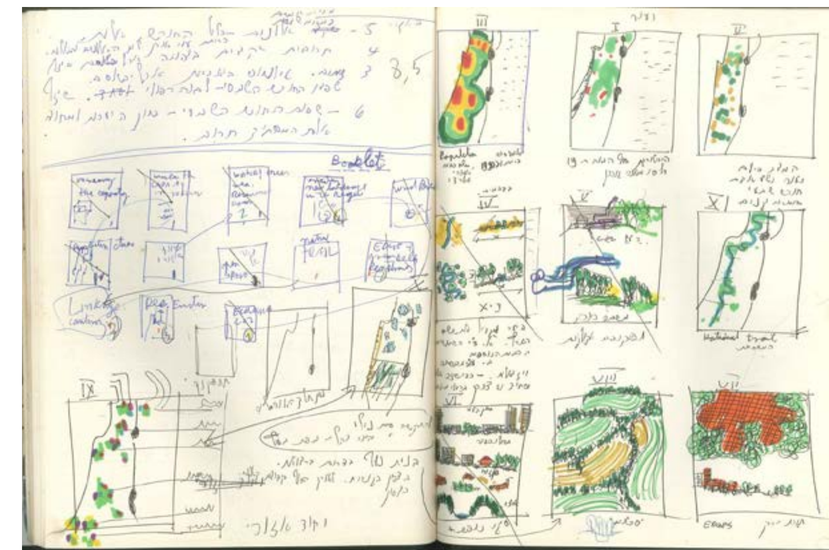

Fig. 76. Thinking about the policy for the 'Concept Plan for the Forests of Israel', Shlomo Aronson, 1972

Fig. 77. Sketchbook drawing, Beit Guvrin National Park, section view explaining the vision for the park with the archaeological remains below ground, and the present-day agricultural/natural landscape above, Shlomo Aronson, 1980s

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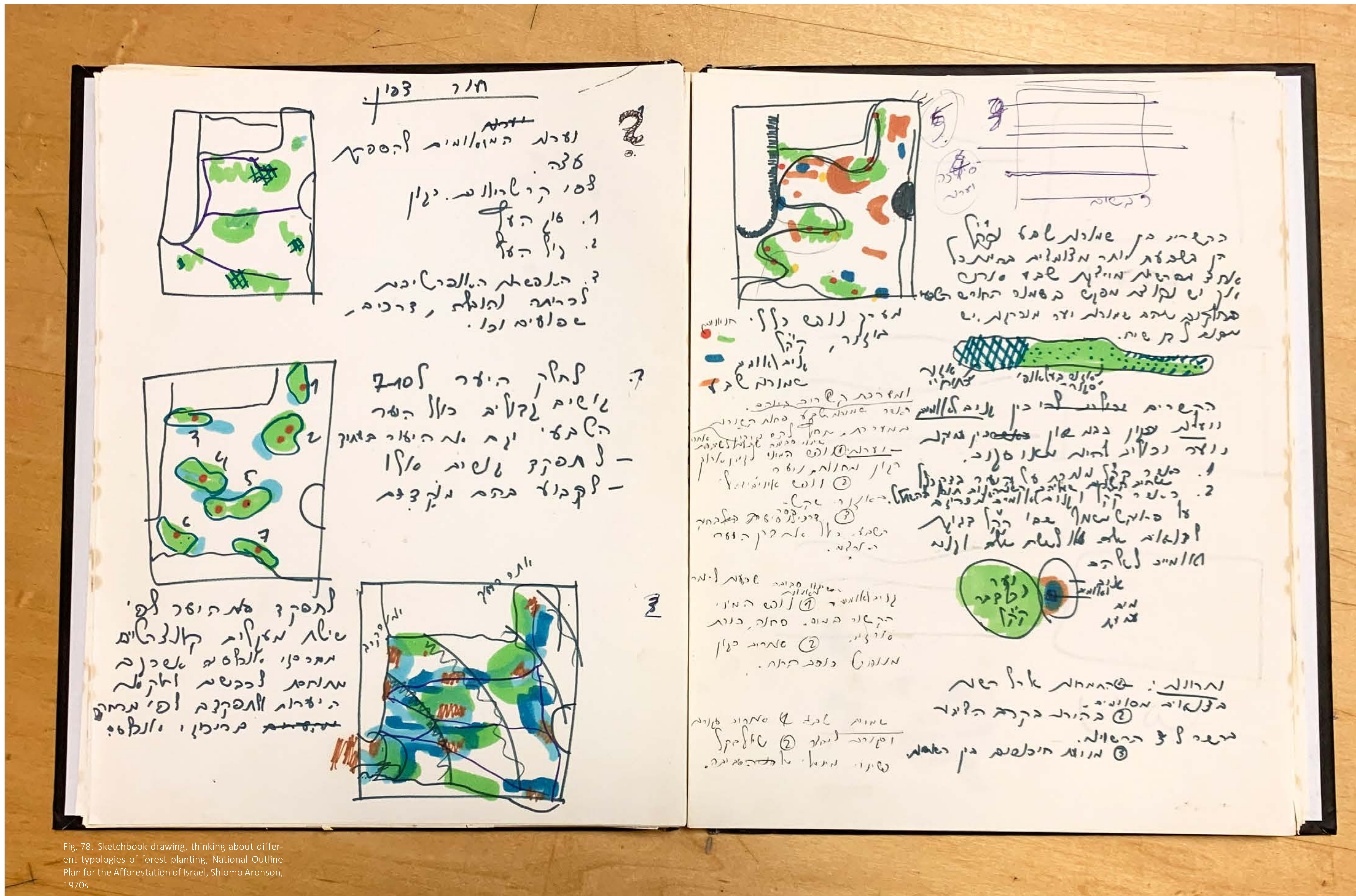

Fig. 78. Sketchbook drawing, thinking about different typologies of forest planting, National Outline Plan for the Afforestation of Israel, Shlomo Aronson, 1970s

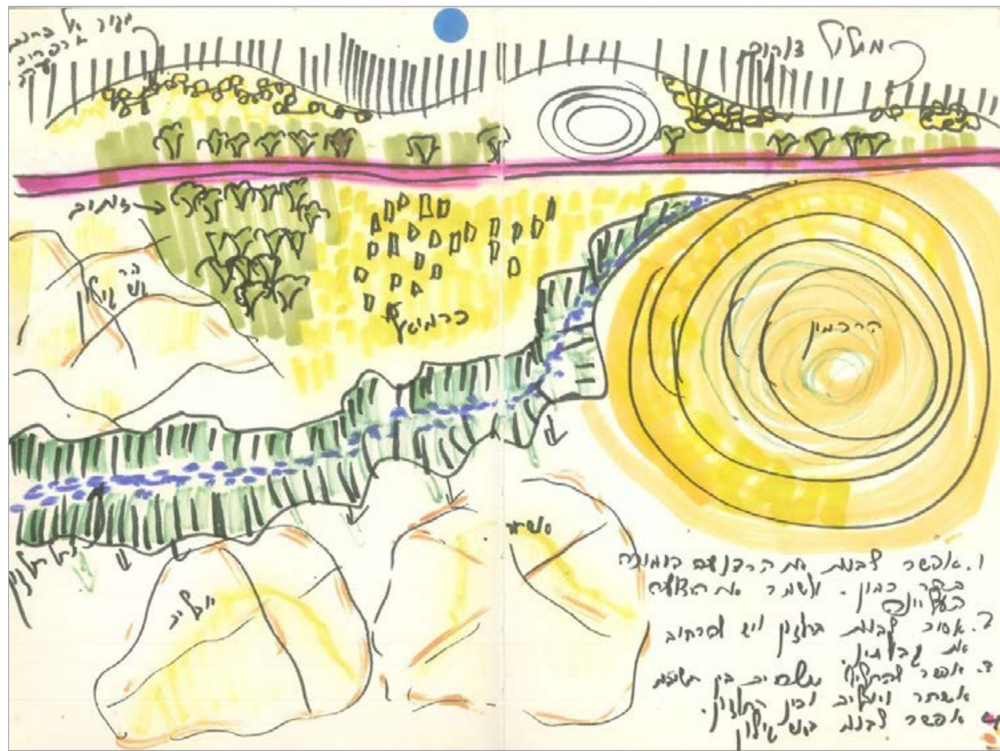

Fig. 79. Sketchbook drawing, mapping and reading the landscape around the town of Carmiel

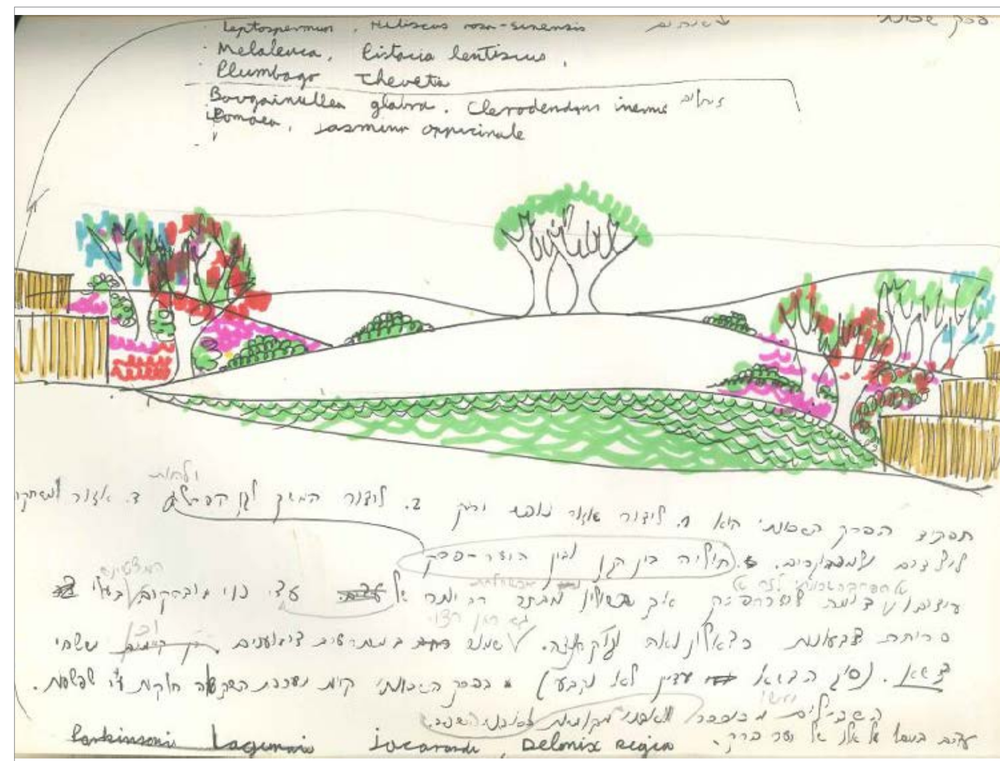

Fig. 80. Sketchbook drawing, planting scheme, Shlomo Aronson, ca. 1972

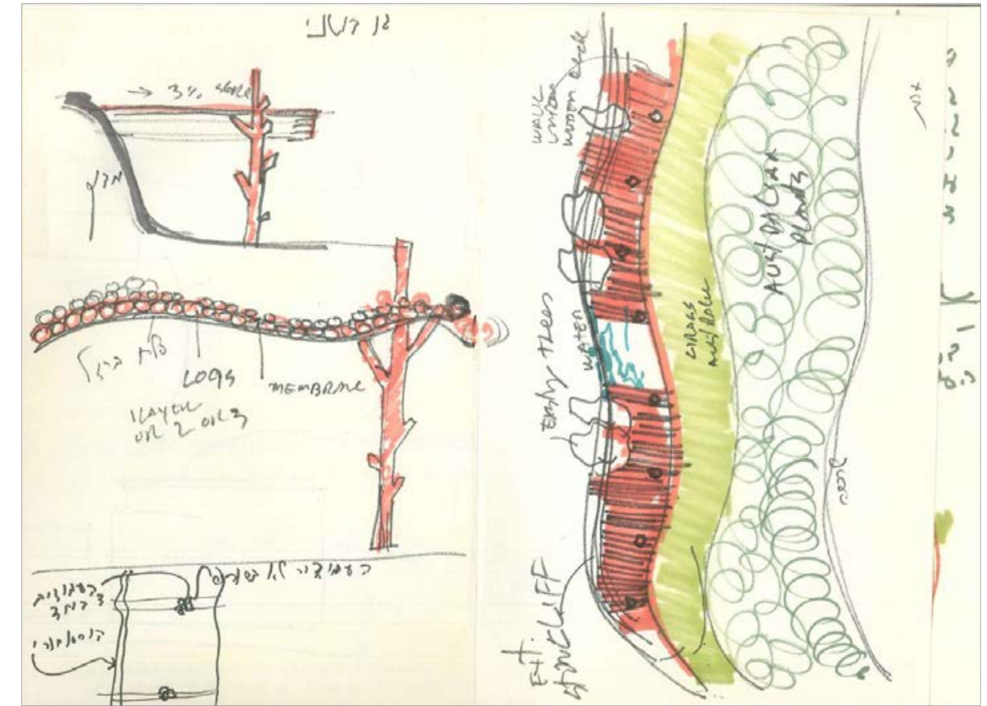

Fig. 81. Sketchbook drawing, thinking about details for the Australian section in the Jerusalem Botanical Gardens, 1970s

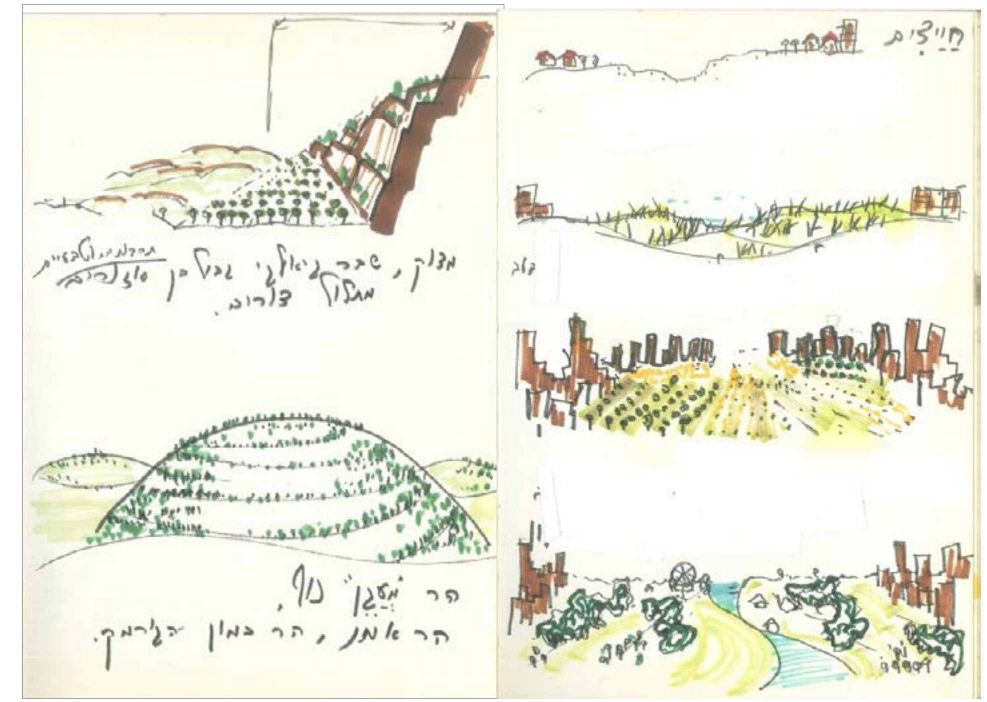

Fig. 82. Sketchbook drawing, National Outline Plan for Israel, 35, Landscape dividers, Shlomo Aronson, ca. 2000

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Fig. 83. Axonometric view showing the location of an elevated road connecting the new CBD district of Jerusalem to the Old City, Art Kutcher, 1970s

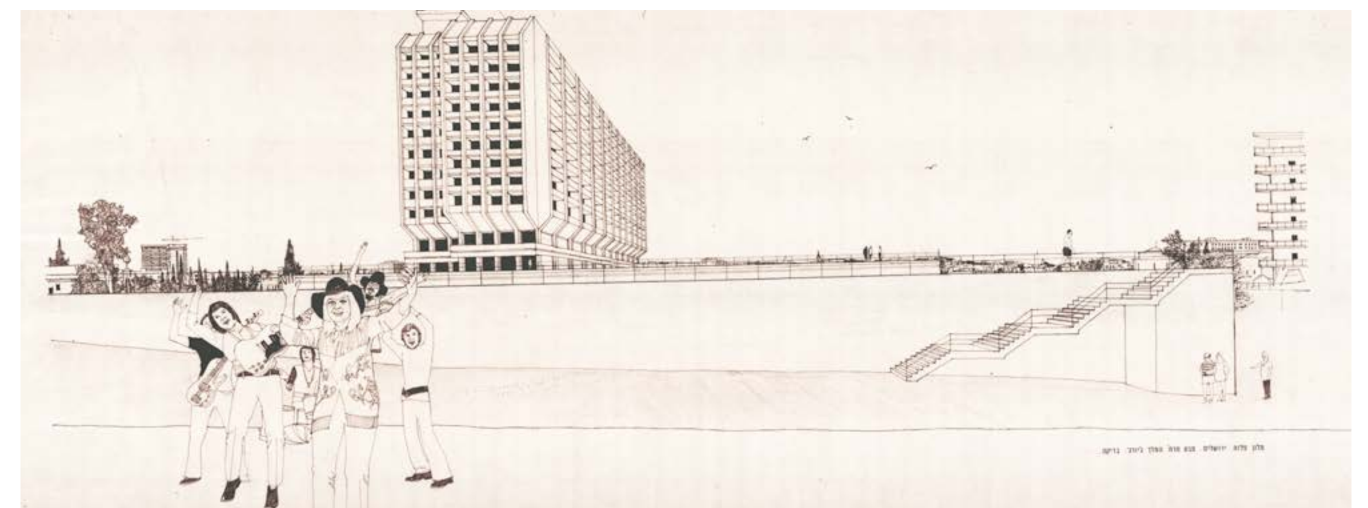
Fig. 84. Group photograph of Halprin's office with Shlomo and Art Kutcher, ca. 1964

In the early period of his practice, Shlomo assembled around him a team of extremely talented and internationally trained professionals, who produced some of the most stunning drawings of the practice. This group included architect Art (Arthur) Kutcher, a classmate at Berkeley, and later a colleague at Lawrence Halprin's office, who worked with Shlomo between 1969-1970, and again from 1976 until his final departure in 1985. Art applied his vast architectural knowledge and extraordinary drawing skills to a number of projects, particularly to the influential projects around the New and Old City of Jerusalem. His first job with Shlomo was working on the Central Business District Plan in 1970, with David Best as lead architect. Art described the potentially devastating impact of new highrise buildings on Jerusalem's urban fabric and historic silhouette as the center of their concern:

"The other more contentious part of Shlomo's and my work on the CBD plan was the development of a high building policy. [...] In the end after much back and forth and after much grinding of teeth, we came up with the high building policy for central Jerusalem which was that there shouldn't be any." (Lissovsky, 2010, p. 67)

In their work on the CBD plan, but also later when preparing the planning guidelines for the Western Wall Area of the Old City, Shlomo and Art employed drawings, site visits with key decision-makers, public participation, and the support of the press to combat many of the massive urban renewal plans for Jerusalem, inspired by the modernist urban design principles of the 1960s. Some of these drawings are highly complex, with multiple layers of information integrated into one plan, which are engaging but at times hard to understand. One has to imagine the detailed explanations that surely came with these investigations.

Fig. 85. Studying the visual impact of the planned Plaza Hotel from King George street in Jerusalem, drawing author unknown, early 1970s



Art's extremely detailed landscape views of Jerusalem, his use of axonometric views and sections to explain the importance of preserving Jerusalem's historic cityscape and surrounding landscapes were intricate, beautiful, and very effective in making the potential threats to Jerusalem's iconic skyline visible. Shlomo and Art's deep respect for Jerusalem's urban fabric did not prevent them from suggesting dramatic changes to the city's open spaces. It is fascinating to realize the degree of the design proposals' audacity when suggesting elevated highways cutting through the historic fabric of the modern city, or excavating the areas around the Temple Mount and the Western wall according to bold formal architectural considerations. Their design alternatives for the latter, though never realized, would cause in today's political climate nothing short of an international incident. Back then, architects felt free to dream big when envisioning Jerusalem's future after its reunification in 1967.

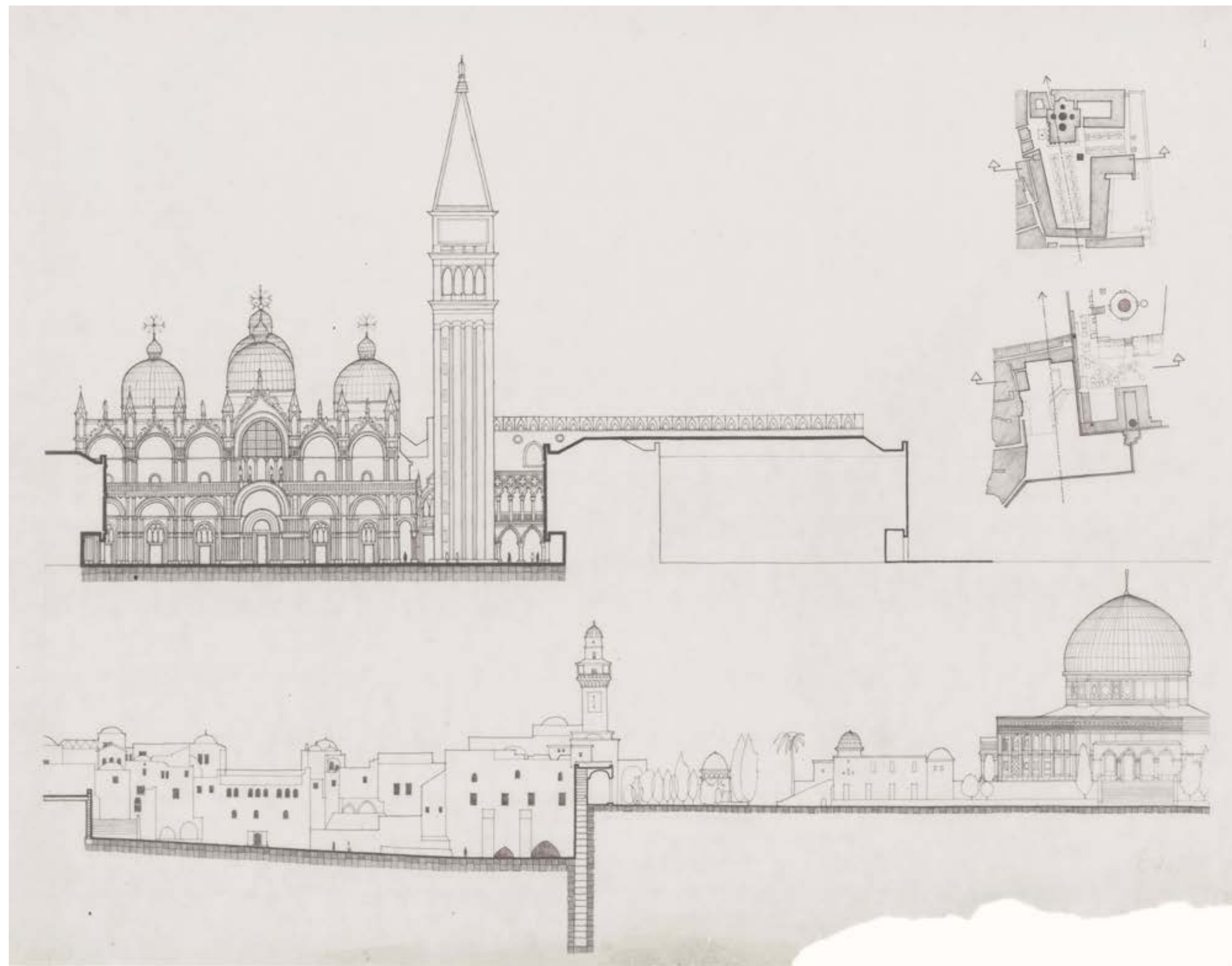


Fig. 86. Comparative study of San Marco Square in Venice, and the area between the Wailing Wall and the Temple Mount of Jerusalem. Planning Guidelines for the Western Wall Area, Art Kutcher, 1973

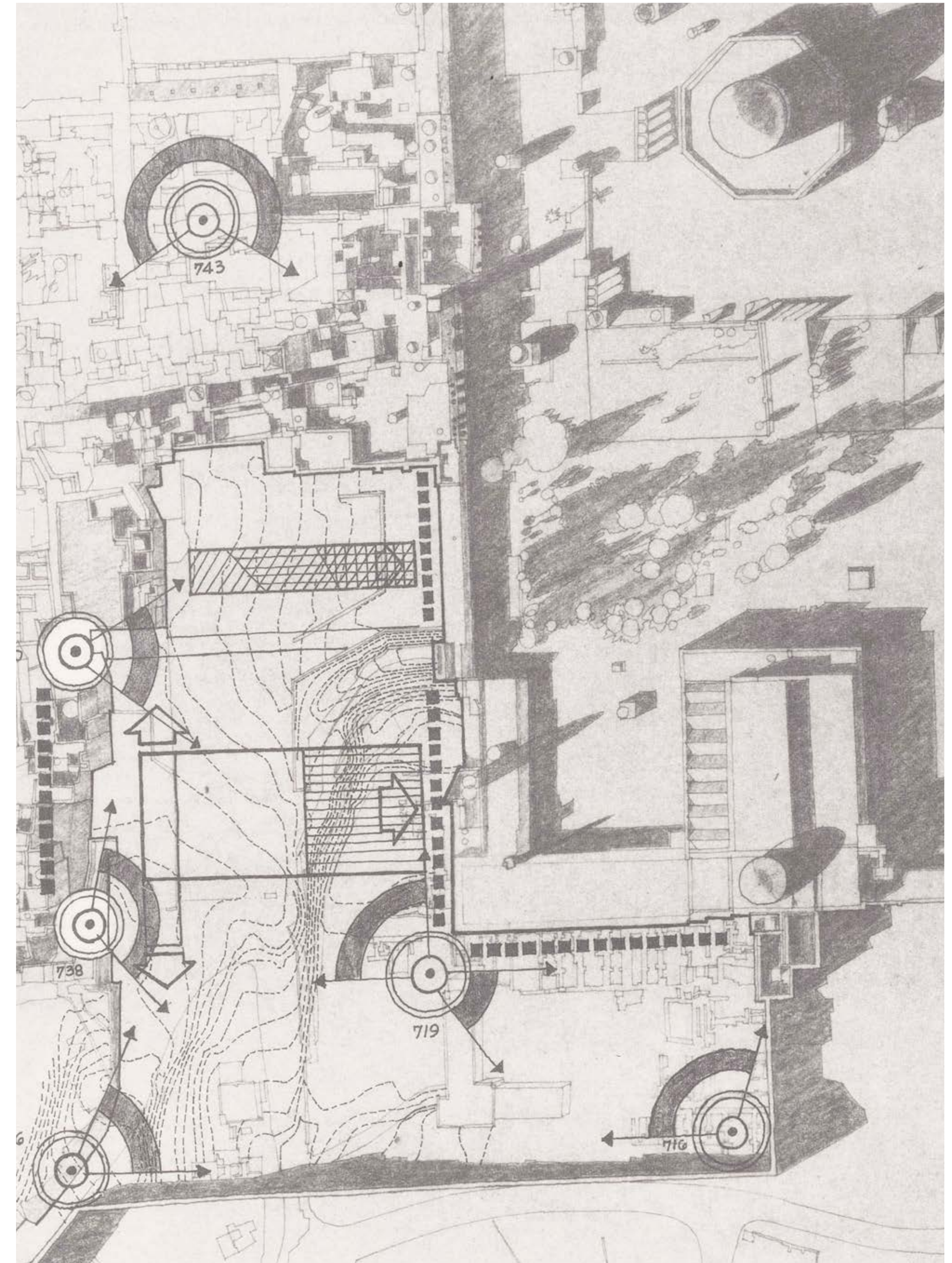


Fig. 87. Axonometric view marking viewpoints around the Temple Mount of Jerusalem's Old City, enlarged partial view, Art Kutcher, early 1970s

Fig. 88. View of the Temple Mount with the Mount of Olives in the background, Planning Guidelines for the Western Wall Area, Art Kutcher, 1973

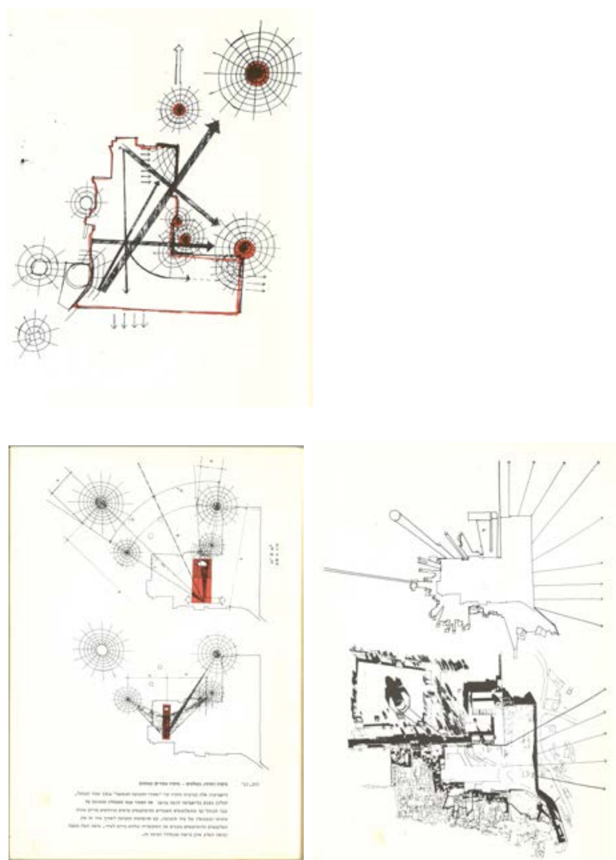


Fig. 89. Visual analysis studies, Planning Guidelines for the Western Wall Area, Art Kutcher, 1973

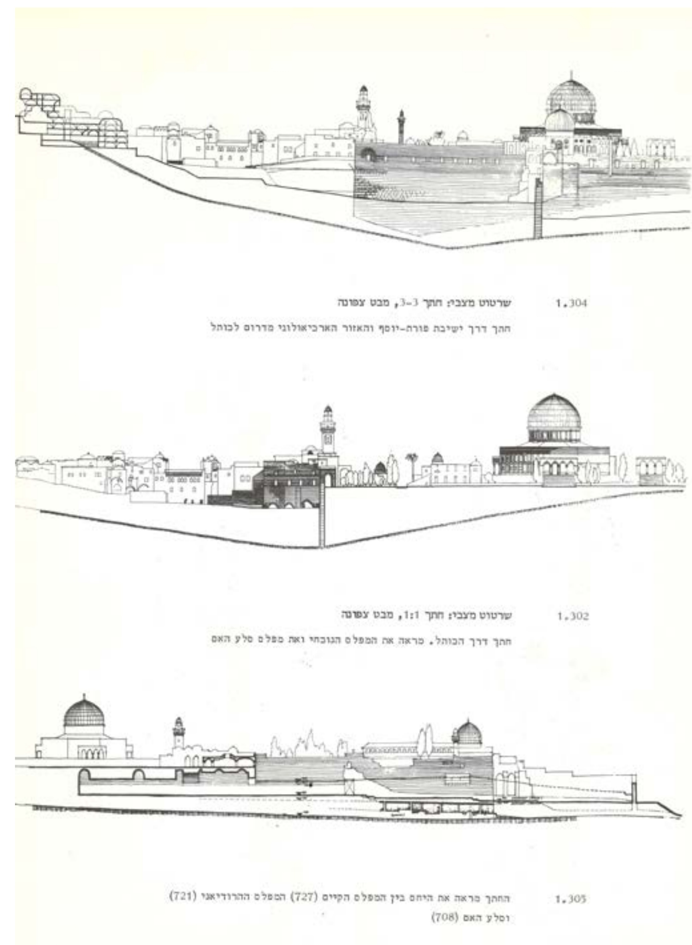


Fig. 90. Sections of Wailing Wall area, Planning Guidelines for the Western Wall Area, Art Kutcher, 1973

Art returned to the practice in 1976 after working with the Jerusalem Urban Planning Unit and writing a book about the potentially devastating effects of modernist urban renewal in Jerusalem (Kutcher, 1973). He was the lead architect on the renovation of the Dung Gate (1985) and the adjacent Beit Shalom Park (1978) in the Old City of Jerusalem, and the renovation of the entrance garden of the YMCA (1979), designed by British architect A.L. Harmon and inaugurated in 1933. All of Art's drawings reflect his meticulous attention to every detail of the design, permeating both his presentation and working drawings. Shlomo's wife Sandra remembers how Art's many study drawings for the treatment of the Dung Gate Arch helped to come to a final decision about the design. We found numerous variations of different formal design alternatives in the archive, alluding to the weight of responsibility they felt when suggesting changes to one of the historic gates to Jerusalem's Old City.

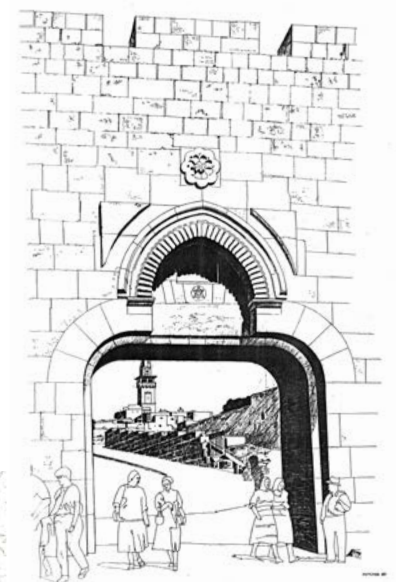


Fig. 91. One of many alternatives for the Dung Gate renovation, Art Kutcher, 1980s

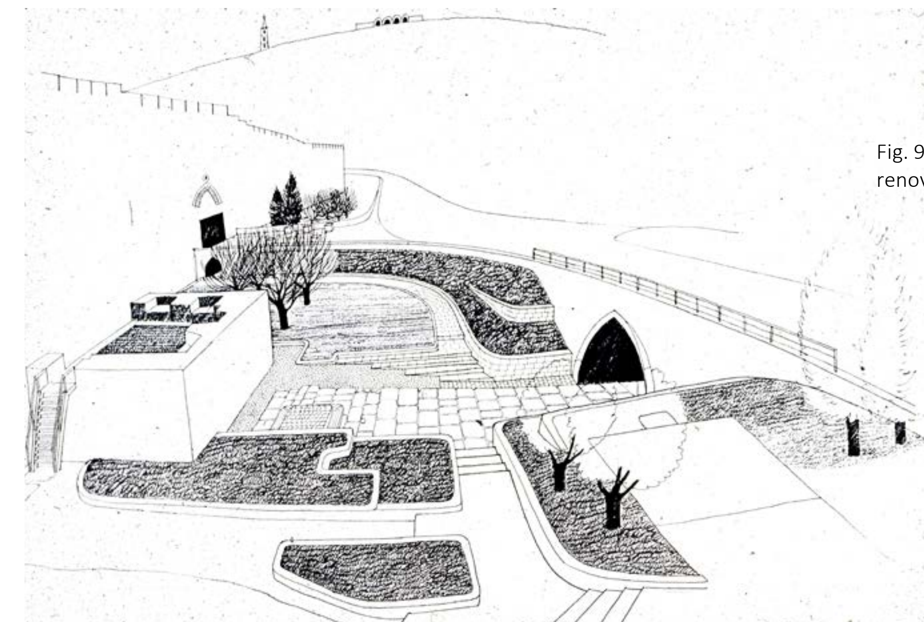


Fig. 92. Design illustration, Beit Shalom Archaeological Park, Art Kutcher, 1970s

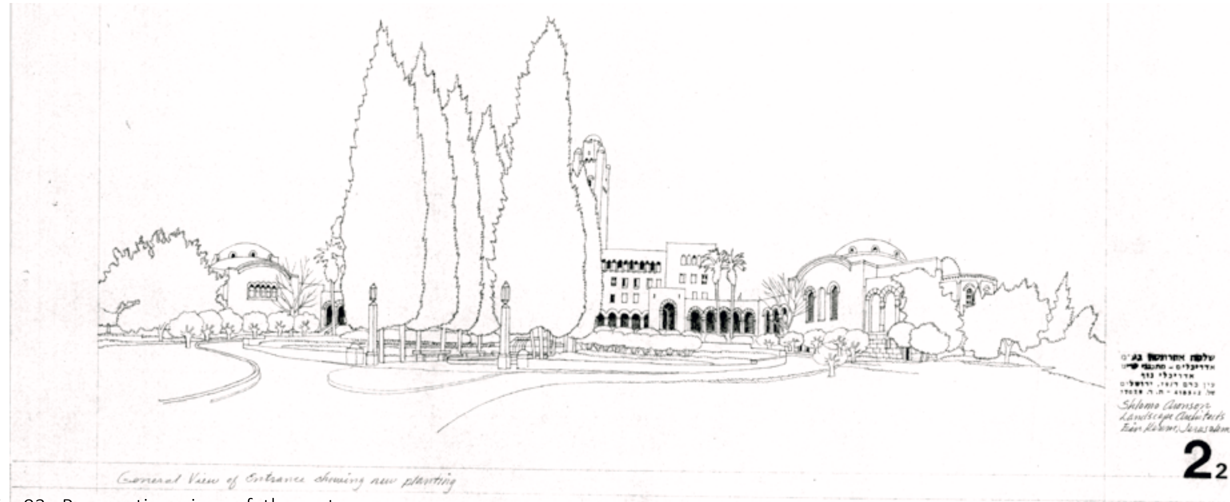


Fig. 93. Perspective view of the entrance area, alternative 2.2, YMCA Jerusalem, Art Kutcher, 1980s

Fig. 94. Detail design of the tiles and inscription of the main entrance staircase wall, YMCA Jerusalem, Art Kutcher, 1980s

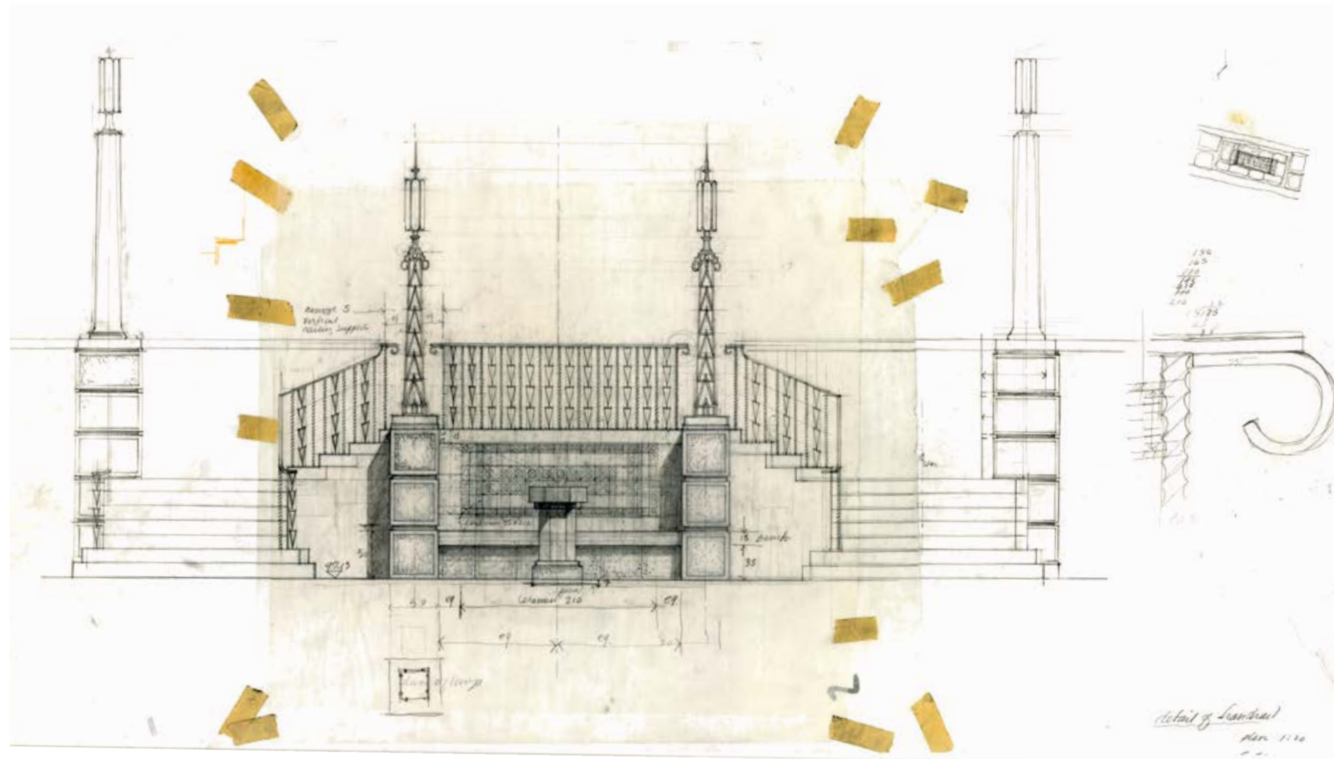
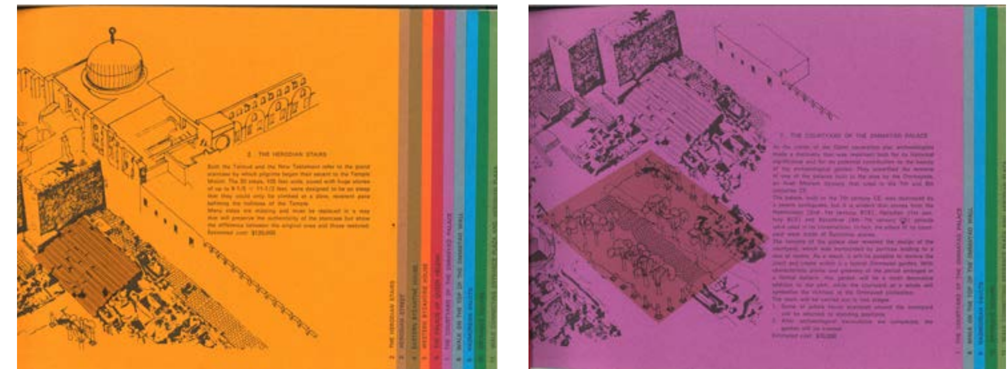


Fig. 95. Elevation of main entrance staircase, YMCA Jerusalem, Art Kutcher, 1980s

Evolving Legacy: An Exploratory Path into Uncovering and Sustaining a Practice's Accumulated Knowledge

During the 1970s, architects Peter Bugod, Eunice Figueredo, Rachel Berman, Arieh Larkey, Colin Frank, landscape architect Ron Lovinger, and geographer Uri Silverstone were instrumental in the preparation of several high profile design documents, and the appearance of a different graphic language.

The brochure for the Ophel Archaeological Garden in Jerusalem presents eleven different areas to potential donors for funding. Without going into too much detail, the almost naïve, yet clever graphic language of the axonometric views stresses the importance of the design areas within their iconic surroundings of the temple mount, rather than their individual design merits.



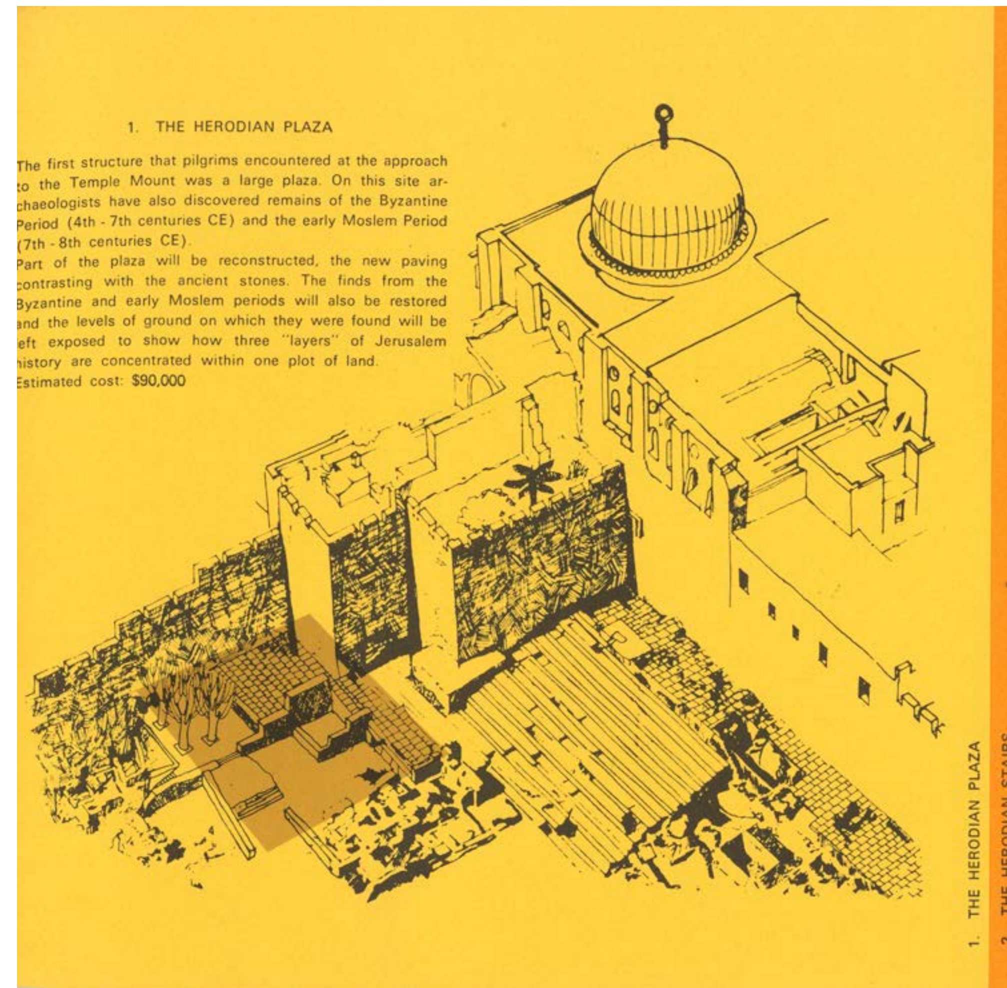


Fig. 96. Ophel Archaeological Garden, Donor's brochure, Rachel Berman, 1977

The planning document of the 'Concept Plan for the Forests of Israel' (1973) shows influences of Ian McHarg's design analysis and ways of expression: it seems plausible that Ron Lovinger, who had undertaken his graduate studies at Penn, brought these innovative ideas to the practice.

Peter Bogod's exceptional drawing skills come to life in the competition drawings for the office's winning scheme for the Roman Cardo rehabilitation in Jerusalem's Old City, a project he and his wife Eunice took with them when they started their own practice soon after.

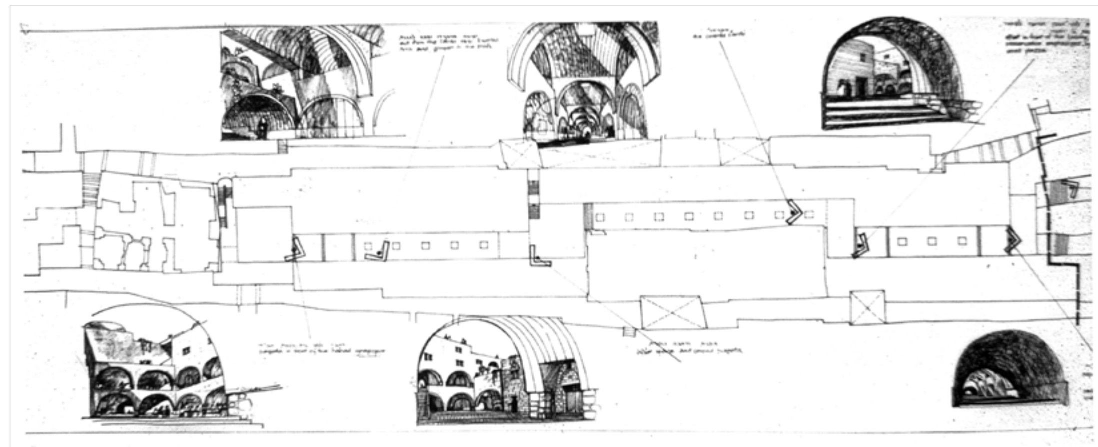


Fig. 97. Drawing for the Roman Cardo rehabilitation competition in Jerusalem's Old City, Peter Bugod, 1972

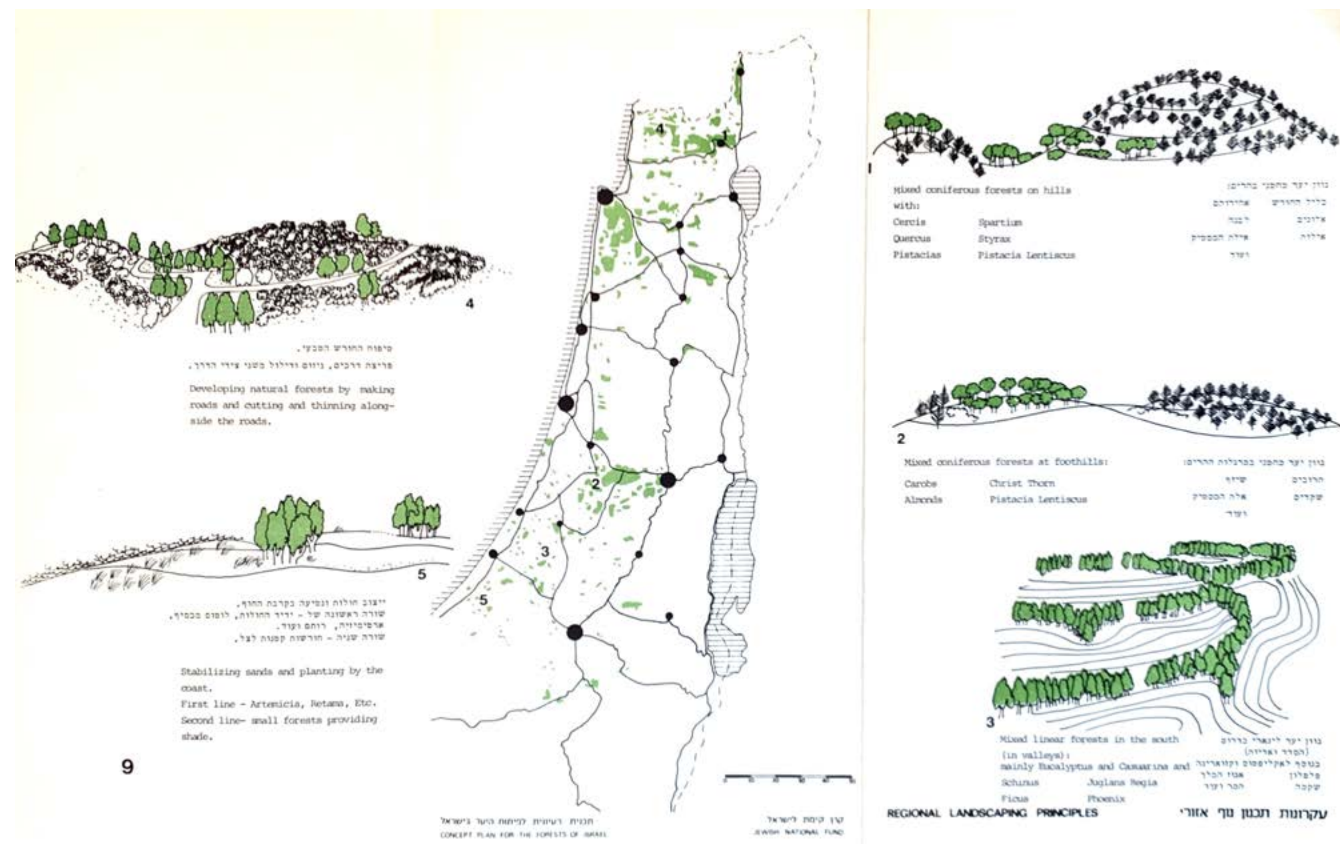


Fig. 98. Regional Landscape Principles, Concept Plan for the Forests of Israel, unknown, 1973

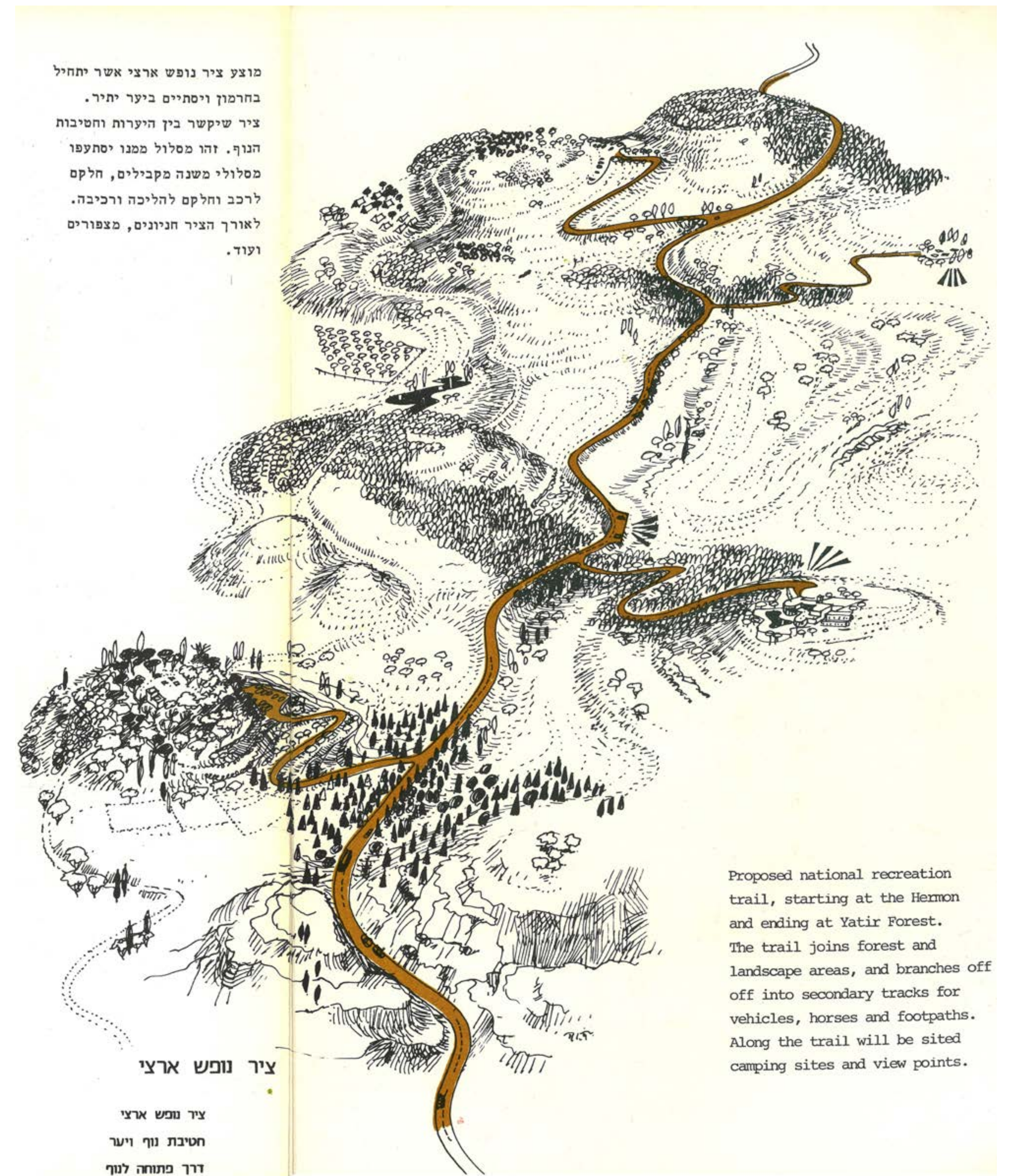


Fig. 99. Illustration explaining the idea of the national recreation trail system, Concept Plan for the Forests of Israel, Ron Lovinger (?), 1973

American architect Judy Green worked in the office between 1979 and 1994. The previous guard of key designers had left, and she overlapped with a group of new talents who had joined the practice: urban designer Daphna Greenstein, and architects Rachel Assaf, David Sagi, Hadass Ben-Meir, Robert Boro, and Stanley Fields. Judy's exceptional design sense and thoroughness influenced to a significant degree the practice's success. Besides Shlomo, she was the dominant design voice of this period, responsible for some of the practice's most memorable projects: The Jerusalem Promenades (1986, 1989), the Eilat Masterplan (1989), several National Park designs, and the Suzanne Dellal Dance and Theater Plaza in Tel Aviv (1989). In regards to her contribution to the practice's graphic expression, it was Judy who brought poetry to construction drawings: her graphic talents are reflected in the exceptional level of sophistication of her plans and details. She taught the junior staff, including me, how to create beautiful working drawings with the greatest amount of 'useful' information.

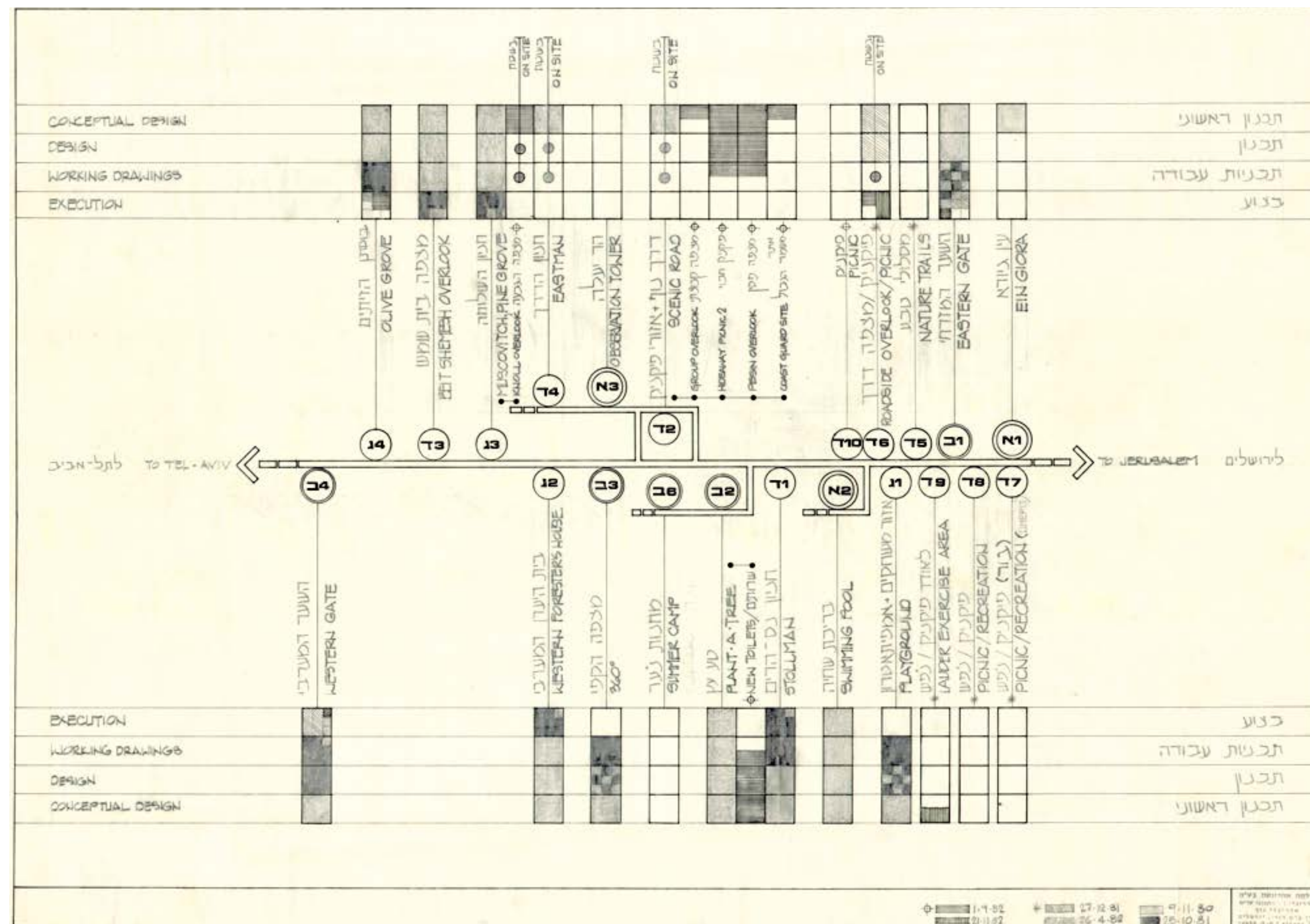


Fig. 100. Proposed planning and implementation schedule for the different areas within the American Independence National Park, arranged according to their geographic location between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, Judy Green, 1980

During the 1980s several young designers joined the office for three or four years, each of them connected to seminal projects: the Jerusalem Botanical Gardens (1979-ongoing), the Negev Phosphate Works (1994), the Dead Sea Works Conveyor Belt (1986), and the Sha'ar Hagai Interchange (1995). They were landscape architects Zofia Rosner, Michal Zussman, and architects Michael Ben-Nun, Aharon Vinograd, Leonardo Gurevitz, Eitan Eden, and Yair Avigdor. All of them possessed notable drawing skills but due to their relatively short time in the practice, their overall influence on the office's graphic output was limited. Leonardo continued to do freelance graphic work for the practice.

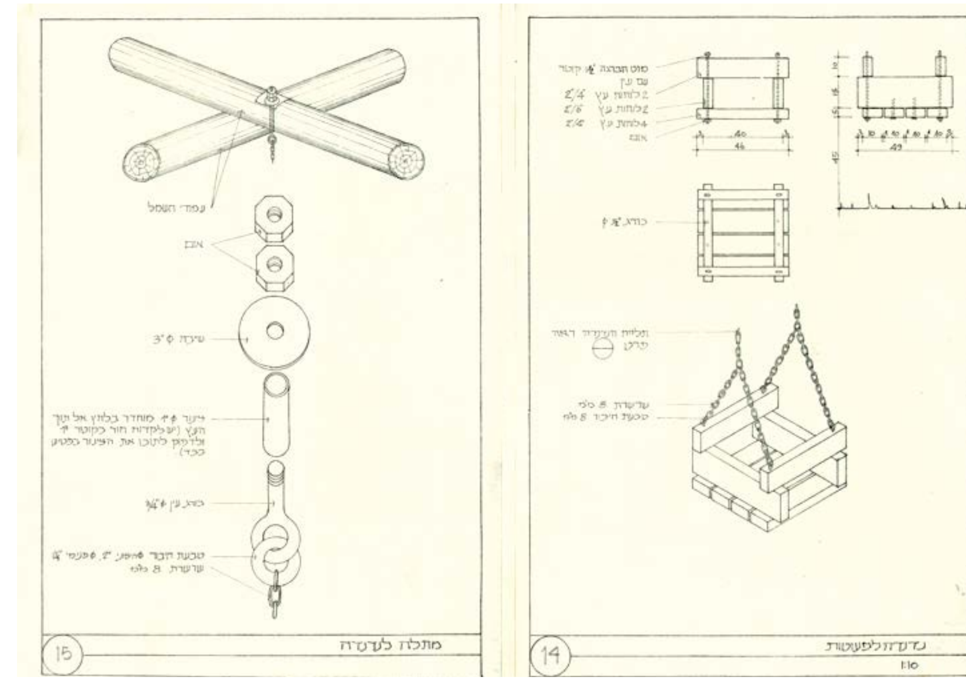


Fig. 101. Details of playground equipment attesting to the thoroughness Judy applied to construction drawings, American Independence National Park, Judy Green, 1980s

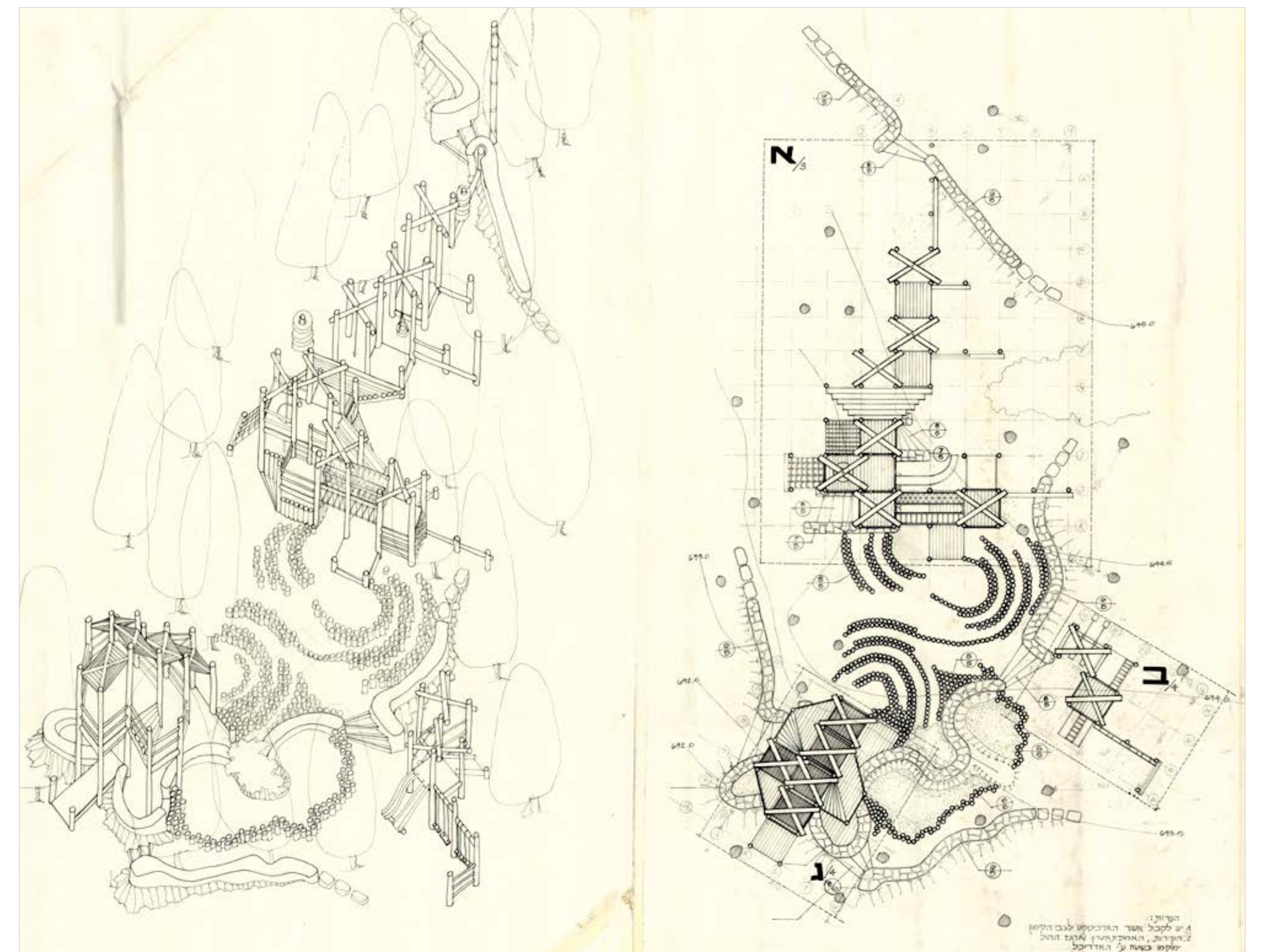


Fig. 102. Playground area explained both in plan and axonometric view for better understanding, American Independence National Park, Judy Green, 1980s

Evolving Legacy: An Exploratory Path into Uncovering and Sustaining a Practice's Accumulated Knowledge

Fig. 103. Perspective view of the Kishle, Nazareth, Jorge Salzberg, 1990s

Fig. 104. Plan view of the Kishle, Nazareth, Jorge Salzberg, 1990s

The 1990s added new influential designers to the office: landscape architects Tali Raviv-Kivity and Anat Sade, and architects Ilana Yarden and Jorge Salzberg who joined the office in 1992. During his 13 years at the office, Jorge became a go-to person for design, but even more, Shlomo relied on his exceptional drawing skills to advance a great variety of different projects. Looking from the outside, Jorge's design sketches, plans, details, and design illustrations came to him seemingly effortlessly and extremely quickly. For most of his drawings, he used a soft pencil for outlining, and color pencils to create texture and vibrance. He sometimes employed a mixed-medium technique when drawing over photographs or aerial photographs. The softness of his artistic style combined with the architectural accuracy of his drawings made his illustrations so engaging and convincing.

Fig. 105. Illustration of Mary's Spring Plaza, Nazareth, sketch over a photograph, Jorge Salzberg, 1990s

Fig. 106. Presentation prepared for client's approval of details for the courtyard of the new Hilton Hotel, Jerusalem, Jorge Salzberg, 1990s

The post-Soviet immigration, which started in 1991, brought one million new citizens to Israel, many of them highly educated professionals, including architects with an exquisite academic and artistic drawing background. Dr. Sergei Kravtzov and Natasha Macheret produced some of the practice's iconic illustrations. Later on, Sergei advanced the use of computers.

Fig. 107.Illustration of the Caesarea Archaeological Park after the renovation of the Hippodrome area and Herod's palace, Natasha Macheret, 1990s

Fig. 108. This detailed sketch of a planting plan in Hof Hasharon National Park beautifully expresses the design intent to create nature-inspired plantings, via the use of local plant species arranged in small groups, Ilana Yarden, 1990s

My return to Israel and the practice after marrying Ittai in 1994, happened during the peak period of Shlomo's professional career. During my undergraduate studies at the FH Weihenstephan we explored multiple media from water coloring, color pencils, and technical pens for drafting. During this period I discovered my love for drawing with color pencils, and it remains my preferred medium of expression to this day. Through my student apprenticeship at Shlomo's office in 1984, I entered an amazing creative environment: working and sketching with Art Kutcher and Judy Green, and experiencing Lawrence Halprin at work during the design sessions on the Haas Promenade, exposed me to the widest possible range of artistic expression. It was an awe inspiring experience, but also an incredible jolt to my professional system. I had the opportunity to see Halprin at work several more times when returning to the office between 1987 and 1989: producing fast sketches of design details to explain his design intentions, recording something of interest during a visit to the Old City, and after dinner at the Aronson's house, sketching portraits of all of us. During this time I learned that successful drawings aspire to represent multiple layers of information. They also express the urges and passion we feel for our ideas.

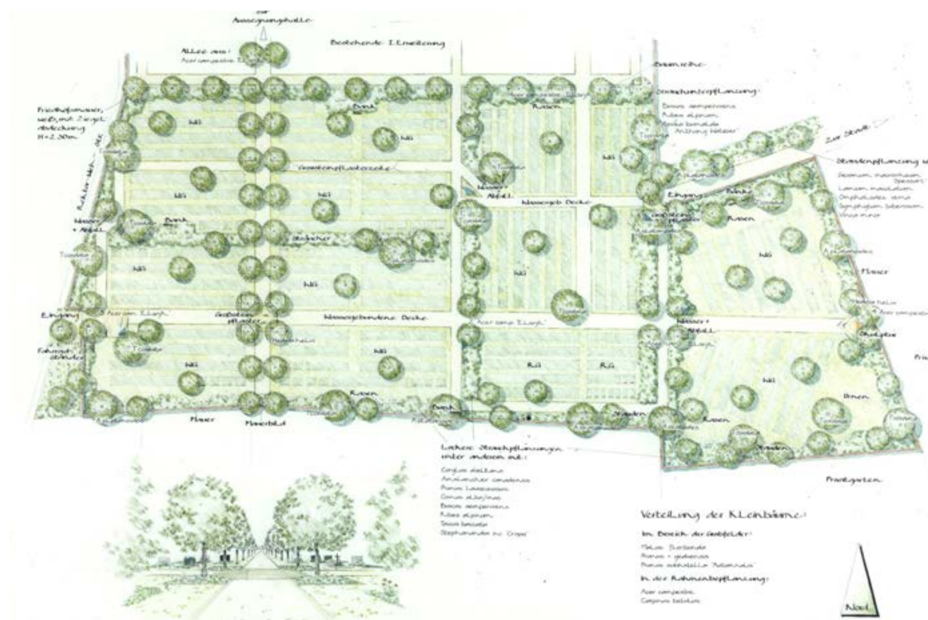


Fig. 109. This design for a graveyard from my studies at Weihenstephan shows an early example of my preference for using color pencils, Barbara Aronson, 1986

My drawings from my time at Harvard record my design explorations into the intersections of landscape architecture and urban design and architecture. They also reflect the influence that the architectural drawing tastes of my peers had on my graphic output. The colorful final presentation I produced for my first project disturbed the black and white aesthetics of my architect friends. In the projects that followed, I explored different techniques, pencil on vellum, rapidograph technical pens and pencil on Mylar, pushing to increase the degree of detailing in line drawings, using colors – red and green – only to highlight specific design elements. The amount of effort that went into preparing some of these drawings required a high level of planning. This intensive process of planning and constructing drawings had a lasting effect on me, bringing discipline to other design and management tasks in my work.

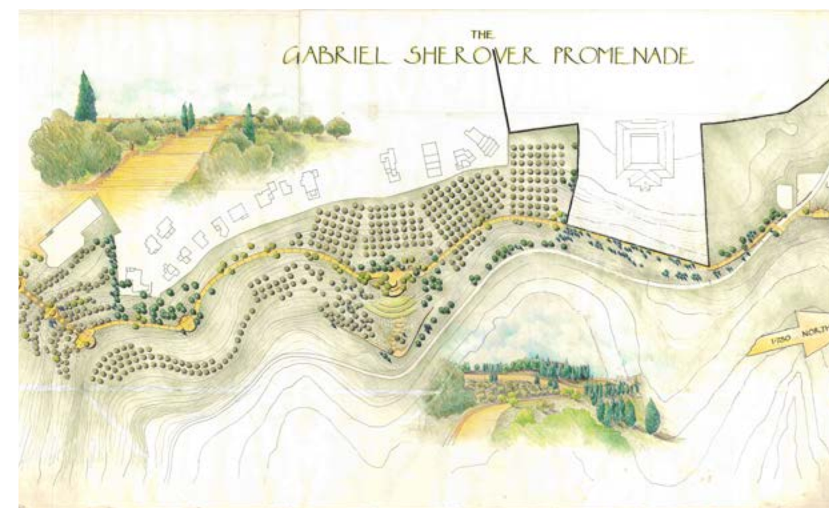


Fig. 110. The Sherover promenade was a project I was involved in from the design development phase to finished construction. I prepared this presentation drawing for my entrance portfolio for Harvard, 1989

Fig. 111. Botanical Garden in North Carolina, 1st-semester studio project. The influences from my experiences at Shlomo's office are apparent in the design, but the graphic language reflects my particular style of expression, Barbara Aronson, 1990

Looking now at the final presentation drawings for the Helsinki project, I remember the hard work and pleasure it took to produce such intricate and complex drawings. These drawings earned me the respect of my peers. Yet it is the rather simple pencil drawing of trees at the end of my park design that recalls most clearly the mood of the project. I learned a lot about urban design and architecture but realized that my true passion lay in designing landscapes.

Fig. 112. Axonometric view showing the connection to the underground Metro station, Porter Square in Cambridge, 3rd-semester studio project, Barbara Aronson, 1990

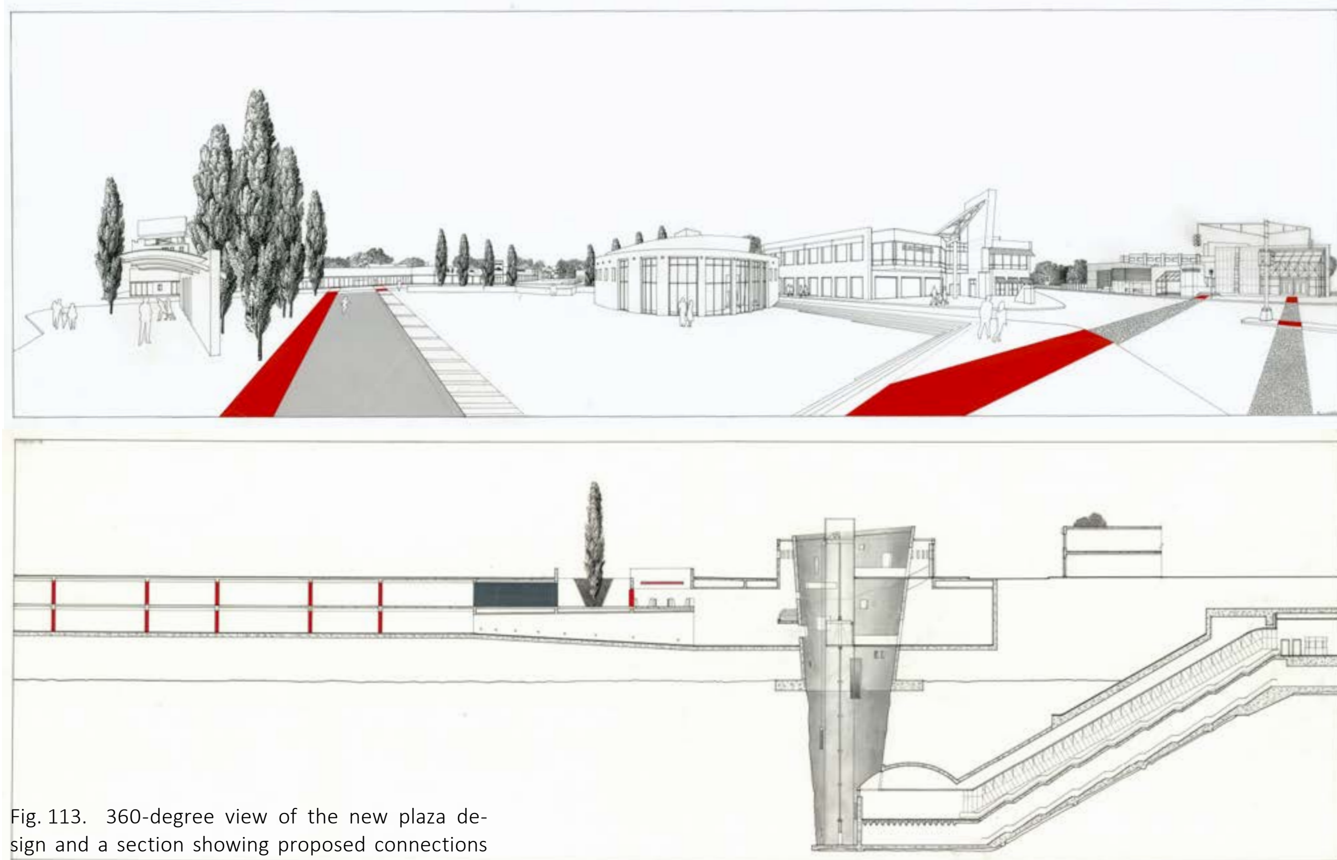


Fig. 113. 360-degree view of the new plaza design and a section showing proposed connections between various modes of transportation, Porter Square in Cambridge, 3rd-semester studio project, Barbara Aronson, 1990

Evolving Legacy: An Exploratory Path into Uncovering and Sustaining a Practice's Accumulated Knowledge

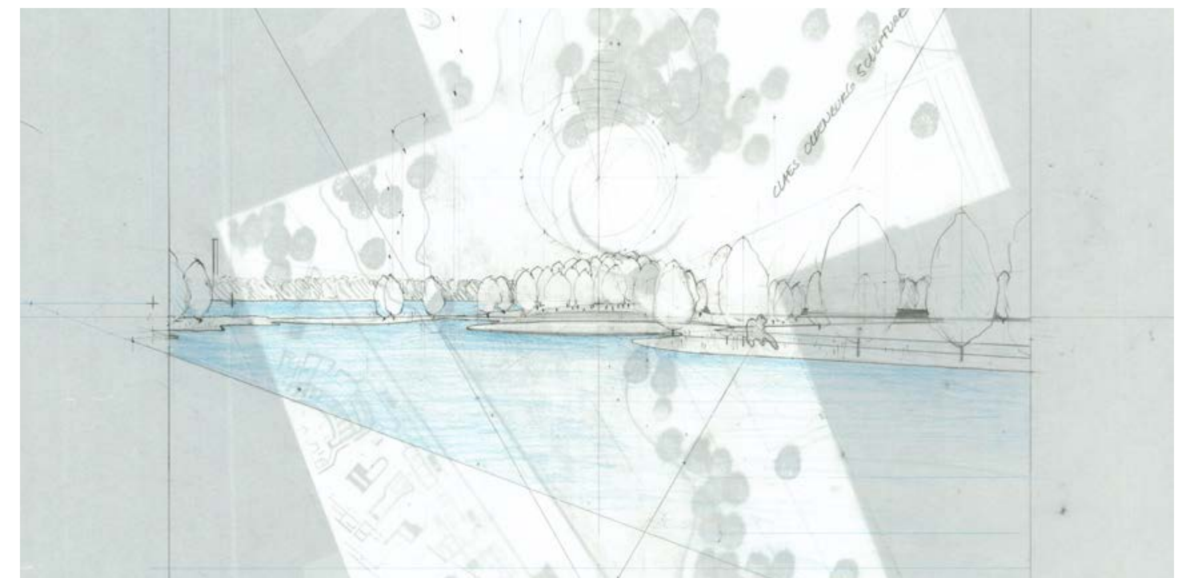


Fig. 114. Construction of perspective view towards the park, Helsinki central train station area, final studio project, Barbara Aronson, 1991

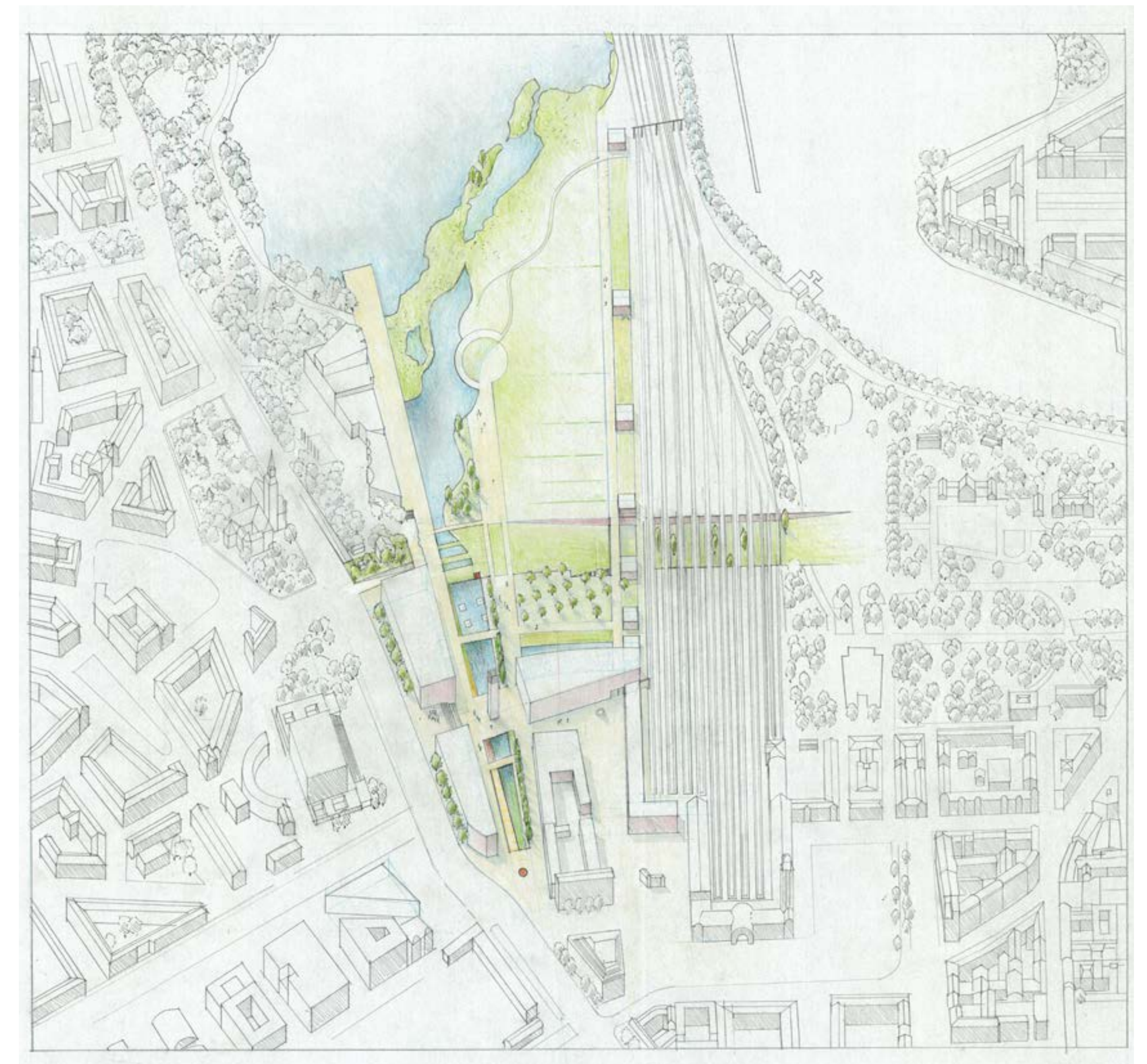


Fig. 115. Axonometric view showing the proposed urban intervention and new city park around the central train station of Helsinki, final studio project, Barbara Aronson, 1991

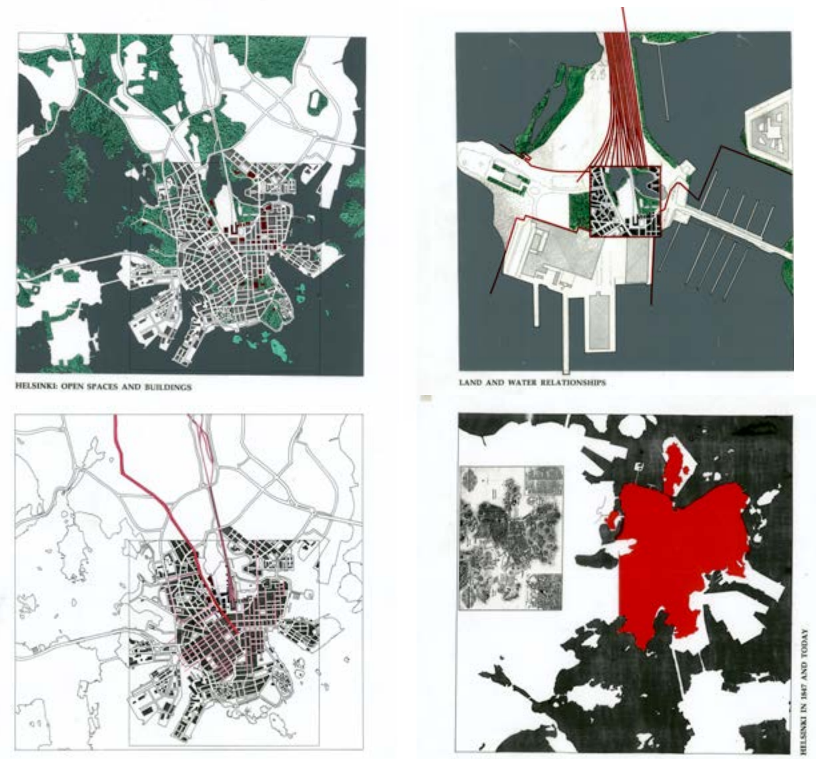


Fig. 116. Conceptual diagrams exploring the relationship between Helsinki's urban fabric and open spaces, and its urban edges and the sea, final studio project, Barbara Aronson, 1991

Fig. 117.Rendering imagining the natural areas at the end of the planned park, final studio project, Barbara Aronson, 1991

Evolving Legacy: An Exploratory Path into Uncovering and Sustaining a Practice's Accumulated Knowledge

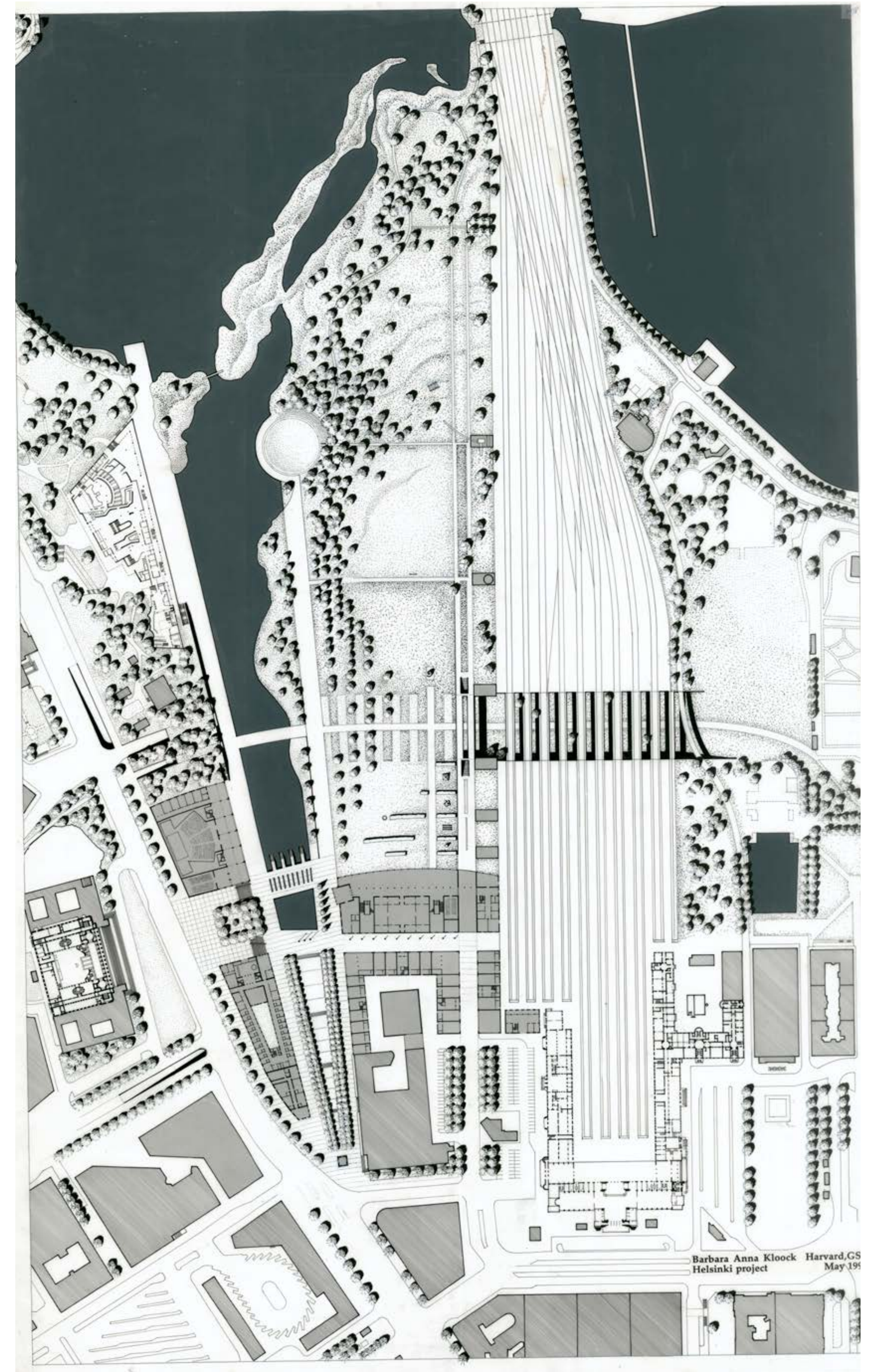


Fig. 118. Plan of the proposed urban intervention and new city park around the central train station of Helsinki, final studio project, Barbara Aronson, 1991

My drawings from the past 25 years present an amalgam of graphic approaches. They happen mostly when conveying design intentions in the early design stages, typically in form of plans and sections, often very detailed and accurately drawn. Around 2000 we left drafting by hand behind and transitioned into CAD, but for me, conceptual sketches and design development plans remain drawn on paper, with some of them serving as the scanned templates for computerized drawings. My interest in exploring design by drawing usually stops at this stage.

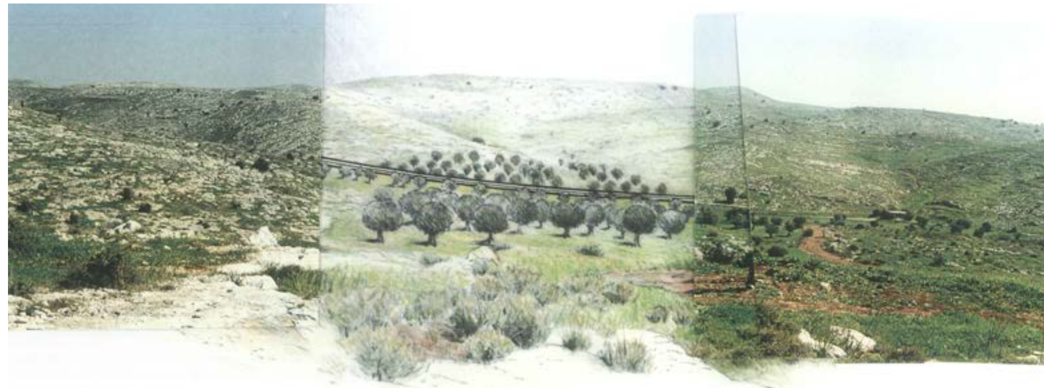


Fig. 119. Illustration of highway landscaping blending into the surrounding agricultural landscape, photograph with color pencil insert, Cross-Israel Highway, Barbara Aronson, 1995

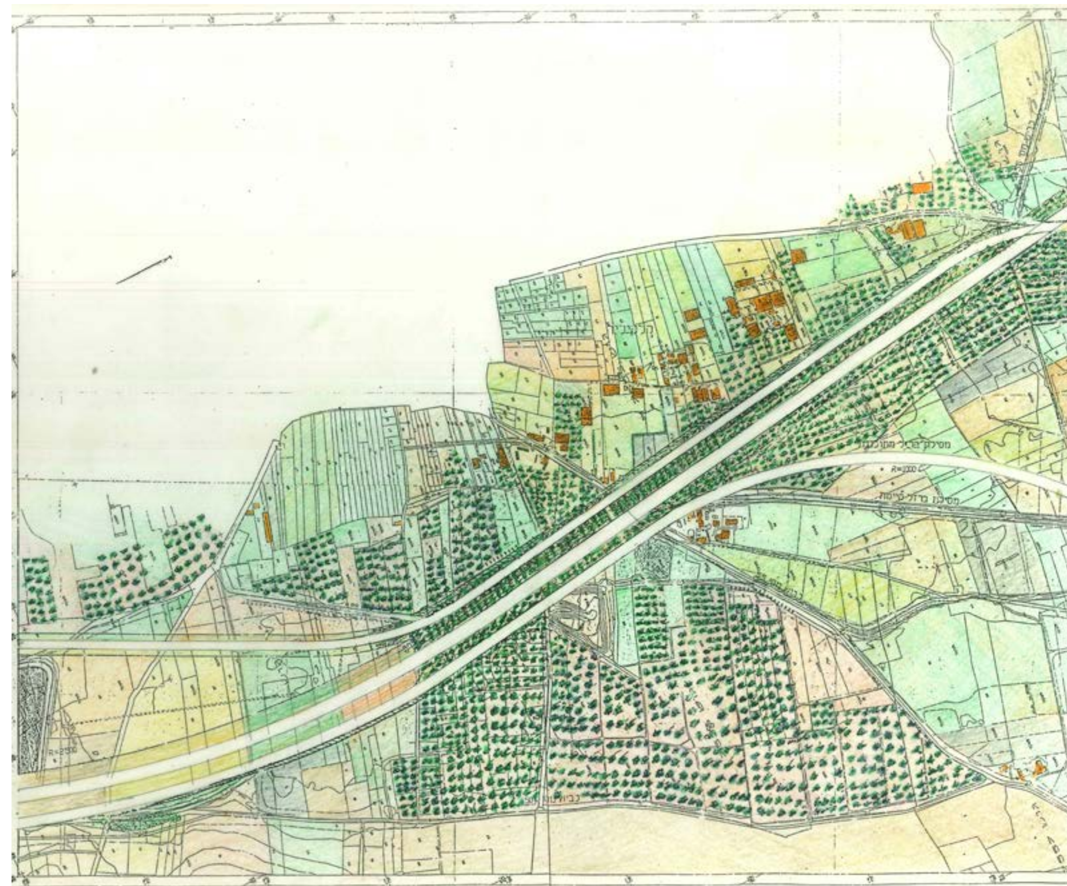


Fig. 120. Illustration of new highway landscaping blending into the surrounding agricultural landscape, Cross-Israel Highway, Barbara Aronson, 1995

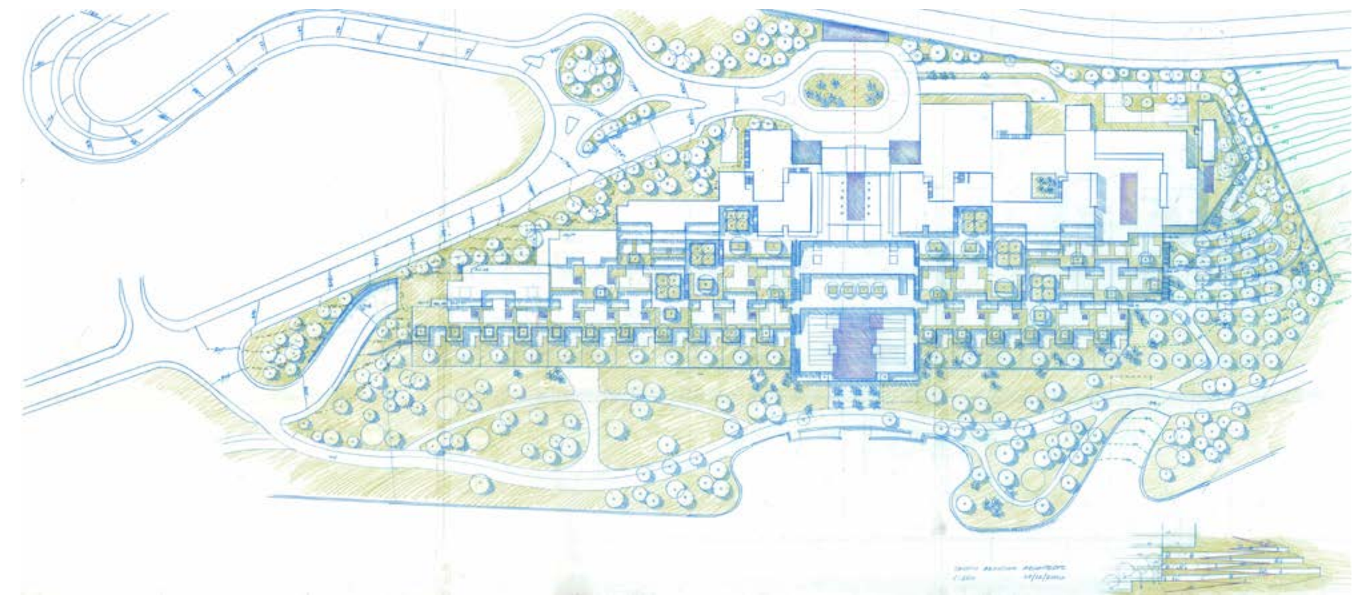


Fig. 121. Preliminary landscape design plan for a new beach-front hotel on the Sea of Galilee, color pencil, Barbara Ar-onson, 2011

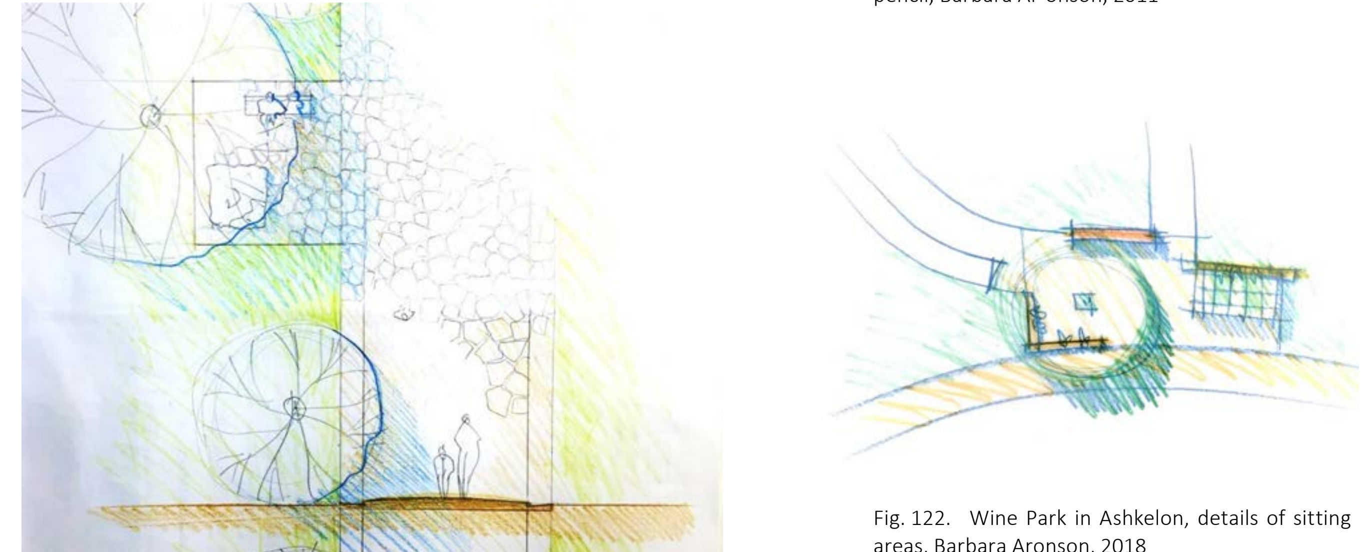


Fig. 122. Wine Park in Ashkelon, details of sitting areas, Barbara Aronson, 2018

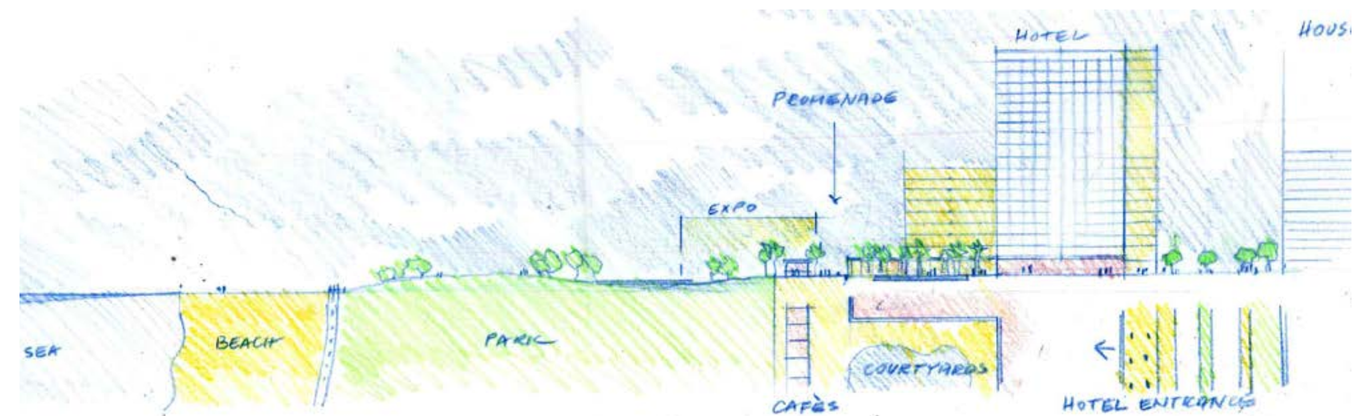
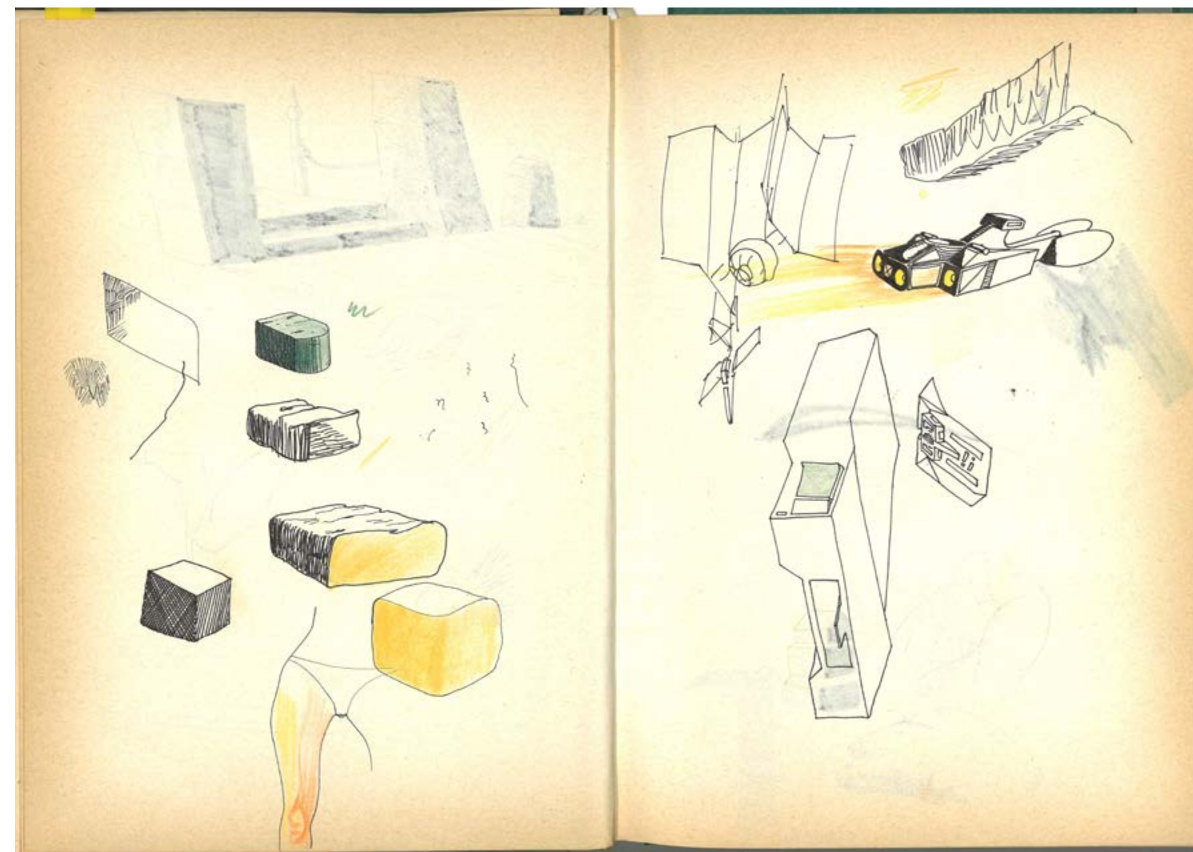


Fig. 123. Section showing the relationship between the seafront, the coastal park, and the first row of proposed buildings, sketch prepared during competition phase, Sde Dov urban renewal project, Barbara Aronson, 2012

All of Ittai's drawings are three-dimensional. His design thinking takes place in that dimension. Ittai's drawings developed in a straight yet individualistic path leading him to the detailed sketches he does today. Drawings from his teenage days already show all the characteristics of his later architectural sketches: perspective views, outlining the object with a black pen, using color or hatching to indicate texture or volume.[51]

Fig. 124. Drawing from high school days, Ittai Aronson, 1985

51. Ittai is the oldest of the four Aronson children. All of them expressed their creative talents and drawing skills as kids, and according to Ittai, it was the general environment of their home that encouraged them to be creative: his sister became a chef, one brother studied graphic design, the other became an architectural lighting designer.



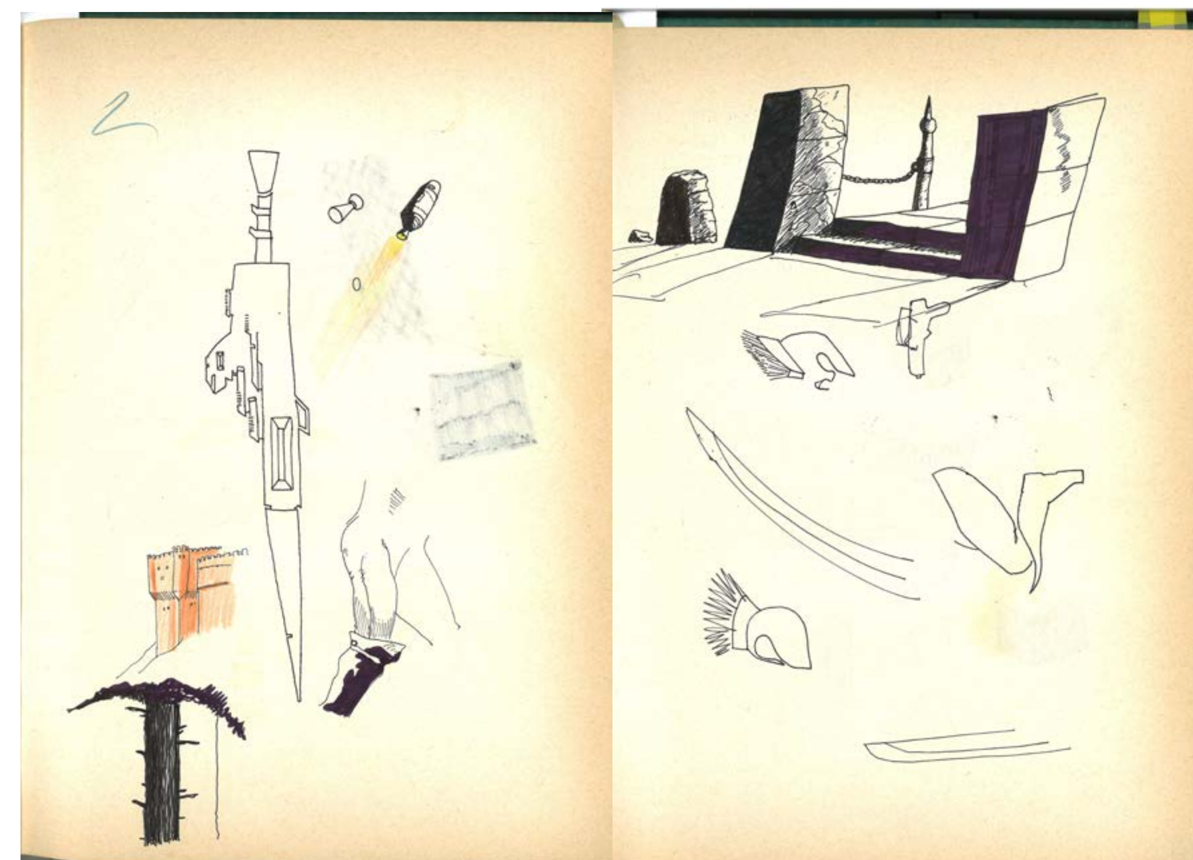


Fig. 125. High school sketchbook, Ittai Aronson, 1985

His architectural sketching style of three-dimensional plans and details appeared in his urban design studio in his 3rd year at the Bezalel Academy, and it hasn't changed since. In 1996, during a semester spent in Helsinki as part of a student exchange, Ittai explored printmaking in his studio project. While there, he studied prominent works of Finnish architecture as part of an on-site water-color course and these studies together with his Scandinavian experience helped shape his formal architectural ideas. His explorations into other media might have influenced his later interest in painting.

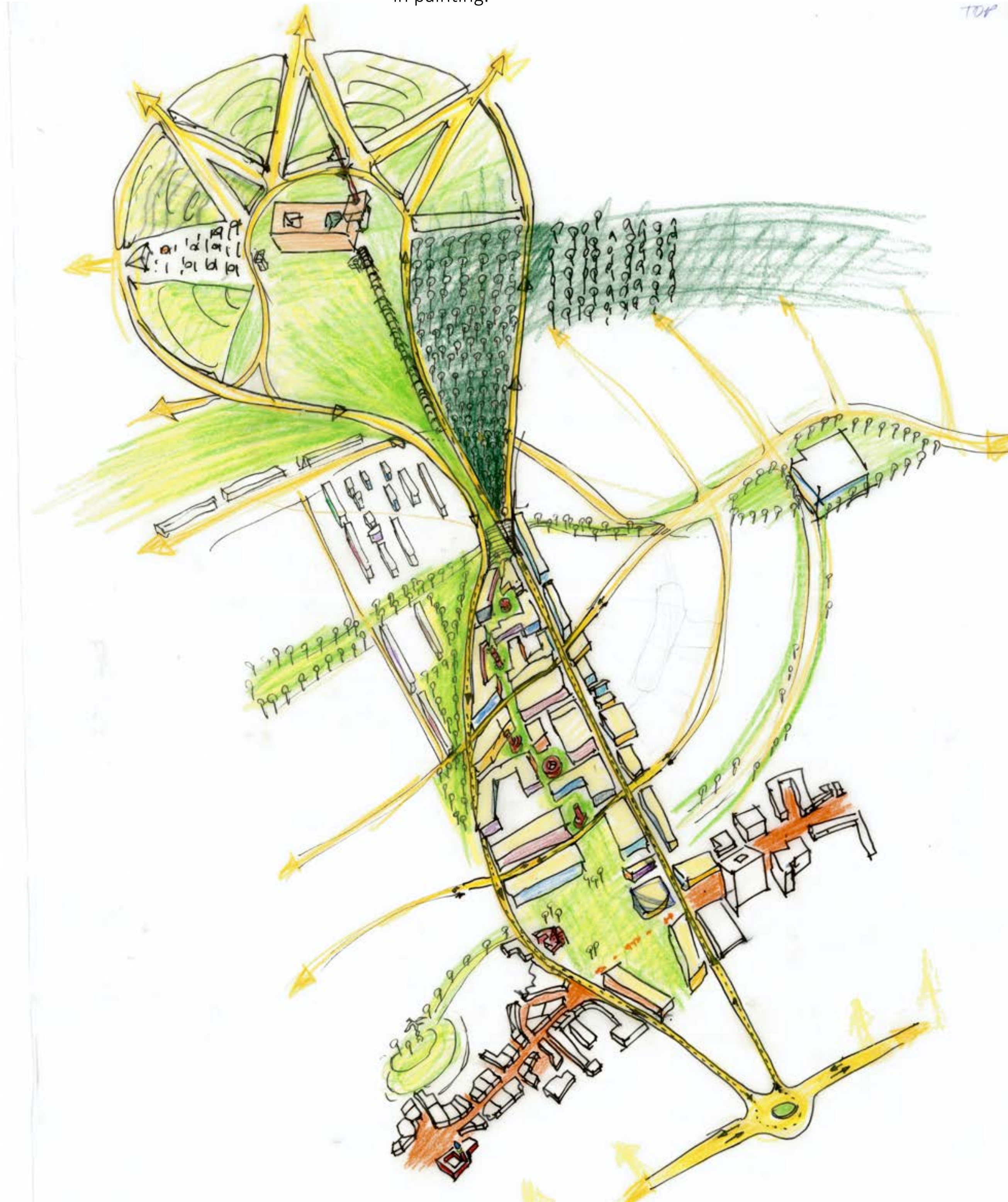


Fig. 126. Sketch for 3rd-year urban design studio, Ittai Aronson, 1995

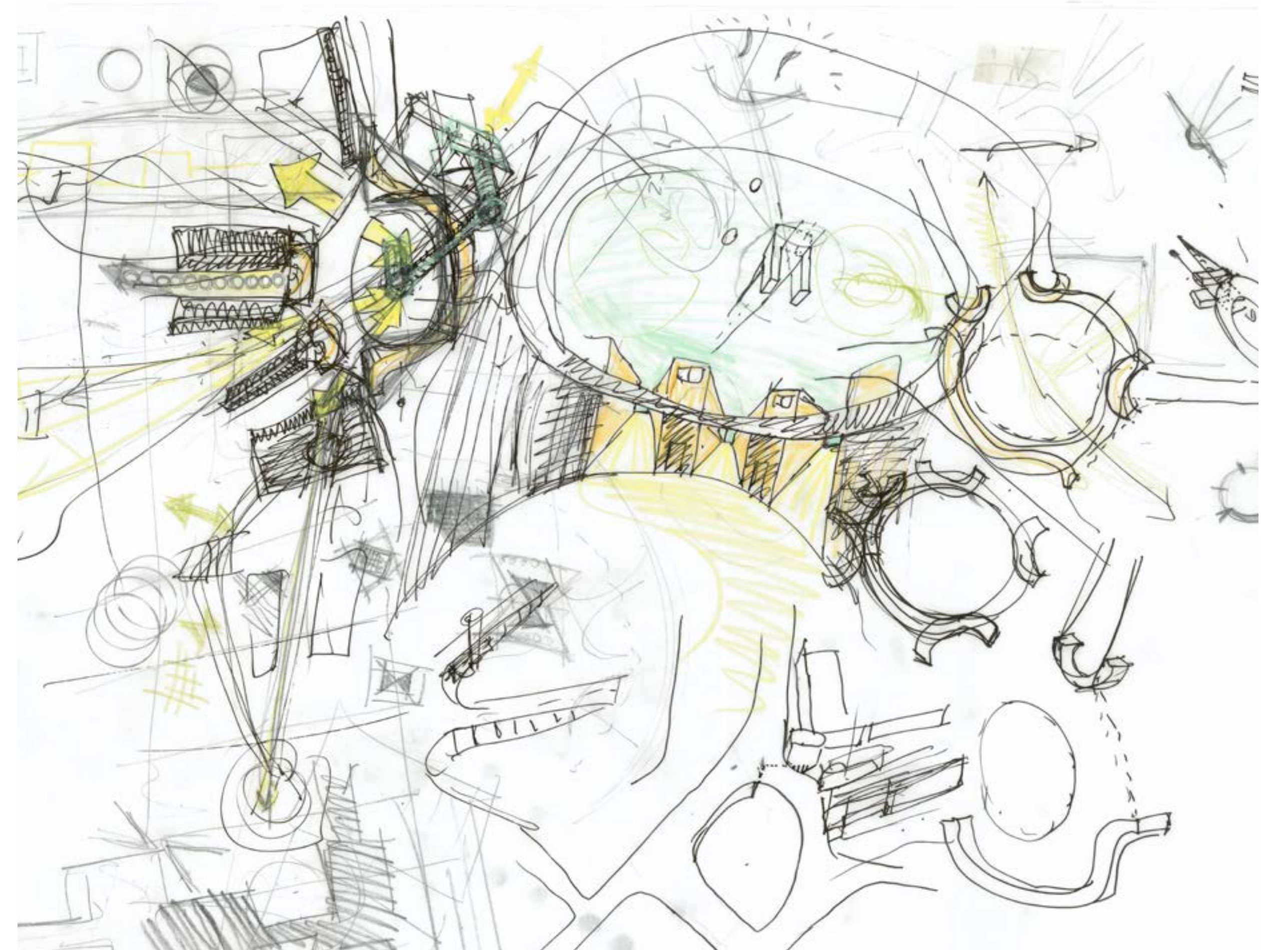
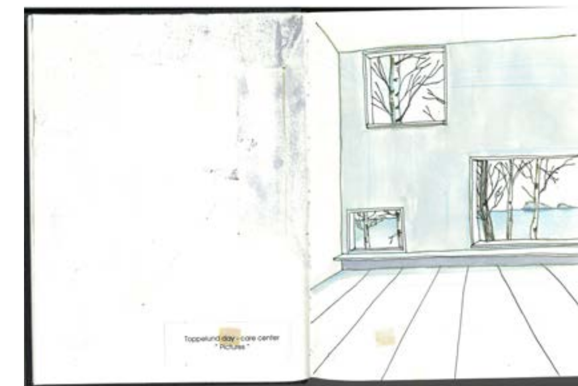


Fig. 127. Sketch for 3rd-year urban design studio, Ittai Aronson, 1995



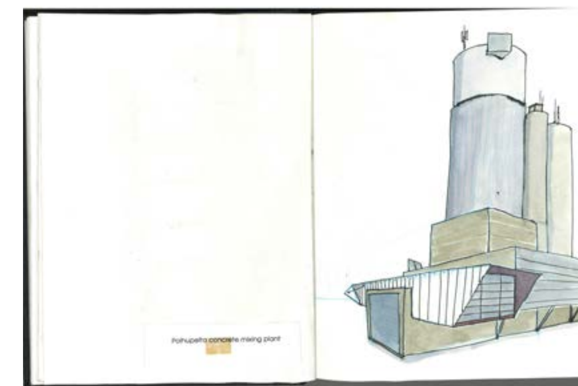


Fig. 128. On-site water-color studies of prominent Finish architecture, Ittai Aronson, 1995

Fig. 129.   Elevation study for 5th-year design studio, Ittai Aronson, 1997

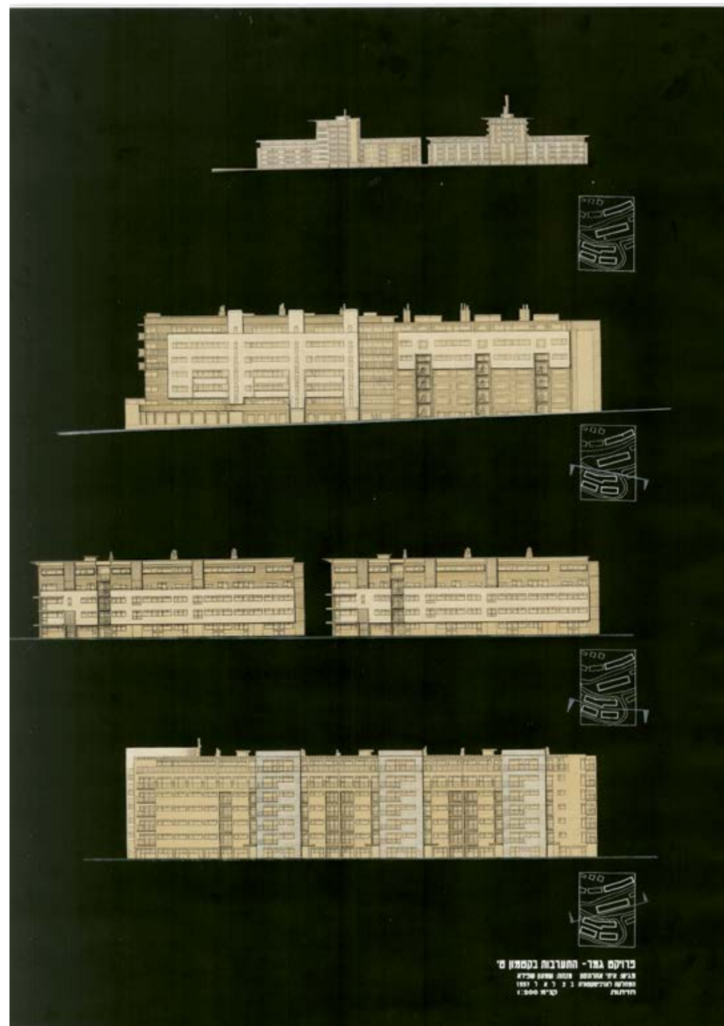


Fig. 130.   Final presentation drawings for 5th-year design studio, Ittai Aronson, 1997

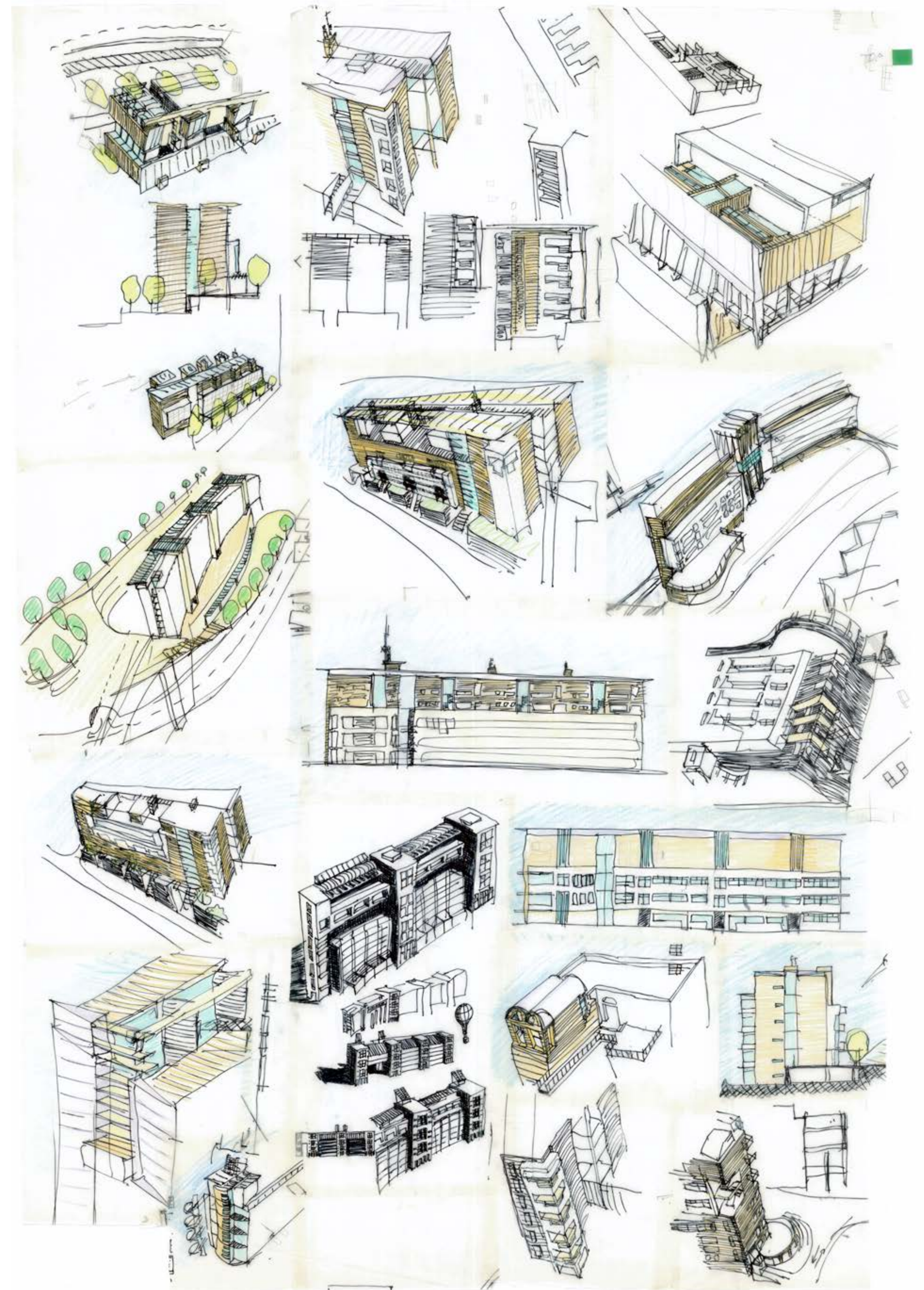


Fig. 131. Collage showing sketches prepared throughout the 5th-year design studio, Ittai Aronson, 1997

Fig. 132. Paintings from different periods, Ittai Aronson

At the age of 35, Ittai decided to take up oil painting as a way of expressing himself in a completely personal way in contrast to the collaborative nature of producing architecture. Although tremendously dedicated to his profession, Ittai has found his ultimate passion in painting.

The past 15 years have been characterized by great changes in drawing techniques. Our entry for the Heriya Refuse Mountain competition (2004) marked the pivotal moment when we started combining hand drawings with digital images and drawings. Originally we had planned to use digital means exclusively to generate our final presentation, yet the drawings produced with Photoshop and Illustrator fell short of expressing the richness we envisioned for our proposal: a mountain that would change its 'skin' over the next 30 years, with changing events hosted on ever-changing terraces that would ultimately stabilize the steep angles of the refuse mountain and provide multiple access points weaving through different types of plantings until reaching the top and heart of the mountain. In the end, it was Jorge Salzberg's colorful pencil drawings produced during a late-night session that brought our design vision to life. Blending the two worlds of graphic production created in our minds the best representation of reality and artistic expression.

In the 2010s, it was architects Ofri Gerber, Tal Bilinsky and landscape architect Ifat Gal who expanded our design explorations into using 3D modeling programs as an exploratory design tool and into building comprehensive presentations using PowerPoint and Illustrator.

Fig. 133. View produced in Archicad to investigate the proportions of the structural skeleton of the entrance pergola, Park Herzliya, Tal Bilinsky, 2005

Fig. 134. View produced in SketchUp to explore the movement within the play structure, Park Herzliya, Ofri Gerber, 2006

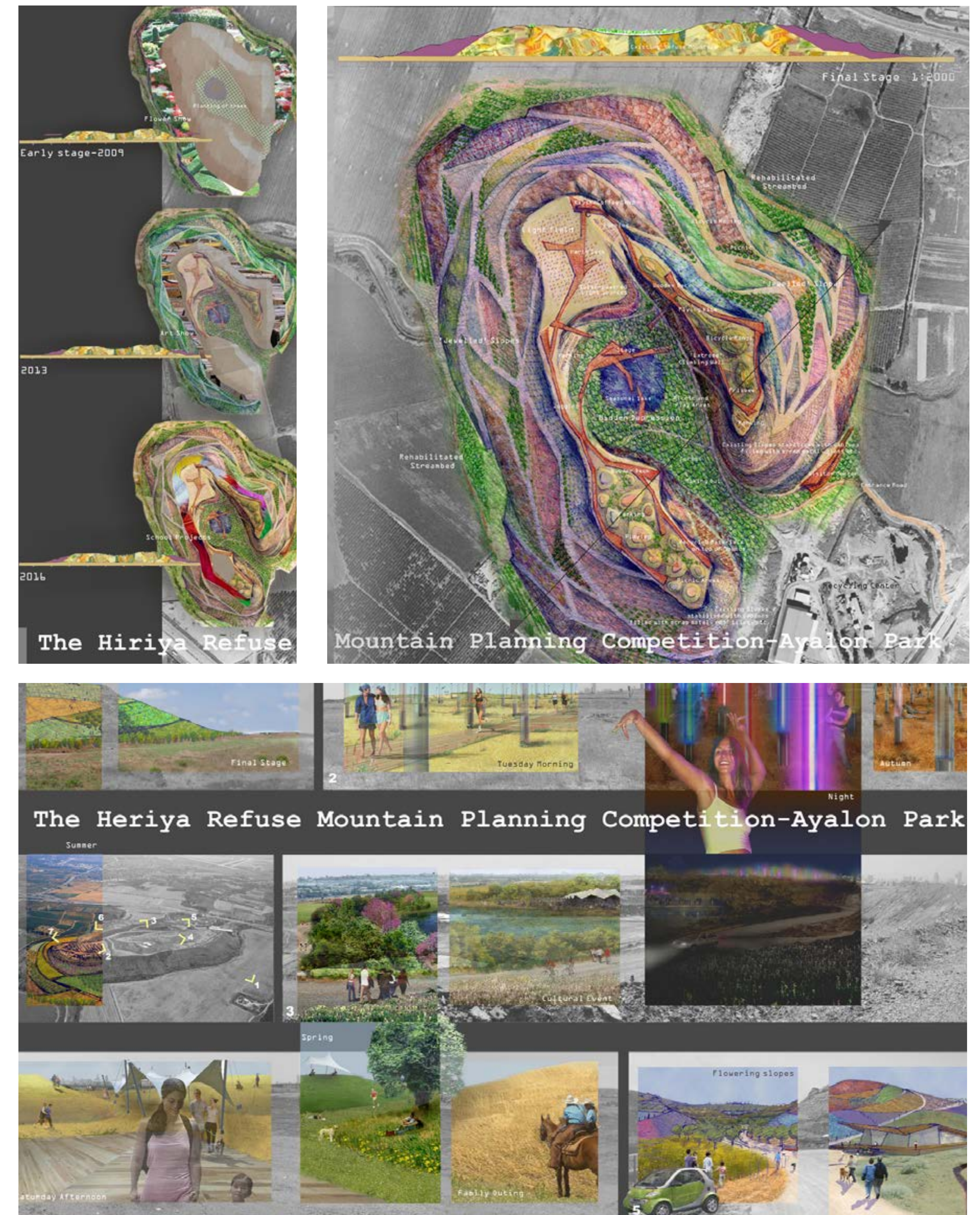


Fig. 135. Competition drawings overlaying computer-generated images and photographs with free-hand drawings, Heriya Refuse Mountain Planning Competiton, Jorge Salzberg, Ifat Gal, Michal Biton, Ofri Gerber, 2004

Fig. 136. SketchUp model employed to explore the color palette for the Light Sculpture in Modiin, David Gruss, 2018

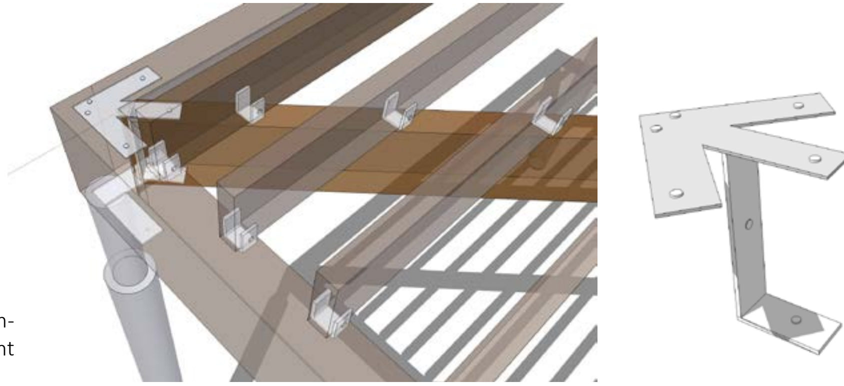


Fig. 137. 3D Pergola details produced in SketchUp help explain the connections between different structural elements, unknown, 2011

Fig. 138. Rendering presenting our design proposal for the expansion of MUSA, the Eretz Israel Museum in Tel Aviv. The image was generated in Lumion based on a SketchUp model, Joni Krugliak, Tal Badichi, 2020

Fig. 139. We designed the layout and heights of the proposed path system located within an archaeological site by studying the combined information from the aerial photograph and the ground survey, Archaeological Park Tel Beit Shemesh, Barbara Aronson, Noga Nevo, 2021

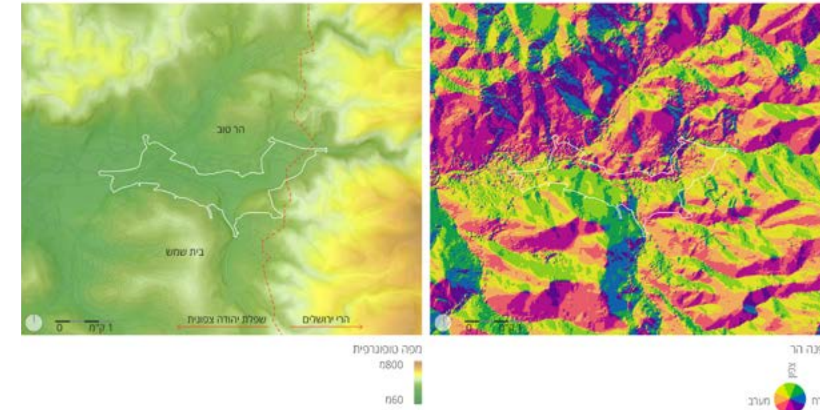


Fig. 140. Landscape Plan for the northern CBD area of Beit Shemesh and the Sorek Stream Park, topographical and slope analysis, GIS, Omri Ben Chetrit, 2020

Fig. 141. Landscape Plan for the northern CBD area of Beit Shemesh and the Sorek Stream Park, Autocad, Omri Ben Chetrit, Nora Nanov, Gil Cohen, 2020

Fig. 142. Topographical analysis produced as part of the walkability study for the planned traffic hub located in the area of the historic railway station in Jerusalem, GIS and Illustrator, Omri Ben Chetrit, 2020

Fig. 143. Design diagrams produced for the Coastal Park Competition in Tel Aviv, using Autocad and Illustrator, Ayelet Ben David, Maayan Turgeman, Omri Ben Chetrit, 2016

The element of time and change in landscapes, prominent in academic and professional discussions, is rarely expressed in drawings for our built designs.[52] (Corner & Bick Hirsch, 2014; Girot & Imhof, 2017; Waldheim, 2006; Mertens, 2010). Landscape Urbanism's central idea of looking at landscapes as changing interconnecting systems brought on a new typology of drawings incorporating ecological and social changes, brilliantly exemplified in Kate Orff's drawings (Orff, 2016). Yet most of our clients have no interest or patience to contemplate aspects of change, some outright refuse to acknowledge it as a reality. Photo-realistic renderings, today produced so easily and in record time, always present an ideal state of development to convince our clients to support our ideas and visions. What is never recorded in publications is the arduous dialog that complements our design meetings with clients: impressing on them the realities of plant growth and inevitable changes in user habits and expectations.

Today, the size of our office with its large number of projects calls on the senior staff to initiate and supervise the output of our graphics with a growing need for standardization of graphic expression to assure quality control. Yet in a surprising twist, some of our clients conceive hand-drawn sketches and plans as more honest and original.

Moving from paper to screen has caused changes in the types of graphics, rather than a shift in representational modes. Plans, sections, diagrams and perspective views are still the dominant palettes of day-to-day architectural expression. What has changed is the way we express and record our design process. A few years ago I was searching for the preliminary design sketches of a park project to recall our initial design ideas: to my great surprise, the young project architect had thrown away all our drawings. The explanation was that our sketches had lost their value when computerized and turned into accurate design drawings.

Some of our young staff exhibit fantastic skills in producing infographics, presentations, design diagrams, and renderings of our designs, and analysis material through their expert use of GIS. The latter has become indispensable in processing the complexities of large-scale planning projects. However, many of this young generation of designers don't know how to sketch or draw. During our design meetings, they realize that our drawing skills enable Ittai and me to communicate ideas immediately, in a matter of minutes. Some of them feel muted by their inability to produce expressive sketches and recognize it as a handicap. Talking about this was another result of office discussions around this research, and it led to the initiation of collective sketching during brainstorming sessions.

Design sketches have always served as a means to express intuitive ideas quickly or to clarify details of the design. Not judged for their artistic quality, they complement the verbal descriptions of our design ideas. In contrast, computer-generated drawings take time and temporary versions of design ideas are rarely filed for reference. In my experience, an exploratory design dialogue using different tools of expression provides the best platform for an integrative design dialogue with different staff members and allows us to review our process during all stages of the planning process.

52. In his PhD thesis, Noel van Dooren provides an extensive historic review of the topic and presents contemporary case studies of Dutch landscape architectural practices after 1985 to advocate the rethinking of landscape representation. (Van Dooren, 2017).

Fig. 144. Two collages present a comparison of the drawing types and graphic methods that were used throughout different planning phases for an architectural project and a landscape architectural project. The comparison reveals variances in approach that are indicative of the different ways in which we explore architectural and landscape designs: detailed free-hand drawings are central in the early design stages of landscape projects, reflected by the often free-form nature of site designs. In contrast, full 3D CAD modeling is the typical approach for building projects; today, Revitt combined with BIM is used to generate all construction drawings. In landscape projects we tend to explore separate architectural elements only in the detail design phase, while most construction drawings are still produced in 2D. Case study projects: light rail depot Lot 25 in Jerusalem, 2017-2020, and Herzliya Park, 2003-2008

PART C

05 THREE PROJECTS
06 KNOWLEDGE AND MENTORING
07 CONCLUSIONS

Fig. 145. Collaborative design effort to determine program locations in the Nesher Lake Park

05 THREE PROJECTS

05.01. Road: Sha'ar Hagai Interchange
05.02. Urban Park: Herzliya Park
05.03 Lightrail System: The Jerusalem Green Line

Evolving Legacy: An Exploratory Path into Uncovering and Sustaining a Practice's Accumulated Knowledge

"But I would say that the legacy of the office has to do with Shlomo's approach to landscape architecture and he had a very – I call it – a very romantic approach to landscape architecture. He was extremely concerned with context. He was extremely concerned with historical context. Even context in literature, physical context of the surroundings. And it was very important that his projects blended in with the surroundings.

Judy Green (2020, appendix, p.257), former associate, 1979-1994

The final step in understanding our design legacy is to ground our modes of design in the critical discussion of built work. This chapter describes three case study projects, identifying their respective design strategies and creative processes.[53] Reflecting on the many lessons learned during the design process allowed me to pinpoint certain critical decisions, better understand the key role of personal relationships, and more fully appreciate the influences gained from public consultation. The three chosen projects represent seminal examples that brought forward an original design approach or concept. They are not necessarily the first occurrence of a particular design idea or type of project but all of them influenced professional attitudes with regard to prioritizing knowledge of the local landscape, and asserted the leading role of landscape architects in interdisciplinary design teams. They also represent particularly important projects for the lead designers – Shlomo, Ittai and I, who, all in their own time – identified them as significant milestones in the business and their careers.

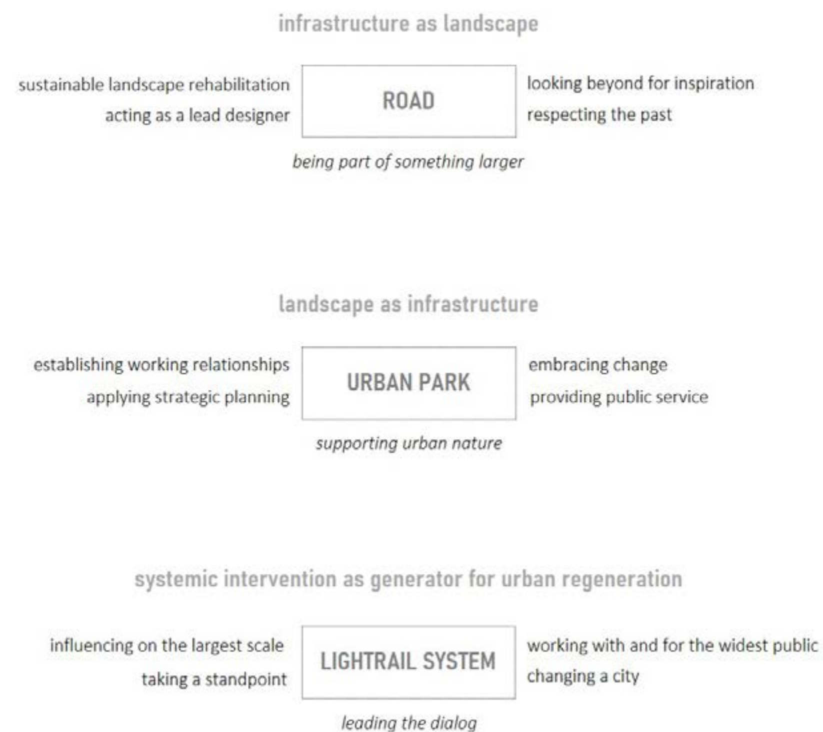


Fig. 146. Ideogram of the case study project's special qualities

53. The project's presentation format was inspired by the case study method suggested by Mark Francis for the research of works of Landscape Architecture (Francis, 2001). As part of this thesis's goal to explain our modes of design, more emphasis is placed on explaining the overall creative design process.

54. The Khan underwent a series of preservation efforts over the past 50 years. Our office completed recently a major part of the redesign of the entire Khan heritage site, restoring it to its original purpose as a stopping point for travelers. The newly opened Heritage Museum will include in its final stage an information center, a kiosk and a restaurant.

05.01 Sha'ar Hagai Highway Interchange

Context

The Sha'ar Hagai interchange is located on Highway 1, at the precise point where the road begins to rise from the agricultural plains to the Judean foothills. Over thousands of years, the story of the ascent to Jerusalem has been that of a long journey, often a pilgrimage and spiritual experience that was once the highlight of traveling to the land of Palestine. In the second half of the 19th century, the Ottoman government built the Bab el-Wad inn, today known as the Sha'ar Hagai Khan, to provide an overnight rest station for travelers and their horses and donkeys before starting the arduous climb up to Jerusalem.[54] As the main supply route to the city, the road became a heavily contested battleground during the blockade of Jerusalem in Israel's War of Independence in 1948. Today the drive up to Jerusalem takes less than an hour. As Highway 1 is the major connection between Tel Aviv-Jaffa and Jerusalem, taking this route is part of the daily routine for tens of thousands of drivers on their way to work.

Both in Arabic and Hebrew, Bab al-Wad and Sha'ar Hagai mean 'Gate to the Valley', signifying the site as the natural gateway to Jerusalem when entering the narrow gorge of the Nachshon River. Historic photographs from 1917 and 1948 document the agricultural fields in the lowlands and mostly barren slopes of the Judean foothills, with the afforestation efforts that started during the British Mandate discernible in 1948. Today, the surrounding hills are covered with a mix of planted conifers and invasive and native species. In recent years, the seasonal agriculture of shifting cultivation of the past has been replaced by olive groves and vineyards.

Fig. 147. View toward the Bab al-Wad inn, 1917

Fig. 148. View from the Judean foothills toward the lowlands, 1948

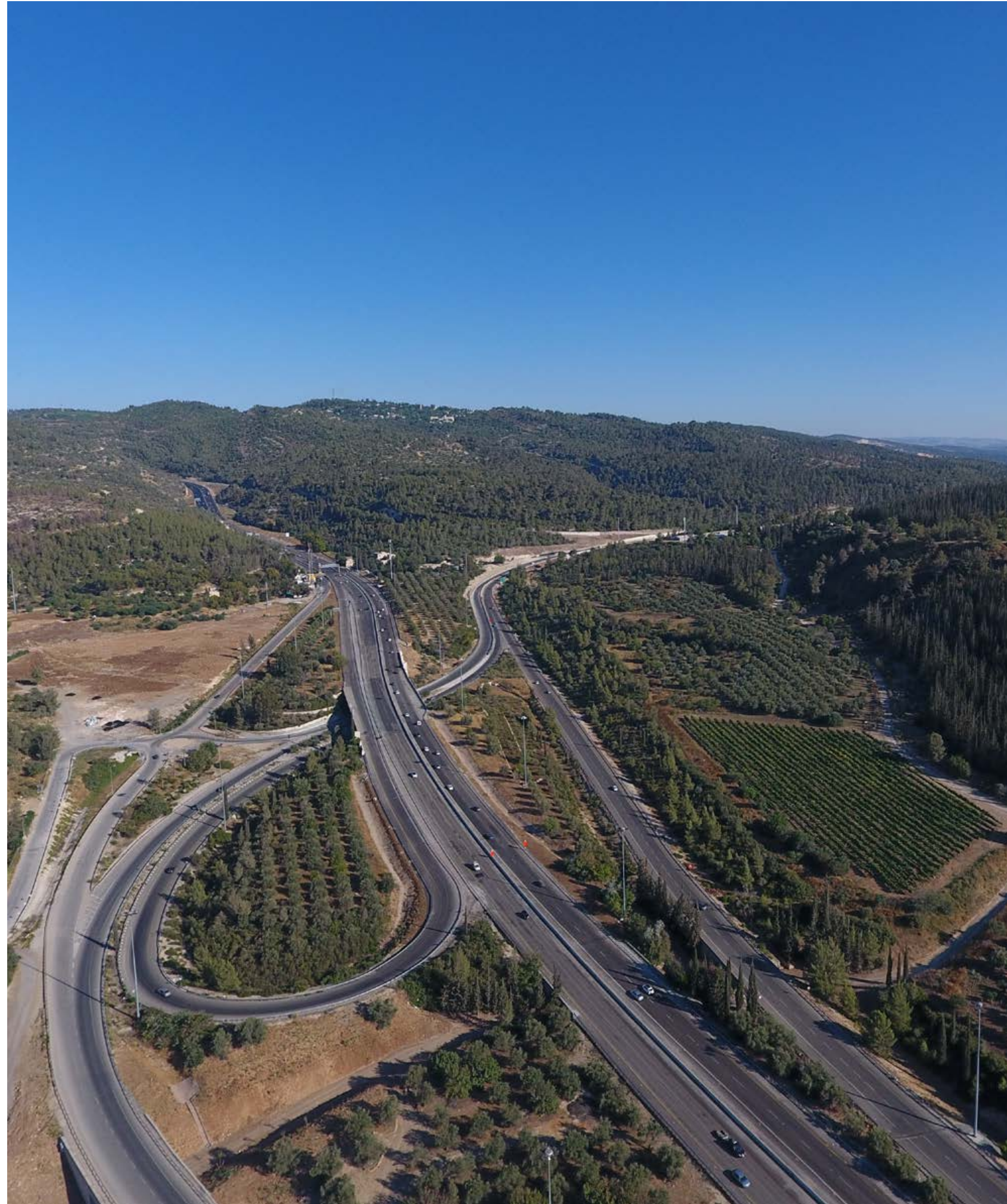


Fig. 149. Contemporary aerial view of the interchange, 2019

Project Background and History

For the past 45 years, our practice has engaged in various projects along Highway 1. Our understanding and involvement in these projects have evolved into a comprehensive approach that considers the road as a landscape entity with multi-dimensional references to time and history, a route where the agricultural landscape plays a major part in defining its distinctive character. In the early 1990s, the massive post-Soviet immigration to Israel generated many plans for the expansion of the national transportation system and that of existing urban centers, including the considerable enlargement of the town of Beit Shemesh to the south, and the erection of the new town of Modiin to the north-west. The National Transport Infrastructure Company decided that a full interchange was needed to provide these new urban areas with better connections to Tel Aviv-Jaffa and Jerusalem.

Genesis of the Project

Shlomo Aronson Architects were hired in 1992 as the responsible landscape architects for the integration and rehabilitation of the new interchange. Shlomo entered this project with an extensive background in urban and inter-city road projects and had been working on and off since the 1970s on the renovation of the Sha'ar Hagai Khan. Right from the outstart, his understanding of the project's setting within a landscape unit of cultural interest set the tone for the design dialog with the traffic and road designers.

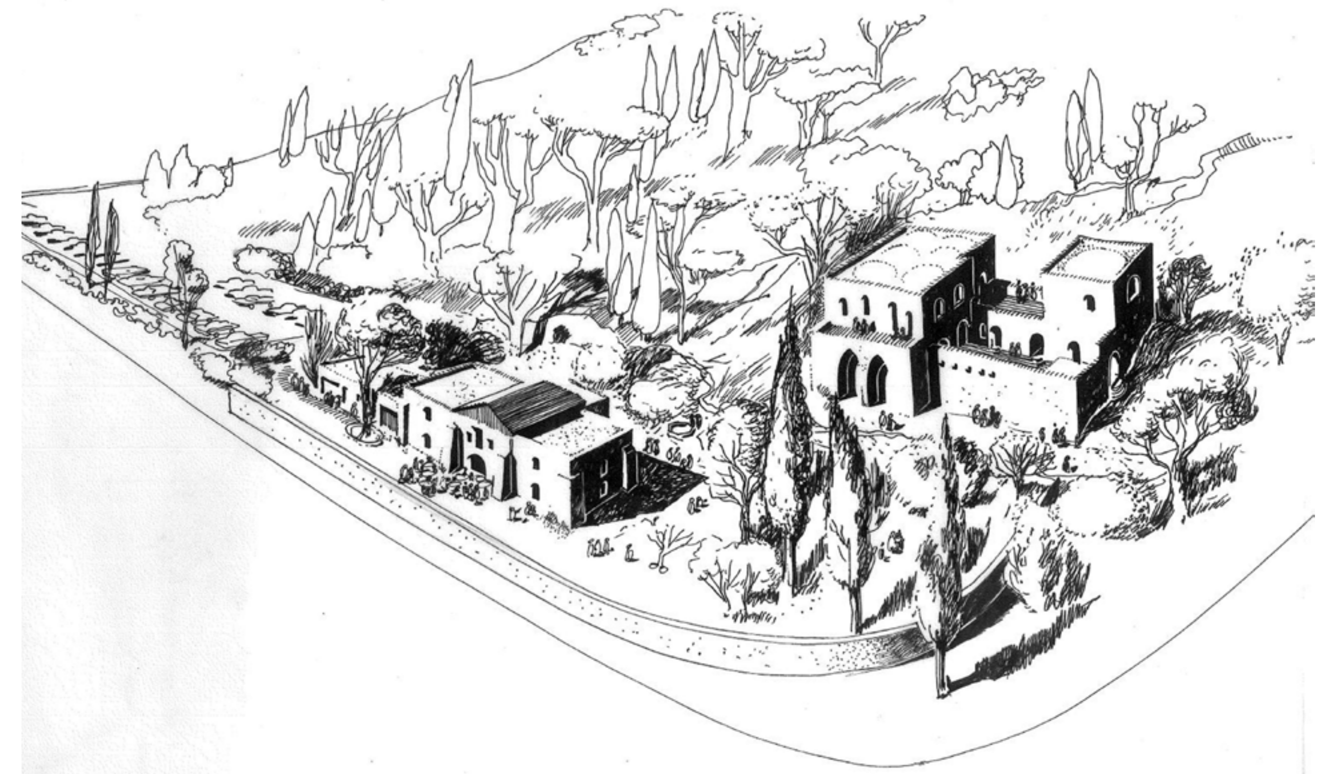


Fig. 150. Early design sketch of the Khan Sha'ar Hagai renovation project, early 1970s

Developing a Concept for the Interchange

The initial solution of the road design team suggested an elevated ramp layout at the location of the existing interchange, with a bridge crossing the highway in front of the Sha'ar Hagai Khan buildings. Shlomo convinced the client that it was unacceptable to change the historic landscape situation of the gateway when blocking the views towards the valley entrance and the historic inn with such a dominant structure. The next layout alternative explored finding a place for the crossing further up toward Jerusalem. The office developed many bridge alternatives before the team rejected this solution due to a combination of landscape and road safety concerns. The visual impact of the excavations for the ramps along the mountainsides, and the addition of a new 'gate' over the road would have lessened the dramatic experience of entering the narrow valley. The chosen alternative moved the interchange several hundred meters west to the lowlands, with connections crossing under the main highway. This solution accommodated the passage of modern traffic while preserving the historic landscape situation.

Fig. 151. Sketch capturing the threshold condition of the road at Sha'ar Hagai, 1990s

Fig. 152. Aerial view of the site prior to the construction of the interchange. The yellow arrows mark the relocation of the interchange to the open landscape further south, as suggested by Shlomo

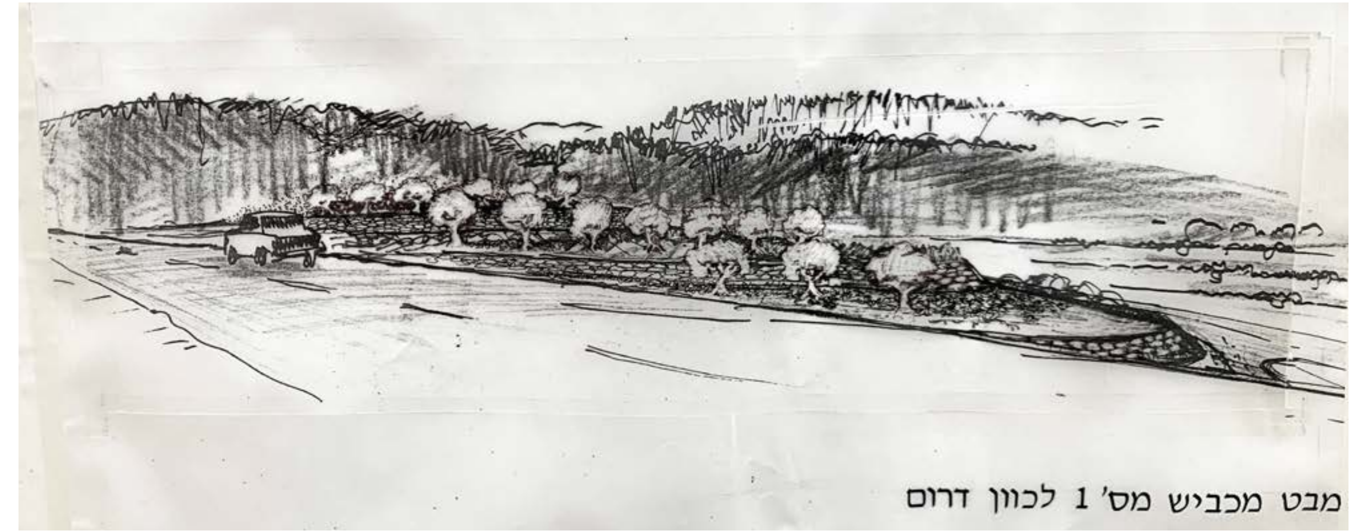


Fig. 153. Design sketch emphasizing the importance of the highway's roadside views

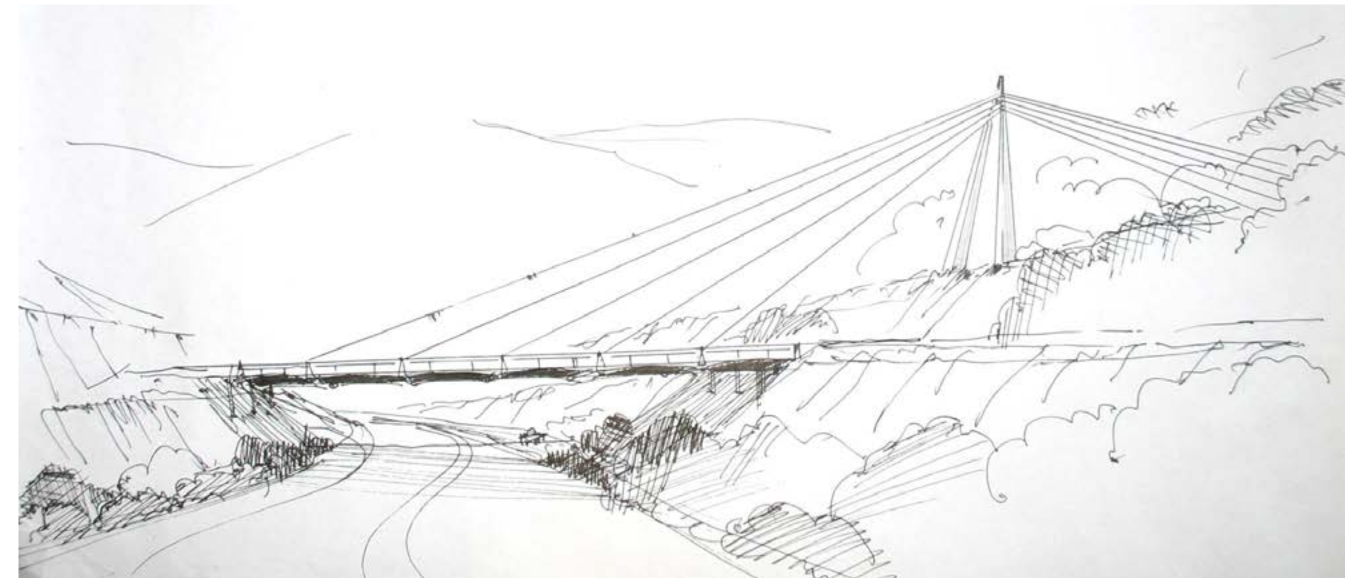


Fig. 154. Early sketches studying the visual impact of a new bridge over the historic road alignment

Evolving Legacy: An Exploratory Path into Uncovering and Sustaining a Practice's Accumulated Knowledge

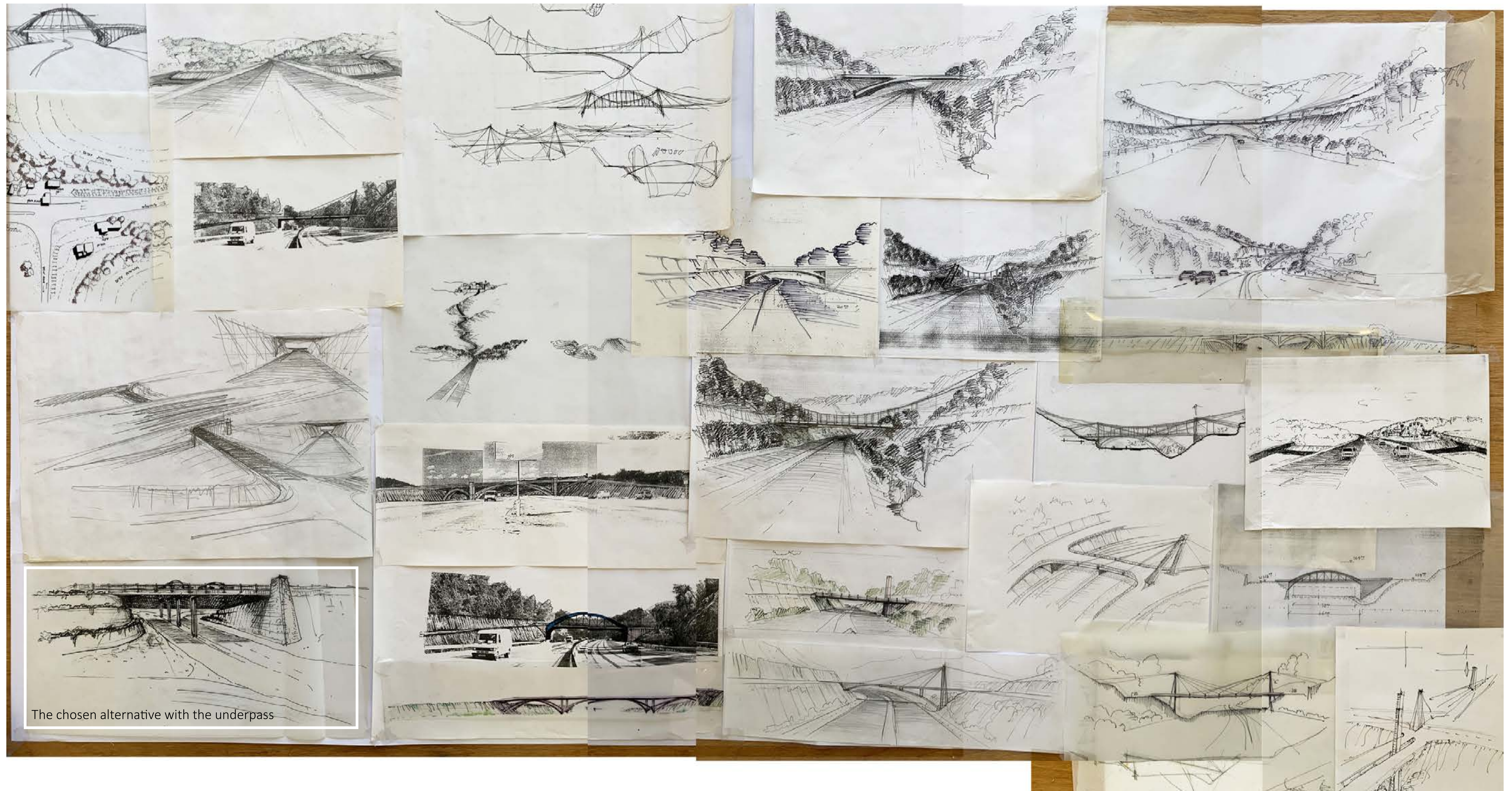


Fig. 155. A collage showing some of the many exploratory sketches which explored the visual impact of a new bridge over the road. This ultimately led to the decision to create a sunken interchange further south, thus preserving the uninhibited historic views toward the landscape along the way to Jerusalem

Fig. 156. Different views of the central underpass area

Fig. 157. Planting plan of central area, with olive groves interspersed with almond, carob and pomegranate trees. Cy-presses and palm trees are placed as accent plantings

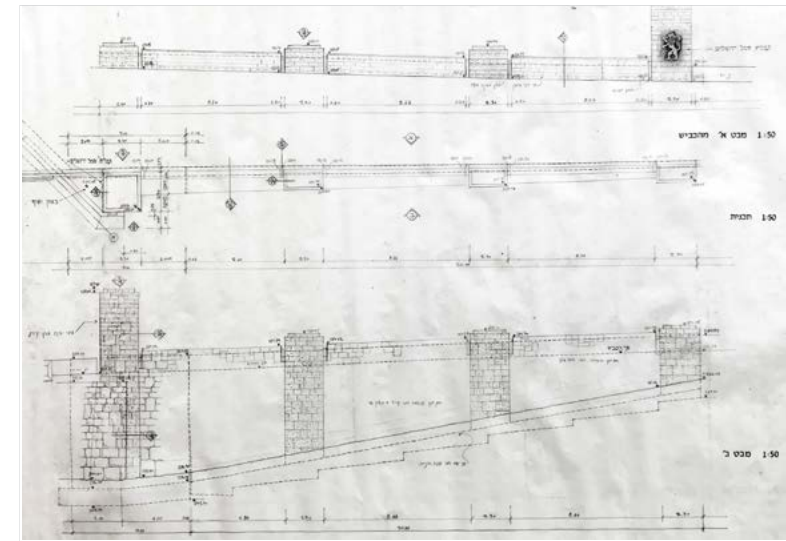


Fig. 158. Elevation of the underpass' abutment

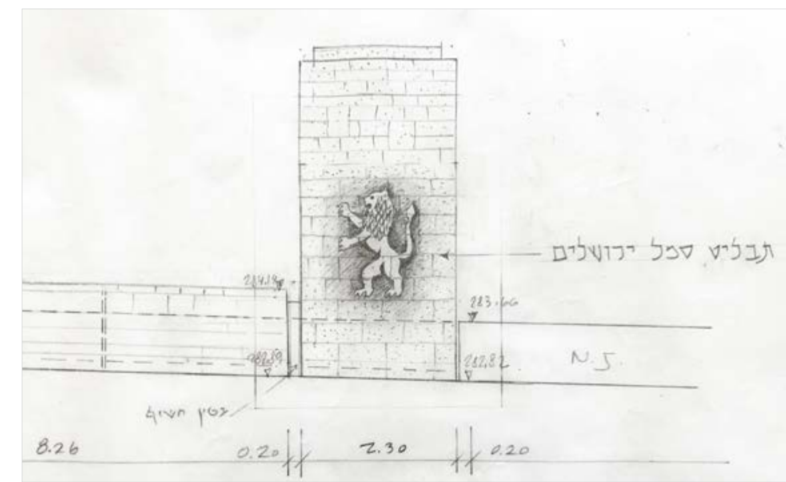


Fig. 159. Details of the main stone 'marker' in the abutment wall of the underpass, with relief of the Lion of Jerusalem

The Design

When developing the language for the landscape rehabilitation of the interchange, Shlomo considered the characteristics of the historic road between Tel Aviv-Jaffa and Jerusalem over its entire length, separating the local scenery into its landscape elements: orchards of date palms, citrus, olive, carob, and almond trees; natural areas of tree and shrub plantings and grassy plains, local limestone, terrace walls, and soil. These elements formed the building blocks to compose new landscape interventions, both retaining the character of the local landscape and satisfying present-day functional requirements. In the case of the Sha'ar Hagai interchange, the planting of olive groves, interspersed with other fruit trees, continues the history of local agriculture, creating a landscape scenery that reflects the seasons of the year while providing a low-cost, low-maintenance landscape treatment acceptable to the National Transport Infrastructure Company. The plantings were intended to bring simplicity and structure to the interchange while tying the immense man-made roadwork to its landscape surroundings. The design set out to do so by looking beyond its immediate boundaries, and by recognizing the singular as part of something larger. Special attention was paid to the stone details. Local limestone was used in varied ways on different types of walls, with a special feature of two large stone blocks placed on the upper walls of the underpass along the highway at the center of the junction itself. The lions carved on these stones reference ancient symbols associated with the city of Jerusalem, marking the location as the first gate on the way to the holy city. Three stone terrace walls, strategically placed at the end of the view when passing through the underpass, reference the traditional walls that were constructed over millennia to create agricultural terraces.

Reflections

The voyage between Tel Aviv-Jaffa and Jerusalem tells the story of civilizations, trade, and pilgrimages, constituting a virtual axis between place and time. Both the road itself and the surrounding landscapes are part of continuous changes that span thousands of years. Every new planning intervention thus becomes part of the story of the ascent to Jerusalem. Over 50 years, the practice has been involved in the widening of the road at various times and in the design of new landscape nodes along the way: the Sha'ar Hagai Khan Museum Site (1970s-ongoing), the Castel National Park (1980s), the Sha'ar Hagai Interchange (1995), the Shoresh Interchange (2003), the landscaping of the Ben Gurion Airport (2004), the Ben Shemen Interchange (2004), and the Arazim Valley Park (ongoing). Beyond their primary function as transportation infrastructures or recreational destinations, Shlomo understood these landscape nodes as part of the experience of traveling to Jerusalem, creating modern-day visual and physical 'pauses' that pace the course of the journey. Looking at the larger picture, in this case, shaped the reading of the road as a landscape ensemble where the sum of its parts assembles the whole. This understanding led the practice to develop a design language that is grounded in the site-specific local identity of each area along the route. Based on the basic landscape elements of each location, it intends to be non-specific to one culture, religion, or nationality, but rather, seeks to strengthen different variations of the same universal idiom that underlies the landscape ensemble at its core.

Our present-day approach to transportation and infrastructure projects can be traced back to this interchange. Shlomo had developed and refined his site-driven approach through projects like the Ein Feshcha Ein Gedi Road along the Dead Sea (1971), the Conveyor Belt project to the Dead Sea (1986), and the Negev Phosphate works (1990), but it was the Sha'ar Hagai Interchange that received country-wide and international recognition as a case study for sustainable landscape integration of a road project, reflecting its perceived relevance to transportation projects around the world. The positive professional and public feedback in Israel had a far-reaching influence on the role of landscape architects

in these types of works: it established them as core design team members when searching for design solutions in the preliminary design phase. Rather than remediating the effects of the intervention in the end, it showcased the huge advantages of impacting the macro decisions taken when advancing alignment and siting alternatives. As in many of our projects, strong personal interrelationships between team members were instrumental in convincing the client to adopt design principles set by the landscape architect. For many years after its completion, I would meet people involved in the project, reminiscing about their experience of working with Shlomo, revering his knowledge, vision, and passion for the project, and the landscape at large.

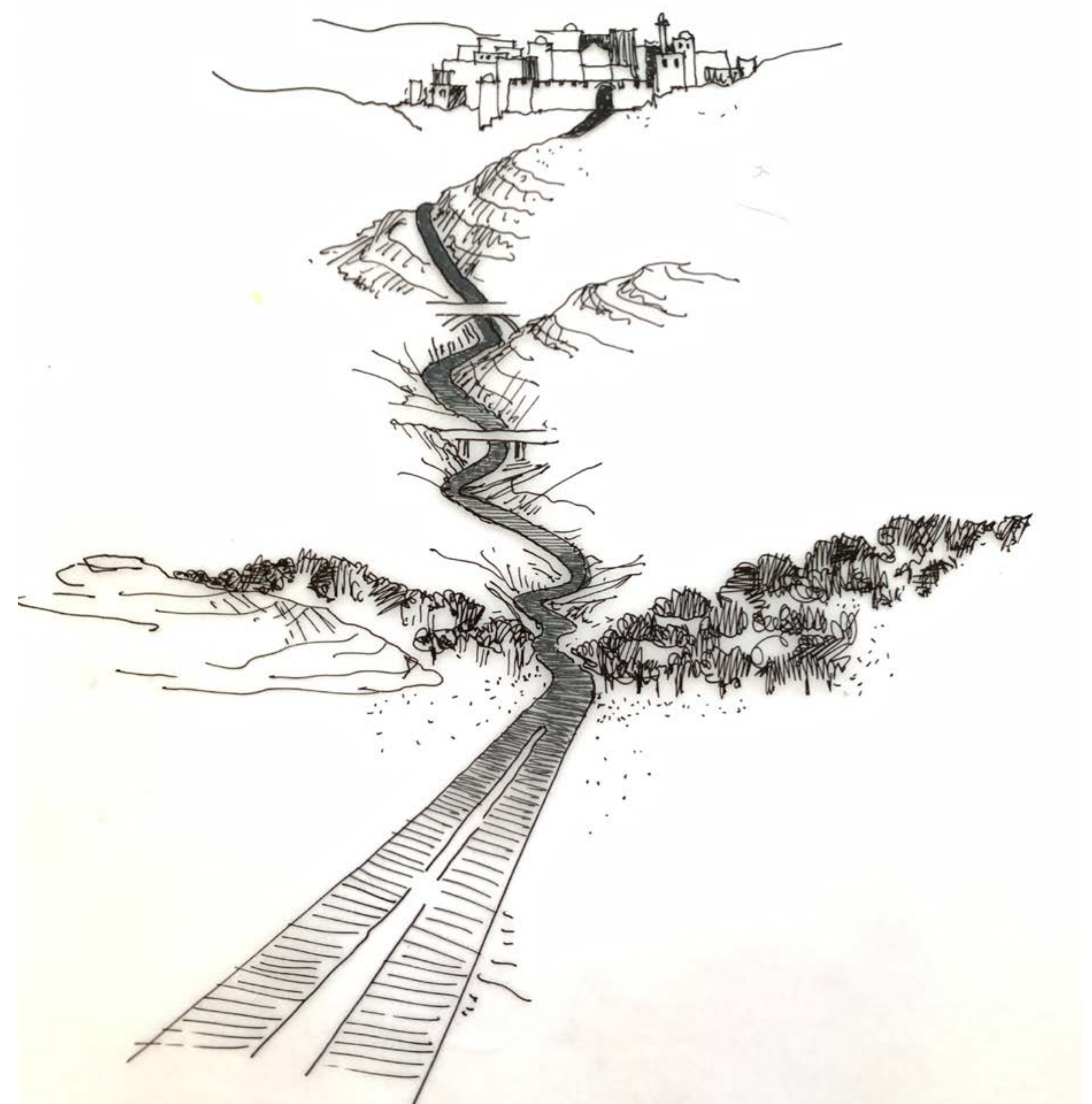


Fig. 160. Sketch illustrating the ascent of the road from the Sha'ar Hagai Interchange toward Jerusalem

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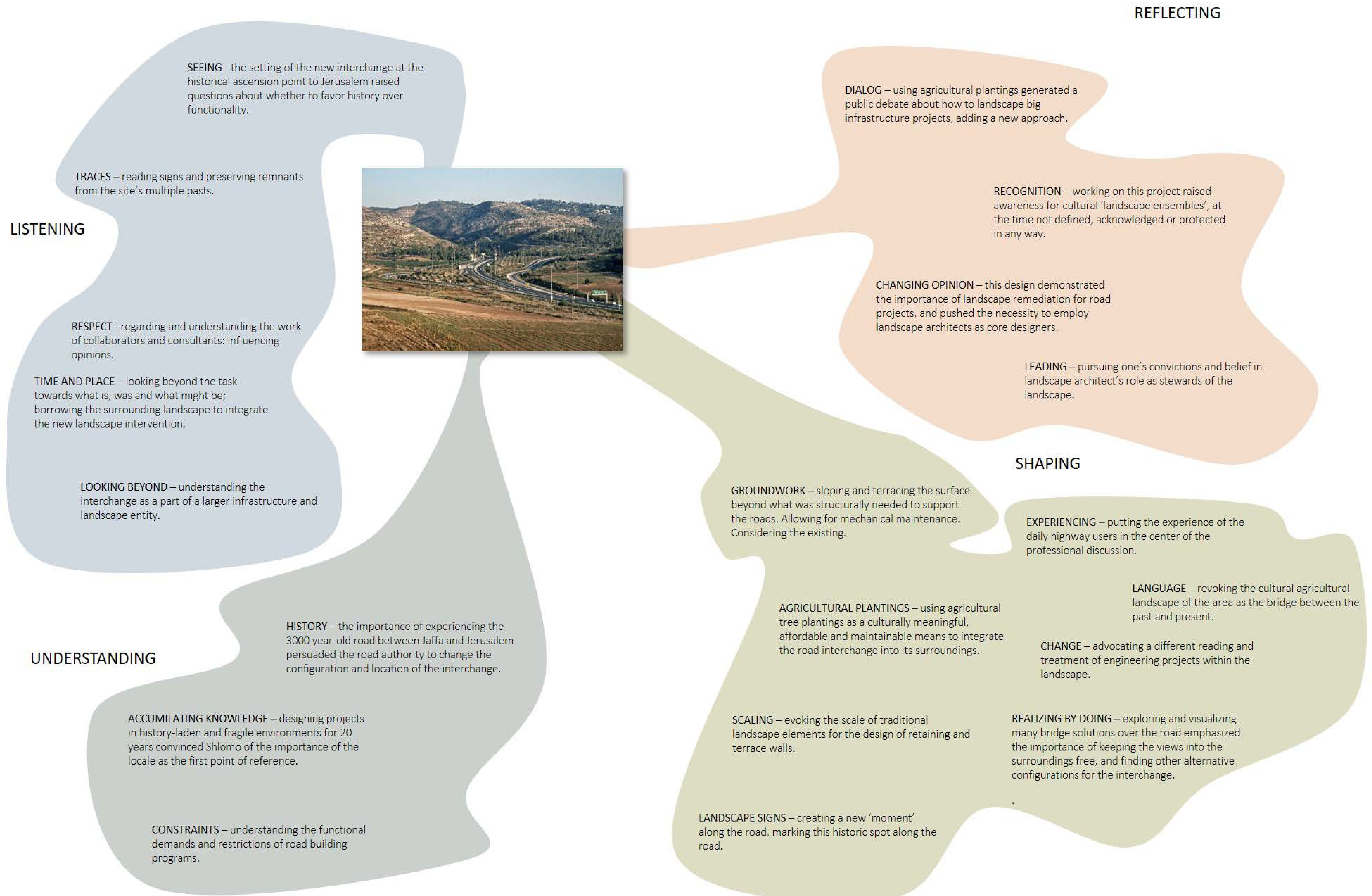

Fig. 161. Our modes of design in the Sha'ar Hagai Interchange project

The Sha'ar Hagai Interchange project illustrates our design methodology of first studying the functional requirements of the intervention before asking a set of questions as follows: What is our evaluation of the intervention's visual impact on its surroundings? Is the project's site part of a landscape ensemble? What is its potential landscape contribution beyond its primary purpose: can it function as a linear corridor for wildlife, provide access to recreation sites, enhance biodiversity through plantings, add sustainable drainage solutions beneficial to the larger landscape? Only after considering these questions do we decide upon the actual landscape concept and language. This line of inquiry has guided our work ever since. It helped us steer large transportation projects countrywide toward a more comprehensible, interdisciplinary design approach.

The use of agricultural plantings was another original element in the design. Until then, there was either no landscape rehabilitation through planting, or it typically relied on planting strips of hardy cultivated species, like oleander, that would not require long-term irrigation. Only urban interchanges were fully planted with trees and bushes. The planting of flowering bushes was also an aesthetic statement: adding green and color along roads showed that care had been taken to beautify an important highway or interchange. The planting of large-scale olive groves was a novel design idea, easy and inexpensive to plant, and it met minimal maintenance requirements, which made it possible to convince the National Transport Infrastructure Company to agree to this scheme. It was the first step toward changing public attitudes in regards to more sustainable roadside plantings that were responsive to their specific landscape setting. The next breakthrough came around 2000 when the landscape and ecology team of the Derech Eretz Highway Transportation Cooperation developed the know-how to cultivate and plant indigenous plant species,[55] changing sustainable planting strategies along transportation lines in the most significant way (Darel-Fossfeld & Helbitz, 2006). Our involvement in the project as the responsible landscape architects for several road sections, including the Ben Shemen and Kfar Daniel Interchange (2004) and the Nesharim Interchange (2008) allowed us to combine our interest in large-scale planting of agricultural tree species with the newly acquired knowledge of using indigenous plants for slope stabilization and annually plowed undergrowth.

Sadly, the great advances made in the last 25 years on behalf of preserving and integrating the natural and agricultural landscape in road projects, are increasingly eroded by concerns regarding the ease and cost of maintenance, sidelining the responsibility to mediate the incredible impact that Israel's many new roads have on the local environment.

55. In 1995, our office had been part of the design team that provided the statutory plans and design guidelines for the international bidding process to design, build and operate road 6, Israel's first toll road. Instead of promoting an overall signature design language for the entire road, Shlomo's landscape concept envisioned the use of the existing agricultural land uses in each design section to integrate the road into its surroundings. The Derech Eretz Highway Transportation Cooperation won the commission in 1999. Their landscape design team added another goal to their concept: increasing sustainability while lowering implementation costs. They conducted extensive research on how to collect seeds from local species, about which planting technique would be most successful, and which species would be successful over time. Most importantly, all this was done in collaboration with nurseries to build a professional and commercially viable infrastructure for future projects.

General data

Project Name: Sha'ar Hagai Interchange, Israel
Location: Tel Aviv-Jaffa to Jerusalem highway
Construction completed: 1995
Client: Netivei Israel - The National Transport Infrastructure Company
Design Team: Shlomo Aronson, Yair Avigdor, Anat Sade.

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Fig. 162. View of the olive groves with the Khan and planted forests beyond, 1996

Fig. 163. Stone terraces referencing the scale of the traditional agricultural terraces of the area, 1996

Fig. 164. View towards the interchange as seen from the higher surroundings to the east, 1996

05.02 Herzliya Park

Context

Herzliya park is situated in the flood basin created by the topographical divide between the city's two development centers: Herzliya Pituach along the seashore to the west, and Herzliya's urban center to the east. The reason for this separation is the natural kurkar ridge which runs along the entire length of Israel's Mediterranean shoreline, creating a physical barrier between the shore lands to the west, and the plains to the east. All major infrastructures and traffic axes of national scale run along this north-south corridor, aggravating the divide between east and west.

Seasonal flooding protected this piece of land from housing development in the center of an otherwise very densely populated and expensive real estate area. In the early 2000s, the former agricultural lands of the park had been largely abandoned or used as a landfill for excess earthworks.

Yael German, Herzliya's forward-thinking mayor between 1998-2013, recognized the potential of a central park to act as a catalyst for new quality urban expansion while creating the much-needed physical and social connection between the two divided parts of the city. At that time, most of the park's land was privately owned, with their proprietors still hoping to turn the land into zoning for future housing. The mayor pushed on with the design of the park, even when the landowners appealed to the Supreme Court, arguing that a city of 95,000 residents is in no need of a 180-acre park. Continuing the process of planning showed the municipality's determination: ultimately, the landowners lost their appeal, and construction of the first stage started as planned.

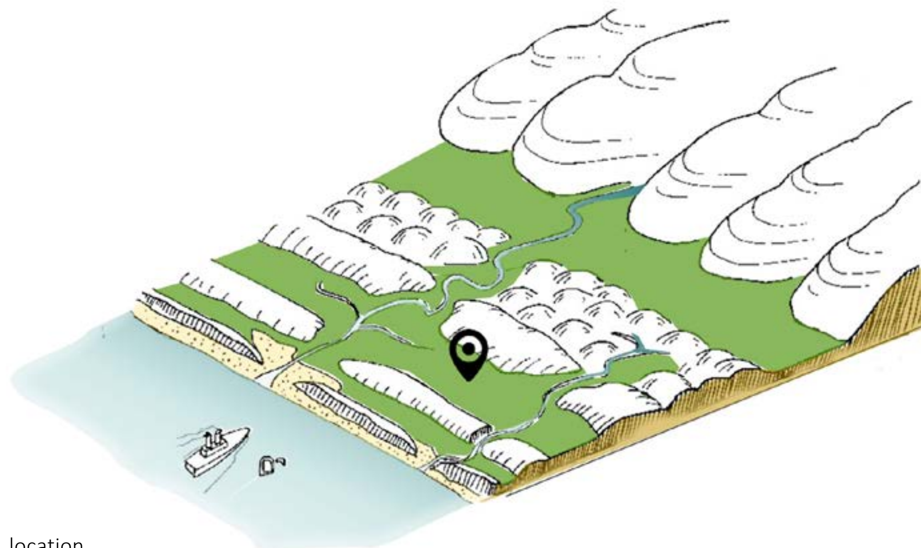

Fig. 165. Diagram explaining the relative location of Herzliya Park to the Kurkar ridge along the Mediterranean coast-line. Illustration based on a drawing published by the Ministry of Education

Project Background and History

The site was known by its Arabic slang name 'the Bassa', describing it as a 'disappointing or depressing' piece of land. As part of the historical flood basin of East Herzliya, it drains toward the Mediterranean Sea via an ancient Roman aqueduct. In 2005, a new drainage tunnel was built to alleviate the flooding problem. Large winter ponds filled with standing water for about six to seven months exist on site due to the heavy clay soil of the area. More than half of Herzliya's stormwater runoff ends up in the park. At the start of the project, two concrete-lined drainage ditches directed the water toward the new tunnel.

Genesis of the Project

Shlomo Aronson Architects was hired in 2004 to develop an overall concept for the 180-acre park and to design the first phase of 40 acres. The plan was based on the statutory plan of 2002, designed by the landscape firm of Lipa Yahalom and Dan Zur. Their plan envisioned a formal layout of recreational functions and open spaces along a central, one kilometer long, water channel and boating lake, with no reference to the natural winter ponds or other existing landscape values of the site.

After the approval of the statutory plan, the municipality approached Shlomo looking for an alternative, more site-specific, 'softer' approach to the site, allowing for the staged development of the park without compromising the final vision of the design.

Fig. 166. Landscape plan by Yahalom-Zur Landscape Architects, 2002

Fig. 167. Images highlighting the differences in the seasonal flooding areas during summer and winter

Developing a Concept for the Park

Different interests, or voices, surfaced right in the beginning. Mayor Yael German's vision for the park was to create a vibrant city park that would become a meeting point for the divided parts of Herzliya, generally improving the quality of life for the city's residents. While deeply committed to building a high-quality park, she also wanted the first phase to be completed before the next elections. The park was funded solely from municipal resources, and throughout the process, she represented the driving force behind the budget and time schedules. Rachel Ben Gom, head of the gardening department, and city engineer David Sockut shared the vision of the mayor, but also saw the project as a unique opportunity to develop an innovative and sustainable design for the largest and most important park in the city, insisting on a thorough investigation of design issues throughout all design stages. The ongoing flooding of the site and the potential threat to park visitors raised great concerns with the maintenance department, while representatives of the Nature Parks Authority questioned the municipality's commitment to preserving the winter ponds sustained by the natural cycle of flooding to the point of refusing to cooperate.[56] All parties involved had a lot at stake, and it fell on us to consider everybody's voice and agenda, and to consider the role of the park as part of the larger landscape, something which had not been addressed by anybody.

The site analysis focused on the hydrological and topographical condition of the site, including the ecological evaluation of the winter ponds and existing trees, the patchwork of existing (mostly private) uses of the future park area, the total lack of connectivity between east and west in general, and in particular to the existing urban fabric of the city to the east. Availability of land due to ownership played a major role in determining areas for immediate park development.

As the first step of our site investigation, we needed to understand the site's land use over time and unveil its discernible and invisible boundaries. Invasive pioneer species marked the southern areas where excess earthworks had been dumped when an adjacent shopping mall had been built. Talks with the municipality revealed that the earth mounds in the center of the parkland concealed building debris dumped on site. Stands of eucalyptus trees, another invasive species to Israel, could be found throughout the site, with no clear indication if they had been planted to help drain the soil or had appeared spontaneously. The northern parts of the parkland were and still are, worked and occupied by its private landowners.

56. Luckily for us, Amir Balaban, urban nature specialist and head of Jerusalem's bird observatory for the Society for the Protection of Nature, agreed to maintain a dialog with us despite outside pressures.

Comprehending the system of flooding of the park areas, and defining the borders of the ecologically valuable flooding areas proved to be a more complex task: we had to negotiate conflicting interests of controlling versus enhancing the flooding, of developing an intensive city park versus preserving the natural state of the land. Several sources of information were available: historic aerial photographs, background information supplied by the municipality, a study of the winter pond area prepared by the Nature Parks Authority, and on-site studies performed by Prof. Avital Gazit from the Tel Aviv University. While it was easy to mark the overall extent of the flooding, defining the extent of areas required to sustain the ecological balance of the winter ponds was not. Very few were aware of the importance of Israel's winter ponds as feeding stations for the 500 million birds migrating every year between Europe and Africa, and as rare ecotopes for amphibians. At the time of the first phase, most of the ecologically established ponds were located outside the borders of the publicly owned land, a fact which enabled us to defer the discussion about the fate of these fragile areas to the next stage. Once a greater awareness of their significance was established amongst the stakeholders we were able to preserve and extend the ponds overall area.

Most interesting, the public's image of the land was that of neglect, a forgotten track of land in the center of the city, causing dangerous floods to its surroundings, perceived as mosquito-breeding grounds in the summer. Farming had stopped on most of the area, adding to the feeling of abandonment.

Our overall design goal was to design a park for everybody: a place for nature and people alike, sustaining the existing natural processes while providing room for old and young, intimate encounters in the outdoors, social gatherings with friends and family, exercising and playing.

Fig. 168. Illegally dumped building debris could be found in many places within the park's limits

Defining the park's program was very much influenced by a public participation process that continued throughout all building phases. In the first phase, a telephone poll with residents kicked off the process. The five top wishes mentioned were playing structures, lawn areas, an amphitheatre, a duck pond, and picnic facilities. In itself this was a list of generic open space programs that we encounter in many of our park projects, expressing very poignantly what Herzliya's residents were looking for: a green city park designed around intensively developed recreational areas.

Fig. 169. On the second day of the workshop, invited professionals, representatives of the municipality, community leaders, seniors, and school children worked together to produce concrete ideas concerning different aspects of the park's design, 2005

A later, two-day professional workshop where the preliminary analysis of the park and first design intentions were presented to the public greatly informed and synthesized the central programmatic and strategic goals for the park. Teams of professionals and local interest groups worked on diverse topics like ecology, traffic design, program, and actual landscape design, presenting their recommendations in the form of drawings and texts in the final session. Three major suggestions were adapted into the design: improving access to the existing sports complex to the east of the park by downsizing the road, and adding traffic circles to reduce traffic speed; adding a pedestrian bridge spanning over the bordering highway and train corridor to improve connectivity from western neighborhoods to the park; and lastly creating a gradient of intensity from east to west, with a buffer of natural areas along the highway.

After four months of mapping and collecting background information, our efforts in drafting a comprehensive master plan for the park came to a halt and shifted towards the design of the first park phase, to be designed and built within two and a half years.

Fig. 170. Sketch developed by the landscape design group during the workshop: their plan envisioned a transition from intensive park programs around the existing sports complex to the east (red and yellow areas) to more traditional and natural park areas (green and blue areas) bordering the highway in the west, 2005

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The Design

The rectilinear limits of the first phase were dictated by land availability, located in the central half of the larger park area. We made a strategic decision that informed the program at large: provide the residents with as many of the recreational programs they wanted to see in their park, leaving the development of more natural areas for later.

The existing matrix of the drainage and flooding systems and the preservation of all existing trees presented the first points of reference for the design. As part of developing a master plan, I had prepared several fast sketches showing different formal approaches to the layout of the entire park. When it was presented to the city for approval, it confirmed their preference for an informal design language.

The budget for the park was reasonable but not extravagant in any way. We opted to design specific areas and elements to the highest standard while choosing inexpensive finishes for most of the paths and general park furnishings to balance costs. The goal was to create a sequence of design 'pearls' throughout the park, constructing the armature of the park's signature language.

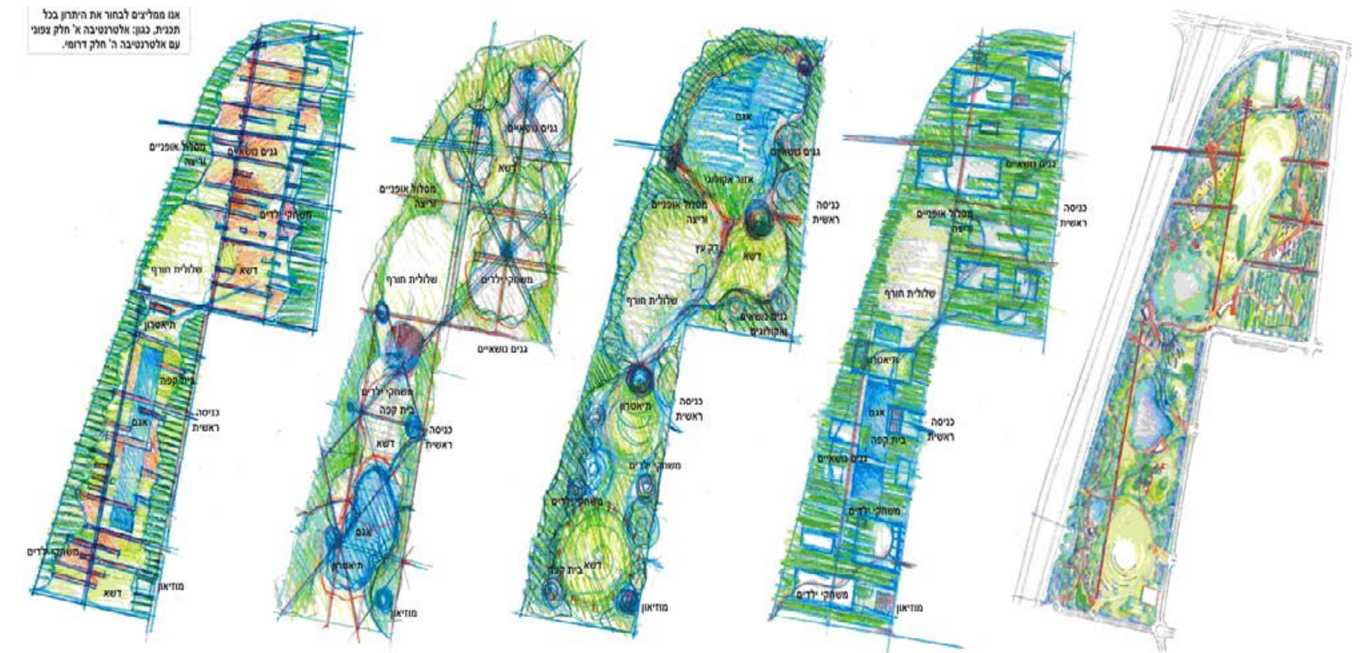

Fig. 171. At the early stages of the project, I suggested a series of very different formal approaches to stimulate the discussion about the park's overall design language

The idea of using the imagery of a tree with extending branches as the organizational structure came about when looking at the relationship of the new park with the existing open spaces to the east, and its location as the heart of park areas to be developed in the future. We wanted to resolve how we could strengthen the connection with the existing sports complex while allowing for the future growth of the park's structure beyond the rectangular borders of the first building phase. As has occurred many times in the history of the practice, abstraction of nature was used to generate a formal concept and to create a design narrative. This central design idea evolved as part of an intuitive response to the design brief, advanced mostly by me. Once approved by the client, the process of developing the design idea became the collaborative design effort of many. Different staff members were appointed to be responsible for certain design elements, like the coffee shop, the pergolas, and the overall planting scheme, or whole areas, like the design of the play area. The basic idea of 'natural flow', recalling the park's history as a wetland was then interpreted and related in different ways in all of the park's built elements.

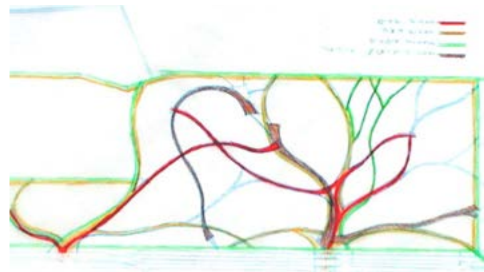

Fig. 172. Early sketch expressing the hierarchy of different path systems within the park

Earthworks were a major tool used to shape different areas and landscape experiences within the park. Surprising vistas were created for visitors moving throughout the park, with large open spaces as well as more intimate ones. Areas prone to flooding were excavated and the earth was used to cap the rising mounds of debris on the site to make them part of the overall grading concept. These existing and newly shaped mounds separate the active areas from the quieter areas of the park, and also from the bordering winter ponds, with one of the mounds doubling as an open amphitheatre.

Two major paths, or 'branches' take visitors from the main entrance to the areas with different landscape characters in the park. One path follows the more natural area along the rehabilitated drainage channels, the lake, the stand of existing eucalyptus trees. The other leads to playground areas and the coffee shop/public facilities building. Two separate path systems for runners and cyclists weave through the entire park and connect to the existing stadium and sports area to the east. Organized places for BBQ were located next to the parking areas at the northern entrance but were later relocated in the third phase to a much larger area to the south.

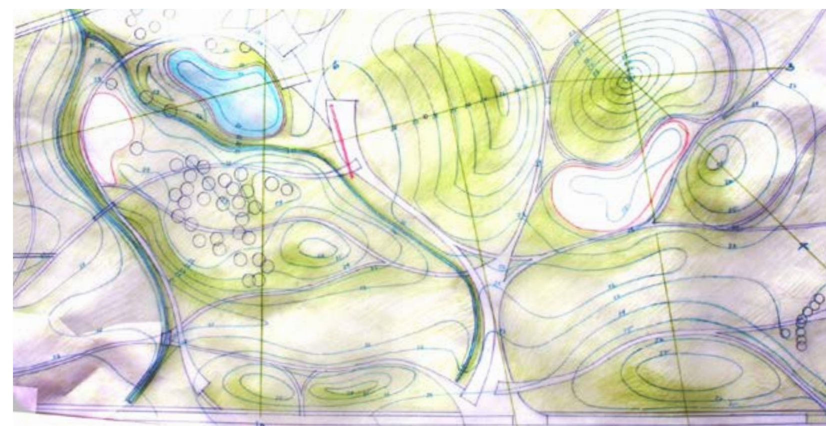

Fig. 173. Early sketch establishing the connection between the paths, drainage and flooding systems, and the overall grading concept of sequencing the discovery of different areas within the park

Fig. 174. Early drawing illustrating how the overall 'flowing' design language is applied to both the general layout of the park and the design of specific architectural elements, like the main children's play area

Fig. 175. Plan showing the park's first stage location as part of the existing sports complex and winter ponds, suggesting further pedestrian and bicycle connections to the city

Fig. 176. The branch structure of a tree was the inspiration for the park's general path layout, allowing for the future 'growth' of the path system to connect to new areas of later design stages

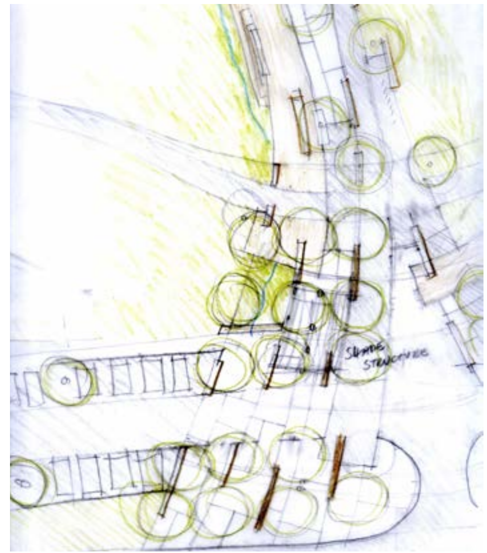

Fig. 177.The entrance pergola: design process from the initial sketch in plan view to the 3D-design exploration of the pergola's general shape

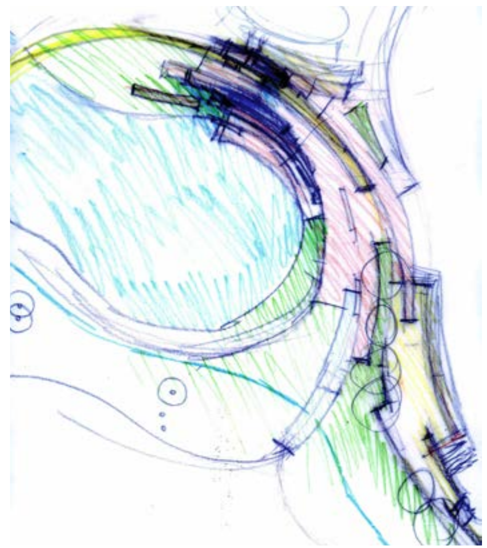

Fig. 178. The pergola on the lake: design process from the initial sketch of the general area to the 3D-design exploration of the pergola's general shape and position on the viewing platform influencing shade optimization

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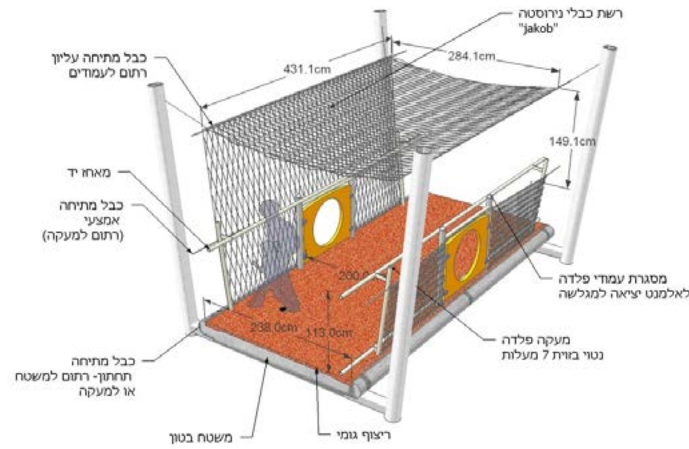
Fig. 179. The entrance pergola as seen when entering the park

Fig. 180. The pergola on the lake as seen from across the water

The playground forms the heart of the active area, with the 'swamp' inspired play area for toddlers and the main play structure that provides a play and running route for young, older, and children with activity limitations alike. It is designed around two loops of elevated pathways of varying width and inclination, snaking through the 'forest' of gigantic swamp reeds/columns. Steep and undulating slopes on the pathways and rope bridges add challenges for older children, eventually leading up to an 8-meter-high platform. Along the way, climbing structures and 15 slides connect the pathways with the ground. Intimate play areas are created under the 'roof' of the concrete pathways. Many types of swings, rope climbing pyramids, and nets are interspersed throughout the area, completing the play experience.

Fig. 181.   The 3D SketchUp model made it possible to design the interlacing paths within the play structure

Fig. 182.   The different layers of the play structure, shown from the ground up



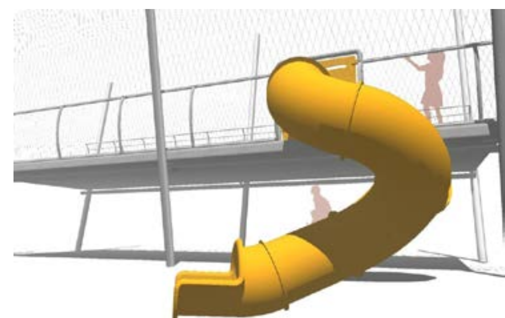


Fig. 183.   3d drawings helped explain the complex design components of the play structure to the contractor

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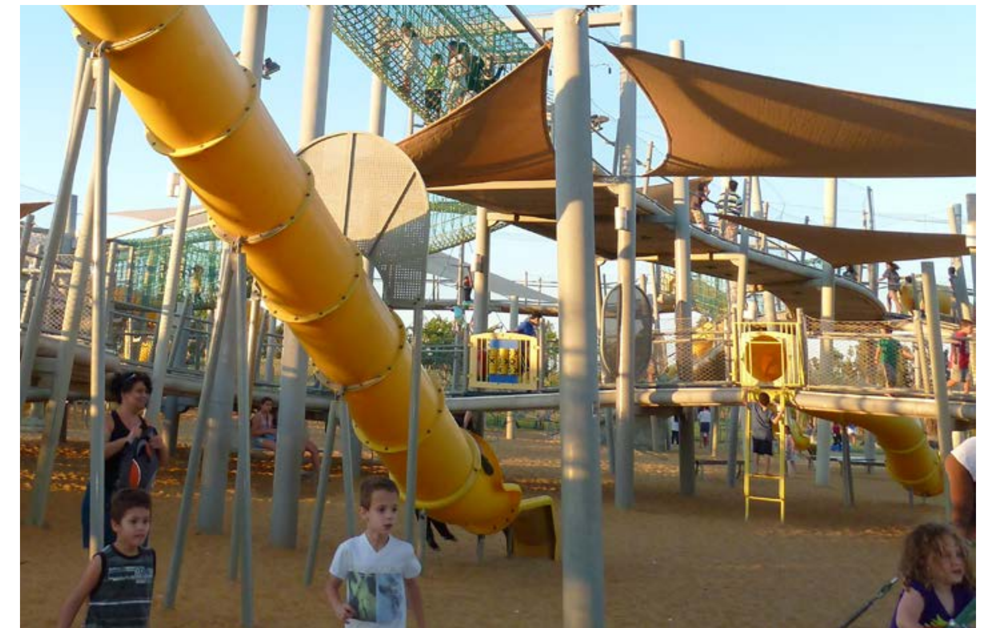

Fig. 184.   Ramps and bridges form an integral part of the play experience, creating spaces to be explored from above and below

Fig. 185.   The system of ramps and supporting columns under construction

Fig. 186. Variously inclined ramps and bridges were designed as part of the overall play experience of discovering different play elements while running along the interlacing looping paths of the structure

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The service building with the coffee shop, restrooms, and supporting technical rooms for the park is dug into the back of the amphitheatre, designed to reveal itself differentially: inconspicuous when entering the park, invisible from the lake area, it becomes the focal point for the play area, letting parents have their coffee while maintaining eye contact with their children.

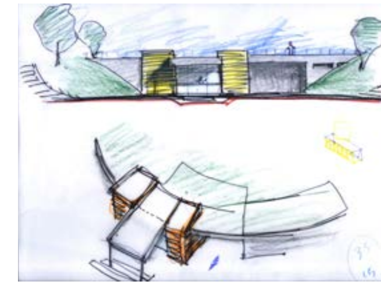

Fig. 187. Ittai's first sketches for the building

Fig. 188. The service building shortly after the opening of the park

Fig. 189. Birds-eye view of the main entrance with the play structure and service building in the background

Fig. 190. Visualization and construction drawing of the viewing platform and pergola along the irrigation pond

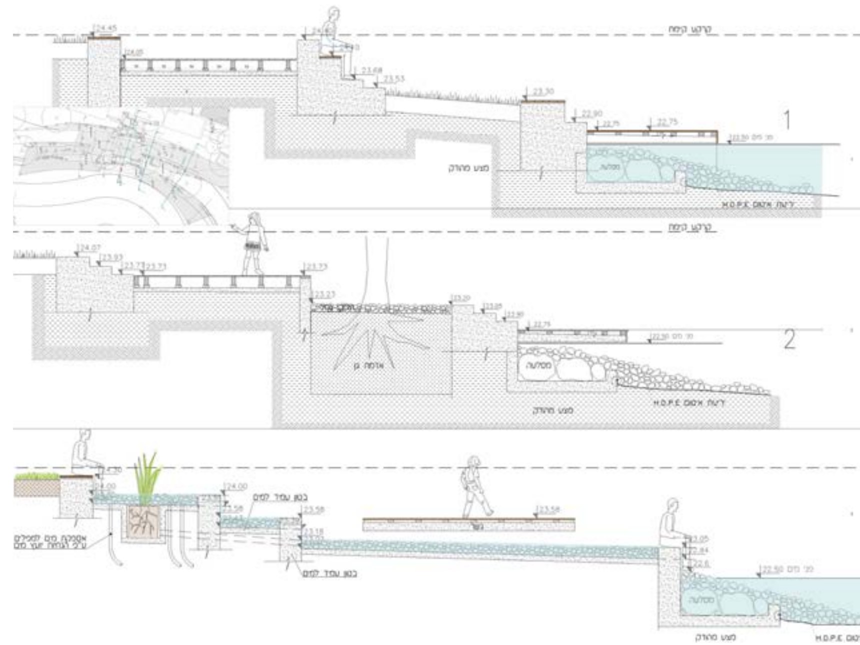

Fig. 191. Sections specifying different edge situations of how the park meets the water

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The natural area was created around an existing stand of eucalyptus trees, with a pond that works also as the irrigation water reservoir. A wooden deck built alongside one of the rehabilitated drainage channels leads from the main entrance to the waterfall area, via the slopes of the amphitheatre. Quiet sitting and picnic places can be found under the trees and around the channels.

Fig. 192. The irrigation pond photographed soon after the park's opening

Fig. 193. This picture from 2016 shows the established vegetation around the pond eight years after planting

Taking the climate into consideration, the entire irrigation system of the park was built for wastewater use, connected to the recently finished wastewater treatment plant nearby. This made the extensive use of lawns justifiable and sustainable. In addition, about one-third of the lawn areas were planted with a drought-resistant species that can be left to grow as meadows (although the city opted to maintain them as lawns). More than one thousand trees were planted, with different species selected along the channels, and for the lawn and elevated areas. In addition to the trees, shade is provided at key points by formal pergolas, shading sails, and hundreds of umbrellas that bridged the time until the newly planted trees grew sufficiently to provide enough shade for the comfort of visitors.

The municipality recognized early on that the maintenance will have to be performed by a park manager and a team of staff workers located on-site. The park manager, who was recruited during the construction process, got to know the park and all of its infrastructure from the very beginning. Today, subcontractors perform all gardening and irrigation services. The high standard of maintenance and the concept of establishing an on-site maintenance unit has become the role model for other large parks developed in Israel.

Fig. 194. Aerial view of the first stage park, with overgrown winter ponds in the foreground

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Fig. 195. Midwinter in the park showing flooding of lawn areas

Fig. 196. The various bicycle, running and walking paths meet and start branching out in the main entrance area

Another workshop started the renewed design process for the second phase, this time involving all municipal departments. The park had been enthusiastically embraced by the public, Yael German had been re-elected as mayor and she was ready to expand the park to the north. A year had passed and public opinion about the landscape value of the natural flooding areas had changed: we sensed that it was possible to push a more ecological approach. The winter ponds were now in the center of this new phase, which brought the issue of drainage and storm-water management within a public park to the foreground. How would it be possible to address the practical needs of the city and the environmental needs of the pond's fauna and flora while developing an intensive park right next to them? On the one hand, these areas act as the most important municipal flood basin of the city while their ecological balance is extremely sensitive to outside influences and changes.

The workshop showed that this time around all municipal departments were interested in the expansion of the park and in taking part in the design process. The design of the park had addressed in a satisfactory way misgivings about maintenance and flooding problems. Contrasting with what we had experienced before, now all department heads brought their ideas and concerns forward in a contributing rather than criticizing way. It was extremely important to get everybody's support right from the start: we stressed the fact that managing these natural areas would require special knowledge, care, and effort from the maintenance staff of the park. We also made it clear that we did not have all the answers about how to design an urban nature park and that it would be a work in progress.

Central to our design of this phase was the goal to renew the bond between Herzliya's residents and their own special urban nature found in the very center of their city. We wanted to enable the community to take pride in preserving the natural environment of the winter ponds, and to enjoy the dramatic seasonal changes, watching tens of thousands of birds passing by or nesting, while appreciating the quiet beauty and quality of the park areas surrounding it. In the winter, these areas are captivating with lush green vegetation and water, rich in birdlife and exciting for bird watchers. In the summer, they turn into fields of dry vegetation that in truth are not very engaging. In the first phase, the park's program was concentrated around recreation and sport, now nature and education were added to form the foundation for the design.

Fig. 197. Diagrams indicating the different program emphases in each design stage

Fig. 198. Bird's eye view of the northern park areas after the completion of the second stage, with the overgrown win-ter ponds in the foreground and the central 'matruka' leading visitors north

Fig. 199. Plan of the park in 2011, showing the location of phases 1 and 2 situated in undeveloped areas to the north and south

Fig. 200. Traces of the historic 'matruka' can be detected in the center of this early summer photograph of the winter ponds, looking north

Fig. 201. Visualization of the second phase plan, facing south.

Fig. 202. Picture of the northern land parcel at the start of planning: a grid of eucalyptus trees was previously planted by the municipality to prevent illegal dumping of building waste. We embraced the tree grid and adopted it as the ready-made shade infrastructure in our design proposal

The borders of this phase, again determined by public land ownership, presented us with a piece of land to the north, connected to the existing park by a long narrow strip crossing the flood plains of the winter ponds that were on land still privately owned. The connecting axis is based on a public land parcel or 'matruka', part of a historic system of public paths introduced during the Ottoman Empire to regulate access to agricultural fields. It dissects the northern part of the park in half, making it into the obvious organizational element. The winter ponds to the west were identified as the most valuable areas ecologically, but the eastern part with its dense vegetation cover had turned into additional breeding grounds for birds. The city had planned to extend the existing sports complex to the south with soccer fields on this part, and we didn't give it much thought until we renewed our mapping process for the second park phase. Looking north over the winter ponds along the 'matruka' I realized that this vast open landscape of water and greenery was very unique in its urban setting, creating the opportunity to design the central axis like a Dutch dike path, offering views to all directions. We quickly prepared an image of how it could look and convinced the mayor to change the city's plans and preserve all flooding areas.

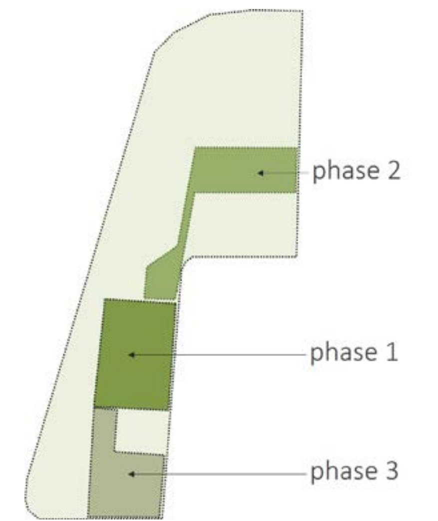

Fig. 203. Diagram showing the location of developed park areas until today

Fig. 204. The central park axis traversing the winter ponds along the historic 'matruka': vision and reality

Fig. 205. Gates marking the entrance to the nature walk

Initially, we had hoped to bring people in close contact with the winter pond areas, but urban nature and bird specialist Amir Balaban made it very clear that light pollution and human movement would critically impact the nesting potential for the permanently residing birds. We decided to design a single path with no lighting meandering through a short section of the winter ponds, opened and closed every day by the park's maintenance staff. Bollard lighting along the central axis was designed to only light the parallel paths for bicycling, running, and walking.

Fig. 206. The nature path with settling pond to the left and nesting grounds to the right

Fig. 207. Interior of the southern bird watching shelter

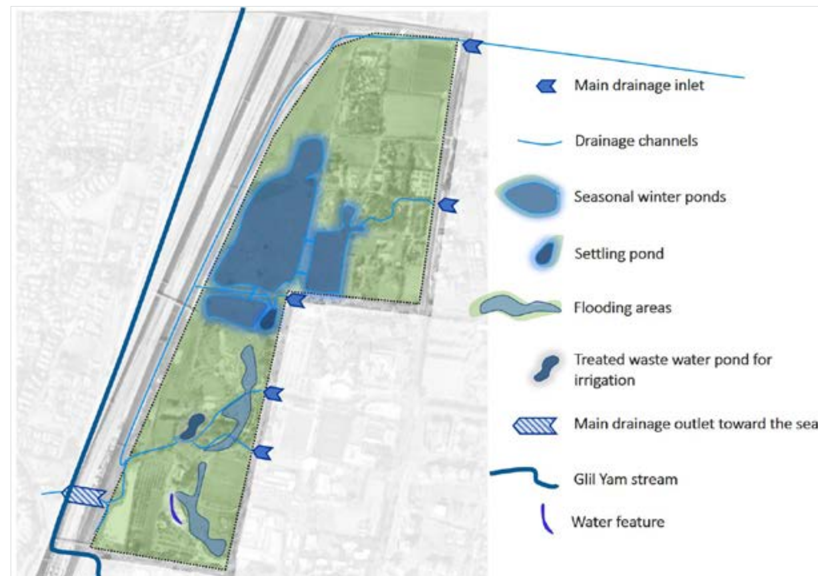

Fig. 208. Diagram mapping the drainage system, and different types of water bodies within the park

Two secluded bird-watching shelters close to the water level offer close-up views of birds, while an elevated promontory provides a vantage point to enjoy the entire area.

Fig. 209. Southern bird watching shelter as seen from outside

Fig. 210. The northern bird-watching shelter is surrounded by flooding areas. Constructed 30 cm lower than planned, this shelter is unfortunately inaccessible in the winter. A stand of mature eucalyptus trees forms the visual focal point within the larger surroundings

Fig. 211. Elevated promontory overlooking the winter ponds

Fig. 212. Elevated promontory as seen from below

The design of a bird-watching center was later abandoned: The Society for the Protection of Nature who operate Jerusalem's bird observatory felt unable to commit to managing an additional one.

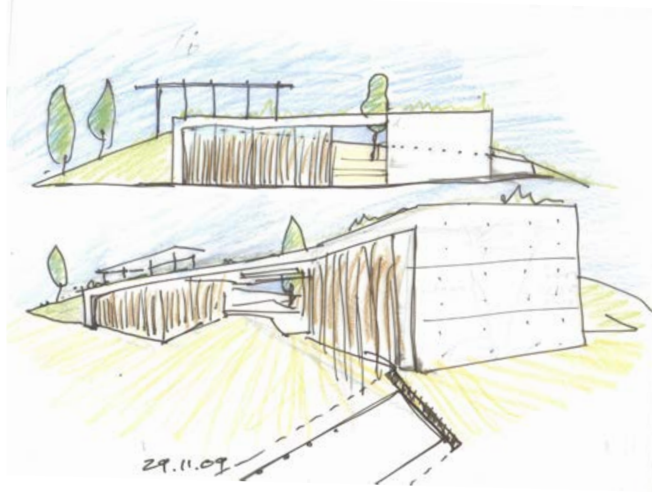

Fig. 213. Early sketch of the bird-watching center by Ittai

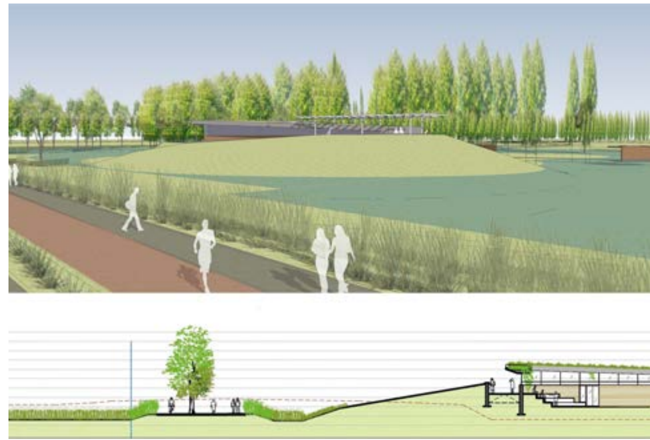

Fig. 214. Preliminary design explorations and renderings of the bird-watching center

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Garbage and contaminants coming into the winter ponds from the city's drainage system posed a problem. We designed a small settling pond adjacent to the main drainage opening, about one meter deeper than the natural flooding areas, to trap pollutants and provide the option of clearing the area in the summer by machinery. In theory, a good idea, the size of the pond proved to be much too small to provide for a significant settling process. Little did we know that this pond would hold water throughout the entire year due to water influx resulting from excess irrigation and car washing: we unintentionally created a permanent water body, beautiful to look at, but inviting invasive snake species. For all of the above reasons, the settling pond has to be drained and cleaned once a year.

Fig. 215. The settling pond in mid-summer

Fig. 216.   Simple 3D design exploration of the central entrance pergola's layout and movement

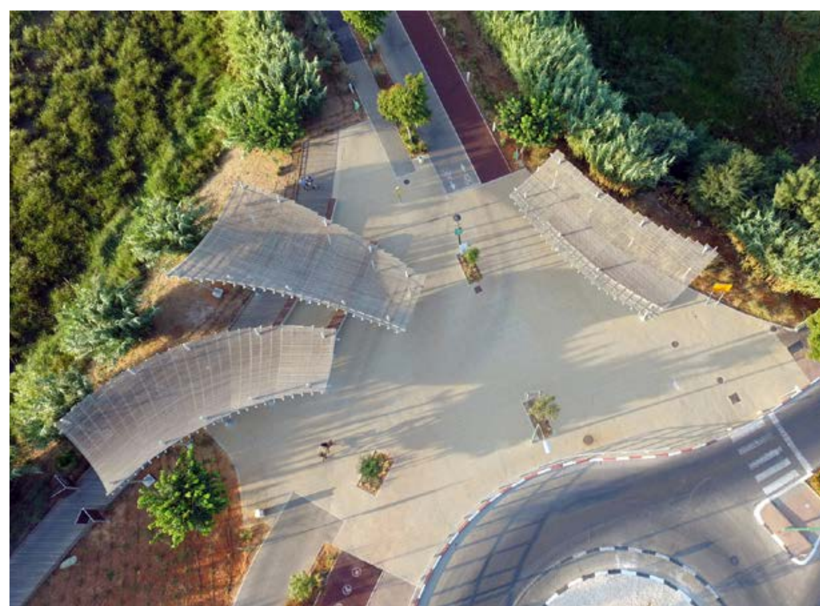

Fig. 217.The sitting area and pergola overlooking the winter ponds to the west; below an aerial view of the same area

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A few years earlier the northern area had been planted with a grid of eucalyptus trees, an inexpensive method to demonstrate land use and prevent unauthorized dumping of building waste. It became instantly clear to us that we would want to retain the trees. We had to convince the city to adopt this idea: they thought of the eucalyptus tree plantings as a temporary measure, fast-growing but of no ecological value. In contrast, we saw it as an opportunity to receive almost instant shade in most of the area. A stand of mature eucalyptus trees formed the visual focal point within the larger surroundings, separating it from the open flood plains.

The city suspected that we would find a fair amount of debris on-site, the massive extent of which we discovered only after starting the earthworks along the central axis. We then decided to sort all debris on-site and crush and reuse the construction waste as a sub-base for the path systems.

As the northern entrance to the park, the program for this area included a parking area and a service building. We wanted the additional recreational programs and new plantings to blend in with the natural feel of this area: a small amphitheatre doubling as an outdoor classroom, a grove of fruit trees, an exercise area in the shade of trees, all connected by a looping main pedestrian and bike path. One more kilometer was also added to the park's existing running track.

Fig. 218.   Grid of young eucalyptus trees photographed at the onset of planning

Fig. 219.   Construction waste recycled on-site for re-use as subbase material

Fig. 220.   The outdoor classroom

Fig. 221.   Running path along the central axis, connecting the southern park areas with the northern land parcel of phase 2

When we learned that the new neighborhood under construction to the east was going to connect its drainage to the road drainage system we insisted to connect it instead directly to the park: visitors could now enjoy the shallow flooding without disturbing existing nesting grounds beyond.

Fig. 222. In the winter, the flooding areas become part of the park experience

Looking for an additional recreational attraction, Rachel Ben Gom suggested integrating a bicycle pump track, the design of which was outsourced to architect Erez Lotan and track specialists Ez Harim who carefully worked within the grid of existing trees.

The opening of this phase proved to be a great success with the public, and its natural areas became the pride of Herzliya's residents.

Fig. 223. The bicycle pump track

Fig. 224. The coffee shop under construction

Fig. 225. The northern coffee shop upon completion. Subsequently it has become a beer garden

The third phase, finished in 2013, completed the southern area of the park and provides connections to major public transportation nodes. Defining the program proved to be a challenge: with no existing landscape assets informing the design, the mayor asked us to continue the general design themes around sport and recreation but to also create a signature water feature. After celebrating the natural water systems as the leitmotif of the site, designing a fountain felt like the return to a traditional park program with no connection to the overall park concept. We realized though that telling the story of water in its many forms could further enrich the narrative: our design solution was to create an interpretation of a natural watercourse, with alternating shallow water areas and micro-wetlands providing the required water quality to allow visitors of all ages to wet their feet and enjoy the slow murmur and cool of the water. It became the centerpiece to this new park section with areas for play, picnicking, flood retention, and a restaurant and service building as commercial anchors contributing to cover maintenance costs.

Fig. 226. Aerial view of the completed third phase, overlooking the playground with the restaurant and service building beyond

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Fig. 227.Preliminary design sketch for the third phase

Fig. 228. Mid-process drawing explaining the relationship between the buildings and the water feature

Fig. 230. Planting plan of the constructed wetlands together with the water feature

Fig. 231. The water feature as the centerpiece of the third phase

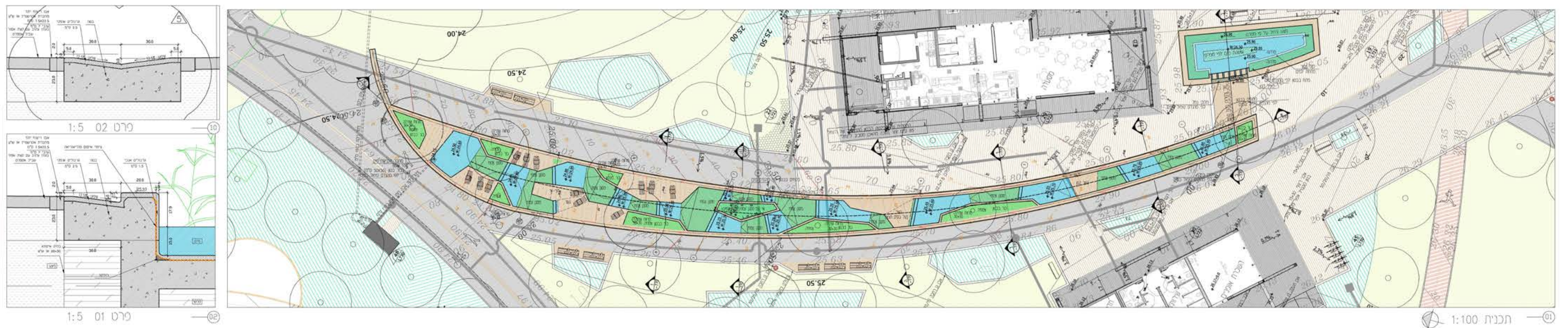


Fig. 229. Construction plan and details of the water feature

Fig. 232. A water level of no more than 10cm allows for free access and play. Water flows between open areas and planted wetlands which cool and filter the water before being circulated back to the source pool

Fig. 233. The shaded sitting area next to the source pool

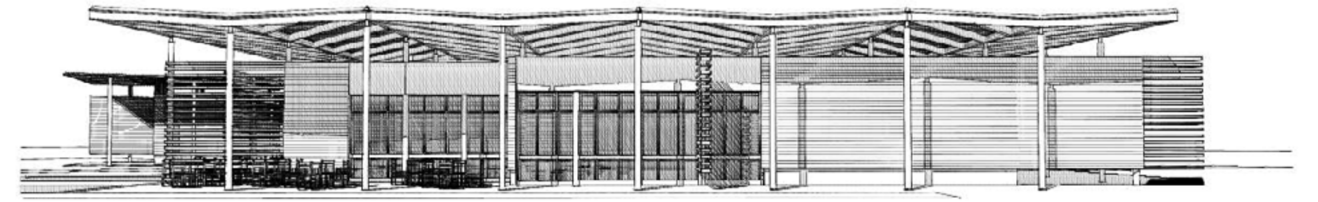


Fig. 234. 3d explorations from different stages of the design. Most construction drawings were generated from the 3d model of the building

Fig. 235. The source pool with the service building in the background

Reflections

Park Herzliya had a great impact on my personal development as a designer, on the office, the city of Herzliya, and the profession at large. During my second progress presentation, in search of understanding of our design process, one of the panel members suggested analyzing one of the case study projects through the lens of seminal moments that happened throughout the design process. I chose the first phase of the park in Herzliya to explore this notion. It supported a premise that I had been trying to verify from the beginning of this research: that good design is not only the result of a great concept, design talent, and experience but very much about establishing personal relationships, involvement of the public, recognizing opportunities, putting together the 'right' team in the office, and sometimes just having the chutzpah to push the ideas we believe in. The relationship between mayor Yael German, Rachel Ben Gom, and myself had an enormous impact on the realization of the park and my understanding of myself as a lead designer: three people who had not met before, bonding and trusting each other to make their combined goals a reality. A lot of other people were involved in the decision-making process but working with those two women performing in such a professional, decisive, and supportive way was a great personal experience. Yael German showed her tough determination when pushing ahead with the planning of the park even when she was taken to the Supreme Court. It was she who pushed for public participation to get the best result for the residents of Herzliya, never afraid to conduct a lively debate. There was a lot to learn from her willingness to listen to and incorporate the opinion of others. Rachel Ben Gom brought to the process her rich professional experience as the head of the gardening department while always pushing for innovation and better practice, contrary to so many other public employees who want to build projects to standards that are most easy to maintain. She took onto herself a lot of the work convincing other municipal departments. Most of all, she believed in what we were trying to achieve, and she believed in my ability to deliver it.

Fig. 236. Barbara, Rachel Ben Gom, and mayor Yael German

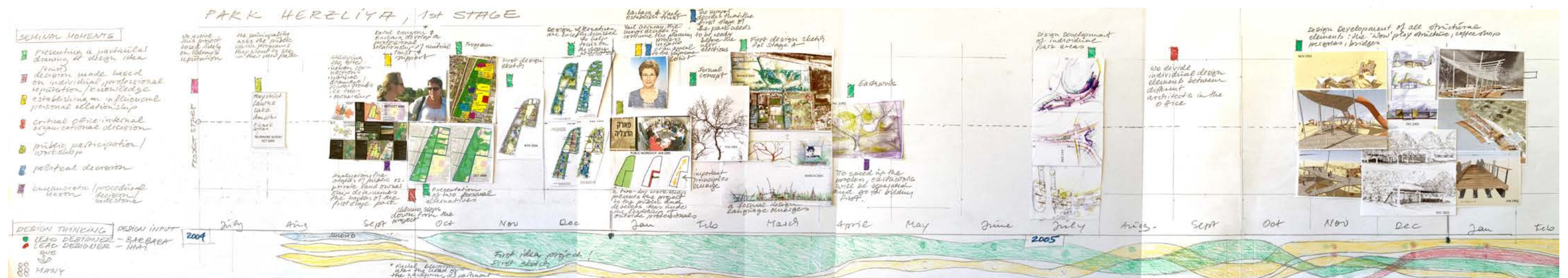
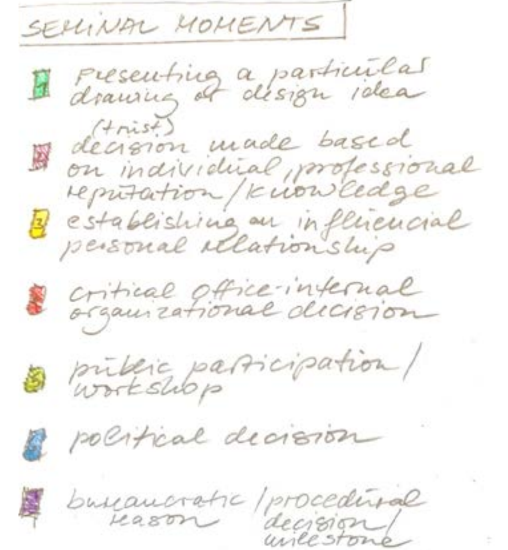


Fig. 237. A collage prepared for the third PhD progress presentation maps seminal moments in the project's design process

The design process denoted a new type of teamwork within the office. It involved a relatively large number of staff members working on specific elements or areas, an approach different to that adopted in the past. One reason for this was the project size: until then the practice had not worked on such a large, intensively programmed urban park. Spreading the design responsibility helped meet the tight deadlines, but more particularly, added the specific design knowledge and innovative technical skills of the younger generation to the design effort. It was an exciting process of trial and error, of stretching the possibilities of 3D modeling to support our design fantasies and to turn them into a buildable reality. I had come up with the initial ideas about floating and organic shapes for the built elements of the park but planning the highly complex geometry of the elevated ramps of the play area and the shading elements would have been impossible to realize without young architects Ofri Gerber and Tal Bilinsky who contributed their notable design talents and knowledge of digital tools to the design. All of us learned a lot from this process. Personally, I learned about the advantages of letting go, handing over responsibilities to others. It marked my transition to becoming a lead designer, implementing a skill that I had observed with Shlomo many times before: how to talk people through your ideas, steering the process rather than dominating it.



Evolving Legacy: An Exploratory Path into Uncovering and Sustaining a Practice's Accumulated Knowledge

LISTENING

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – the input from a telephone survey about the park's program and a 2-day workshop provided major insights.

FINDING TRACES – reading the site for information about natural and disturbed areas, flooding and hidden waste.

VIRTUAL BOUNDARIES – understanding the role of private land ownership in determining the realistic boundaries for park development and design.

INSPIRATION – Enric Miralles & Benedetta Tagliabue – Parc Diagonal Mar, 2002. The image of the plan, as published in 'Landscape Architecture', was radically different, flowing and artistic from other projects of its time.

PERSONAL CONNECTIONS – the relationship with the mayor and key figures in the municipality created an environment of mutual trust and support which made it possible to incorporate new and untested ideas and programs in the park.

NETWORKING – establishing a personal relationship with the park management gives us the ability to help facilitate and influence outside changes.

LANDSCAPE AS INFRASTRUCTURE – approaching the park's drainage system and flood areas as part of the larger drainage and ecological networks of its surroundings.

COEXISTENCE – putting the wishes of the public in the center of the design debate while protecting the needs of the ecological systems: designing for man **with** nature

UNDERSTANDING

CONNECTING – celebrating the story of the site as an ancient flood basin and its importance as a stop for birds migrating from Europe to Africa, weaving it into the landscape vision for the park.

LEARNING – studying existing local attempts by others to deal with seasonal flooding and ecological sensitivity of these areas in actively developed urban parks.

ACCOUNTABILITY – understanding our responsibility to integrate the needs of people and nature alike in the design of large parks, especially if the local 'nature' is perceived as hostile yet ecologically of highest importance.

Fig. 238. Our modes of design in the Herzliya park project

REFLECTING

LOOKING BACK – documenting the shortcomings of particular design decisions and solutions.

A SEMINAL MOMENT – the park design marks a transitional point between lead designers, manifesting Barbara's design voice.

CHANGING OPINION – exposing the beauty of seasonal winter ponds and the dramatic appearance of the migrating birds to the public, helped to advance an ecological agenda in the park design.

INFLUENCING – starting a professional debate about ......

TURNING LEMONS INTO LEMONADE – the overwhelmingly positive embrace of the natural areas by the public inspired other municipalities to utilize their drainage challenges in creating sustainable and rich urban open spaces.

EDUCATION – excitement about the natural wildlife around the seasonal winter ponds triggered multiple initiatives: workshops, guided tours and inviting volunteers in the park's upkeep and research.

SHAPING

EMBRACING FLEXIBILITY – acknowledging that the implementation of the masterplan in multiple construction phases will have to allow for significant changes.

SALVAGING – much of the construction waste found on site was crushed and re-used as subbase for the park's path system.

ENABLING – choosing a formal language which allows for growth and an organic expansion of the park into areas to be developed in the future.

CREATING 'PEARLS' – carefully balancing a modest budget: allocating more money to the design of specific design elements to create the signature language of the park.

SCALING – celebrating the largeness of the park with far-reaching vistas while providing intimate spatial and sensual experiences using topography and plantings.

SCULPTING – the ground is molded to create different spatial experiences for a variety of reasons: to provide water retention areas, to cap non-toxic waste areas, and to create visual and acoustic separations throughout the park.

BUILDING COMMUNITY – designing an inclusive park: for man and nature, for residents and neighbors in need of quality open space, for the young and old seeking action, quiet or a place to meet.

SEQUENCING – topography and plantings are used to create landscape rooms and walking sequences that are meant to be discovered and experienced independently.

The municipality of Herzliya hired Shlomo Aronson Architects based on Shlomo's reputation as an experienced landscape architect with a love for Israel's natural and cultural landscapes. Yet during the inception phase of the project, Shlomo's health started failing and I stepped in as lead designer. Park Herzliya became my coming-out project. While continuing the practice's legacy of creating site-specific designs, the contemporary design language of the park presented a new interpretation of time-trusted formal and programmatic concepts; it also gave a more prominent voice to social and ecological issues close to my heart.

The synergetic approach of maintaining a dialogue with all stakeholders throughout the planning process of the park, including the general public, the natural environment, and municipal departments, helped create a new format of how to conceive resilient programs for contemporary urban parks. The organic and modern design language, expressed in each element of the design, was inspired by the natural flows existing on-site; it also reflects our conscious decision to create a contemporary formal language suitable for a new urban park of the 21st century.

The success of Herzliya Park was instrumental in establishing the practice as a professional authority on designing sustainable parks while integrating all architectural and landscape aspects into one holistic approach. Today, we are working on a variety of large-scale parks which were awarded to us because of the reputation gained for this project.

Municipal parks are always subject to changing ideas and pressures due to change in political leadership. Past achievements might be seen as outdated, undeveloped areas are seen as a potential to introduce different programs and new planning agendas. Typically, large urban parks of 180 acres are not implemented in one building phase. We used strategic planning to promote green policies, and the original design for the entire park changed considerably over time: lessons were learned from the site, changes in political leadership and feedback from users caused programmatic shifts, and changes in public opinion about the value of conserving natural areas helped to boost the 'green' agendas in the park.

The master plan of 2011 outlined the programmatic layout and development strategy for the entire site, with the first stage planned as a cornerstone, creating an active and intensively developed park section that addressed the first wave of demands of its projected users while exposing the rich natural processes and ecologies existing on the site. It also was intended to raise public interest and political support for the protection of the bordering winter ponds and their rich wildlife, until then hidden from view and widely snubbed as mosquito breeding grounds.

Fig. 239. The prominent graphic presentation of the natural flooding areas in the park's signage attests to their perceived importance as part of the overall park experience

Fig. 240. The masterplan of the entire park site was only compiled at the end of the third park phase in 2013

Integrating the public and the city throughout the repeated process of planning has helped create local pride and stewardship, encouraging good citizenship and social involvement in the running of the park.

To date, about half of the site is developed as a park. Private uses are still in place, and pressure to add more built programs (e.g., a sports stadium) to the park is ever-present. The great achievement of the phased design was allowing for progressive change through public input; yet without the continued involvement of the original designers in the design of the remaining park areas, the overall concept of the park as a sustainable and resilient open space for people and nature alike might have become secondary in place of other considerations. The office is continuing to advise the management of the park on a voluntary basis, assisting the park management in mitigating necessary and unwanted changes, such as increased security demands threatening to turn the open area of the amphitheatre into a permanently closed off area.

The park has received wide professional and public acceptance [57] and was selected as a case study project in academic research.[58] It has become a role model of how to successfully combine natural areas and storm-water management with intensive park uses in an urban park. It proved that nature-based drainage solutions and winter ponds can become part of the landscape narrative, their seasonal beauty, celebrating the natural changes of nature and life. The overwhelmingly positive feedback from the public toward the inclusion of the natural areas as part of the overall park experience has demonstrated their understanding of the importance and appreciation of natural processes and changes within our urban areas. Learning from the successful relationship which developed between the park and the city and its residents has helped to advance the national debate about integrating 'urban nature" in our cities. After recognizing the educational value of the winter ponds, the city took an active role in changing public attitudes, starting in schools, offering free bird watching tours, integrating volunteers of all age groups working in the park, and establishing a municipal education center. In 2019, the park was recognized as a national bird ringing center.

57. Karavan Prize for Barbara and Ittai Aronson, for Herzliya Park (2015). First prize in general design category, The Israeli Association of Landscape Architects (2013). Prize of Honor, "Domus" Magazine (2010). Projects of the Year, "Architecture of Israel" Magazine (2009) Jury comment: "A creative and innovative design originating from the site's characteristics, that translate in the design to add both ecological and architectural benefits. The park serves the public wonderfully, and is an example of planning that takes into account both the needs of the community and the environment." (Shlomo Aronson Architects, 2014)

58. The Israeli Association of Landscapes Architects published the first edition of its system for the sustainable development of urban and rural landscapes in 2019, "Sustainable Landscapes Israel," or "SLIL" (TM), selecting the park as one of two case study projects to illustrate the system's methodology and findings (Yoffe, 2019). The park received the highest scores in almost all categories ("SLIL" is the Israeli response to the American "Sustainable Sites Initiative" (TM), known as "SITES" (TM)). In 2018, Herzliya Park was chosen as the detailed case study for "Project 4.1: Water-sensitive Urban Design: Best Practices and Beyond," an extensive research project of the Center for Urban and Regional Studies at the Technion, developing a new tool "...to evaluate the level of goals achievement of designed landscape projects which integrate various practices of Sustainable Storm-water Managements (SSWM)" (Alon-Mozes, et al., 2018, p. 13) In the report's overall assessment of achieving hydrological, environmental-ecological, social and economic goals, the park received a total score of 41 out of 60, with high grades for reaching environmental-ecological and social goals.

General data

Project Name: Herzliya Park, Herzliya, Israel
Location: center of Herzliya, Tel Aviv metropolitan area
Date Designed: first phase 2004-2006; second phase 2009-2010; third phase: 2011-2012
Construction completed: first phase 2008; second phase 2011; third phase: 2013
Size: overall size 180 acres. First phase 40 acres; second phase 16 acres; third phase 19 acres.
Design Team: Barbara Aronson, Ittai Aronson, Shlomo Aronson, Zivya Fullman-Frieder, Ofri Gerber, Tal Bilinsky, Ulrich Becker, Assaf Zeevi, Ifat Gal, Michal Biton
Client: City of Herzliya
Managed by: Park Herzliya Management

Fig. 241. The masterplan from 2011 allocated different types of park programs within the matrix of drainage, flooding, and paths systems

05.03 Public Transportation System: the Jerusalem Green Line

Context

This project illustrates the potential of transportation projects to improve urban environments and further explores the role of design coordination and public participation in the design process. The LRT Green Line is part of the J-Net network, scheduled to open in 2025, which includes the existing Red Line and two sections of the Blue Line. The operative goal of Jerusalem's light rail transit (LRT) network is to provide an advanced public transportation system that will create easy and quick connections between neighborhoods, university campuses, hospitals, public institutions, employment centers, and tourist destinations, and to link points of interest in the center of the city. It is designed to encourage the use of public transportation: reducing social disparities in the city by minimizing the need to use private vehicles while mitigating environmental problems caused by traffic congestion. Until the conception of the LRT system in the late 1990s, buses formed the only mode of public transportation, but they were unable to meet the city's growing need for a comprehensive transportation system which could support the much needed urban renewal of Jerusalem's central neighborhoods. The inadequate public transportation service resulted in rising levels of air pollution along hopelessly congested streets.

Project Background and History

Jerusalem's history and importance as the center of three world religions date back thousands of years. The development of modern Jerusalem outside the walls of its ancient old city only began in the mid-19th century through the establishment of Jewish and Arab neighborhoods and enclaves associated with different religious groups, spread out over its mountainous surroundings. In 1948, Israel's War of Independence cut the city in half and lay the foundation for the city's demographic definition into mostly Jewish neighborhoods in West Jerusalem and Arab neighborhoods in East Jerusalem. The western part became the capital of the state of Israel, while the eastern part came under the administration of Jordan. The city remained divided until the Six-Day War of 1967 with the subsequent unification of Jerusalem under Israeli rule. Jerusalem's city limits expanded twice in the past 50 years. In 1967, they grew from 38 sq. km. to 108 sq. km. through the disputed annexation of East Jerusalem (Lustick, 1997), and again in 1998 to 123 sq. km. through the inclusion of westward areas located within pre-1967 borders (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1998). Israel and Palestinians both claim Jerusalem as their respective capital, profoundly influencing municipal and national planning policies (Rokem, 2012). Since 1950, the city has experienced steady population growth from 120,000 residents to 940,000 today. Currently, 64% of the population is Jewish, 34% Muslim, and 2% Christian (World Population Review, 2021). Jerusalem is today Israel's poorest and largest city. Most neighborhoods are defined by ethnic, national, and religious affiliation, and/or socio-economic standing.

In 2011, Jerusalem's Red Line became Israel's first light rail line to open to the public. Based only on a general statutory plan[59], it was planned, built, and until recently operated by the CityPass Consortium[60],

59. prepared by Ari Cohen Architects.

60. In 2021, the consortium of CAF and Shapir replaced the CityPass consortium as operators of the expanded future J-Net system.

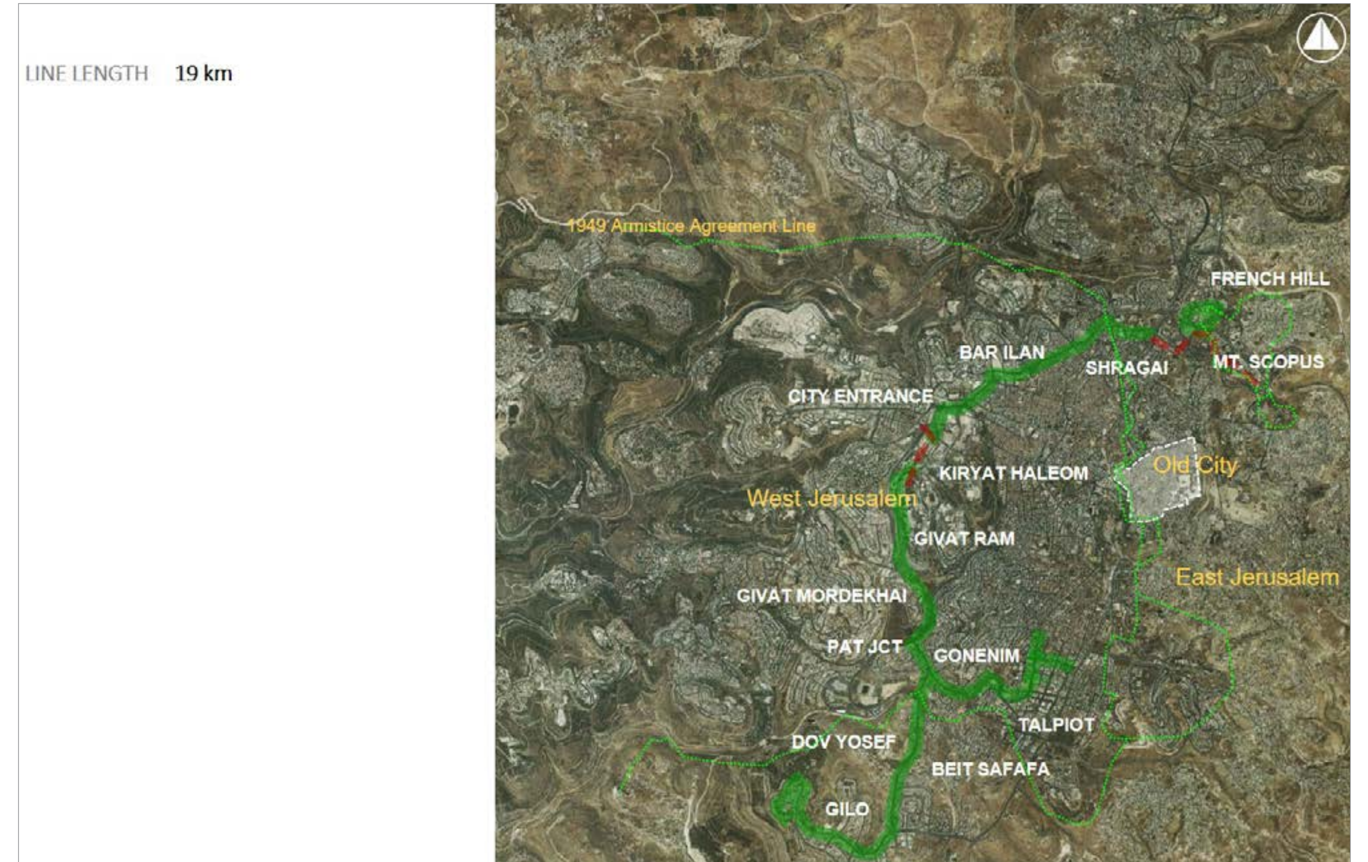


Fig. 242. The Jerusalem Green Line route

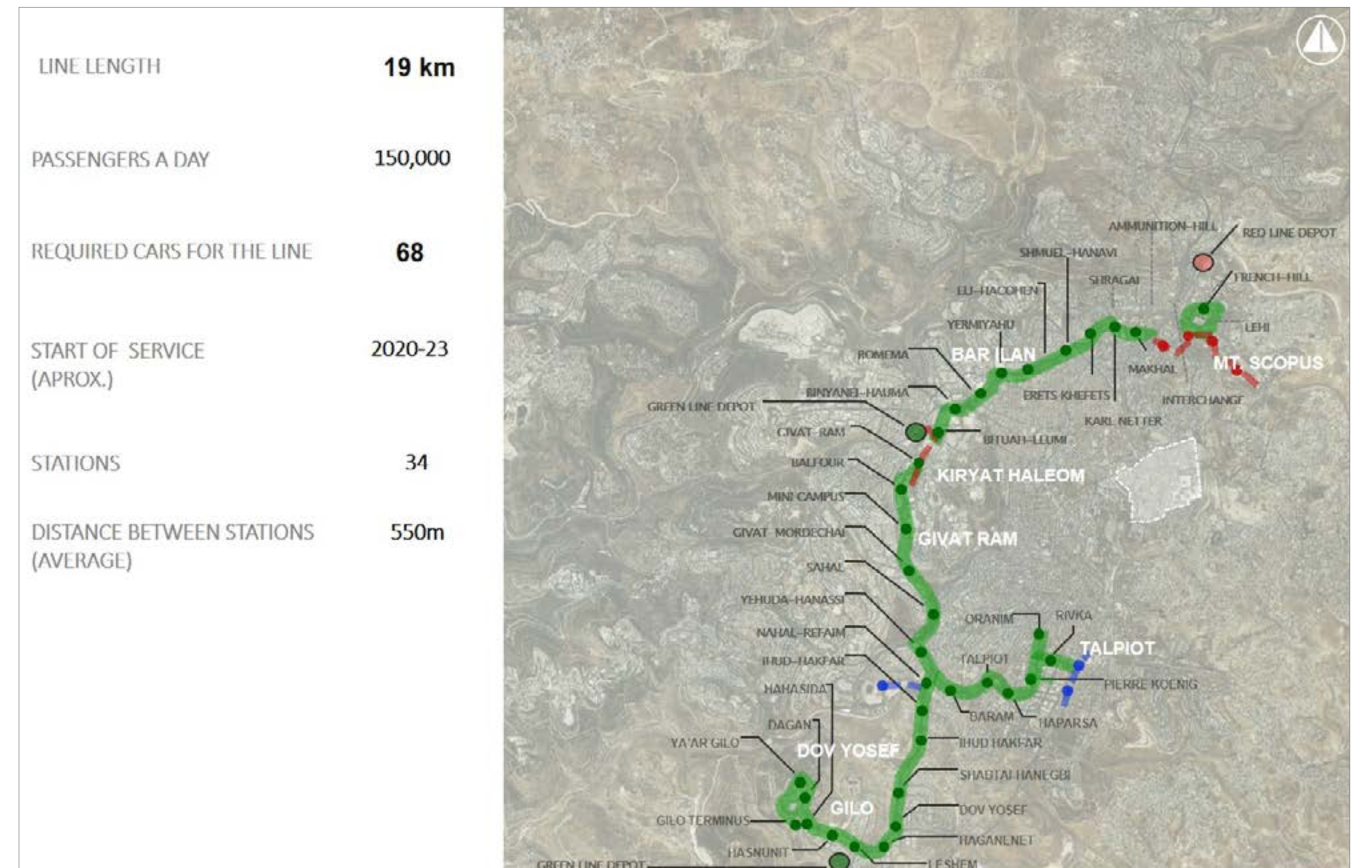


Fig. 243. Station locations along the Green Line route

awarded through an international tender process. The French-based engineering firm Egis and rail transport company Alstrom headed the team of international and local consultants. At the time, the Jerusalem Transportation Master Plan Team (JTMT) believed, that the international experience of the foreign consultants would provide the best basis to meet the design and construction challenges of the project. As it turned out, the planning process proved to be extremely complex, with many decisions reached by trial and error. This was in part due to the physical, political and social challenges of working in Jerusalem, the inexperience of the local authorities to steer the approval and appropriation process, the unrealistic assessment of the planners of what was involved in the work, and because no clear guidelines had been in place to safeguard public interests over economic considerations of the private consortium. The construction turned out to be equally difficult and lengthy, and it left many people questioning the overall implementation process. Streets were repeatedly dug up and closed off for different utility works, seriously damaging businesses and testing the patience of the residents living along the line. Legal disputes between the state and the CityPass Consortium caused long delays in the opening of the line. Too little was done to inform the public of what had been planned and what they needed to expect during construction. In time though, the operation of the line proved to be highly effective in providing public transportation for many. The transformation of Jaffa Street into a continuous public transportation route, including a long pedestrian-only section, established the historic connection between the city entrance and the old city as the vibrant new central urban axis of Jerusalem.

As a result of the difficulties experienced in the Red Line project, JTMT decided on a new strategy to design and build the future lines. They separated the planning and construction of the urban insertion (Infra-1) from the detailed design, construction, and operation of the light rail (Infra-2), which includes the laying of tracks, station construction, and the provision of the rolling stock. The two-phase system of Infra-1 and Infra-2 effectively put the public interests of the general alignment design, the relocation of municipal utility lines, and the upgrade of the urban environment under the control of the state, while assigning the mostly professional considerations of the light rail infrastructure to the chosen concessionaire.

Genesis of the Project

Our involvement in the Green Line project had not been planned. JTMT had awarded the design of the line for the Infra 1 phase through a public bidding process to the JGL team, a comprehensive planning group under the joint leadership of foreign and local experts on light rail, traffic, and road design.[61] As part of the same setup, our practice was working at that time on the landscape design for the Blue Line, and as the responsible architects, statutory planners, and landscape architects on the design of the Red Line extension to the Hadassah hospital, [62] directly hired by JTMT. In 2014, while still in the statutory planning phase, the Green Line team experienced internal organizational problems and was asked by JTMT to restructure their team. After coming to termination agreements with the respective consultants, they approached us to take over the architectural and landscape planning for the project. It was not an easy decision to commit to such an enormous project that would require a large office

61. The lead designers are the team of JGL (the German engineering consulting firm of Obermeyer and local engineering firm Amy-Metom).

62. The practice's working relationship with the Jerusalem Transportation Master Plan Team (JTMT) started in 1999, when commissioned to design the new compound for the Municipal Center for Veterinary Services which had to be relocated as part of the new Red Line Depot. It was the start of Ittai's working relationship with this client which generated in the following several projects for the practice.

team working exclusively on one project, and doing so for many years to come. Ittai ultimately embraced the unique professional opportunity to actively improve the public infrastructure and urban fabric of the city he grew up in. It was clear from the outset that it would involve complex discussions and negotiating compromises.

Developing a Design Concept for the Line

The main planning task centered around the design of the light rail alignment, involving the creation of a comprehensive interface with all modes of public transportation, including new traffic arrangements and stations, and the upgrade of the existing urban environment and utility infrastructure. Our office entered a project that was headed by a strong engineering team but needed an urban vision of what the line could do for the city. Up to this point, the general street section design was guided by traffic considerations and constraints arising from utility relocation. Ittai started our involvement by steering the design dialog toward the larger question of how the line would best serve its users and the people who live beside it, concerns that were shared by the regional district committee and the city engineer and architect. Part of the strategy to strengthen the impact of our professional input was to relocate the weekly meetings of the core design team to our office, where different members of our office team would join in to contribute their respective expertise. The overall design concept of modernizing and improving the existing streetscape as well as the surrounding urban fabric quickly became part of the main dialog, and for several years the whole office overheard the heated arguments between the various factions of consultants, with Ittai as the vocal mediating voice.[63]

At the center of the architectural and landscape design concept lay the goal to create welcoming and safer streets for pedestrians and cyclists as part of providing access to public transportation: to enhance walkability, connectivity and encourage more varied use of the light rail corridor as a place to stroll, gather and do business. Our central design strategy concentrated on the provision of wider sidewalks and designated cycle paths, shaded by continuous tree plantings. Improving the connections and providing universal access between the surrounding neighborhoods and existing green open spaces to the light rail stations, became part of the larger concept of giving back to the community: adding sitting areas, pocket parks, and playgrounds as part of the overall renovation of the existing fabric. With time, we came to understand our role not just as designers to give form to a technical undertaking, but as mediators. We were entrusted to fight the good fight for the city, each resident and tree. We strove to form a balanced position, developing a common language of dialog based on honesty. It was of paramount importance that we could convince others that we would deliver what we promise. Embracing the role of dialog and bringing it to everybody was critical in turning our design concepts into reality: listening to everybody involved or impacted by the project, sharing information, and showing that we care. The process of public consultation and participation influenced design decisions and was instrumental in building trust.

63. The project team leaders from JGL appointed Ittai as the main design coordinator due to his professional knowledge of transportation and urban landscape projects alike, his general knowledge of the city, his positive rapport with the client, the practice's longstanding good relationship with city representatives and planning committees, and his talent to arbitrate between opposing opinions.

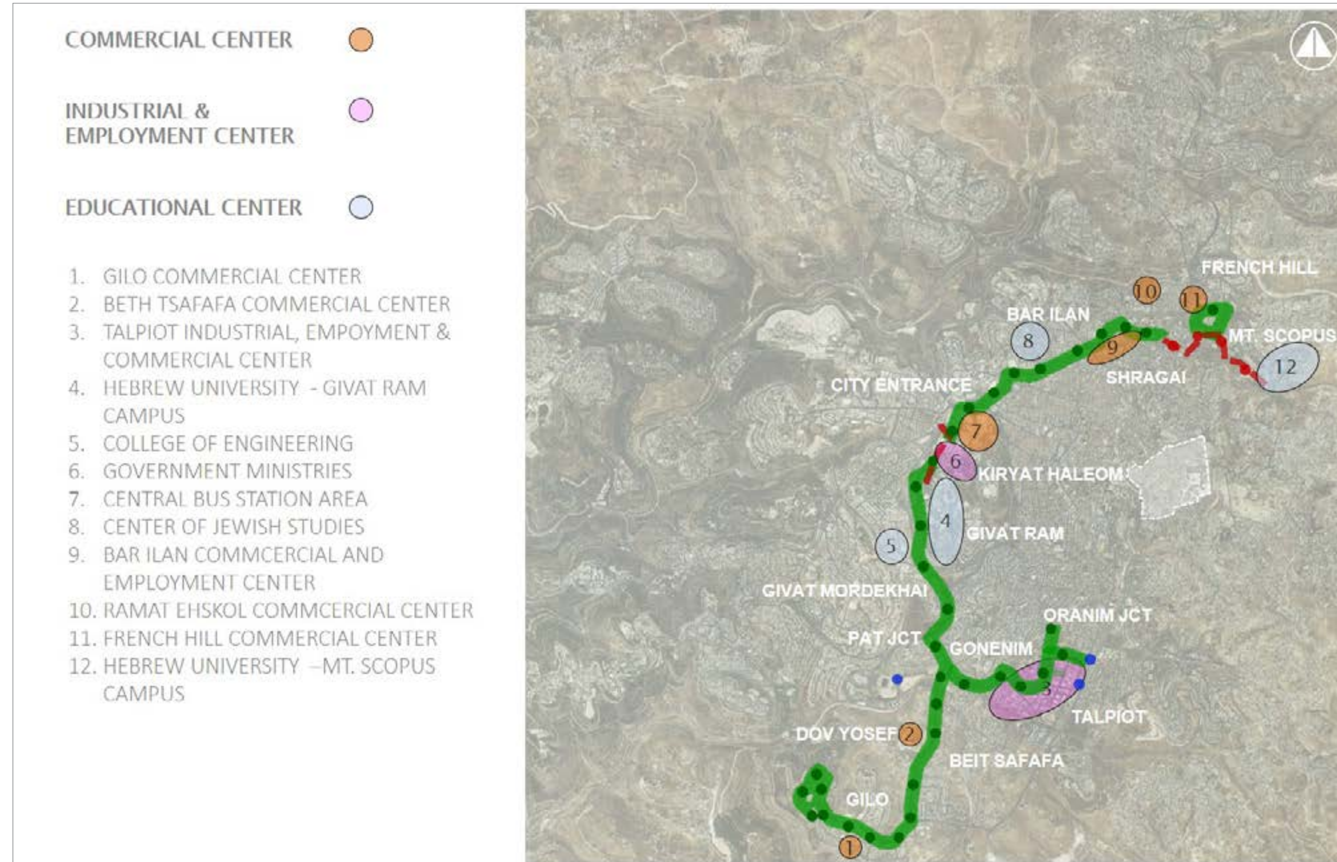


Fig. 244. Points of interest along the route

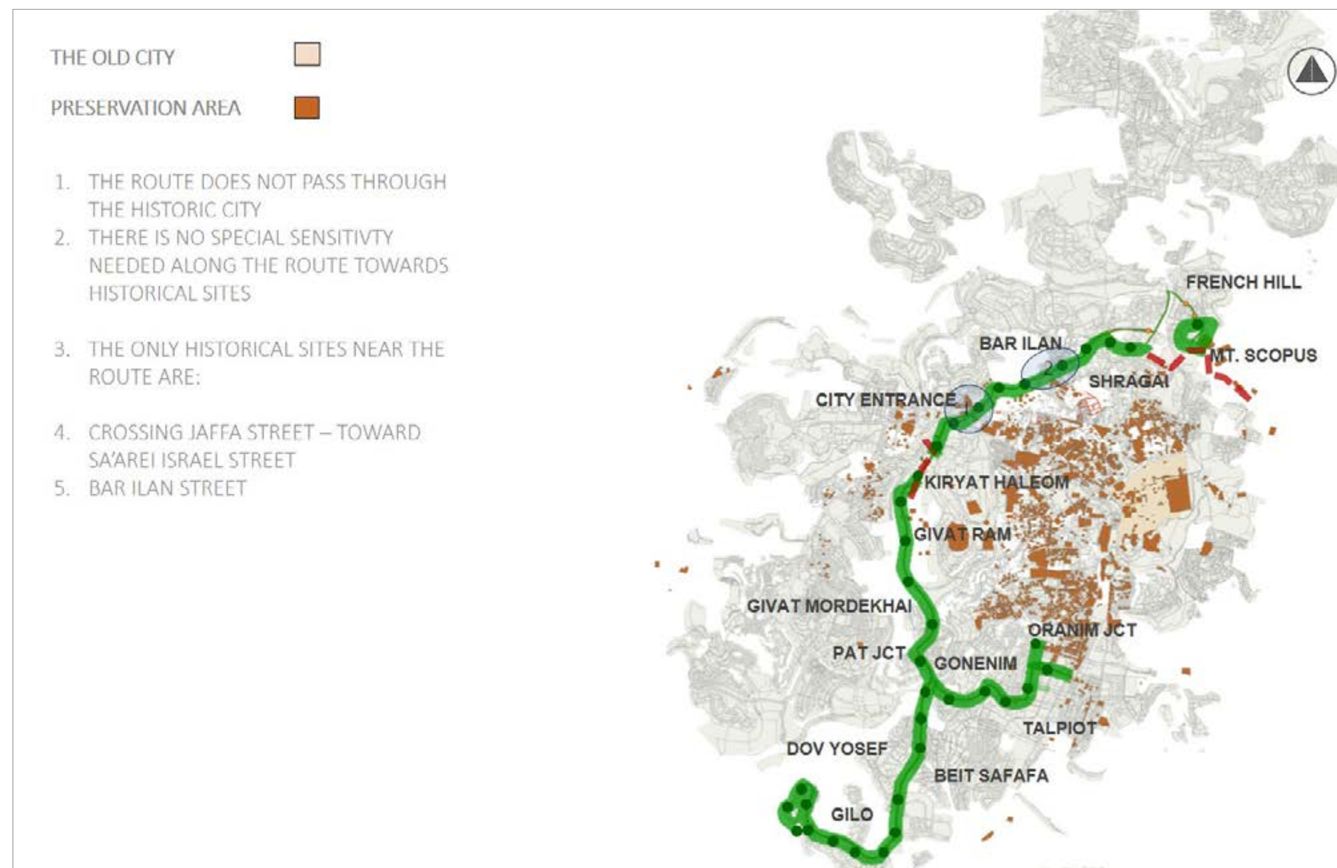


Fig. 245. Historic preservation areas along the route

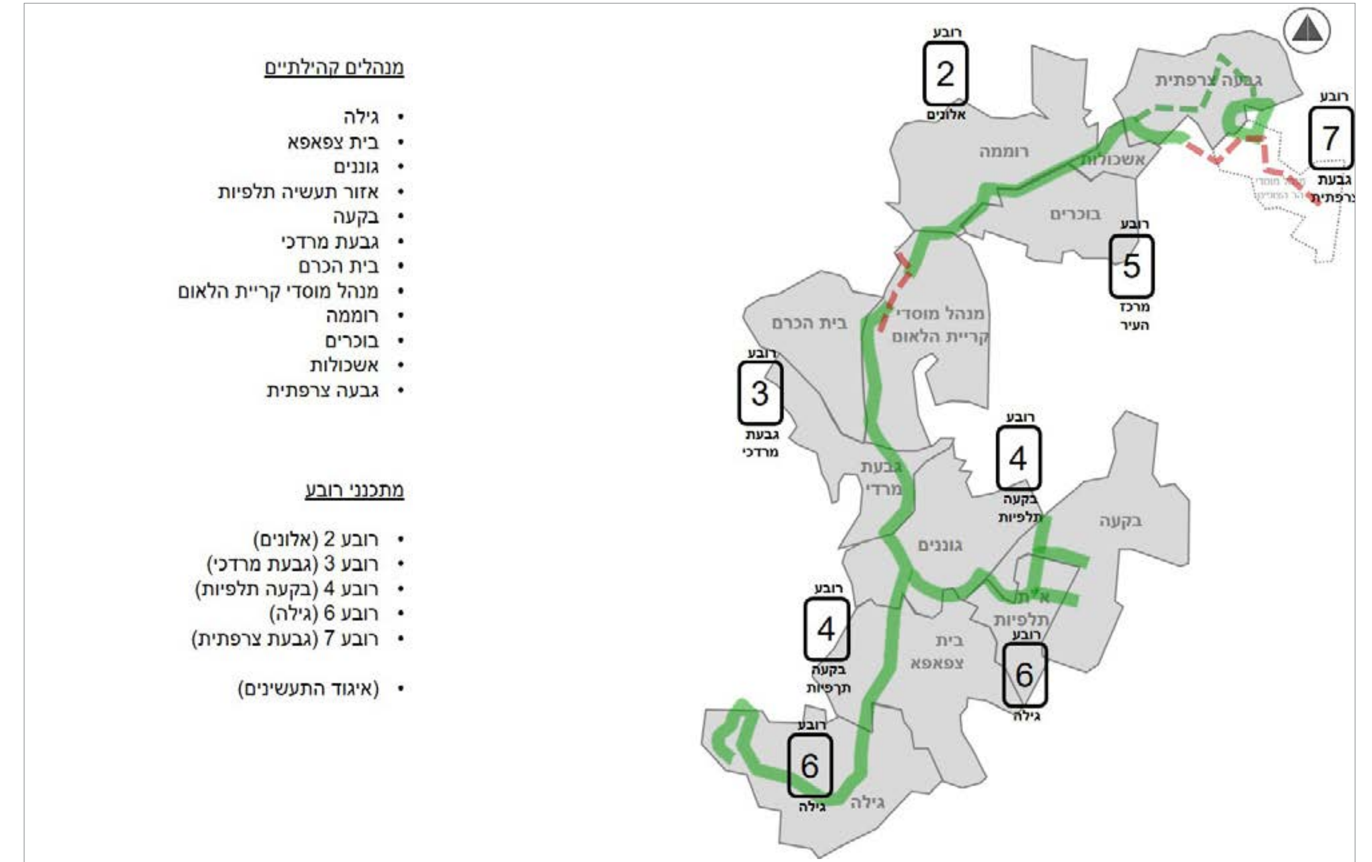


Fig. 246. Required coordination with community administrations and planning districts

Fig. 247.Required coordination with public 3rd parties and institutions

The Design

The route of the Green Line runs between the Mount Scopus campus of the Hebrew University and Gilo, 19.6 km long with 34 stations, including several bridges, underground passages, and multiple technical rooms. The project inserts a public transportation system into an existing urban fabric, with this being its core incentive. While the engineering requirements were similar throughout, the solutions of integrating the line into the changing urban environment varied greatly. Work needed to be advanced on all scales at the same time; discussing alignment alternatives with the district and local committee, progressing on the layout of site-specific street sections, while developing typical architectural details for the entire train system to be approved by the city architect. To cope with the sheer magnitude of the design scope, the line was divided into 14 sections. During the statutory design phase, general issues like alignment alternatives, station locations, and the placement of Park-and-Ride facilities were explored as part of the whole line, while the design of the individual sections was discussed in sequence. Regular meetings with the design team and the client soon expanded into frequent consultations with the quality assurance team, the ministries of transport and finance, representatives of various planning committees and the municipality, public institutions, neighborhood planners, the general public, and numerous general interest groups along the way. To manage the workload in our office, we had to build a new type of team structure, with Ittai as the overall designer and coordinator, a project architect overseeing all sections, and two or three architects responsible for each design section.

The analysis phase was divided into understanding the programmatic requirements for the new traffic arrangements, analyzing the findings of the accessibility study conducted by the client,[64] and exploring and documenting the existing situation of the future light rail corridor. Jerusalem's pronounced topography and the varied nature of the line's urban surroundings emerged as the main influences on the architectural design. Although part of one traffic axis, each design section presented its own, very distinct set of challenges, calling for location-specific design responses. The architectural considerations of traversing enclosed University campuses differed from those when joining the crowded streets of the dense ultra-religious neighborhoods, or when bridging major open spaces or roads. Strong neighborhood identities based on religion, social standing, and national identity, generated animosity towards becoming part of something larger. For reasons of religious observance, some ultra-orthodox Jewish communities prefer to remain detached from the rest of the city and enforce the physical closure of their neighborhoods during the Sabbath. Some of Jerusalem's Arab population question the motifs behind the light rail system implementation: they view the LRT network as the symbol of Israel's ongoing efforts to make the annexation of occupied Palestinian territory irreversible, along with strengthening the status of settlements outside pre-1967 borders by connecting them to the city center (Barghouti, 2009).

Looking at this transportation project as a city-wide landscape and urban rejuvenation project became the leading idea that guided our design thinking. From the outset, we questioned the general scope of work associated with the light rail insertion, extending the design involvement into the surroundings beyond, aiming to strengthen physical and social

64. Beyond the relative distance of residents to stations, the study considered the level of comfort of access when analyzing the overall number of available connections, the inclination of streets, and the number of staircases or ramps present in the existing urban situation.

Evolving Legacy: An Exploratory Path into Uncovering and Sustaining a Practice's Accumulated Knowledge

connections. The design of the LRT Green Line involved a relatively small number of general design principles and details that applied to all design sections, while hundreds if not thousands of site-specific solutions had to be found to address the dramatically different urban situations. It was clear that the newly created urban artery would service the general public but that its impact on the immediate urban surroundings would be of far greater consequence to the people living along the line. In each design section, we aimed to convince the community that the advantages of having immediate access to public transportation and the upgrade of their urban environment would outweigh years of construction, dust and noise pollution, traffic changes, loss of parking spaces, and in a few cases the appropriation of private land. Public consultation and participation became an integral part of the design work. JTMT assembled an in-house team to guide the participation process throughout all design phases and construction, with Ittai taking part in hundreds of meetings, sometimes leading discussions with whole communities, on other occasions talking to individual residents about improving private access or changing a wall. As a result, finding the project's language was as much about defining the common language of dialog as it was about developing a formal concept for the LRT Green Line corridor.

A major consideration in the design of the street section was the provision of shade through tree plantings. As the design process evolved, preserving existing trees and planting as many new trees as possible became a fixation. We demanded that linear tree planting strips would be treated and marked in the infrastructure coordination plans like any other underground utility line. This proved to be a decisive tool in the constant fight for space in the tight street sections along the line.

We developed an architectural library of typical details to be implemented throughout all sections, establishing a quality standard for all built elements, including the use of natural stone for wall claddings and as a paving material in important historical areas. This guarantees the use of long-lasting finishes, while also referencing Jerusalem's local architectural language. It became a pivotal element in upgrading the existing urban situation. We wrote design specifics for tree planting in different situations to ensure healthy tree growing conditions and convinced the Ministry of Finance to support the additional cost per tree. Looking to improve access to the stations merged with our design goal to give back to the community. We renovated existing alleyways, footpaths, and green open spaces to increase the number of access points from the surrounding neighborhoods. Wherever possible, ramps and even elevators and pedestrian bridges were added to increase universal access. Many adjacent green open spaces were upgraded with new playground facilities, exercise equipment, sitting areas, and new plantings. Communal parking lots were created in locations where more than 50% of the public parking spaces along the light rail corridor were canceled due to the new traffic arrangements.

Fig. 248. A new promenade along the light rail corridor connects previously detached parts of the city and provides a much needed open space for the surrounding communities

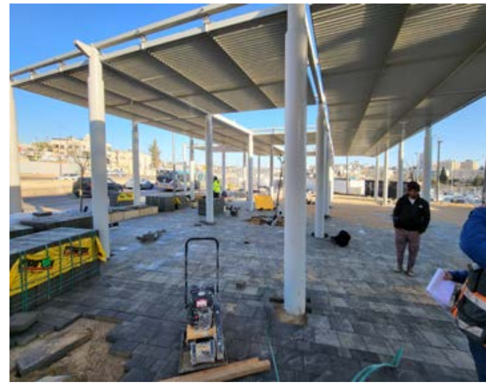


Fig. 249. The pergola in Beit Safafa's new meeting place under construction

The design sections along the neighborhoods of Beit Safafa and Givat Mordechai serve as different examples of how general connectivity and open spaces were upgraded as part of the light rail works. Since Israel's War of Independence in 1948, Arab Beit Safafa experienced a succession of traumatic changes to its urban fabric and a substantial loss of agricultural land as part of disputed expropriations.[65] Against this background, the advancement of the light rail system, which provides the neighborhood with two stations, was met with great suspicion. Meetings with local representatives pointed out to the design team several serious problems concerning mobility and walkability. As a result of this input, an existing underpass between Beit Safafa and Sharafat was widened to provide a safer passage for pedestrians and busses connecting the neighborhoods to East Jerusalem. A new pedestrian bridge was added to provide better access to the light rail. Adjacent to one station, a sizable square along a commercial area provides a new meeting place for the community, shaded by trees and an extensive pergola.

Fig. 250. Ittai's sketch of the train passing on a new bridge between land belonging to the Jerusalem Botanical Garden and the neighborhood of Givat Mordechai

In the Givat Mordechai design section, the light rail alignment creates a new linear connection between two major traffic arteries when crossing an existing green open space and drainage basin. We insisted that this new connection should also serve also pedestrians and cyclists, and a generous new promenade with sitting areas and access from the adjacent residential buildings was added to the program. An 80-meter-long bridge spans over the river bed of the seasonal Rehavia stream, preserving a critical green connection and allowing for a future pedestrian connection. The slopes toward the existing neighborhood of Givat Mordechai were terraced in preparation for community use.

Fig. 251. Picture of the built bridge crossing the Rehavia stream. The terraced slopes were designed for a community garden

65. The 1949 Armistice Agreement line divided the ancient village into two separated areas under Israeli and Jordan rule respectively, to be unified again under Israeli rule after 1967. In the 1970s, the access road to the new Jewish neighborhood of Gilo created a physical barrier toward the adjacent village of Sharafat. The southward extension of highway 50, which opened in 2015, further sliced through the southern parts of the village. Massive land expropriations occurred as a result of the development of new Jewish neighborhoods after 1967 (Bimkom, 2013; The Applied Research Institute-Jerusalem, 2012).

The design of the Givat Ram University Campus section exemplifies how technical concerns came to the forefront of the design considerations. The station in the heart of the Campus raised the need to install mechanisms to check passengers when entering or exiting the station. Negotiations with the university proved to be complex. As the result of lengthy discussions, the scope of work of the light rail included the upgrade of the combined security system, the relocation of a laboratory that was sensitive to noise and vibrations, and the provision of a covered connection to the adjacent buildings via stairs and an elevator.

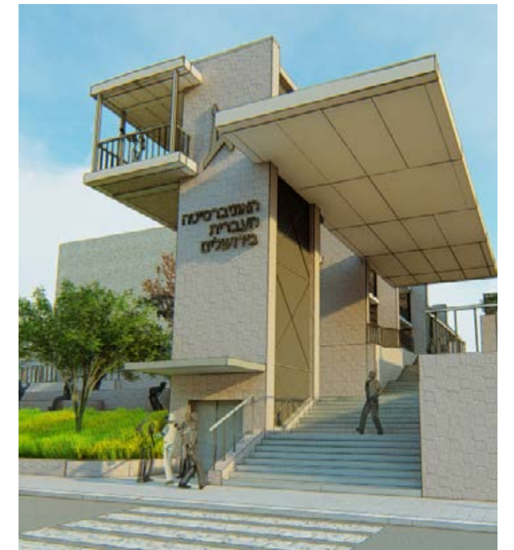


Fig. 252. Rendering of the new entrance to the Givat Ram University, providing universal access from the station to the campus

The public participation process in the French Hill neighborhood section proved the importance of residents' input in influencing the design outcome: their objections resulted in the change of the light rail corridor. The initial alignment design proposed to enter the neighborhood from its main vehicular entrance, raising concerns amongst neighborhood representatives that this would cause unacceptable congestion along this route. They commissioned an independent study and proposed an alternative alignment that proved to give the same level of service and was ultimately adopted as the preferred solution.

These examples highlight the nature of the project's urban contribution: the architectural treatment of the line produced a new signature feature in the city but more so, assembled a mosaic of urban interventions that generated significant improvements to the city's open spaces system and to the urban conditions of the different communities along the line.

Reflections

The presented investigation of our involvement in the project does not elaborate on the politics and planning policies surrounding Jerusalem's status as a contested city. Ethical questions arising from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are an acknowledged or suppressed aspect of almost all projects in Israel; the Green Line project is no exception. The implementation of Jerusalem's light rail transit network has become a research case study of international interest, criticized as a tool to facilitate Israel's ongoing annexation plans of areas outside the 1949 Armistice Agreement Line, commonly referred to as pre-1967 borders [66] (Rokem, 2012), as part of Israel's goal to expand Jewish dominance in the city (Baumann, 2018), and as an instrument to enforce Israel's 'colonial urbanism' (Nolte & Yacobi, 2015). We accepted the design challenge based on our belief that all Jerusalem's neighborhoods deserve to be connected to public transportation and to partake in the city-wide improvement of urban environments and infrastructure. Unfortunately, a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict appears remote in today's political climate, and with it, a comprehensive solution to the city's status as the declared capital of two nations.

The office started the LRT Green Line project 7 years ago, and construction will continue for another three years. The design process required making decisions simultaneously on the largest and smallest scales, impacting the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. It meant not being afraid of taking on responsibilities, and being at once sympathetic to the concerns of private citizens while representing the interests of the general public at large. Today, it is tremendously satisfying to see the impact of the design on the city's urban fabric as it unfolds with each completed section, but

66. "Armistice Lines (1949-1967): In 1949, with UN mediation, Israel concluded armistice agreements with Jordan, Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon, thus reaching an official cessation of hostilities of the first Arab-Israeli war that had started in May 1948. Iraq and Saudi Arabia, whose forces took part in the war, never signed any agreements with Israel. The parties agreed that the armistice agreements would serve only as interim arrangements until replaced by permanent peace treaties. Israel's territory according to the agreed 1949 Armistice Demarcation Line encompassed about 78% of the Mandate area, while the other parts, namely the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, were occupied by Jordan and Egypt respectively. The 1949 Armistice Lines between Israel and its Arab neighbors came to be known as The Green Line." (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021)

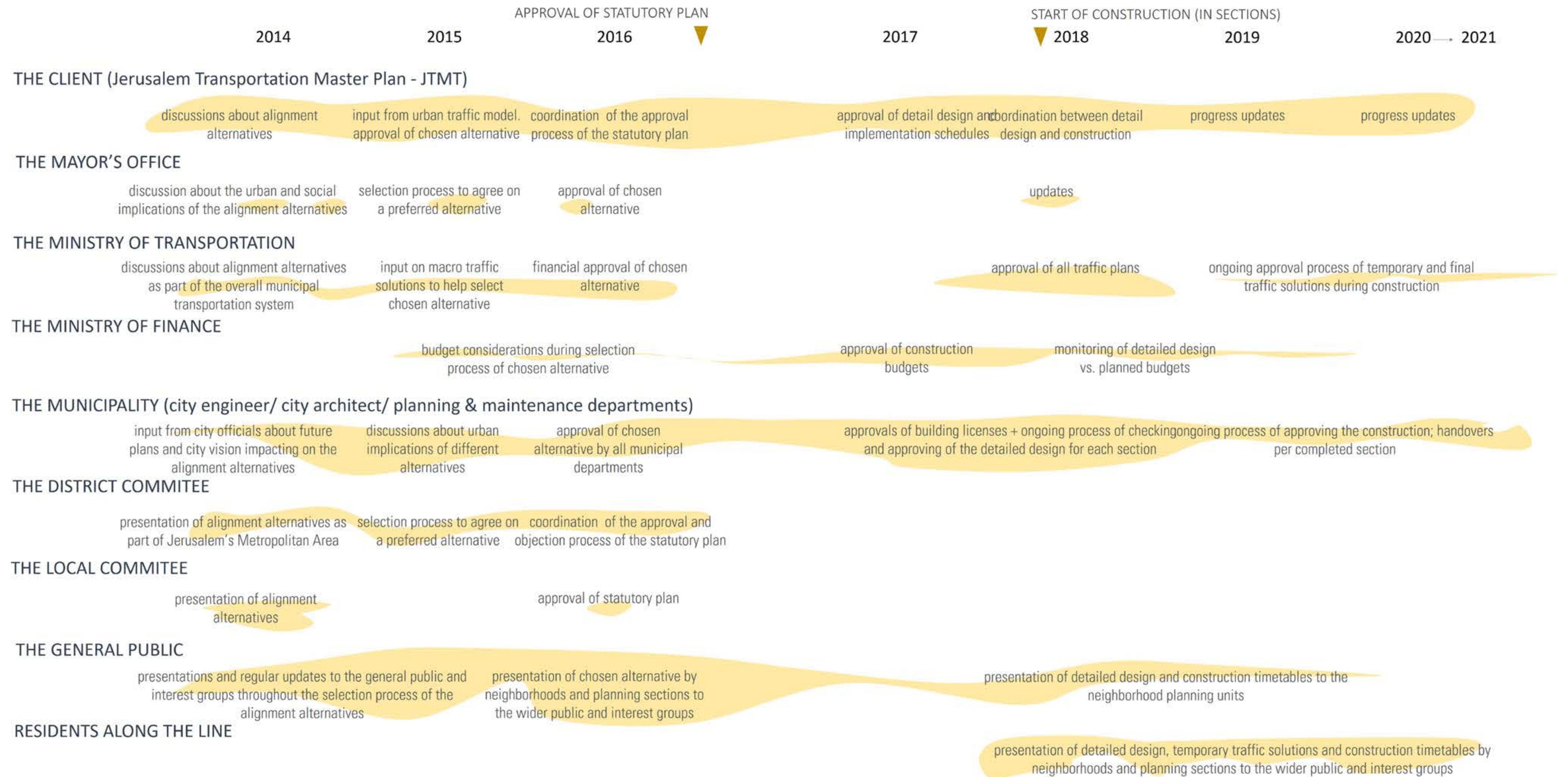
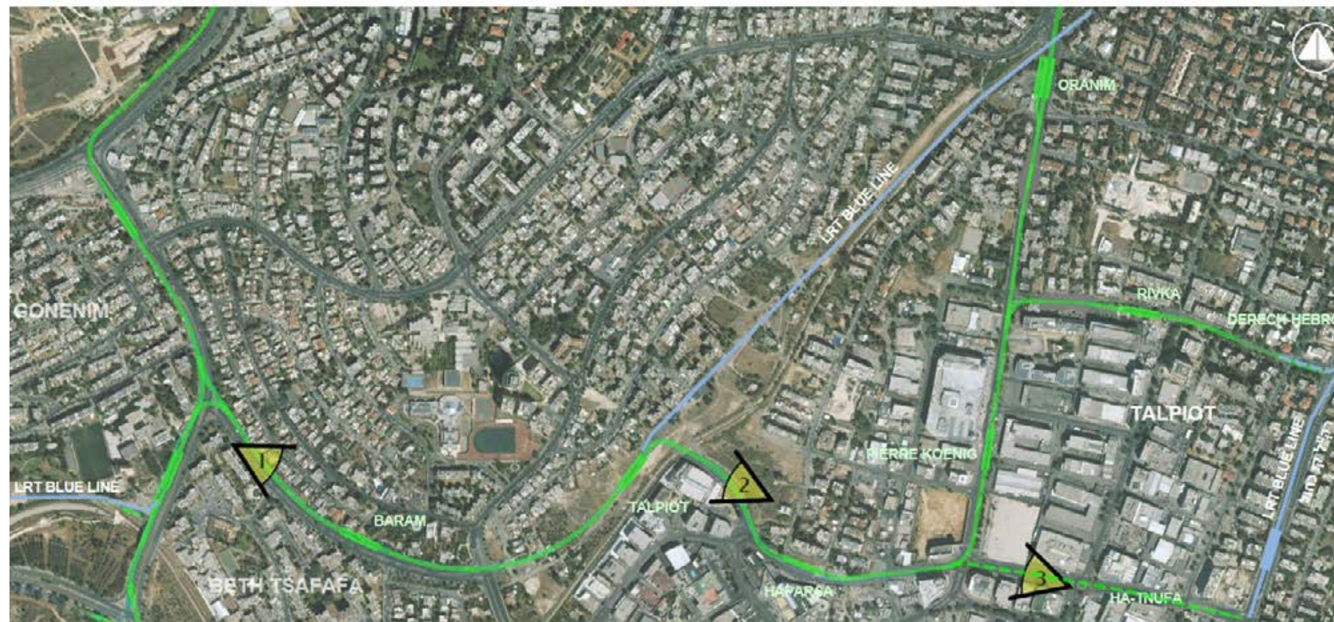


Fig. 253. Diagram presenting the multipart project dialog with different stakeholders and the public

Pat Junction – Current Situation

Model at Pat Junction – According to latest design

TALPIOT SECTION - VIEWS



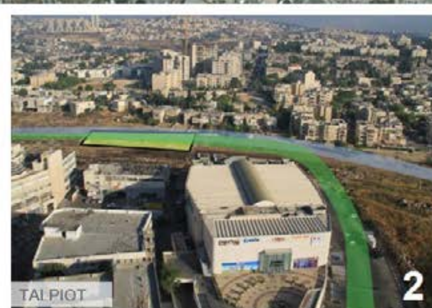


Fig. 254. Sample images of the graphic material used to explain the train alignment to 3rd parties and the public

the way to get there proved to be extremely demanding, tedious, and frustrating at times. It brought more work to the practice and built our reputation as reliable and knowledgeable design partners in projects of that size. In the Green Line project, we had taken on an awful lot of professional responsibility, as urban designers, architects, and landscape architects all in one. Besides the regular design work, we were in charge of preparing and approving the statutory planning documents and in the following 20 different building licenses. The challenging characteristics of the work process took a toll on our staff's motivation. Everybody involved learned a lot, but we also realized, that each new public transportation project will follow a similar difficult design process. In the past two years, we were approached several times to join new light rail projects and we chose to take a break. We did commit to the Purple Line in Tel Aviv, as the responsible landscape architects only, where our accumulated knowledge has helped us to navigate the complexities of the project.

When we started, the LRT Green Line represented the biggest project in the practice. It still involves the largest number of staff working on one project over such a long period. Similar to the process of working on a 1000 piece jigsaw puzzle, the course of bringing together the overall design of the entire line required separate work on individual areas, in a process that did not become easier until the very last piece falls into place during construction. The creative design process was very different from that of any other project we had taken on so far. The inception of the architectural concept and the development of the line's formal language and details took an almost minuscule role compared to the coordination process involved in implementing it. The design process demanded coordination with an unusually large group of team members and third parties. Good or problematic personal relationships with consultants had a lot to do with how our staff felt about the design work. It revolved around endless discussions about traffic alignments and utility placements, which continued changing right into construction, and years of Sisyphean work to agree on the location of every tree, wall, manhole, and utility cabinet. There were never-ending changes as the result of updates by other consultants, changing regulations, and stipulations from the approval process, and countless surprises during construction. At some point, we installed regular internal meetings with everybody to discuss what they had learned and problems they had encountered, but also giving room to vent shared frustrations. In addition, meeting impossible deadlines and navigating the quality control and data management protocols turned out to be another big and trying aspect of the work. The team's endurance was tested, again and again, fighting to enforce the goals of the original design concept while getting entangled in day-to-day meetings and the efforts to expedite thousands of documents .

We view the productive dialog with the public, the broad upgrade of the urban environment, and the massive planting of street trees as our most far-reaching achievements. In the process, we enforced the need to provide better tree growing conditions and made sure that trees are given the same importance as any other municipal utility infrastructure. In partnership with staff members of JTMT, we prepared a separate study about how access and walkability to the light rail corridor could be further advanced, including preliminary designs and cost estimates which were approved for further development by the Ministry of Finance. We made plenty of mistakes and lost fights along the way: sometimes because we

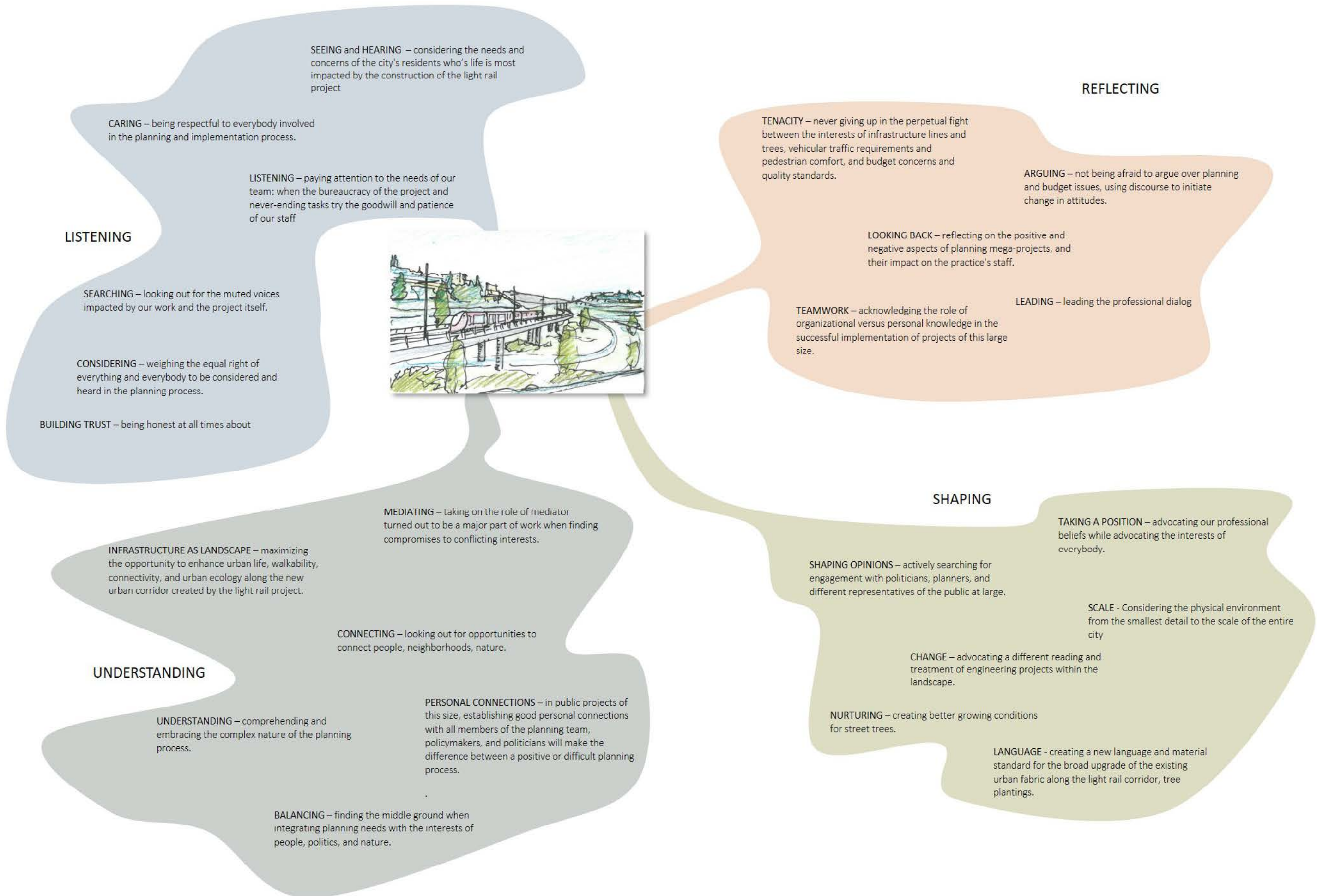


Fig. 255. Our modes of design in the Green Line project

didn't pay attention at the right time, other times when traffic and utility considerations were regarded as more important. We tried to make everybody heard and succeeded in clarifying a lot of the questions that people had throughout, explaining the benefits and drawbacks of the design and construction works and making the decision-making process as transparent as possible.

Fig. 256. Ittai conducted many coordination and consultation meetings with community leaders, public interest groups, and residents

On a public planning level, the district committee decided to substantially increase building rights along the line to encourage inner-city urban renewal. Generally viewed as a positive move, there is concern about how these future high-rise developments will impact the historical skyline of Jerusalem, and how the existing infrastructure of educational institutions, community amenities, and quality open space will be able to service the anticipated large increase in population.

Today, about a quarter of the line has been constructed and the results are pointing to the positive influence on its urban surroundings. At the same time, the whole city is suffering from the disturbances caused by multiple building sites throughout town, and small groups of religious Jewish fringe groups continue to disturb construction in their neighborhood. A realistic assessment of the project's achievements and misses will have to wait until the J-Net commences operation in 2025.

General data

Location: Jerusalem
Client: Jerusalem Transportation Master Plan Team (JTMT)
Green Line: 2014 – construction ongoing
Green Line team: to be completed
Office team: Ittai Aronson, Rachael Bardugo, Ulrich Becker,
Michal Doukarsky, Lilach Avital, Tomer Rabinovich, Hila Gordon, Ruthi Yadgar, Ella Doktovsky, Ayelet Kaplan, Ella Basnovati, Ruchama Shmuelevich, Adi Gilad, Yoni Krugliak, Ruth Goldberg, Shani Aizenkot, Nofar Granot, Lital Nagar, Rachel Haimov-Pinyan.

Evolving Legacy: An Exploratory Path into Uncovering and Sustaining a Practice's Accumulated Knowledge

Seminal projects tend to appear in our mid-careers.[67] By then, we have come to understand the depth of knowledge that is required to turn good designs into convincing realities, and we have learned that our artistic vision is not always the most important goal for us to realize. However, many of these experiences stay in our heads and become part of our concealed professional design knowledge and modes of design.

The reflections on the project case studies are intended to expose significant examples of this concealed knowledge, in the attempt toward turning personal insights into explicit office knowledge. As such, the investigation into the Sha'ar Hagai Interchange project shows the importance of looking beyond the physical and professional boundaries within which we are asked to operate. To do so by taking a leading role in the decision-making process, and by actively pursuing knowledge in related design fields to help express informed opinions that strengthen the viability of our design ideas. Moreover, the project reflects one of the most prominent characteristics of our approach that views landscapes as infrastructures of natural, historical, political, and social systems existing in any specific context. The Herzliya Park demonstrates the key role of establishing personal relationships to create resilient projects through the support and contribution of outside knowledge by others. It shows how an ongoing dialog with stakeholders, maintenance staff, and users helps to push innovative and potentially controversial ideas and to ensure their conservation over time. The Green Line LRT project expands on the significance of the motif of community building in form of a continuous discourse with team members and the public at large to achieving our professional goals and best representing the interests of everybody impacted by our designs. It further shows the role of organizational versus personal knowledge in the successful implementation of projects of this large size.

67. Many years ago, during my studies at Harvard, Professor Carl Steinitz told us of his theory, that architects start producing great work only after their 40th birthday. At the time we were ambitious graduate students aged between 25 to 30. Some of us were landscape architects with experience, and we disagreed with this assessment that put our note-worthy achievements a long time ahead of us. Since then, I have come to agree with the underlying notion of Carl Steinitz's statement: that the quality of our creative output improves greatly with professional experience. Judging from the work of colleagues around me, there are of course exceptions to this rule: Shlomo was one such example when producing extraordinary planning documents at the very beginning of his career; Moshe Safdie, who designed his world-famous Habitat '67 project when he was in his late twenties; or LANDPROCESS founder Kotchakorn Voraakhom who has already produced several outstanding projects before reaching 40.

The following 17 images were photographed in November 2021, taken from a moving car. Jerusalem had not seen rain for 6 months, leaving the city and its greenery covered by a thick film of dust. The photographs document the fact that most planning sections are still under construction profoundly disrupting traffic patterns and daily life. They also illustrate the changes in Jerusalem's urban scenery as the train route traverses different neighborhoods, university campuses, government districts, and green open spaces along its way from the neighborhood of Gilo in the south, to its end station at the Har HaZofim University Campus in the north. Some trees and greenery were planted before the 'Jewish Year of Sabbath' which commenced in September 2021, all other plantings will have to wait until it ends with the Jewish New Year next September.

Fig. 257. Housing areas along Zvia VYitzhak Street in Gilo

Fig. 258. Dov Yosef Street in the Sharafat neighborhood section. A vertical staircase still under construction will connect the neighborhood with the planned station

Fig. 259. Dov Yosef Street in the Beit Safafa neighborhood section. A new bicycle path and wide sidewalk were added to enhance connectivity between different parts of the city

Fig. 260. The new meeting place and massive pergola adjacent to Beit Safafa's future station is under construction

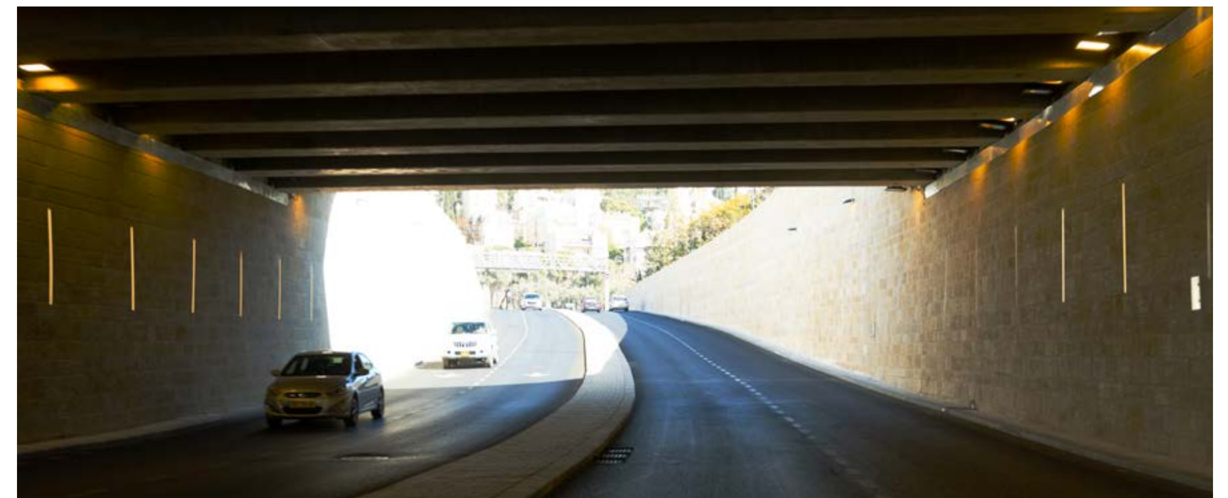


Fig. 261. Driving through the new vehicular underpass which provides the light rail above with the right-of-way at the busy Golomb Street-Pat junction

Fig. 262. Herzog Street between the neighborhoods of Givat Mordechai and Rasco

Fig. 263. The train crosses the Rechavia Stream, providing a generous green connection for both nature and people

Fig. 264. The new promenade between the Givat Mordechai neighborhood and the Jerusalem Botanical Gardens

Fig. 265. The train starts its ascent toward the Givat Ram University Campus along the southern entrance route

Fig. 266. The northern entrance plaza to the Givat Ram University Campus

Fig. 267. Going up Natanel Lorch Street: the building cranes to the left mark the site of the future Green Line under-ground depot and government building complex, another mega-project of the practice

Fig. 268. The construction activities along Shamgar Street cause disruptions to the urban functioning of the street

Fig. 269. Bar Ilan Street, the heart of the central shopping district of the ultra-orthodox community of Sanhedriya and the Bucharim neighborhoods

Fig. 270. One of many busy pedestrian crossings in the heart of the ultra-orthodox community, the junction of Khativat Harel Street

Evolving Legacy: An Exploratory Path into Uncovering and Sustaining a Practice's Accumulated Knowledge

Fig. 271. After leaving the crowed ultra-orthodox neighborhoods behind, the train passes through the quiet quarters of the government office district

Fig. 272. On its way to the Har HaZofim University, the train passes between the French Hill neighborhood and the campus grounds on Aharon Kazir Street

Fig. 273. On its last leg to the Har HaZofim Campus, the train passes the historic British Military cemetery at Mount Scopus

06 KNOWLEDGE

06.01 Knowledge Retention and Knowledge Transfer
06.02 Mentoring Methods and Platforms for Learning

"[...] there were professionals in the office with particular expertise, and as a young architect I was consulting them all the time. It was not like "We are the experts, don't ask and don't bother us." We were all working together, not on the same projects but very much as an office team. On some days I would draw a detail for somebody else's project, and on the next day I would deal with the projects that I was heading as a very young architect. So, this combination of helping and learning from each other was a very good start for me in my career."

Yair Avigdor (2020, appendix, p.271), former associate, 1986-1994

"In everyday language we use knowledge all the time. Sometimes we mean know-how, while other times we are talking about wisdom. On many occasions we even use it to refer to information." Emil Hajric, founder of HELPJUICE (Hajric, 2010).

What kind of professional knowledge helps sustain an architectural practice over time? What role does mentoring play in continuing the practice's record of excellence and supporting its professional growth? Which type of knowledge can be written down and explained, and which needs to be demonstrated and experienced? These questions relate to the core incentive of this research: producing comprehensive documentation of explicit knowledge and presenting methods for the teaching of tacit design knowledge. This chapter identifies the kinds of knowledge that are relevant to a creative design practice, including in particular that of the lead designers, and presents different ways of teaching and sharing it with the staff. One of three hypotheses that started this research was 'mentoring is an integral part of sustaining design excellence and a key to innovation'. The initial research questions were 'how do we ensure a regular process of knowledge exchange and adaptation? Are there clear processes in place to teach the staff? Are the junior staff given enough opportunities to contribute to the design process at all stages of design?'

The most basic belief of the practice is that all staff should have the opportunity to work on multiple phases in the design process: to learn the profession from the concept phase through construction. Ultimately, architects and landscape architects design physical realities, to be inhabited by people, flora, and fauna. Experiencing the full process involved in reaching the final outcome will hopefully make them better designers, feeling their responsibility as 'shapers' of our environment. This should also reinforce their sense of the value of their work contribution within the office and keep them interested in their work in the long run.

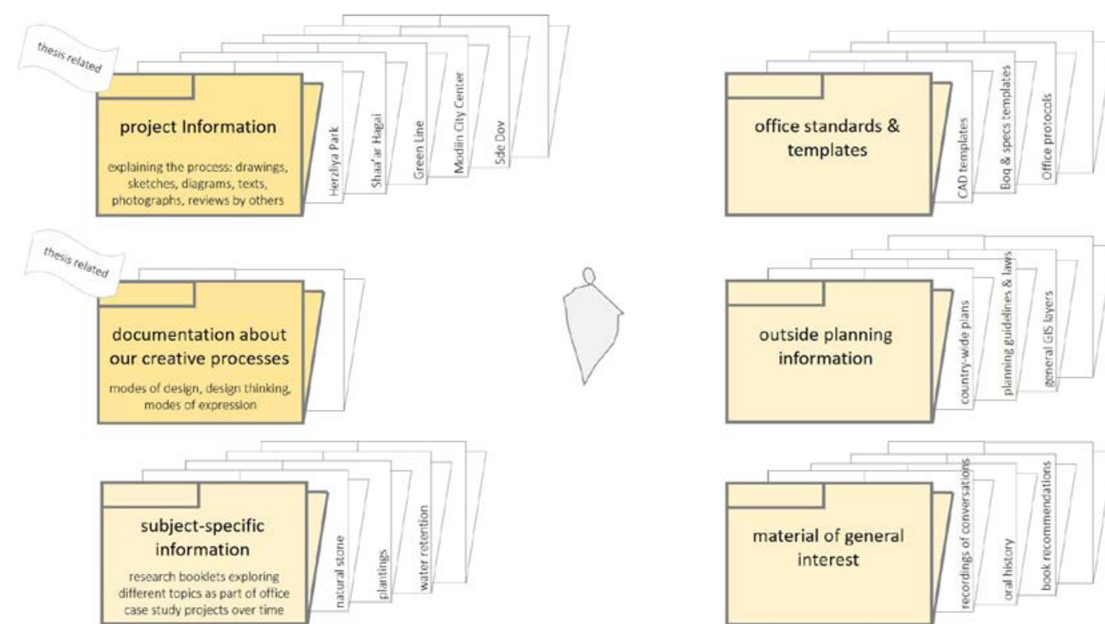


Fig. 274. Thinking about an organizational structure for the documentation of the practice's explicit and tacit knowledge

06.01 Knowledge Retention and Knowledge Transfer

The realization that Ittai and I are not spending enough time thinking about our designs, too often adopting our first idea, without sufficient time being spent on structuring a design process that is based on shared ideas between experienced and young team members, focused my attention on organizational learning. With too much reliance on our personal design knowledge, the gap between what we know and what our staff knows about the practice's design intents would only continue to widen. Very few of our staff met Shlomo, and many are not familiar with the practice's older projects. In a midsize office of 45, with five associates who are instrumental in the running of the office, our interactions with the senior staff are frequently about management tasks rather than sharing our design thinking or personal insights gained over time. More often it is the junior staff who Ittai and I engage with in the early exploratory design processes: somewhat selfishly enjoying their skills in using the latest, most advanced digital programs, preparing fast 3D studies, researching information, being aware of new trends in the discipline and society at large, and for being extremely enthusiastic about design.

As I was immersing myself in the office archive, I became more and more aware of the knowledge loss that had already occurred when Shlomo was still in the practice: documentation of whole projects is missing, existing documentation is not accessible to the staff, and no one is encouraging active engagement in learning about the past achievements of the practice. I rediscovered inspiring material that I had forgotten about since organizing the design archive 27 years ago.[68] While all our staff is undoubtedly seeking personal engagement with us, I neglected to assess the central role of other people in the office in complementing the design process by providing their particular expertise. As one of the dominant design voices of the past and today, I initially thought that the key to unraveling the practice's knowledge was through exposing the creative knowledge of the lead designers. With growing experience in the profession, Shlomo, Ittai, and I accumulated many design skills but also established valuable personal relationships with clients, policymakers, consultants, and colleagues. We positioned ourselves as key design members in large-scale projects, and earned professional credit in the community. We learned from our mistakes and successes and developed the ability to distance ourselves from the often narrow definitions of projects to assess them within the larger framework of professional and societal concerns. On reflection, it became obvious that the different types of our personal, and the practice's knowledge and the process of nurturing, conveying, and retaining knowledge had to be investigated in more depth before talking about knowledge retention and transfer. We needed to explore how the important and most elusive aspect of architectural knowledge can be taught: how can creative knowledge be described and explained, how can it be fostered in others, while ultimately acknowledging that a designer's special creative talent cannot be transferred to others.

In his book 'The Reflective Practitioner', social scientist Donald A. Schön pioneered the approach of reflective discourse as a method to elicit knowledge in response to his professional experiences as an industrial consultant and from the insights gained from his teachings at MIT's Department of Urban Studies. He used case studies from

68. I had been the person who organized the office archive and boxed up the entire material. The opening of the archive has exposed a lot of material that I don't remember seeing, which points to, what I consider now, my inability at the time to appreciate the depth and value of past investigations.

different professional fields to explain his methodology, and with regard to architecture and urban design, advocated reflective designing in favor of relying on technical knowledge: "reflection-in-action" versus "technical rationality". His theory suggested a framework to produce new professional knowledge in design processes, emphasizing both the need for self-reflection and the coaching of practitioners (Schön, 1983).

Understanding and teaching tacit knowledge are the most challenging tasks in organizational learning. Dan Asher and Micha Popper's current research puts forward a framework that helps elicit tacit knowledge through interpersonal interactions. Their "onion" model identifies three layers of tacit knowledge: "the hidden practical knowledge layer, the reflective tacit knowledge layer, and the tacit knowledge that can only be demonstrated", recognizing varying degrees of self-awareness and the difficulty present in extracting personal knowledge. The research suggests uncovering this knowledge through direct and indirect questioning, observation, brainstorming, round-table methods, story analysis, and case studies. (Asher & Popper, 2021) (Asher & Popper, 2019).

"Knowledge Management involves how best to capture, share and apply knowledge in the organization to create and leverage knowledge." (Liebowitz, 2009, p.2)

In his book 'Knowledge Retention – Strategies and Solutions', Jay Liebowitz identifies four types of knowledge, each associated with a specific type of information held within an organization:

(a) Contextual knowledge - knowing when, knowing why. (b) Declarative knowledge – knowing about. (c) Procedural knowledge or subject matter domain knowledge – knowing what and how to. (d) Social knowledge – knowing how to work with others, who knows who, who knows what. (Liebowitz, 2009) Examples of these types of knowledge required in an architectural include:

(a) Contextual knowledge: understanding how to function in real-life situations throughout the decision-making process of projects, knowing how to operate within different scenarios, e.g., how to present a design proposal to a mayor or an environmental protection agency, how to lead a design workshop with representatives of the public, how to establish a working relationship with the contractor of your project to get the best results for everybody.

(b) Declarative knowledge: knowing where to find background information, relevant research, guidelines and codes, knowing about similar projects to reference as case studies, identifying the right tools to expedite a specific task or a project at large, where to find documentation of previously gained knowledge within the practice, and understanding the inter-relationships between collecting information and the phasing of a design project.

(c) Procedural knowledge: possessing the creative ability to come up with design concepts and ideas, knowing how to start a design process, assembling the right team for each project, choosing the appropriate methods to achieve the design goal, and managing time and resources.

(d) Social knowledge: understanding the informal networks for knowledge exchange between staff members, knowing who to go to for advice within and outside of the office, knowing who is the best person to consult with, sustaining an overall office staff composition that matches the professional and social DNA of the practice.

This complete knowledge is rarely found in one person: it follows that the identification of staff members with particular skill sets and abilities and the exchange of knowledge between the staff is key to sustaining the success of an organization.

The creative process in an architectural practice is defined by research, mapping, observing, analyzing different types of information and data, designing, brainstorming, sketching, visualizing our designs in different ways, discussing, negotiating, and transforming our ideas into explicit information to be understood and executed by others. While the specifics of knowledge differ from one professional field to another, the challenge to manage and retain knowledge within an organization is shared by all. Organizational consultant Dr. Nachum Fossfeld pointed me to the first question that needs defining when considering knowledge retention strategies: what constitutes the most critical 'at risk' knowledge in the practice? (Fossfeld, 2021)[69] He defines the generic process of ascertaining information about a person's critical knowledge in the following way.

The initial assessment phase includes five stages. In stage one, the client who ordered the study describes why he or she considers the asset - the person whose knowledge is at risk of being lost - to be a critical link in the organization's chain of knowledge. In stage two, senior personnel who are working directly with or under the asset, compile a list of skill sets that the asset represents to them, summarizing the most important knowledge that may potentially be lost. In phase three, the consultant sits with the asset and his immediate senior staff to discuss their respective views of what constitutes the asset's critical knowledge. In stage four he repeats the same session with the next lower level of team members. An important part of the discussion is to understand if other people in the organization might possess the same knowledge, or if some of the asset's knowledge is available in codified form. Identifying additional staff members with similar knowledge is extremely important and often simplifies the path towards developing strategies and solutions for knowledge retention. In stage five the consultant and the asset discuss the findings and organize them from most critical to least important.

According to Fossfeld, the asset is often not aware of which part of his knowledge is most valued by the organization. Through discussions, the consultant extracts the types of this knowledge by asking specific questions: how did you obtain this knowledge? Which projects helped you to develop your skills? Who was your go-to person when you were the junior staff? Which professional research do you consult within and outside of the organization? What are your professional contacts? These contacts are often critical in explaining a person's expertise and subsequently invaluable in sustaining knowledge. In his methodology, the outcome of the initial assessment stage is the creation of a tree diagram that demonstrates systemic relationships between knowledge and people, forming the basis for designing a knowledge retention strategy. Fossfeld's process is designed to extract knowledge from one person, and as part

69. His 30-year professional expertise includes working with organizations that are interested in retaining the knowledge of specific personnel.

of that, valuable insights can be gained into the general management of professional knowledge, or the lack of it, within an organization.

As a first step in defining the 'at risk' knowledge in our practice, I applied Fossfeld's initial assessment process and sat down with Ittai to compile a list of what we consider our most critical knowledge. We then held an informal session with members of our senior staff to extract their views on the subject. The conversation with Ittai produced the following points:

- Our creative design knowledge: the ability and talent to come up with design concepts and ideas that will in due course produce innovative projects and planning documents of high quality.
- Knowing how to act as diplomats: achieving our design goals without offending anybody, getting our clients and third parties on board, and in turn enthusiastic about our ideas.
- Our willingness to compromise: recognizing when other people's ideas are better than ours, whether it concerns the formal, programmatic, or procedural aspects of our designs.
- Knowing how to be a leader: taking a lead role and advocating our design agenda in all projects, especially in complex, inter-disciplinary projects.
- Expanding our professional knowledge into the fields of our consultants to steer the teamwork process in directions that support our design goals.
- Understanding our obligations to society, the environment, and the profession at large, and to our staff in particular.

The following discussion with senior staff members produced a list of issues that could be traced back to the real-time concerns arising from their daily work. They talked about Ittai's and my aptitude for finding appropriate and fast solutions to problems, our ability to navigate the political processes of approving projects, and our extensive background knowledge. The contribution of personal creative design knowledge to the success of projects came up only when we directly asked them about it. In their mind, it was an issue that is obvious but that needed no mentioning.

06.02 Mentoring Methods and Platforms for Learning

The practice always understood its role as an educational institution, aware of our responsibility to mentor our staff: to create opportunities for both sides to contribute and to learn. After defining the critical 'at risk' knowledge, the next step was to identify the methods available to transfer, nurture and manage this knowledge, with the ultimate goal of making it part of the working environment. Teaching the knowledge we consider valuable poses challenges of its own: how can we reach and entice our staff to take time out of their busy work schedules and look for or listen to information that we deem important? How do we keep the momentum of learning going over time? What are the easiest and most up-to-date ways of sharing knowledge? How is it possible to teach creative design?

In 2012, The Cultural Landscape Foundation (TCLF) launched the Shlomo Aronson Oral History with 25 video segments, interviewing Shlomo on different aspects of his biography, designs and projects (TCLF, The Cultural Landscape Foundation, 2012).[70] I believe that most of our staff is unaware of these videos, a fact which reveals a two-fold problem: their possible lack of knowledge and interest in the history of the practice they work for, and our negligence in encouraging them to know more about it. The responsibility to teach goes hand in hand with that of others to pursue learning.

Jay Liebowitz offers a broad list of methods for collecting both explicit and tacit knowledge and sharing information. These include: interviews structured around specific topics and pre-prepared questions; formalized mentoring programs where key staff members share their knowledge and experience with the junior staff; oral histories conducted as part of informal conversations or in recorded form; inviting retired personnel to share their insights; staff members sharing their notes and personal procedures about how they structure their work; compiling office manuals capturing the knowledge in specific areas; project managers sharing their successes and failures at the end of a specific project, and internal networking sites within the practice which enable staff members to share and inquire about information. (Liebowitz, 2009)

Most of these methods can and should be adopted in an architectural practice, but I discovered additional scenarios within which knowledge transfer occurs. Talks with former staff members revealed that they learned much during informal conversations they had with Shlomo, Ittai or me. These conversations occurred in various informal settings, such as while driving to meetings when we might comment on the qualities of a passing landscape, point out 'signs' in the landscape they hadn't previously noticed, or discover an office project they didn't know existed along the route. In our design field much can be learned from participating in meetings and planning committees as well as visiting projects during construction. Being present when senior designers interact with other parties also provides opportunities for staff to experience one of the lead designers in action. Such interactions include conducting an important meeting, convincing a building contractor to do his best, and persuading clients to go the extra mile to make the project better.

70. This work is part of TCLF's program of creating oral legacies of the "Pioneers of Landscape Architecture," including professional legends like Lawrence Halprin, Richard Haag and Laurie Olin.

Knowledge of these methods alone will not bring about any change. Anybody leading an office knows about the difficulties in implementing extra-curricular activities that are not per se interesting to the staff. In the past, I established work and learning protocols which were gradually eroded by time and lack of enforcement. I realize now that somebody has to be put in charge of the task of overseeing and instigating knowledge transfer.

Teaching tacit design knowledge and design thinking is essential in our profession. First designs in our practice still come about by sketching and discussions with the lead designers, making learning by example the best way to convey creative knowledge. In the past year leading up to the completion of the PhD, we received several large-scale park projects which until then would have been very closely designed by me. It became clear that this was an opportunity to test the insights gained from the research into methods of knowledge transfer and mentoring. Proposing ways to encourage design thinking could be built into the creative process for the park projects. For me, this meant working on my listening skills, taking the time to let everybody be heard, and not shooting down ideas because I consider them too expensive, unpractical, too complicated to construct, or simply because I don't like them.

As a result of this reflective process, we implemented structured brainstorming sessions for each new park project with a large group of diverse office members, followed by design charettes with the staff working on specific projects. During the two-hour brainstorming sessions, we first presented the findings of the mapping and analysis phase, providing a broad information base to focus the ensuing discussion. In turn, everybody brought forward his or her thoughts on the overall vision and specific programs in the park. The varied backgrounds and age profiles of the participants produced a diverse list of ideas, expressed in their interests in a quiet versus an active park, a new urban nature hotspot versus a destination for sports activities, a park with corners to get lost in versus sprawling lawns to enjoy the vastness of the open space, a place to go to with their kids or get away from them. All ideas were recorded and presented to the client.

Using the Nesher Lake Park as a case study, the next session with the design team was dedicated to assembling a list of possible park programs and exploring, via trial-and-error where to place them within the site. This helped us to allocate areas of greater and lesser intensity relative to their proximity to the main entrance and sensitive natural areas.

Fig. 275. Documenting the results of our brainstorming sessions is now standard procedure in preparation for presenting the design process to our clients

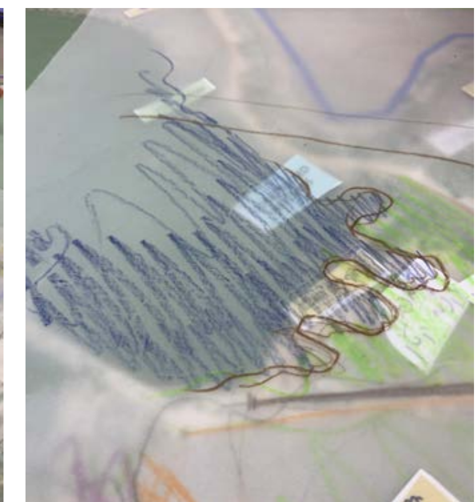


Fig. 276. Staff members of our Tivon office branch participate in the design session where we explored program locations and first design ideas for the project

For the subsequent design charette, we took out sketching paper and color pencils. I asked all team members, one after the other, to draw out and explain their first design sketch, a process that forced them to express their design ideas on paper. Doing so in front of others took them very much out of their comfort zone, but it produced fantastic ideas and insights when sharing personal readings of the site. One such occurrence happened when the youngest team member, who struggled with her sketch, suggested moving and locating the main path to a higher elevation based on what she had learned from the site. She had enjoyed climbing up on a berm and in so doing had discovered fantastic views of both lakes. Such insights are precious and they only surface and may be heard in these types of discussions. I went last, by which time the input of the other team members had clearly influenced my initial concept and made it richer. I also realized that my sketch was not 'better', and did not necessarily summarize the direction that we will ultimately choose to take. After four hours we produced three good alternatives for further investigation. Afterwards, all of us commented on how much we had enjoyed the session and learned from it. The value and lasting positive effect on personal development had been mentioned by several past staff members during our conversations, and the overwhelmingly positive feedback from the entire staff confirms the importance of these types of design discourse as a mentoring tool. Above all, these forms of exchanges have a great impact on the project's design quality.

Fig. 277. Members of our Tivon and Tel Aviv office branches came together for a design charette about materials and shade structures for the Nesher Lake Park

Evolving Legacy: An Exploratory Path into Uncovering and Sustaining a Practice's Accumulated Knowledge

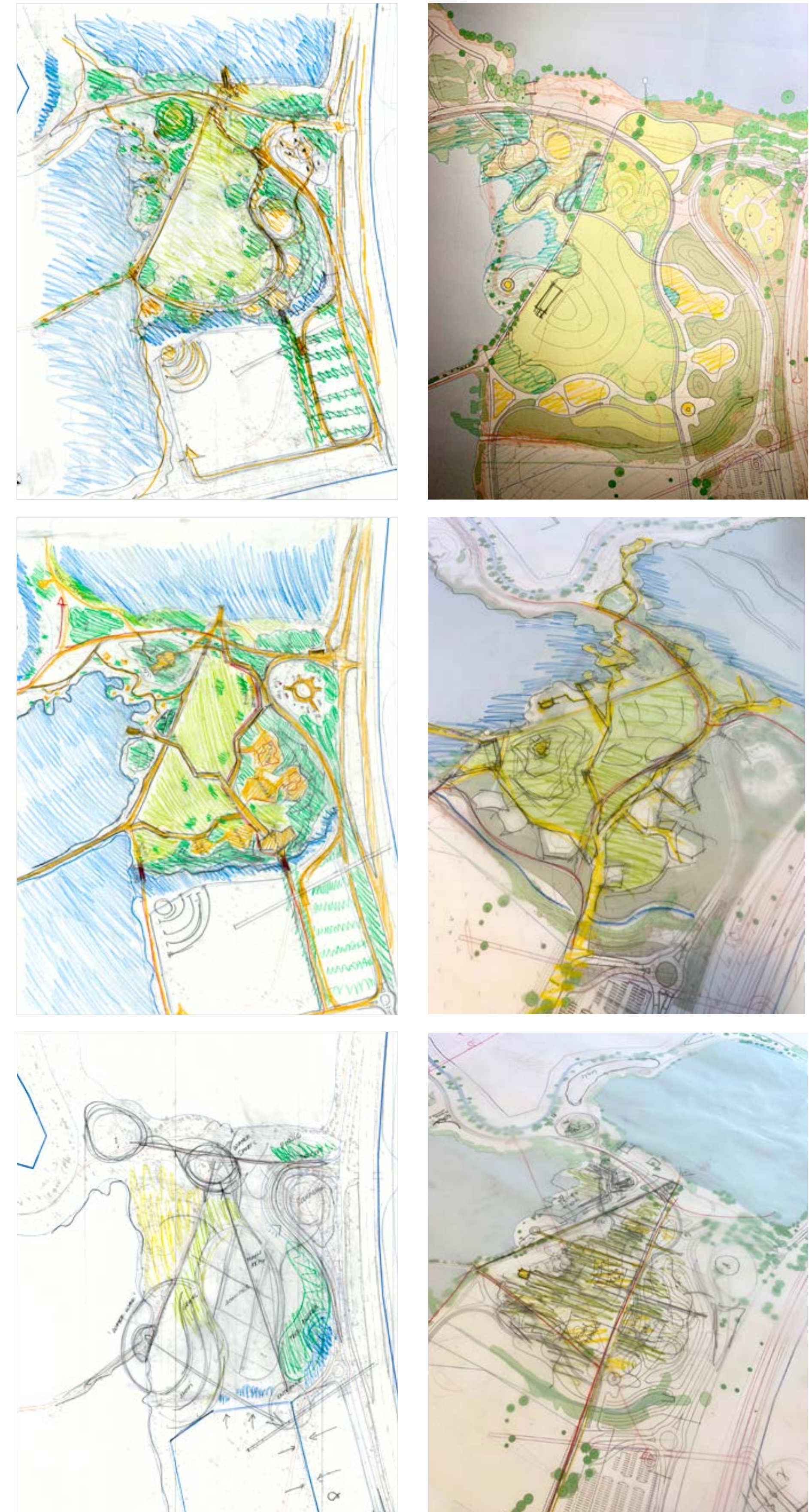


Fig. 278. To the left: design alternatives suggested and drawn by different members of the team during the first design charette about the Nesher Lake Park project. To the right: further development of the alternatives during a collaborative revision process a month later

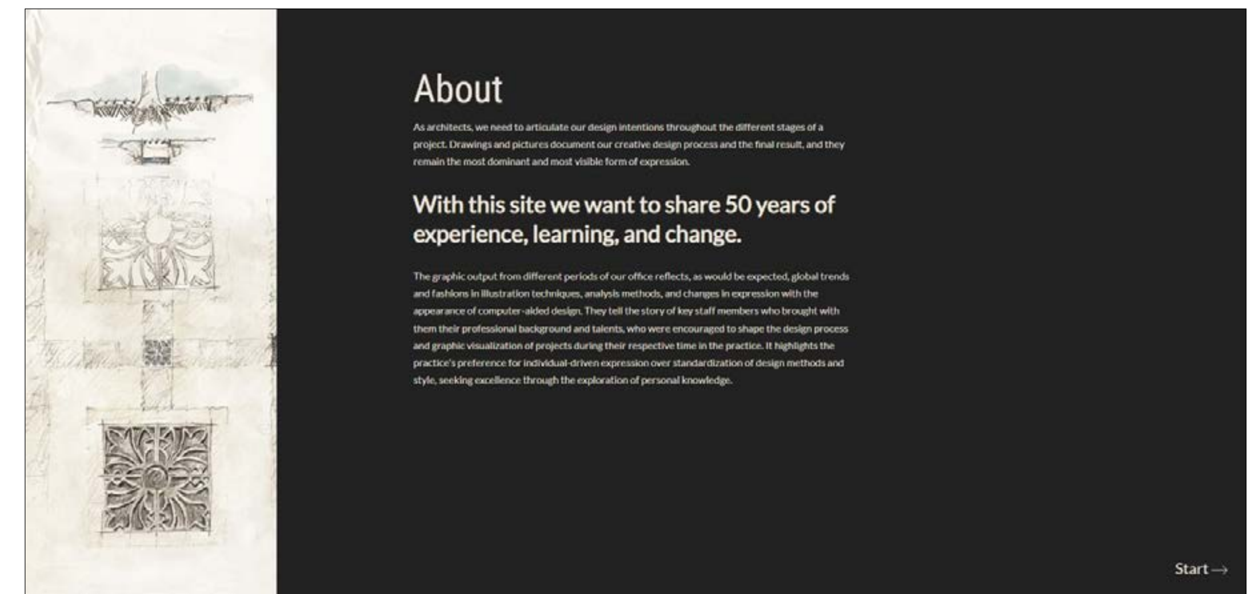
This research, combined with existing office routines already in place, suggests the following opportunities for learning and knowledge transfer:

- Participation of the junior staff in all coordination meetings with consultants and third parties.
- Office-wide design brainstorming sessions for large-scale projects.
- Project-specific design charettes at different stages of the design.
- Participation in competitions.
- Regular lectures by office staff about their work, or topics of general interest.
- Lectures of the lead designers about past projects and design approaches.
- Office trips to construction sites.
- Participation in external lectures and symposiums.
- Encouragement to study the practice's work through past publications.
- Establishment of study groups involving all members of the office to research past and present office projects according to subjects, as well as researching local and international case studies for comparison.
- Drawing and sketching lessons, to start when Covid-19 regulations allow for them.
- Compilation of a comprehensive directory containing all relevant professional background information within and outside the practice.

The work on our new digital knowledge site, recording the breadth of the practice's creative output for seminal projects of the past 50 years, was another chance for the staff to learn about past projects when assisting me in assembling the background information and visual documentation of the selected projects. Soon to be made public online, it will provide the staff and anybody else who is interested, the opportunity to review the design processes and graphic output that produced some of the practice's best-known projects. They will also be able to access photographic documentation of the building process and finished outcome where available and relevant. Adding to the site's content is a work in progress, and it will provide research opportunities for many others to come.

Omri Ben-Chetrit, one of our associates, offered the final piece of insight into learning and knowledge transfer: you should try as hard as possible to share knowledge within the practice, but you can only reach those who want to learn.

Fig. 279. Landscape architect Marti Franch giving a lecture about his work to our staff. Our office and that of Ari Cohen invited him to participate in a design charette for the Yarkon River open space master plan in the area of Petah Tikva



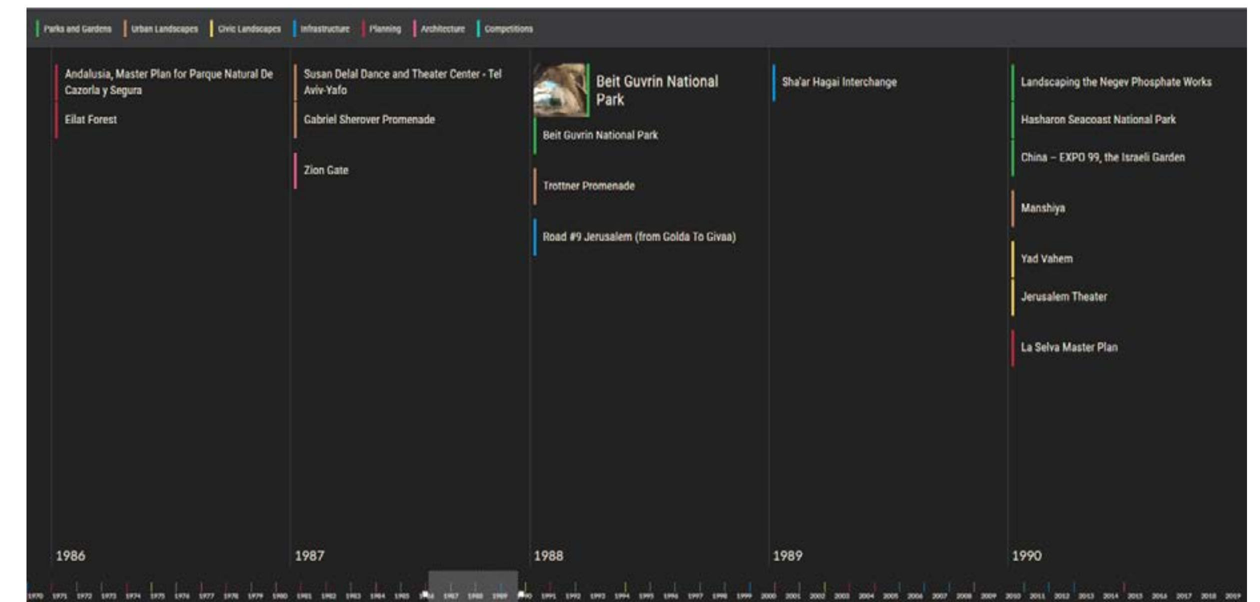


Fig. 280. Example pages of the digital knowledge site

07 CONCLUSIONS

07.01 Conclusions

Evolving Legacy: An Exploratory Path into Uncovering and Sustaining a Practice's Accumulated Knowledge

"Shlomo Aronson's practice is largely an interdisciplinary one. It cuts across the boundaries of the design professions and extends from the core of the walled city of Jerusalem to the *wadis* of the Negev: from the local setting of the kibbutz to the forums of international fairs and exhibitions. The practice is extensive and intensive; it weds environmental and esthetic literacy with both a pragmatic and symbolic reading of the landscape."

Peter Jacobs (in 'Shlomo Aronson, Making Peace with the Land', 1998, p. 9)

07.01 Conclusions

This case study research set out to expose the multiple layers of knowledge defining the modes of practice and design of an architectural office and to investigate the role of mentoring and knowledge transfer in the creative growth of both the staff and the practice itself when considering succession of leadership. Our large body of work and long-time experience in the profession were obvious advantages when searching for the central aspects that sustain a practice's creativity and commercial viability over time. They also provided a far-reaching window into the mechanisms, thought processes, and social skill sets necessary to produce works of architecture, all of which represents the legacy of the practice. The additional characteristics of Shlomo Aronson Architects as a locally acting design practice operating in an extremely diverse country made it a pertinent case study to consider the potential rewards of designing in familiar environments. The review of our creative archive produced a wealth of documentation about planning studies and built projects conceived in a place that has changed dramatically over the past 50 years. Working in a small country made it also easy to reach out to key staff members of the past and collect information about their experiences in the office when discussing the practice's creative work processes and contemplating past and future learning opportunities. The first step in understanding our legacy was to provide insights into the practice as a whole by investigating the backstory of its lead designers. The second step was to classify the way we create and to ground the theoretical constructs of our modes of design in the discussion of three case study projects. The final step was to describe the different kinds of knowledge that sustain the practice, and to discuss the role of mentoring in the creative design process, presenting methods of organizational learning knowledge transfer.

The Practice and its People

Practicing exclusively for public clients in Israel profoundly impacts what, why, and how we design. Our work environment is defined by the constant demand for urban expansion due to Israel's high population growth rate, the country's dry climate and the fragile nature of its landscapes. We operate within a society of great social disparities resulting from socioeconomic status, disputes around national and religious identity, and the unresolved political situation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Case study reflections and conversations with former staff and colleagues substantiated the central belief in the practice as a place whose design work aims to be inclusive and expansive rather than exclusive. It exposed our role to be that of facilitators rather than specialists when working on all scales of planning, often presented with conflicting interests, deeply aware of the impact that our designs have on people and on Israel's threatened habitats. Mediating compromises through discourse with the public and within the practice emerged as a critical method in the collision and resolution of ideas: a crucial part in forming a distinct design position for each project. Started by Shlomo, the practice continues to be involved in the widest range of project typologies. Contemplating our office ethos exposed the advantages and heightened responsibilities of working locally: on the one hand, knowing the country and its climate, being familiar with politics and planning policies; on the other hand, recognizing the heightened need to define our professional standpoint

on issues emerging from questions about social, ethical, cultural, political, and environmental responsibilities.

The research into the lead designer's professional background points to the origins of many of the practice's basic set of beliefs and modes of design, and the continuity of values that were installed by Shlomo, and which evolved with the change in leadership to Ittai and me. Shlomo was the pioneering founder, Ittai and I are the second generation expanding and evolving the original message. Many professional attitudes can be traced back to Shlomo's experiences while studying abroad and when working with Lawrence Halprin: a fearlessness when taking on new design challenges, acting as a leader in interdisciplinary design projects while integrating his concern for the protection of natural and cultural landscapes in his approach to infrastructure and transportation projects. Shlomo was the most influential role model for both Ittai and me, and as members of one family, we undoubtedly influenced each other. What connects us is a deep respect for what came before us, and our concern for public interests that informs the artistic visions of our designs. Our formal approaches have evolved but still retain some of Shlomo's inherent formal romanticism when creating sustainable landscapes in the dry climates of Israel. Yet with time, individual talents and preferences became apparent. Ittai and I apply a more pragmatic attitude toward the business. We turned the office into a profitable and stable enterprise without compromising its creative aspirations and values. Our individual creative talents evolved signature characteristics of the practice's designs by combining time-proven concepts with our personal formal preferences, lessons we have learned and necessary adjustments to today's professional environment. Lastly, I believe that having a woman in the leadership brought additional strength to the practice and to our inclusive approach to managing the company and its people.

The Way We Create

The investigation into our modes of design exposed the different types of explicit and tacit knowledge that we apply in our creative design processes. They represent our reverence for context; our goal to connect through dialog and evoke meaning through referencing existing landscape values and creating narratives, and our preference for formal restraint, quiet aesthetics, and local materials. The three case study projects embody different professional achievements and demonstrate the diverse application of key principles as part of the four stages of our modes of design: listening, understanding, shaping, and reflecting. The Sha'ar Hagai highway interchange helped establish the leading role of landscape architects as part of the road design team and pioneered the use of agricultural plantings in the integration of large infrastructure projects into their surroundings. It exemplifies our approach to view landscapes as infrastructures of natural, historical, political, and social systems existing in any specific context. Herzliya park marked a fresh formal and conceptual approach to the design of urban parks where we employed strategic planning and public participation to integrate urban nature areas of high ecological value into an intensive urban green space. The LRT Green Line in Jerusalem showcases the importance of acting as a mediator when steering the discourse within design teams, planning committees, and the public at large to implement complex urban insertion projects.

Mentoring and Knowledge Transfer

The practice always prided itself in giving creative freedom to its staff and encouraging input from all team members. My reflections on our present-day operation of the practice revealed some painful truths about good intentions meeting the reality of practice. Time pressure and the size of the workforce made it harder to maintain our ideal of a studio practice with missed opportunities for using mentoring in generating design, sustaining design excellence, and promoting innovation. It was clear from the beginning that the research and its documentation alone would not implement change or teach anything, and that we had to find the methods to implement change. Teaching design by example had always been part of the practice's mentoring philosophy and re-installing brainstorming sessions and design charrettes for new projects was the obvious way to engage with the staff about design. Participation in coordination meetings and construction site visits is part of learning the social skills to hold one's ground in negotiations with third parties, consultants, contractors, and in dialog with the general public. Participation in design competitions and lectures by office staff are great ways for people to connect, test new ideas, and let the junior staff display their talents. The combined success of old and new methods of mentoring and opportunities for creative exchange, as implemented in the past year, convinced me that the role of the lead designers is less about teaching our personal design knowledge and more about mentoring design thinking and defining one's creative and ethical position in the profession.

How to make sense of our accumulated knowledge and classifying our modes of design was another step in producing explicit information. Finding the methods to pass it on required a more structured understanding of what we know. I used the categories proposed by Liebowitz (Liebowitz, 2009) to investigate the different types of the practice's knowledge: our contextual knowledge that relates to the understanding of how to function in real-life situations; declarative knowledge that describes our aptitude to know where to find background information; procedural knowledge that describes our ability to conduct a creative design process and manage time and resources; and lastly, social knowledge, that encompasses the understanding of informal networks for knowledge exchange within and outside of the office. Considering the above in the context of specifying the most emblematic and critical knowledge to the way we practice, led Ittai and me to identify three elements: knowing how to act as diplomats, knowing how to be a leader, and understanding our creative design knowledge/talent, the element that is the hardest to teach and transfer.

General Insights (Reflections on Reflecting)

The combination of lessons learned from the case study projects and conversations exposed another central interest in our work: that of building community. We see a clear connection between the way we interact with our staff and people outside, and how we approach and design our projects. Being sympathetic and respectful to the concerns and ideas of others is a big part of it. Going back to being a student gave me a renewed perspective of how it feels to be on the receiving end of getting advice and criticism when talking with my supervisors.[71] This experience has given me more patience when engaging our staff

71. In our discussions, both Charles Anderson and Paul Minifie listened empathically, which allowed for their advice to be specific and accessible.

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and it brought into focus the general topic of design through discourse, starting within the practice itself. Conducting a constructive discourse hinges on understanding the difference between technically listening and then telling the staff what to do, and trying to see things from their perspective, understand their input. The aim became to coach the staff to actively participate in the creative process to reach better results for the project. This requires an open mind and taking time to listen, qualities that we tend to neglect with growing experience in the profession. In this respect, the accumulated knowledge of Ittai and I might inhibit open discourse, calling our intuitive and fast responses to design problems into question. Building community extends to the public realm, where the same qualities of listening are equally useful in the dialog with the general public, public agencies, and outside team members. Our goal to reconnect people with their natural and cultural environment is another expression of building community, but it requires the addition of different implementation methods. We need to encourage the active involvement of the public in the designing and maintaining of new open spaces, enabling the incorporation of familiar and cherished landscape elements that evoke emotional responses. This also involves educating the public about the importance of preserving natural habitats.

This research has provided a better understanding of who we are and how we can stay true to ourselves. At the outset of this investigation, 'knowing who you are' appeared to be one of several ways to frame the practice's design philosophy and approaches. With time, the exploration into how we create, the review of our design archive, and the case study reflections have taken the understanding of knowing who we are in different directions. Revisiting past projects and beliefs has helped define our position within the present day and expose the strengths and weaknesses of our current operation; the review of the practice's legacy has exposed a wealth of professional knowledge that makes it a worthwhile case study to be considered by others.

This thesis contributes to general knowledge by presenting comprehensive documentation about many aspects that help sustain an architectural practice and business, adding practice-based insights to the small pool of existing research on the topic. The digital knowledge site might be the biggest contribution to general knowledge, making research easily accessible to anybody interested. Scanning archived material of seminal projects was initially part of the goal to expose the present staff to the design legacy of the practice by making it available in digital form. It revealed a wealth of drawings representing the creative development of planning studies and built projects. With each recorded project it became clear that this material would be of professional interest to many, and an opportunity to tell the story of how projects happen through exposing the evolution of drawings and images produced from the beginning to the end. The purpose of the site is to present project documentation in an unfiltered and honest way, showcasing tremendously beautiful drawings alongside poorly executed sketches and analysis material. The archive presents the chronologically organized graphic output of drawings and photographs for old and new projects, allowing inferences to be drawn about different design approaches, changes in fashion and modes of graphic expression. The site also allows consideration of the pivotal question as to whether there is a connection between extensive and innovative creative design approaches in a project and the architectural quality of the built design.

The research findings and my personal experiences suggest a yes and no answer: well-conceived design processes are the foundation for a good outcome, but some great projects come about by lucky circumstances. The site invites people to appreciate works of landscape architecture and architecture not only based on their present state or performance but to review them through the study of the creative process that guided the design.

This research has produced new knowledge through documentation and the introduction of new platforms for mentoring and knowledge exchange which elicited broad appreciation and positive feedback from our workers. The results of these exchanges have contributed many new ideas about contemporary professional goals, activating the expansion of the practice's general design knowledge. It confirmed my initial premise that mentoring is key to innovation. In addition to the material on the knowledge site, explicit knowledge has been compiled in form of background information on projects, design protocols, and professional research on varying topics. The thesis itself provides the lens through which to look at the material and to interpret it. In our practice, it will serve as an additional tool to keep the staff informed, and I am planning to give a series of talks about selected chapters. The work on this thesis has also generated discussions with colleagues and researchers, and we all expressed our intention to continue sharing our ideas and insights.

The research has exposed the polymorphic nature of our work and with it the advantages and the concerns when acting and working on multiple fronts. It demonstrates the potential breadth of influence when working on all scales for a wide variety of public clients. We are aware that we accept baseline conditions in projects that do not always align with our professional views yet it reflects our belief that our involvement always holds the potential to make a positive difference. We may compromise at times in our efforts to represent the interests of everybody, not giving enough consideration to muted voices. Maybe we are not always trying hard enough when looking for new creative expressions. Within the practice, this investigation has instigated an ongoing debate with our associates about how we can do better, individually and collectively. The completion of this thesis adds one more piece to the puzzle of evolving legacy in a creative practice.

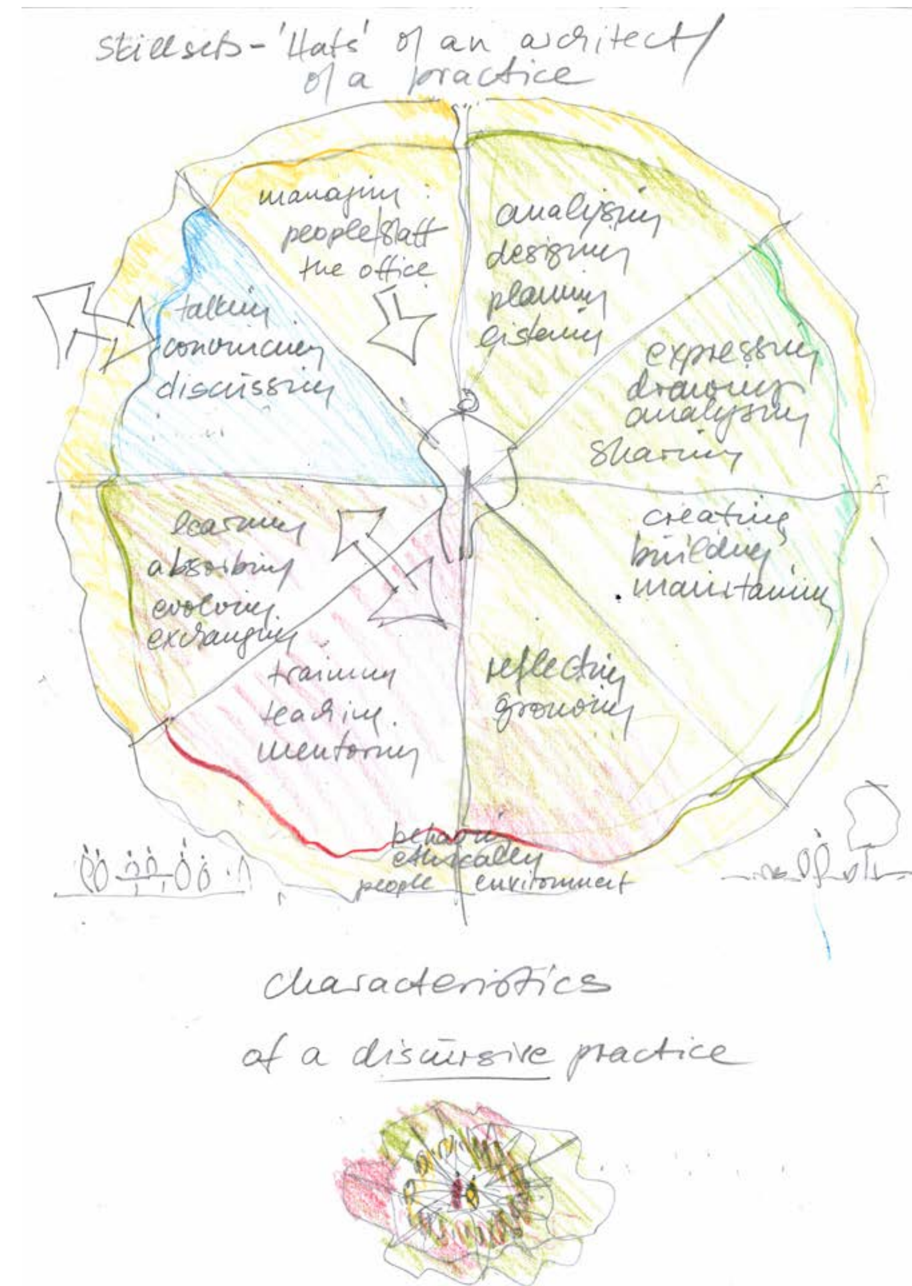


Fig. 281. Contemplating the characteristics of a discursive practice: 'slices' of separate actions come together to make up the whole of a creative practice

PART D

08 APPENDICES
09 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Fig. 282. This group photo taken during the tribute evening for Shlomo in 2010 shows Shlomo, Ittai, and I in the company of past and present staff members and colleagues.

08 APPENDICES

08.01 Seminal Works according to Periods of Practice
08.02 Transcripts of Informal Conversations

"I think the office is a wonderful 'school'. When I started working in Aronson I felt that I hadn't learned anything in the Technion, it was like starting from a blank page, and you [Barbara] gave me a great opportunity to enter the profession. You had a lot of patience, a lot of trust, in an office with a very positive atmosphere, not pressuring. Although the projects were very demanding and one needed to stay much longer, I didn't feel that somebody was forcing me or was angry at me or not satisfied. It's amazing because in other offices there are emotions like this, and in Aronson there weren't, so the good atmosphere was really not to be taken for granted."

Michal Biton (2020, appendix, p.278), former worker, 2001-2006

Final thesis word count: 250

08.01 Seminal Works According to Periods of Practice

Seminal works of the practice include built projects, planning documents and publications. Out of the 600 projects on record in the practice, what makes a project seminal? The most straightforward answer lies in the fact that they were chosen to represent the practice’s most important work in office brochures and other publications. All seminal works included here meet this first criterion. One or more of the following additional criteria apply to each one of the projects:

- It embodies a novel design concept.
- It influenced the profession and contributed to design knowledge.
- It signifies a substantial contribution to the natural or cultural environment.
- It influenced public opinion and perception of landscape values.
- It received outstanding public acceptance.
- t was referred to in professional writings.
- It received significant peer recognition.
- It marks a personal milestone for one of the partners.

A few projects achieved iconic status at home or abroad, some even beyond the realm of landscape architecture:

The Erosion Control through Limanim (Bays) and Ravines project in the Negev Desert remains the all-time favorite abroad as a landscape intervention of large-scale impact with minimal effort, creating green infrastructures through the understanding of natural systems. Shlomo Aronson worked on this project as part of team with the Jewish National Fund, responsible for afforestation in Israel.

The Phosphate Works project is internationally revered for its large-scale sculptural qualities, conceived at a time when land art became part of the discourse in landscape architecture.

The Promenades in Jerusalem and the Suzanne Dellal Dance and Theater Plaza in Tel Aviv were completed in the same year and became widely known and beloved by the general public as projects celebrating Israel’s cultural and agricultural landscape in urban settings.

1969-1979

The Judean Hills Master Plan for Tourism and Recreation (1972) established Shlomo Aronson as a landscape architect with a broad understanding of the environment, using new and innovative methods of analysis to achieve large-scale planning.

The master plan for new housing in Mevasseret Zion (1973) is the first manifestation of the practice’s interdisciplinary approach to master planning and urban design.

Erosion Control through Limanim (Bays) and Ravines (1977), a project that Shlomo Aronson worked on as part of a team with the Jewish National Fund, was very much ahead of its time in recognizing the potential of manipulating natural processes to create green infrastructures, in this case in the Negev Desert.

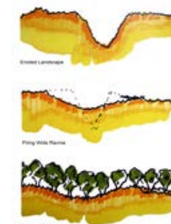
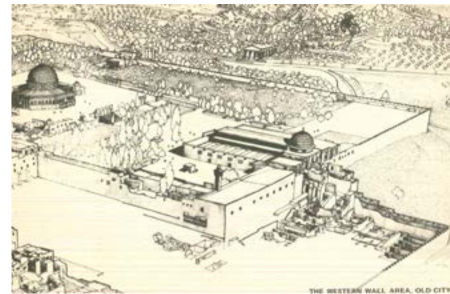


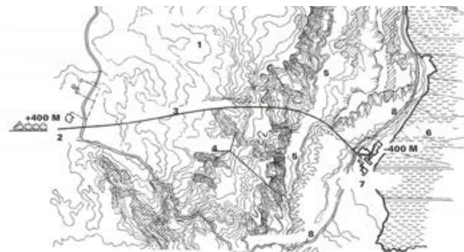
Fig. 283. The images in this chapter provide seminal drawings and photographs for each project as a complement to the general description with no need for individual image captures

A number of influential projects mark the practice's seminal work in and around the Old City of Jerusalem: competition win for the Rehabilitation of the Cardo in the Old City of Jerusalem (1972), Beit Shalom Park – City of David Archaeological Area (1979), Western Wall design guidelines (with Art Kutcher), the Ancient City of David, the park around the wall of the Old City. All of these projects exhibited Shlomo Aronson's deep understanding of the multi-layered history of a place, and his ability to make this history a legible part of the present-day open spaces he created.



1980-1989

The Conveyor Belt project to the Dead Sea Works (1986) presented the unusual task of integrating 40 kilometers of conveyor belt transporting potash through a pristine and fragile desert environment, mitigating its physical and visual impact on the landscape. It changed the understanding of the traditional role and influence of landscape architects on large scale engineering projects.



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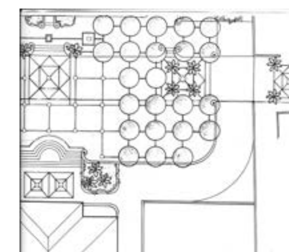
The Sherover Promenade (1989) reached a special status and appreciation not only with professionals but also with the wider public. It's general landscape setting with views of Jerusalem's Old City, the Temple Mount and the surrounding hills is breathtaking. The promenade's quiet yet monumental design language combined with its extensive agricultural plantings of olive groves, wheat fields and grass areas, created a novel dialogue between the edge of the city and the desert landscape beyond, a meeting place for all Jerusalemites alike.

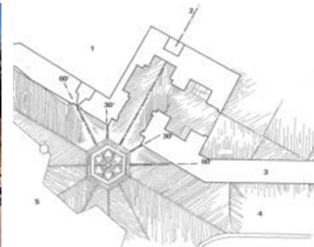
The Sherover Promenade was part of an (unfulfilled) vision to create a continuous pedestrian walk between Jerusalem's most dramatic overlook and the Old City itself, passing along the edges of modern Jerusalem's Jewish and Arab neighborhoods. The first section was the Haas Promenade, designed by Lawrence Halprin, with Shlomo Aronson Architects as local architects, completed in 1986.

The Suzanne Dellal Dance and Theater Plaza in Tel Aviv (1989) created a vibrant neighborhood square and entrance plaza for the new Suzanne Dellal Center for Dance and Theater, employing similar elements as the Sherover Promenade to achieve its acclaimed design: a strong reference to the cultural landscape of its surroundings (the citrus groves of Jaffa), classical use of natural stone for walls and paving, and a formal geometrical layout. Both projects were enthusiastically embraced by the public, and they achieved an instant sense of belonging.



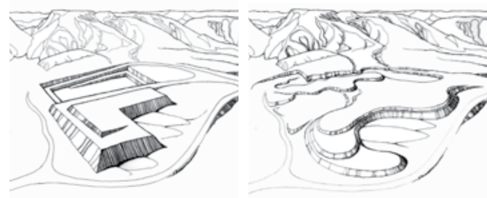
The Beit Guvrin National Park (1988-1998) presents a departure from looking primarily at the archaeological content when developing the overall design for the national park, but by weaving the larger historical and cultural setting of the landscape into the main concept and understanding of the park, the landscape context became part of the story.

The renovations of the Zion Gate (1982) and Dung Gate (1985) in the Old City of Jerusalem showcased the practice's understanding of Jerusalem's multifaceted past and architectural history. In different ways, both renovations added a modern layer of interpretation to the gates without changing their historic presence.

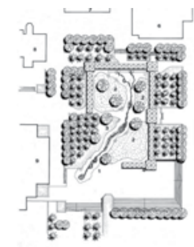


1990-1999

The Negev Phosphate Works (1990). This project presented a challenge of reconsidering the traditional field of landscape architectural work: the newly implemented way of excavating phosphates and depositing excess material initiated a new way of thinking about landscape remediation in desert conditions.



Kreitman Plaza (1994) showed how a landscape insertion can become the heart of a university campus, providing a central outdoor meeting space for its students. Around the narrative of a desert oasis the design employed shade, water and trees to create a special microclimate which provides relief from the natural desert climate.



The Caesarea Archaeological Park (1975-1985, 1992 -2005) was an important ongoing project for many years. The Roman amphitheatre and the Crusader city had been the main attractions of this National Park before Shlomo made the sea the major story, explaining and tying all different historic periods together. It was the connecting narrative which created the overarching concept for the site and rationale for understanding the historic city of Caesarea.

The Sha'ar Hagai Highway Interchange (1995) was a radical departure from the proven ways of highway design concentrating on engineering values alone. The location's importance as the historic entry point to the ascent to Jerusalem was trigger to sinking all access ramps, providing free views into the landscape and towards the ascent. It recognized the important influence of landscape architects in the actual road layout design. Agricultural plantings were first introduced here as a sustainable form of roadside plantings, integrating the interchange within its surroundings and referencing the cultural landscape of this area. It became a landscape model in many future plans.

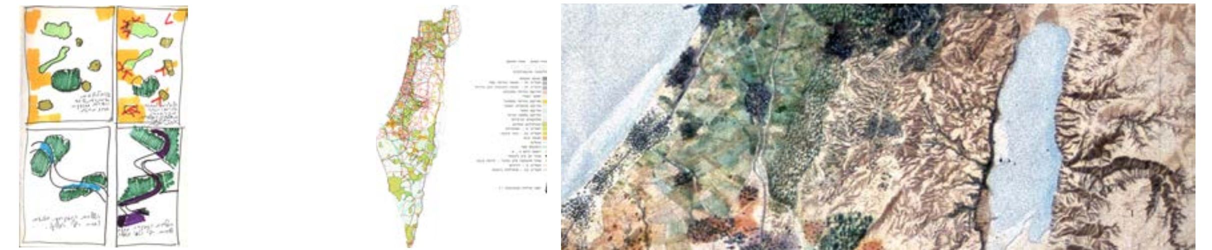
The **National Plan for Afforestation** (1976-1985, 1995) in its first and final edition created the legally binding guidelines for the afforestation and development of forest parks for the entire country. It was a milestone for a comprehensive and multi-disciplinary planning process, considering all aspects of ecology, botany, soil science, hydrology, fire safety and landscape values into one document.

The **Contour Lines on the way to the Dead Sea** (1996) became for many Israelis part of their personal memory of experiencing the dramatic descent from Jerusalem or Arad down to the Dead Sea, the lowest place on earth.

2000-2009

Ben Gurion National Airport (2004) gained international recognition while referencing the iconic agricultural and natural landscapes between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem as the main theme for the airport's central garden. The ascent to Jerusalem has had a special meaning for thousands of years, experienced and treasured by locals and tourists from all over the world on their way to visit their respective cultural sites in Jerusalem.

As one of four authors of the **National Outline Plan for Israel**- Tama 35 (2005), Shlomo had the unique opportunity to contribute his professional knowledge of 40 years toward the planning of Israel's future development. As part of his contributions, landscape ensembles of national importance were identified and gained recognition as unique landscapes worth protecting (e.g. the road to Jerusalem, the Biblical landscapes around the Sea of Galilee).



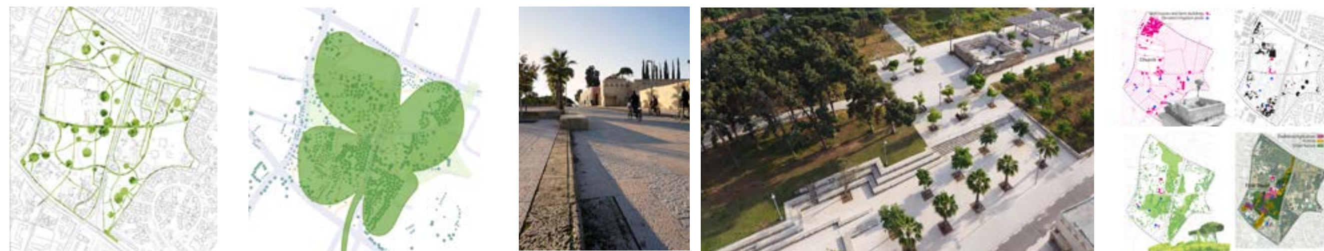
Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem (2006). The landscaping around the new museum complex designed by Moshe Safdie Architects was an act of restraint and minimalism, with the overall goal of creating a series of quiet places for contemplation. Using local materials and plant species references the site's surroundings and creates the connection between the past and the present.

Herzliya Park (2008). This large municipal park received wide recognition for successfully combining intensive recreational programs with urban nature and storm-water management. The celebration and conservation of its seasonal winter ponds became a role model for the integration of natural areas of great ecological value as part of intensively used parks. It also marks a point of departure from time-proven design concepts and formal motifs toward a greater emphasis on ecology, public participation and education, and modern-day requirements of green open spaces.

2010-2020

Sde Dov Competition (2012) Master Plan (ongoing) The 2012 partnership between Ari Cohen (as lead urban designer), Shlomo Aronson Architects and Dr. Chaim Fialkoff won 1st prize in the competition to develop a programmatic strategy for the redesign of Tel Aviv's Sde Dov Airport. During the master planning phase, an unprecedented number of local and international consultants worked together to design one of Israel's most dense and sustainable urban developments, making it a seminal case study project.

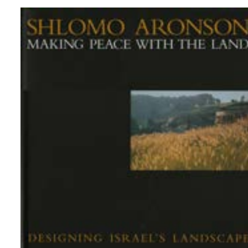
The **Park of the Groves** (2013) celebrates and exposes the site's cultural layers and remaining traces of (Jewish) Tel Aviv and (Arab) Jaffa, inviting all sections of the population to enjoy the park. The site's ecological riches became part of the overall concept, altogether providing many different experiences and areas for meeting, playing, enjoying the seasonal changes of nature and bird watching. The park became the new center for its surrounding neighborhoods and received wide recognition for successfully embracing and integrating different voices from the past and present.



Participating in the design and partial construction of **50km of Light Rail in Jerusalem** (2005-ongoing) established the office as a leading expert for the urban insertion of mass transit systems. It also created the opportunity to participate in the urban transformation of Jerusalem. As architects and/or landscape architects working on different lines of the LRT system from the statutory phase up to construction, the office has shown the advantages of applying an integrated landscape-architecture approach to traffic insertion projects.

The design of **Modiin's New City Center** (2019), including the new central shopping street and two adjoining plazas and pedestrian connections, integrates considerations of sustainability, harvesting of urban run-off, walkability and accessibility with intensive programs and high-quality finishes of its design elements along the central commercial spine and its neighboring open spaces.

Publications



"**Peace with the Land**," Monograph, Spacemaker Press (1998)

"**Aridscapes**," book by Shlomo Aronson (2008)

08.02 Transcripts of Informal Conversations

All participants in the informal conversations are either former staff members or colleagues, most of whom are owners of firms, employed by a government agency and/or members of the academic community. Participants were interviewed about their professional experiences within or vis-à-vis the office, or, in the case of Dr. Nachum Fossfeld, because of his expertise in organizational psychology and knowledge management. Chosen participants have no biases associated with a potential power relationship with the research student conducting the conversations. All conversations were edited for language, general comprehensiveness, and readability.

Former Staff:

1979-1994: Judy Green, architect

1985-1989: Eitan Eden, architect

1986-1994: Yair Avigdor, architect

1987-2002: Haya Nevo, office manager

2001-2006: Michal Biton, landscape architect

2004-2014: Adi Noy Ivanir, landscape architect

Colleagues:

Moshe Safdie - Safdie Architects, architect

Dr. Nurit Lissovsky, Associate Professor, Technion, Faculty of Landscape Architecture

Marti Franch – EMF, landscape architect

Dr. Nachum Fossfeld – Ergo Management Consulting, expert in organizational psychology

.

Evolving Legacy: An Exploratory Path into Uncovering and Sustaining a Practice's Accumulated Knowledge

Judy Green

BA=Barbara Aronson; JG=Judy Green.
Date of conversation: Jan-24-2020.

BA: Hi, Judy, let's start with the first question. Please state when and for how long you worked in the office, and what you have been doing professionally since then?

JG: Well, I worked from November 9, 1979 until December 31, 1994, 15 years and a month. And what I've done professionally since then, for a period of 13 years, I had my own office. And then I spent three years as a Peace Corps volunteer in a city planning department in Sarande, Albania. When I was in the Peace Corps there, I also designed some small archaeological projects and work between the tourism department and the city planning department to develop cultural heritage tourism in the area. Then when I came back to Israel from Albania, I continued working on a consultancy basis. I worked alone and I consulted on quite a few projects, mainly with architects doing Regional Planning projects. And I did a few private projects for friends. I started actually teaching in the university a year or two, I don't recall exactly, before I left Shlomo's office, and I continued teaching in the university up until 5 or 6 years ago.

BA: When I came to the office, besides Shlomo, you were the most influential person on my professional, also my personal development, and I think you are a prime person to shed light on what represents the legacy of the office. I mean, you've been such an important part of it. When we are talking about legacy, it is also the design philosophy, also the projects, but also the office structure in the office culture. So, if you could elaborate on that.

JG: I think that Shlomo modeled the way that he ran his office, to a certain extent, on Larry Halprin's office, he ran it as a studio where he gave a lot of responsibility to the architects that he relied on. He set the office up so that the people who were the primary architects on a project would be involved from the conceptual stage all the way through the end of construction, which is a wonderful way to run an office. For the people who work there definitely because you get experience at all levels and at all stages of a project. Is that legacy, the legacy of the office? I think that's more structure. But I would say that the legacy of the office has to do with Shlomo's approach to landscape architecture and he had a very – I call it – a very romantic approach to landscape architecture. He was extremely concerned with context. He was extremely concerned with historical context. Even context in literature, physical context of the surroundings. And it was very important that his projects blended in with the surroundings. So that they became a part of what was the original context, an extension of it, oftentimes emphasizing very important pieces of that context.

BA: When you say context in literature, what do you mean?

JG: Well, when we researched a project, we would research it from all the angles that we could, and that included reading accounts, historical accounts of particular areas that we were designing. So, for instance, on the promenade projects, we read about the United Nations, I read about the United Nations Headquarters there, I read about the history of the Hill of Evil Council. I read what was written about it in the Bible. And those are in that literary context. Because by having an understanding of the history, this understanding of the history of a place would oftentimes inform the design concepts.

BA: So, thinking of the design methodologies or design or approaches to design, you would say that not just analyzing the physical qualities of the site were part of that but understanding historical context… JG: cultural historical context very important BA: …. of the site.

JG: Yes. And it's, by the way, something that I carried over, for instance, when I worked on the American colony: the first thing I did was to go out and find all of the literature that I could find on the American colony and on the founders of the American colony, on the way that they set out their agriculture, the way they collected water, so on and so forth. And these are things that were always important in every project that we did Shlomo's office. And the thing that was wonderful about it, was that Shlomo would give you the time to do it. In many offices, I know this from my colleagues, you would be pressured to rush, rush, rush, and doing that kind of research would oftentimes be looked at as superfluous. But it was a very important part of any project in the office of Shlomo.

BA: Which experiences in the office were most memorable and influential on your future career?

JG: Everything I just said. I took all of what I just said and internalized it. And it became the primary foundation of my approach to design after I left the office, my approach to teaching design after I left the office.

BA: What would you say were the most important projects in the time that you worked there?

JG: That's hard to say because there were so many that were important. I would say that the ones that I found the most important were the ones that had a strong historical and archaeological context. So, for instance, the (Sherover) promenade I mean, obviously, the promenade

is an important project in Jerusalem. There are two things about the promenades I should say (the Haas and Sherover Promenade) that influenced me highly. One of them was the research of the issues of ridges and valleys in Jerusalem, how important they are for sight lines and the adaptation of design so that it emphasized the topography, the original typography of the sites. By the way, I researched historical typography because the topography of promenades had been almost erased by illegal dumping in the area. And so we went back and actually, I think you even helped me on that part, we went back and researched old topography maps to see how the valleys related to the ridges and so on and so forth.

The second thing was working with Lawrence Halprin on the Haas Promenade. Working with Larry on the Haas Promenade was an extremely influential experience. And of course, it was working with Shlomo and Halprin, but Halprin's input there was very strong. I was in awe of him. The way that he looked at design was very similar to the way that Shlomo did, but there were some differences as well. Shlomo was more the romantic. And Larry was also a romantic, but he had much more of a stake in his design philosophies in modern architecture. Now, I didn't take any of that from Larry. I mean, actually what I took from Larry was the way that he related to the people that he worked with. And Shlomo had the same thing. They were very respectful. I mean, unless you crossed somebody. I mean, with Shlomo he was respectful all the time. With Larry, if you crossed him once, then he would not be respectful. He could actually be quite mean. Shlomo would never come and overtly criticize. When you were working on a project, he would sit next to me, and if there was something that bothered him about what I was doing, he would ask me a question. Or he would say, don't you think? He actually had a very personable way of relating to the designers that he worked with. Larry was very egocentric, and he could sometimes just simply lay down the law. And Shlomo, at least with me, Shlomo never did that. If he thought that something should be done a bit differently, we would have a discussion about it until we came to an agreed upon conclusion.

BA: But that's also part of the legacy because I think that how and what we design, but also how successful we run an office has to do with the way we treat the people that are working for us; and how much we're letting them contribute to the design, but also how much time they want to spend in the office and contribute. You knew Larry quite well, he also inspired loyalty in people, and also Shlomo. They (his staff) were fiercely loyal to him as a person and as a professional.

JG: Absolutely, yes. They both had good techniques for interpersonal relationships. Larry's was a bit harsher. Shlomo was softer, and they were both good at it. And yes, not only did they inspire people's loyalty, but they inspired their workers to do their best. And this is very important. They inspired people to push to do the very best that they could.

BA: Many times, today, clients are coming to us and they say: How are you managing to hire people that are so responsible? And who are very much doing their best. And it's, I think, something that we learned. We, definitely, I learned that from Shlomo, because that's how he treated us. That's how he treated me. And I think that's how it should be.

Which set of professional skills did you receive in the office? But in your case, I think also which set of skills did you bring to the office?

JG: I was an architect when I came to the office and I had just finished the year before my master's degree at Berkeley and I had worked for a year in architecture. So I came with a little bit of experience. I had worked summers in an architecture office also, but I didn't have really that much experience. I remember that when I first started working with Shlomo, I had some technical experience that I brought with me, for instance, the last office that I had worked in in the States, we had a set of more or less standard details which could be adapted, of course, but this was architecture, not landscape, but which could more or less be adapted to different situations in different projects. And we actually had a technique of printing those out on paper, that could then be modified so that the basis of the detail would be in place and then you could erase pieces of it and add on pieces. And it saved a lot of time. Shlomo was very impressed with this. And we adopted it in the office at the beginning. I was always good at detailing; detailing was something that I enjoy or enjoyed, and this time saving approach to detailing is something that we used in the office afterwards. We didn't do it exactly the same way that I had learned in America. Although for a while even on the Sherover Promenade we did use some standard details that we simply made changes on.

BA: I wasn't necessarily talking about which skill set you brought with you when you started your job. I'm talking about things that you contributed to the office during the 15 years (you were there). In terms of the standard of drawings that were going out, and so on. Or your personal approach to things.

JG: I don't know. I mean, as a student in Berkeley when I did my masters, I did develop a certain style, which was an organic style of architecture, which somehow fit in with the organic approach to landscape architecture. When I came and started working with Shlomo, I actually felt like I had found my home because I didn't like working in architecture that much. What I found in architecture was that maybe 25% of your time, even less, 10% of your time was spent in designing, and 90% of your time was spent in production. What I loved about getting involved in landscape architecture was that I found it was about 50/50. So that any project that I might work on, about 50% of it was spent in design, 50% in production. And so spending more time in design was something that really, really appealed to me, but it's not something that I brought with me. It's something that I learned when I got involved. Yeah, maybe I contributed a certain standard, although I would say it was more a standard of design than a technical standard. I mean, Shlomo and I did good work together and it's hard for me to say. On the technical side the office was already good at that. Rachel, she was meticulous in working drawings and so I more or less extended that, but it certainly isn't something that I brought to the office. And again, it was a very personal thing because it depended on who did what in the office. There were certain projects that didn't come out to the standards that many of the later projects did. But that had more to do with the individual that was responsible who was primarily responsible under Shlomo for the project.

BA: I have this question here, which maybe you already answered: what did you learn from Shlomo?

JG: I learned so much from Shlomo, first of all landscape architecture. I mean, he was my teacher, you know, I had taken a course in landscape architecture at Berkeley. And we'd studied Halprin and I had been very impressed by this very, very early movement of the environmental aspects of design, and it was very early back then. And so, when I came and started working in landscape architecture, that spoke to me very strongly, but everything that I spoke about before, about Shlomo's attitude towards design and towards landscape, I learned from him, most of it or almost all of it, I learned from him, and I loved it. And besides that, I learned all kinds of other things from Shlomo because every time we would go on a site visit, he would explain history to me, he would explain culture to me. He was a wonderful teacher.

BA: There is a question that I'm asking kind of everybody that I'm interviewing. Were there enough opportunities for knowledge exchange in the office? And you actually answered that already partially by saying that Shlomo was always listening, and always giving other people opportunities to bring in their knowledge or their take on design, but do you feel that it went enough in both ways?

JG: Well, I learned an awful lot from Art Kutcher also. From Art I learned a lot about excellence. He kind of complimented Shlomo in a way. And with Art, there was an enormous amount of information exchange, learning exchange. It's a strange question because in a way, there was a lot of isolation between projects. So, for instance, if I were responsible for a certain project, and there would be other people that would be responsible for other projects, oftentimes, I would not have a clue what they were doing. And I didn't care because I was totally focused on, and I mean, totally focused on whatever project it was that I was involved in. At the time, that gave me this opportunity to go very deeply into projects. We tried for a period of time, after Yair (Avigdor) came to the office, to have office meetings where we would exchange information, but it never spoke to me. I didn't feel like I got anything out of that. And neither did I feel like I gave anything there. But again, this is a personal thing because that's the way I am personally, I can work cooperatively, but I do my best work alone.

BA: I'm asking this question because the office back then was around 12 to 15 professionals, today we are 35 professionals. People complain about not knowing enough of what's going on in the office.

JG: Oh, people complain!

BA: Well, people today tell you very clearly what they're looking for and what they want.

JG: Well I got what I wanted. There was one area that there was not enough knowledge exchange. And that was the area of how to financially run an office. Even though I was an associate, I was never involved in that; Shlomo kept pretty much to himself. I mean, obviously I didn't want to be - if I had wanted to be then I would have made an issue of it. Obviously, I enjoyed the fact that I was not involved in that. And so therefore, I learned nothing about it. And when I opened my own office, it was a big problem. I found it overwhelming, not understanding exactly how to put together fee proposals. I mean, we ended up doing an okay job of it, but nevertheless, I found it difficult because I didn't have any experience in it whatsoever after 15 years of working in an architecture office.

BA: I think, after we outsourced the financial part something like 17 years ago, I feel very confident saying that if (somebody else) is doing it well, you have much more time doing the things that you like, and that you are good at. And because you're spending more time doing design and supervising your staff, you're generating (money); every hour of yours is a productive money making hour, whereas spending 30% on doing administrative work are actually lost hours; and because they (the hired firm) know much better what they're doing, probably your business would have been financially much more successful if you would have had a better understanding, or a person in

place that would do it better than you.

JG: I think probably the main issue would have been to have a person in place that did it better. Because what happened with me in my office was that I ended up spending most of my time on administration. And I really hated it.

BA: It means also that the one thing that you are brilliant at, design…

JG: …I was not doing enough of.

BA: …is you're not doing your design and you're not supervising the staff, which ultimately produces the money. I think this is a point that is unfortunately never stressed in architecture school or in any kind of (professional) environment.

JG: I agree with you.

BA: Are you equally familiar with past and present office projects, but it really is part of my question, if you can identify difference in the designs in the office since Barbara and Ittai took over the office?

JG: Yes. Even though I'm not equally familiar, of course. I'm mostly familiar with the projects that ran in the office when I was there for those 15 years, and I would say more so with my projects, or the projects that I worked on, those are the ones that I really know well and deeply. For instance, Yair (Avigdor) was working on the entrance to Jerusalem, I knew a little bit about it, but not really, not in depth.

BA: You mean the Sha'ar Hagai highway interchange?

JG: Yes. What was the question? Equally familiar?

BA: No, the question is really if you see a difference.

JG: So, the difference is … I've gone with you to see two or three of your projects. And yes, of course, I can see a difference. First of all, I can see a difference in the approach to architecture. And I'm sure that this has to do with the fact that you have a real architect as a partner in the office. The architecture has much more of a modern flair. If we look back at the Haas Promenade, the pergolas there, their influence was Japanese. And this came through Halprin, because Halprin had a very strong connection with Japanese wood detailing, and therefore the layering of the different levels and so on. It was coming from a different place. The detailing and your projects are much more modern. They're beautiful, but they're much more modern than anything that Shlomo ever did in the office. I can't remember any project.

BA: Well Shlomo was, I think, in his heart, a total classicist. (Note: I used the wrong word. What I meant to say was that he favored classic expressions in his designs)

JG: You think?

BA: Yeah, I think so. I mean, he was, first of all, an Olmstedian romantic…

JG: Yes.

BA: … in terms of his language, and I'm not talking about when he did vernacular when we were really out in a park or somewhere (rural), but he very much believed in the timelessness of a classic approach; now classic approach doesn't have to be Italian (Roman), it can be also Japanese, but in something that is classic in its general set of…

JG: …in its longevity?

BA: Yes.

JG: Yeah, because modern architecture also can be looked at in the same way but Shlomo never got there.

BA: No.

JG: No, he didn't. He had no desire to get there, and by the way neither did I. And so for instance, if you go and look at (my project) at Bar Ba Har, which I was there just recently, it's really nice to see because it's really thriving after all of these years. It's also completely romantic and with the use of materials and the use of space, but you in your projects (are different), and I saw that from the very first one that I went to see with you in Herzliya, although it builds on many things that we did together in the office, especially topography design. Because that's there. But the elemental design is a different epic. It's great. It's good. It's yours.

BA: Well, if there anything else you would like to add to this conversation that we're having, something that is kind of interesting, as part of understanding what the office was and is about.

JG: I thought of something before that, do you remember this kind of funny lecture that I gave about Shlomo? The one that Nurit published later (in 'Making Peace with the Land', the collection of lectures given as part of the tribute evening for Shlomo at the Begin Center in Jerusalem).

I went back and I rewrote it because I had given this lecture what is called extemporaneously. You know, based

on slides, without having a text really. And so, when I went back and I wrote it, I cleaned it up. And yes, I would suggest that you get that book and read it. Because I can't remember everything that I said there, but many of the things that I said to you today are there and they may have been elaborated on a bit more. You know, when you sit and you actually work on something, you remember many more things than what I can remember off the top of my head in the interview.

BA: The conversation I think gives the opportunity to remember things on a personal level, you know, the things that were so important that you remember them spontaneously.

JG: Yeah. Well, maybe I said this already, but when I came in, started working with Shlomo on landscape architecture, I felt like I'd found my home, I still love it, even though I'm not practicing. I still love it.

There's something else which is that beauty was something that was very important to Shlomo and oftentimes in modern architecture, it takes second or third place. Not yours, but sometimes the gimmick is more important, or the geometry is more important, and sometimes it isn't beautiful. I find a lot of modern architecture actually unbeautiful. Beauty was very much woven into the whole design approach. And yes, that beauty relied on it 'being a part of wherever it was', and oftentimes people would say things like, 'it looks like it's been there forever'. This was the highest compliment.

BA: Thank you, that was good.

JG: Oftentimes and especially in the Technion, and I heard this when I was teaching, the critics of Shlomo's approach would say 'romantic' as if it were a dirty word. And I was always having to remind my students that romanticism is actually a beautiful thing. And yes, I won't name names, but there were quite a few. That was Shlomo Aronson. He's just a romantic.

Eitan Eden

BA=Barbara Aronson; EE=Eitan Eden.
Date of conversation: Jan-31-2020.

BA: Hello Eitan. My first question is When did you work in the office, for how long and what have you been doing since then?

EE: I worked in the office of Shlomo the same time you've been there. I worked one year and a half in Shlomo's office as a student, and then when I finished, I worked two more years. And then it was Shlomo's idea, helping me decide where to study and do my second degree, my Master's, in the United States in Seattle. I told him what I was considering, and he said "you know, you should go to Seattle. I have a friend there and you can talk to him and the school would really fit you and you would like it." And that is what I did, I just listened to him, and I followed his advice. I was accepted to this university and went to study there.

BA: So you actually left the office in the summer of '89?

EE: Right. He invited all the office to this restaurant in Neve Tzedek that had just been finished, and you and I were the 'graduates', and he celebrated with us in a way and thanked us, and it was so nice and really very respectful. Not only that, I also got this book from him as a present and it was very dear to me. So, that was a very sweet ending to these two years for both of us, I guess. You went to Harvard and I went to Seattle.

BA: Okay, so maybe you want to go ahead, you prepared some things. Maybe we'll start with that.

EE: I think that in terms of the work, achieving goals, bringing ideas and being able to make them happen, what Shlomo did was to 'see' every worker: it didn't matter for him if it was student or architect; he would see him as a person and ask how he sees things. And from this a dialogue developed. Shlomo knew of course what he wanted from a certain project, a new project that was on the table, but at the same time, he let the person bring forward his ideas. There was a beautiful dialogue between the two, one who is just coming from school and doesn't know many things, and Shlomo, who knew history. Shlomo went on many trips with his friend Professor Menachem Marcus, a geographer, who knew every corner of Israel, and they slept in all kinds of places: in the desert areas and the Galilee, so he knew places and he also knew the history of these places.

But this dialogue wasn't just between Shlomo and the architects in his office, it was also with others. For instance, in the Lifta project that you were involved in (the renovation of the ancient Lifta spring in the valley). He would go for supervision and to check what was done in a certain stage. He wasn't just interested in talking with the site manager, but he went and talked with the worker, with the builder of the stones, usually Arabs, many of whom were illiterate. Yet working with stone was the language they knew from a small age, trained as helpers to senior stonemasons.

And there are so many ways of dealing with stone, of sculpting the stone, it's a whole world of knowledge, of history, each culture referring differently to the stone, from very delicate treatment of rich cultures and able cultures like the Romans, to other cultures like the Mamluks or later the Palestinians. So, he was talking to the worker and describing what he wants. "Just work from your stomach, from your gut. Don't try to be very straight."

And this is also relating to what the line in the landscape meant for Shlomo, and what existed as his ideal, his platonic ideal. All he had to do was look through the window of his office in Ein Karem, to the mountains of Jerusalem and see all these beautiful places around him. They are beautiful because of the way the agricultural terraces sit in the landscape, the utilitarian approach to their placing, which expresses survival really. I was a student in Bezalel, he was my teacher, and one time he said, "I have no time today, you can come to my office and then I'll give you a crit." So, I came to this office, and I thought it was the most beautiful place I could ever want to work in. And later, when he told me "come work for me", for me it was a dream, really.

Shlomo and I, we talked about the line of the terrace, because this is something very essential to understanding Shlomo, its simplicity, the knowledge of the way other cultures were touching the landscape, what they did with it; and the materials of the place, the stone. All kinds of stones: the Jerusalem stone, the red 'Slaib' limestone, soft ones and harder ones; each one with its own character, and he was very aware of it.

But also, the geometry of the line: many times you would find architects not understanding at all what it means in Israel to have a wall in the landscape. The way it sits, and the way it 'converses' with topography and nature. You have the bedrock, and when you build a line, a wall, you have to take it into consideration; and if you want to break an angle… an architect will do simply a 90 degree angle, but here it's a lot softer because many times the way you build a stone wall, you have to choose some kind of soft and undulating line, because you want to stay on the bedrock. The bedrock is not geometrical, it's not straight. So, it's a dialogue. Many times you see the bigger stones sitting at the bedrock with smaller and more delicate stones toward

the top of the wall.

And it's something that has to do with understanding the feeling of architecture. And this is what led me later to understand… I didn't know how to describe it then… what Shlomo felt, and I feel also about architecture. It has a name, and it is phenomenology. Phenomenology as seen and described in Gaston Bachelard's 'The Poetics of Space', and also of other philosophers of architecture, that were dealing with this kind of understanding landscape and architecture, not through intellectual ideas or classical ideas that are always in the background, but from the way that things are in the landscape. First, it's the agriculture of the country, it's the simplicity that comes from the way people lived here and understood the genius of this place, the topography, the stone, vegetation. Vegetation was very important for Shlomo.

These ideas are not like taking a style, a recent style that you see in books on architecture. Or classical ideas that are more rational, you would find them since Hellenistic times through the Romans, and then through the neoclassical world of Europe. We can find places like that in Israel, all the monasteries and the churches that were built in the 19th century with the permission of the Ottomans after they lost the war. The contrast between Shlomo's way of seeing things and the classical approach is exactly expressed in the notion that the line doesn't need to be straight. It could be other things. It could be something that discovers itself, something that develops: it's got so much more life to it, so much more than the rational straight line.

And there were many architects working in his office, and each of them had his own idea of a line, and you could see that it was also a dialogue between each architect and Shlomo, for instance with Judy. She came from the United States, she came with this formalism. Micha Ben-Nun also, he had a very straight approach, and in a way, Shlomo went with it, but he made it a little softer, I think.

These ideas were also partly coming from being an Israeli. Shlomo, when you looked at him, he looked like a "Schlumper", I don't know what it means in German, where the word comes from. But at the same time, he had his own truth inside. I mean, it's the same way that someone who is not charismatic on the outside becomes very charismatic because of his inside. Inside he has a way, he knows what he wants, but he doesn't impose it, he doesn't force it on anyone, but makes everybody that he comes in dialogue with understand, I wouldn't say his feminine, but his soft side.

Shlomo came back with ideas he collected during his studies in the United States, like the garden city of Ebenezer Howard and other thinkers that dealt with the way of creating a dialogue with recent generations, building ideas and building architecture as this kind of continuation. Relating to the great Christian buildings that were built here, monasteries and churches and compounds, and also the Palestinian architecture, which is traditionally very vernacular, a true way of living with nature and working and finding your livelihood from nature.

This stands in contrast with other thoughts that were existing before him in landscape architecture, existing as part of Zionism, a movement that wanted to relate to the most recent, a manifestation of something new. Zionism was working very well with modernism, which you could see almost like a white cardboard, very geometrical, with academic ideas. You could see it in Tel Aviv, of course, not so much in Jerusalem, because even the Bauhaus touch in Jerusalem looks a lot different because of the stone cladding on the buildings. And the Kibbutzim were something so new and so simple and so geometrical. But Shlomo's approach wasn't this classical Bauhaus thinking, which is both rational, but also adventurous, almost scientific.

The way Shlomo would approach things is something you could see in certain places, in the treatment of a particular area in a project. I think one of the places he really liked the most is the wall of the St. Clair monastery in Jerusalem, near the Sherover promenade. There, more than in all the other parts of the promenade that are much more formal, you can feel his soft touch, the small path that he made between the outside wall of this monastery and the cypress trees on the slope on the other side, from where you could see the panorama of the Jerusalem mountains. This place was very dear to him. And this is something that not every architect would take as an example. He didn't look to show off his architecture, and this place that was a small path that happened to pass by an old monastery wall, that was important to him.

I would like to continue with the hippie movement. When I was working in the office, I always wondered what it would be like to live and become part of this movement. We were children at that time, and it was already past the hippies. But Shlomo had been there, at the right age in San Francisco, when he studied at Berkeley, one of the major places of the hippie movement. I told him that I wish I could have lived there, like him, because it would have been for me, I would have liked to join a commune and really feel this way of life. He looked at me and started laughing, and he said, "you really wouldn't have wanted to be there, these people were so confused, they didn't know anything about themselves. The last thing you would have liked is to join a commune like that." So, he was not a hippie, and he wasn't a classical.

Being an Israeli was for him the ability to be very sincere and very honest. When we talk with people, Israelis, many times, they don't have the same kind of manners, and I would even say respect…or not respect, but they are not afraid of sharing their own ideas no matter what.

He told me the following story after teaching at Harvard. He was gone for two months or something like that, for summer school, and after he came back, I asked him about how it was and he told me about one student, who came from a rich family, probably an American, who was not a very good student. And in a way the student felt it himself, that he wasn't really good. And he didn't know what to do. And Shlomo sat with him, with his drawings, with his work, and told him, "you know what, just leave school." And this is something that the student was really… he was in shock when Shlomo told him that, even though he wasn't so talented, and he didn't know what to do. Yet hearing a professor saying this, right in front of him, was something that no other American professor would ever do. But Shlomo was right. And he told me that after this guy left school, he called him and thanked him for telling him this because this was not his direction. He went for these studies because his parents wanted him to be an architect. He went but it wasn't for him. But nobody dares to say this to a student because it's not politically correct… well, 'political correctness' didn't exist at that time but still… you have some political correctness in being an American, right? You don't say many things so upfront. That was Shlomo, he was just honest.

At the same time, he brought some kind of respectfulness back from America. This was very different from other leading offices here in Israel, like Yahalom-Zur, or Segal–Dekel. At the time when Shlomo studied in San Francisco people started to understand the damages that modern style brought with it, the Bauhaus style as a generator for this movement. The modern style looked at a building as an object and a free unit, like an island; and street life seized, and simply disappeared. This was something that had to do with the destruction of the street, much spoken of in the United States, how street life is important, how it's a place where people gather and talk, how democratic and free this place is in comparison to malls that are under supervision, or other buildings that became self-contained entities. So, when Shlomo came back from the United States, in Israel the modern style still ruled and all the bad results of it as well. Shlomo was coming with this new 'talk'.

He managed to make way for other ideas, especially in landscape, because landscape that comes from modernism doesn't have the richness, I think, that comes from other ways of taking inspiration from local culture, way of building, the materials in a certain place, the topography, the history, people who are there, all these things mattered for him. These are not modernist ideas. And this came into some kind of clash sometimes, because the old institutions were used to a certain way of thinking. And suddenly Shlomo came with new ideas, but still he managed to persuade people in a very simple and honest way. And I could see that when we were going to meetings in all kinds of places.

I would like to also talk about his handwriting, and then his way of drawing. Both his handwriting and his drawings looked at first glance like those of a child that doesn't know how to draw, this broken way of the lines, and the writing looked very sloppy. He didn't think that his handwriting or his drawings were good, but I think that they're so beautiful, just because they don't try to be something that they're not, and because there is richness. If you look at it from an artistic point of view, the lines of his drawings and his handwriting were very much him. It didn't need to be so straight, something really unique to Shlomo.

BA: Well, I think Shlomo had a real problem, he might have been dysgraphic, like Ittai, his son, who was diagnosed with it, you know, not dyslexic, dysgraphic. Ittai couldn't write legibly, and he taught himself to write only in capital letters. I think that they both might have had a problem with the handwriting, but in his drawings, Shlomo definitely took a weakness and turned it into an incredible strength.

EE: I agree with you.

BA: He translated his ideas in a kind of abstracted pictogram that always conveyed the idea in a very pure way.

EE: Yes. These drawings, they foremost reflect an idea. They didn't try to show how beautiful they are and to show off their correctness of perspective or the beauty of the line. No, it was just a drawing to manifest an idea. And this is so beautiful in my eyes because it's so honest. And he didn't think that his handwriting is nice, he thought it's awful.

BA: But his handwriting was awful, but his pictures… he also didn't think very highly of his drawings, but they were very…

EE: I think they're beautiful. And one could see that, once someone is being aware of it, it is just there. You could just look at it and enjoy it and understand how nice it is, precisely because it's not trying to be nice.

BA: Did you ever see Shlomo do a drawing that wasn't, you know, one of his sketches?

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EE: Yeah, all the time. We would draw together.

BA: I mean the sketches. Did you ever see Shlomo do a more detailed drawing of something?

EE: No.

BA: Shlomo was always doing sketches, right?

EE: Yes. It's like a part of the way you think and it's a part of how you understand things through the drawings, things that you didn't think of before in your mind, because once it's there on the paper, suddenly it's got its own life and its own information, and it keeps giving you ideas, the way it works with details.

BA: But he was also trusting very much other people in the office to develop the sketch into something, and there was freedom in that with the paper, because he didn't try to control every line, he controlled the idea, the narrative, but not necessarily every detail and every expression and form.

EE: Yes. I think you could see this very much with the projects that Judy and Micha were working on, because they're much more geometric. When I came to the office I was also opposed to straight lines, just as Shlomo was. But Shlomo's approach was soft and more vernacular, in a way. My ideas, they came from the chaos of deconstructivism, because it was the start of the deconstructive movement in architecture. And for me, it was intriguing because of this kind of aggression or this kind of breaking the laws and breaking all angles and you could do whatever angle you want in a certain composition. There is something in this chaos that related with Shlomo in a very strange way, but when I came with these de-constructive ideas, for him it was really also very intriguing, because he was suddenly seeing some of his ideas in a totally different interpretation.

BA: I would like to ask you about the Phosphate Works in the Negev, the iconic projects that Shlomo is known for internationally, and you were actually the person who worked with him on it. And later on, people were very impressed how he looked at the landscape almost as an environmental sculpture, and I am wondering if that's really where it came from, or whether it came from an idea of dealing with the landscape rehabilitation in an area where vegetation is not an option, where the landscape rehabilitation that Shlomo had in mind was to blend in as much as possible with the environment; if the interpretation of looking at it as a sculpture is really where he started from.

EE: What happened at that time was that there was a big debate among the people who live in this area. The factory itself, the Negev Phosphate Works, provides work for the people of the developing towns in the Negev. On the other side, you had the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI) and other organizations, who said that this mine takes the phosphates from nature, but in fact, ruins nature, and with it the virgin, beautiful landscape of mountains whose geology was created through tectonic movement, souring up at almost 90 degrees to the surface, and weathered over time. So, this beautiful desert place was about to be destroyed. It had been okay as long as it was isolated, away from people's eyes, but when it became visible from the Ma'ale Akrabim road, it became a problem. The Ma'ale Akrabim road is the historical way from Jerusalem and Tel Aviv to Eilat on the Red Sea. This serpentine road has its own memories, memories of attacks in this place, right where the mine is. The compromise was to take a landscape architect that would suggest ideas of how to give this factory some kind of future, and be part of nature, trying to develop a solution or vision for the SPNI, to the green movement that was very much against it. That was the background.

Now, Shlomo and I went to this place and we saw these beautiful mountains and dramatic formations creating all kinds of beautiful sculptural forms. Shlomo saw and drew the mountains, and from this, he came up with the idea of how to rehabilitate the huge amounts of material that are taken from nature in order to extract the phosphates, and which have to be re-deposited somewhere in the process. What had been done until then was spilling the excess material in the most efficient way from an engineering point of view. Many times, they would block small seasonal creeks in the process, because it wasn't considered to be something valuable by the people of the mine. So, Shlomo suggested to recreate the shapes of the surrounding mountains exploiting the way that the trucks spilled the soil. These huge trucks are called Euclids, each one of them is like five or six times the size of a regular truck in the street. These are really huge things with 100 cubic meters loading capacity while regular trucks have only 20, at most. Shlomo used the way that those trucks spill the material as a tool, and by this, created all kinds of shapes that resembled the mountains. The new deposits weren't like an imitation of the mountains, it simply couldn't be done because they don't carry stones and we couldn't reach the steep angles of the natural mountains, these crazy angles. But still the shapes, once they took on their moonish shape, this 'banana' shape of the new mountains, they were suddenly there, had presence. The shapes are made up of at least three or four terraces, each terrace 10 meters high, like three story high buildings, one on top of the other; it's actually a huge sculpture. So, you really cared for all the creeks, not blocking any of them. Shlomo was very much aware that in time, the sharp edges of the

'bananas', of each terrace, would start to erode and it wouldn't stay so stark and so apparent. These forces of nature, drastic changes in temperatures, strong winds, less rain, and the hot desert sun, all of these forces were taken into consideration, seen as beautiful, contributing to the rehabilitation, and not as something damaging.

I think there is certainly some kind of dialogue between these shapes and the surrounding pristine nature. The shapes are something that takes from the beauty of the lines of nature. Shlomo knew that he couldn't imitate nature. But this initiative, I think, was the cornerstone to understanding how to deal with mines in desert environments, how to deal with this act of taking from nature, destroying nature, and returning to nature.

Being able to work with such large creations, large forms, each banana shape about 600 meters long, something you can see from a satellite, was incredible. And this is something Shlomo told me, "it's something that you could see from the sky, it's so big, it's just huge." It wasn't easy to come up with an idea of how to deal with a monster, you know, taking things from it.

I would like to talk about the fact that the office, and the house that he lived in, was an Arab house. The question that arises is 'is that moral?', how can we live and use Arab buildings when their people are no longer there. They were… you could say they were deported; you could say they were exiled or they ran away because they were afraid of the Israeli army, I mean in '48 (Israeli war of independence) and later in '67 (Six-Day war). The family that had lived in Shlomo's house had left in '48 and moved later to Jordan. We know that because one day they simply appeared at the doorstep. What I remember is that there was one grandmother and her son, who was already in his forties, and two children and the wife. And they came all of a sudden, and it was almost frightening, because someone from the past, it's his house and he wants to see it. Shlomo greeted them at the door, talked to them and then they entered and he let them see the place. They simply came from Jordan to see the house where they had lived in the past. And later, of course, we talked about it, because this wasn't something that you could just let go. I mean, Shlomo, he was a Zionist. He believed in our right to be in this place. Shlomo had bought this house (from the Israel Land Authority). First of all, he said it was our place from past times, but also that Zionism wasn't necessarily trying to make people leave their houses, but because of the situation that evolved in '48, this is what happened. This is not the place to get into politics; Shlomo believed in the ideas of Zionism, ideas that were not very clear for me at that time and I don't know if they're clear for me right now.

Yet still, living in a house that was built in such a distinct way, because of the way the Arabs constructed the double dome, the cross-dome structure that is meant to carry the roof, the thick walls that are meant to insulate the building, the arched windows. We find such beauty in these houses. So, it's a question, and I think that also Shlomo was thinking a lot about it, of our way of living.

Shlomo was someone who gave a place to every architect to allow him to bring forward his ideas. There is a word in Hebrew: "להאציל סמכויות". It means to give rights to the one you're working with. It's something very unique to Shlomo because he was someone who cared about people. The word "להאציל" in Hebrew comes from "אציל", which means 'a noble man'. So, when you give rights, you're noble. The word noble is something that semantically is very special because it's like you become noble because you give rights. Shlomo didn't think about it, it's just the word in Hebrew that is so intriguing here.

We can move now to your questions.

BA: There are these questions that I'm asking other people who went to the office and worked there. And although you touched on that, trying to pinpoint on specific issues in a kind of general way, What do you think represents the legacy of the office in terms of design, philosophy, projects, office culture and structure? You talked about the office culture, you talked about the structure… if you're thinking about design philosophy, maybe we also talked about it… what do you think, not just to you personally, what the office gave to the profession, to the country?

EE: I would like to start with Shlomo's name. His name, Shlomo, comes from shalom, from peace. Many times, people who are called by a certain reference are exactly the opposite. But with Shlomo, there was a straight forward connection, I mean, the name represents the person Shlomo. He really came to people with peace, simply. He himself respected other ideas but of course he also had his own ideas.

Many times, Israelis take a hard line and they have to be always right and show others that they know everything and other people don't know anything. It's very Israeli. And this was something not very Israeli about Shlomo, the way he would talk: making peace in a place that people think they know everything.

The first experience that you have in Israel when you're 18 is to go to the army. And in the army, you solve things by force. This is something that stays with you, also with architects, the way they force their wishes, because they want so much to reach them. And Shlomo didn't need it and he came with this peace and this approach of not

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imposing, but going with what existed, and then explain why it's valuable, why it's worthwhile. This is something that he managed to do although his peers in other offices were still in this modern style way of thinking, which meant "what I do is what I do, in spite of what everybody else is thinking because I have the right to make my point. I will do it no matter what, I will do it even though the contractor and the municipality think differently." Something they would try to impose even on the people that live there, while Shlomo would always see the people.

It's a small country with beautiful nature, but very much endangered or destroyed nature. So, this was something that he was very much aware of, that he wanted to fix, to make softer and to improve on what was done at the time.

BA: Which experiences in the office were most memorable and influential on your future career?

EE: One experience, I don't know how influential it was on my future, but it simply gave me some kind of understanding of generosity.

One time I went to the phosphate mine with Shlomo's brand-new car, the Citroen. He told me "take the car and go to the mine." It was really fun, I like driving very much, driving fast. The height of this Citroen could be adjusted to all kinds of levels, go up and down automatically. I drove with the car in one of the wadis (valleys), and one stone simply hit the oil pan, all the oil spilled and the engine was a total loss. I was in the middle of the desert with his total loss car, and I knew that if I would leave it, it could be looted immediately. What do I do? And after a long and horrible evening, I came back late at night with the truck that brought the car back to Jerusalem, and I went to Judy to cry. I asked Judy "what do I do? Now he is going to fire me". I mean, it was a damage of thousands of shekels. She told me "you know, the Aronsons don't care so much about cars, it will be okay."
And then, Shlomo, when he heard about it, he didn't even tell me one bad word. I mean, everyone that I know would have said something from nasty to something cold; it's not something that you don't comment on. And I was guilty!
He said "we'll fix it." He called the insurance company and then he discovered that the car is not insured, but since he had been insuring his cars for years with this company, he yelled at them and they fixed it. And he didn't tell me even one bad word, or made faces; I mean he just continued as if it hadn't happened.

But this is more like an anecdote, and if you talk about something that I took with me for life, it is the fact that you can be good and still succeed. You don't have to try to step on others and try to care too much about yourself, that is what I learned. First of all, it has to do with being a 'person', but also, practicing architecture in a way that derives straight from that, being relaxed, respecting and human, with a 'making peace' approach, trying to rehabilitate. Rehabilitation has many other aspects. It's not only about the architecture, it's also about rehabilitating memories that people have with the country and with places where people were killed and wounded, and places that were destroyed.

BA: Which set of professional skills did you receive in the office?

EE: I became very aware of topography; the way you sculpt with the topography, the way you draw it. You make a peak, you make a creek, something soft like a meadow. The way there is this field in the Sherover Promenade where he planted wheat, a completely new idea, nobody thought of using such an agricultural plant as part of landscape plantings. It was the first time, I think. And it's beautiful, how the promenade suddenly becomes a path along an agricultural field. There's so much beauty in it and so much strength in terms of the idea of rehabilitating landscape, and the work of the architect as a rehabilitator or someone that repairs, that gives place to all kinds of species that were not there before. Trees, he was very much aware of native trees and using them, like the oak and other trees like olives and cypress trees. Trees that really come from the history of the place rather than trees that were imported from India or South America. Those trees really succeed in Israel, but they bring something that is not local. So, all the plantings, the trees, the plants, for Shlomo they that had meaning and they were a source of inspiration for him. Like local materials, the stones and the way you work with them.

BA: It was very much in contrast to the other offices that advocated the modern style, some of whom were inspired by (Brazilian landscape architect) Roberto Burle Marx, and they used very much the tropical species, these big shade trees, experimenting with plants that are giving different colors, flowers and textures. It was a very much a black and white way of looking at what you're doing.

EE: I just want to add one sentence about native trees. Ein Karem, the location of the office, is so beautiful; not only because of the houses but also because there are all of these almond trees spread over the landscape in completely arbitrary order.

BA: But they are remnants from the Arabs who planted them for the almonds, right?

EE: Yes, but when they bloom now in the spring, this is so special. Suddenly it's a celebration, it's like snow, like the cherry trees in Japan. This tree looks really miserable most

of the year, but this time around, it turns into a prince.

BA: I'm not going to ask you what you learned from Shlomo because you covered that in the first part of our conversation, but the research is also trying to understand how much people know about the legacy of the office, but also, and that's the question, if there were in your time enough opportunities for knowledge exchange in the office. Again, I think you talked a lot about the conversations you had with Shlomo, and how Shlomo was giving people the opportunity to share their ideas with him. I think that your answer would probably be yes, there was a very wide platform to exchange ideas. Do you think it had to do with the way that the office was organized, the way that Shlomo was running it like a studio?

EE: Certainly, first of all, the atmosphere in the office was like a home. Every day someone would go to the grocery store and buy very basic things like fruits and vegetables and some yogurt. I mean, very healthy, but very simple food. I remember these breakfasts, that we would make salads, and it was really part of the place, this family eating together. It doesn't happen in many places. But also, the issue of legacy, I think you take responsibility once you are aware of things that happened before you and existed before you. I mean learning about a place, about its past.

BA: Well, it's easier if you're fewer people. It becomes harder as the office grows and the contact between the lead designers and all staff members is becoming much smaller. I think that when you go over 20 people, things are changing, and you have to work much harder, exposing everybody to the knowledge that is already existing.

I want to take you to my last question: you and me we worked in the office together 30 years ago. Today we're colleagues, you have your office, we have our office. I'm not sure how much you're aware of what we're doing today, but the research is also about identifying divergences from what Shlomo was doing and what we're doing.
Can you identify a difference in the designs of the office since I and Ittai took over the office?

EE: I think you're very much aware of the ideas that Shlomo had and of his legacy. But you know, in architecture, there has to be a place for individual ideas. Everyone is different with the potential to enrich the final result. Already when Shlomo was working as the head of the office, he gave place to many other ideas. The way you are doing your work, I think is more varied. I would say there is openness to all kinds of differences.

But still there is something, I would say, eternal about the office's work. Using materials that are heavy duty, that are sometimes 'thick', that are creating lines in nature, like walls, terraces, columns, in a way saying that they are here to stay. Places, that say "we are here to stay, we're not going to leave", there's something rooted. It's something that you would want to see preserved in 50 years ahead in time, right? And of course changing with time, the weathering of a place, the ground, trees grow and change, stone changes its patina, its color. These places stay.

I see that you use natural stone wherever you can. Even in Tel Aviv that is not really a stone city; but in the Park of the Groves you worked with kurkar stone, which is the local stone for this area, and I think it's beautiful. It's so different from Jerusalem stone, it's a really soft, weak stone, it can break easily, but if you use it in very big chunks it's got a lot of beauty and power in it.

And it has to do with the most grounded feeling of something that is laid on the land, on the earth, like a ground layer, upon which other layers could be, or just people could be. It's like some kind of a ground, a ground of meaning. Of course, relating to and incorporating memorable places, like old structures; even a path could lead to some kind of inspiration, thinking about where you walk and which places you see.

Shlomo would make a small sketch or panorama, something he did in every place, right you remember? (No, I don't); this is something that I keep in mind when I design a place, and I keep thinking about it. I wouldn't say that my line now is completely 'taken', I have other energies that I want to deal with and unlike Shlomo, I don't see only the peace here, I see also the confrontation, the struggle and I think that I want, in a way, to acknowledge also this in the geometry of the landscape. So, I'm not so much trying to make this kind of relaxed or peaceful feeling, but to bring other energies to the design and to see how they can still be there without being interruptive.

BA: Somebody said in the interviews that Shlomo did work at a time when it was okay to chose a narrative with a simple message. There was optimism, there was consensus about a lot of things. Today it's more complex, there's more awareness of a lot of conflicts. The solutions that Shlomo found might today not be received the way they were received then.

EE: There is another thing that he brought to the country. At the time, other offices were operating in a way that you had the Grand Master, the owner; he designed and the workers were specialized on different fields of the process. One was doing the first drawings, one was very good with presentations, another one was good with just drafting, the next one would supervise and go to see how the construction was getting along. So, there was differentiation, like in a manufacturing process. For

Shlomo it didn't exist at all, I mean, every architect took a project from the start to the end. For me this was very important. Later on, in another office that I was working for, this was not the case, they didn't think about it in that way. They let me lead the project from the start till the contract documents, but if I wanted to go and see how my project was being built, I mean, something that I was so much spiritually involved with, it was a no. "There's someone else that is better than you in arguing, and if you would go, he would be insulted." The boss would not let you go. Once you had an experience like this, you didn't want to model your office on that.

BA: It is the most cost-efficient way to run an office, that you specialize people. Shlomo saw it much more like a teaching experience, that people who go through the office have to be taught all stages of design and construction. He never took it against somebody who left. He understood that every person has their own personal reasons or urges to pursue a different career.

I think that was a very good, thank you.

Yair Avigdor

BA=Barbara Aronson; YA=Yair Avigdor.
Date of conversation: Feb-03-2020.

BA: Hi Yair. Please state when and for how long you worked in the office and what you have been doing professionally since then.

YA: Okay. I first came to the office after the first year of studying architecture at the Technion in Haifa. At the time I was working as a student in a very small architectural firm in Jerusalem. It was terrible. But then I heard from a friend that she was working in Shlomo's office and I said "Wow, the office sounds very nice."

I joined the tour that Shlomo did for his office workers, visiting the building of the first wall in the Sherover Promenade project. He talked about the stones in the wall, and I thought to myself that this looked very interesting and very special. For me, it was a surprise, because I thought at that time that I wanted to design buildings, not walls of promenades. Shlomo was open to take me. It was in 1985 or 1986 that I joined the office as a student. I could only work one day a week, sometimes even less, but during all the holidays and the summer break I came to work full time.

From the beginning, it was not like a student job, it was like "Okay, you are here, take this job or project and go on with it." I had been with other professional architects, but for the first time it all felt like it didn't matter if you are a student or a finished architect, you are being treated as a professional. That was the atmosphere. And so I worked as a student for four years. In the end of my studies it was almost full time because it was my fifth year at the Technion and I studied only one day a week. By then it felt like I was one of the people in the office that knows some projects already for three or four years, I'm part of the staff, not just a student. I worked in the office until 1994, the last three years as an associate. It was not trivial to become an associate so early in my professional career, or obvious for Shlomo to do so; I was still very young. For me, it was of course very good, and gave me the opportunity to work and to be responsible for some very important and big projects. Of course, always with the hand given to me by Shlomo, I mean working together with him.

I opened my own firm in 1994, but the first big project was a joint venture with Shlomo. For me it was a huge opportunity, working as a young architect on this very big and significant project of designing a new neighborhood in a new town, completely from scratch. The work with Shlomo was like "Okay go ahead with this, ask me... let's talk about it", not about controlling every line and doing only what he said is right to do.

For me, it was the foundation of my office, which is today a big office for architecture and mostly urban design. I can say that from the time of working in Shlomo's office, the point of view of urban scale and landscape scale has been my main professional interest. I have not designed any buildings at all, and it was the work in Shlomo's office that took me in the direction of urban design and landscape architecture and the connection between the two. I think I developed my curiosity for this already during my studies at the Technion, but Shlomo's place was dealing with this scale and it was very relevant for me.

Today we have an office which combines the two disciplines of urban design and landscape architecture. My business partner is a landscape architect and most of our projects are developed jointly.

BA: You started telling me before the recording that you still remember what Shlomo told you about how he decided to go and study in America.

YA: Yes. Shlomo studied in the Hebrew Reali high school in Haifa, he was part of a group, which was called the "Schechterists". The founder was a teacher at his school by the name of Schechter. It was a group of people, from what I have heard, that always went between trees and not in the streets, but in nature to find birds and so on. It was a kind of social group, and later they started a settlement in the Galilee (Yodvat), a commune, and I think Shlomo lived there for a while.

One day he met my father-in-law Micha at the beach, they had been class mates at school. It was after their army service, and Shlomo was asking my father-in-law: "Micha, what is going on with you?", and he answered "I am going to study in the United States two months from now, I'm very serious about that and it is for a degree in business." Shlomo said "Wow, how do you go about it? It is the States, it is so far"; Micha said "There are some papers you need to write and send off and they will come back to you with an answer. It is very simple." Shlomo decided to go for it and that was the start of Shlomo's thinking about studying in the States. It was at Berkeley, no?

BA: It was Berkeley. But how did he decide on architecture?

YA: I don't know. Not on landscape architecture?

BA: No, Shlomo started with architecture but switched to landscape after hearing a lecture of Larry Halperin.

So, the next question in regards to my research is, what do you think represents the legacy of the office in terms of design, philosophy, projects, but also office culture, atmosphere and office structure?

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YA: Okay. There are different points in this question. Shlomo was dealing during my time in the office with some important projects relating to the development of Israel. For example, new roads in remote and natural areas, various large-scale projects in the desert. It was not about designing small gardens, even though we had some small gardens in that period, but the issue was how to deal with these important projects and give them our vision of the development of Israel. Today I know that answering these questions was not trivial, not at all in this period. So, in this respect, I think Shlomo was a kind of pioneer. There were of course other landscape architects, but they did not deal with this scale and these mega structures in Israel, mega plans, master plans. They were not there at the time. Landscape offices practiced more in defined areas of design: there were landscape architects for big parks and others for green open spaces as part of housing developments, and so on, operating more like 'niche' offices.

BA: It was more compartmentalized, more specialized.

YA: Another thing was the not very hierarchical way that Shlomo was running the office. I mean, there were professionals in the office with particular expertise, and as a young architect I was consulting them all the time. It was not like "We are the experts, don't ask and don't bother us." We were all working together, not on the same projects but very much as an office team. On some days I would draw a detail for somebody else's project, and on the next day I would deal with the projects that I was heading as a very young architect. So, this combination of helping and learning from each other was a very good start for me in my career.

The third thing I want to talk about is what I call the 'passion for the profession'.
Sometimes Shlomo would come back from a meeting about a project, very angry about someone who said something not professional or not contributing to the quality of the project, and he was very troubled by this. Yet half an hour later he was very composed and smiley when discussing another project. As a new architect I understood that there are things that we need to argue and we need to fight for; for the quality of our projects, because it is the foundation of our profession, of realizing good designs.
At the same time to be civil to each other, to interact in a professional and polite way with people, even if they are very junior staff. The people in the office were always treated with respect. I took this part of Shlomo's behavior to our office. It is the basis of the atmosphere that we created in our own office.

I believe that we live in a time, or a professional climate, that does not always support this atmosphere. Projects are more scheduled and budget based, rushed along in time.

Also today, we need to be able to stop a project and say "Alright guys, let's stop and go back, or go back to the previous stage" even when all the people around the table say "You are crazy, we are almost done", and we say "No, it is not. We are in a bad place in the project, we need to take another way to solve it." I think I learnt that in that period.

Shlomo gave me responsibility over projects that were huge in scale. For example, the Phosphate Works project in the Negev desert (a project he took over after Eitan Eden left). It was a unique project, not only in Israel, I think it was a unique project in the world, in the way that Shlomo was approaching the problem. He let me deal with this and he sent me to the desert to fight with the engineers of the mine, who were not interested in landscape architecture, they were phosphate engineers. I was really young, but it was after my army service as an officer, and maybe the qualities of an officer were needed there. After the arguments with the engineers I remember thinking "Okay, you did it." As a young architect meeting some very tough guys around the table, I was only 26 or 27 years old, I was holding my ground. It was very important for me at the time.

BA: Which experiences in the office were most memorable and influential on your future career?

YA: Understanding that the most important thing of what we do is the final outcome in real life, not on paper, not the writings about the project, not the newspaper articles about our architecture. The way our projects impact on the land or on the city, and the way that people will receive our work and enjoy it. Because designing projects in urban design or landscape architecture involves such a long process. Sometimes you reach the end of the project's design, but the outcome is far away, some years ahead.

It was important to experience the way that Shlomo was dealing with his projects, during their construction, to go and to change in the last minute the materials and the details, because he saw a sample or the mock-up of something, and he said "Oh, it is terrible. We did a terrible detail; we are going to change it." And he did it. He did not give up until the last moment, because he always had in mind the impact on the end result of the project, not on the process.

The process is what it is, but in the end, it is people who will see or experience the project as part of the city or the landscape. It is this kind of understanding, that with all the

philosophy we are developing, and all the fun that we are having with the design and creative process, that we need to think about the way that people will meet our work in the end.

BA: The liberty he had to do these things, and to get the project management at a late stage to change the details, basically changing an item in the bill of quantities, is today much harder to push through.

YA: It is almost impossible, but I think if you know what you want, you can achieve it. The question is whether you know what you want in any given situation. It is very hard today, but it is important to try.

BA: Okay. The next question, and I think you already touched upon on some of it, is which set of professional skills did you receive in the office? You talked about tackling things on a large scale and so on.

YA: I studied architecture, not landscape architecture. From my time with Shlomo on, I am dealing mainly with urban design and also with some projects in landscape architecture, seeing the landscape and the city in a kind of almost conceptual way. Not only looking at the scale of a specific project, but at the large scale, which includes looking at cultural and environmental issues when thinking about urban structure. In my PhD I dealt with this topic, how to see the urban scale and the urban environment, and the connection to the landscape, but also with the cultural, political and sociological processes that occur within cities and in specific urban spaces.

I think my ability to see things from a wide perspective started with Shlomo. I learned from him how to see the world around us, looking at the combination of all kind of different layers. Standing near him, he would talk about things that you had not noticed by yourself: "Wow, there are some trees that I did not see, there is a wadi (valley) that goes around, and the town is going to meet the slopes in a very specific way." These are things that I saw with Shlomo for the first time, outside in the landscape, and I learned a lot from that. Afterwards I had the professional knowledge to deal with it, to understand things that I saw with Shlomo when I was not so professional.

BA: Okay. Next question. Were there enough opportunities for knowledge exchange in the office back then?

YA: Yes. I think you might come to an office, if you are a new student or almost an architect, and the office manager or owner is telling you "Okay, for the next two or three years you just need to learn and to work under this or that architect." This is totally different from a place where on the first day you are told "Okay, take this little project or small task and develop it." Now, if the working atmosphere is like this, everybody knows that they need to help each other and to share their knowledge. A place where everybody can be a person who is contributing to the work, and it is also a vision of how people can work together for a common aim.

BA: Moving on to the next question. I do not know if you are very familiar with the work that we are doing now, but maybe you can answer this question. Can you identify differences in the designs of the office since I, Barbara, and Ittai, took over the office, which is about in the last 15 years?

YA: I think it is hard for me to talk about a specific design that I know is yours and I am familiar with, but I can surely talk about you in the past, and about specific aspect of your projects. I can see the connection between today and the period when the office was designing the details for the Suzanne Dellal Plaza in Tel Aviv. I remember that you were working on the stone details. The blue pencil you used to paint the water in the perspective drawings.

BA: The attention to detail.

YA: The attention to detail and to materials and the right way to deal with each material and the connection between hard surfaces and plants. I mean, this way of seeing the place as a 'scene', combining materials, plants and trees, considering the climate, dealing with the different climates in Israel, which are very diverse. I think I can see it from that period until now.

I think, that the way we worked as a profession in Israel during this period was quite different from today. We have today some planning opportunities that we did not have then, but you are continuing to deal with projects of all scales and scope. It is the same legacy but the projects and the way that we, you and us, are dealing with our projects is a bit different.

BA: I think it was the fearlessness of Shlomo to tackle all of these things that paved the way for us. That landscape architecture is looked at as a more major player. Of course, also internationally landscape architecture has changed, has gained a more prominent position in design teams.

YA: I agree. When I was a young architect in Shlomo's office, I did not understand it, I thought it is always like that. I did not understand that Shlomo is one of the few, or maybe that he was the only one in that period, that was in a place to deal with these types of projects. Today, it is much more common.

BA: Yet we are achieving less today, we have less influence.

YA: Because the companies that we work with are more cynical about some of the topics that we deal with as landscape architects and urban designers. It still is the same problems.

BA: Is there anything else you can think of? I think maybe you want to say something about the types of projects in your office. You are doing mostly public work, and you are choosing not to work for developers.

YA: Today the office is dealing with about 150 active projects. I think we are not doing any projects for developers, because we understood that the way they think and the way that we think is so totally different. We do not have any common language with them.

BA: You choose where you want to make a difference in the profession.

YA: Yes. I want to say another thing about the office, the set-up of the office. The office was a part of Shlomo's house at that time, and it was not just the place. We felt as employees that are in some ways also a part of Shlomo's family. I met Ittai as a teenager, he was in high school, and also the other kids, Maya, Ari and Eran when I would be invited to eat lunch with them in Sandra's kitchen; sort of by mistake, it didn't happen often, and it was not something planned before. The family was part of the office, but also the office felt like a family. I think sometimes about the feeling of the office, which was so connected to the family, a very nice and very happy family; it was very special for me.

BA: Thank you very much for this talk.

Haya Nevo

BA=Barbara Aronson; HN=Haya Nevo.
Date of conversation: Jan-17-2020.

BA: Hi, Haya. Please state when and for how long you worked in the office.

HN: I started in 1987 and I stayed 15 years until 2002.

BA: And what was your position in the office?
I think that you were in a period in the office where you and Shlomo not only managed the office on a practical level, where you made all the appointments, but you were also in the office at a time where there was no word processing and actually all the letters and all the correspondence, of Shlomo and of everybody in the office, was going through you. And in addition, you did all the billing, all the financial dealings of the office together with Shlomo. You were definitely a kind of a uber-manager that had to do a lot of things that today are very much done by the staff or by the financial team that is working outside of the office.

HN: I think I started more as a secretary and became a manager later, because when I came in, the girl that was before me, I'm sorry to say, was really terrible; and she frightened all the staff, I remember everybody was afraid of her. The first year being in the shoes of that woman… she also really took advantage of him, poor Shlomo, because Shlomo was a very 'seeking peace' person, he didn't like fights. So, instead of fighting he would let her have her way. It was very difficult at the beginning because I'm different. So for one year it was not very nice, not because of Shlomo, but because of the whole situation. But after a year it became for me heaven, the next 14 years were paradise on earth.

Yes, it's funny because I remember we were doing some fee proposal, we would discuss how much we would like to take and so on. And Shlomo and I would sit, and we would say "how much should we say (how much money should we ask for)? Should we say this, or this? And I said "Shlomo, you must think how many hours you have to put into this", it was very funny. So we were sitting and we would say "less, more…". In the years that passed, because you're working so close to the guy, to Shlomo, you became his friend, actually, not just an employee but a friend, somebody that you talk to, that you tell things that are heavy on your heart. On the other hand, before he would take (hire) somebody he would say, "what do you think?", and we were thinking together and so on and so on. It was really, as I said, it was paradise.

BA: So that's my question, what were the professional and personal highlights of your time with Shlomo?

HN: I think when there was a proposal we would sit together thinking. I'm not an architect, but I could think around the thing, how to propose it, how many people should work on this, not what he (Shlomo) is going to do, because I don't know anything about it, but around it. And also just being there for him, because he was a person, a person that has problems sometimes, like anyone. And it was nice to be there, and it was nice to be a part of the office and a part of the team.

BA:

What was the office culture and working environment back then?

HN: I don't know what to say.

BA: Well, I remember I came in '87 to work for Shlomo, we kind of started at the same time. And I remember that the office had the Mitsubishi. And you would collect most of the workers in the morning, would pick them up, and take them home. We had very regular working hours. What was the atmosphere in the office? Was it like a studio, or how was it from your point of view?

HN: I remember that when I came in nobody talked to each other almost. Everyone was sitting at their tables, very quiet and so on. But actually, I started to talk to people and we started to be more friendly, and we had the thing that in the morning everybody would have a coffee and then at 10 or 11 we would prepare a big salad together and we would all sit together and talk and laugh. All of us became very friendly, we were not only working together, we were all friends. And the atmosphere was a very friendly one and a very nice one. And people that didn't adjust to this, we said goodbye to them.

BA: But I think it also had to do with the fact that you were like a mother, you know, a very professional mother to us, because you were older, more experienced. And you actually initiated a lot of these habits of socializing and making people feel that they are part of a family. I knew the secretary that was there before, but obviously I really started working in the office with you. So that was kind of the norm that we're a family and Shlomo is the father. Shlomo was always very much a 'mensch', but also (providing) professional guidance, and you were kind of the complimentary side, and I think people very much respected you.

HN: I don't know if they respected me, but they were talking to me, I knew the people, I knew their problems, I was interested, and I think I like to listen. Actually, I like stories very much, so that's why I like to listen.

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BA: I think today you would be responsible for Human Resources, you would be the person to really feel what's going on in the office, and the minute that something surfaced, you were always the person to go to and to mediate or to tell Shlomo.

HN: Because if I saw something wrong in the office, I would tell Shlomo. If something was not okay or somebody needed help or somebody would say that he has a problem somewhere, I would go to Shlomo. And actually, usually he would listen to me because they would talk to me, maybe not to him. It was like we were a family; we were definitely a family.

BA: I think every office needs somebody… this go in between.

HN: And it was a big office, I mean, there was a time when we were about 28 architects. I don't know how it is today. It was a lot of people and you have to know everybody and you have to know what's ticking and so on. So, to make people happy, you must know what's going on, because if you want the office to be successful, you need to make a nice atmosphere, where people would like to come to work. To go to work was not something "Oh, I'm going to work again…" no, it wasn't. I think people enjoyed being at work. There were a lot of smiling and jokes sometimes. Yes, we were happy. I think everybody that worked with Shlomo, and does not work anymore, because I talked to them like Ariel and so on, they all remember the time they were working for Shlomo as the happiest time, the best boss they ever had. Because what they told me, Ronit Almogi, she said it was marvelous to work for him, he gave us space, he listened to our ideas, it was clearly the best time of our professional time that we had, not only for one person but for a few.

BA: So, how would you describe Shlomo's working relationship with staff, as you saw it from your perspective?

HN: He respected, he listened to the ideas. I mean, the architectural ideas. He did listen, his ears were there always. He gave them advice, but he left them a lot of space, but with his guidance, I must say, he did give them ideas, he might say maybe you do this or that. But he let them develop their ideas themselves, and he was there to guide them, he was there to know if it's okay or not. He was there for everybody. He actually never shouted at people, he never cursed people, come to think of it. There was never a fight or anything like it. Everything was very quiet and in a very polite manner, because he never fought. (…) In 15 years, I think of it sometimes: never.

BA: And I think even when there was pressure, Shlomo didn't blame somebody in the office because something wasn't to standard.

HN: He took always all the blame on himself. He never pushed it on somebody else, he said, "I am the boss, and I'm responsible." But even when there was tension, we were in a hurry to do things, it was always in a smiley environment.

BA: I think it's one of the lessons. Obviously, you're not an architect, but thinking about that some of the legacy of an office is not just the built work, and it's not just the theories that you developed, but it's also what you showed people in the office how you ran your office. Because hundreds of people actually work for you, and then they go out to work for somebody else or they start their own office.
So, if you're thinking about the office structure and the atmosphere, what do you think is the legacy?

HN: I talked to people and they said what they took from Shlomo is to listen, to accept the ideas, to be there but to let people express their ideas even if you just finished university now, yesterday. He respected you, he would not belittle you, never. And everything always with good vibes. I think the good vibes from the office went with people home. And actually, I don't think I met even one person, and I met a lot of them, who would say a bad word about the atmosphere in the office. Everybody was only complimenting the atmosphere in the office, that Shlomo bestowed on us.

BA: Okay, I think that's summarizing. Is there anything else that you would add that…?

HN: He was a good friend, and I'm sad that he's not here. I'm sad he became ill because it was such an awful sickness, and he didn't deserve it, as nobody deserves it. No, it was terrible. He could have gone on for another… even when he was very ill, he was thinking always of the office and what he did, what he didn't do, and what he could have done better… the office was his baby, completely his baby. He had a family and the office; the two things were together because his office was over his house in the beginning. So actually, the office was part of his family. The family was the office and the office the family.

BA: Thank you Haya.

Michal Biton

BA=Barbara Aronson; MB=Michal Biton.
Date of conversation: Jan-17-2020.

BA: Hi Michal. First of all, please state when and for how long you worked in the office and what you've been doing professionally since then.

MB: I started working at Aronson's office in 2001, immediately after finishing my degree in landscape architecture. The work in your office had been presented to me as a summer job by my studio instructor in my final project, Anat Sade. Somebody was about to go on maternity leave and Anat asked me if I could fill in until she would come back; it was Osnat, I think. Originally, I had planned to go to India, I had this dream of going there for my big trip after the studies; but then I thought "okay, this is a big opportunity, I have to take it. I will postpone my vacation". I told Shlomo in the interview that I am still planning to go on my trip, and we agreed that my time in the office would be for something like three months. After three months, I said to myself "it is crazy to leave, I will postpone my travelling plans." I told Shlomo that I will continue, and this is how I started in 2001, and left in 2006.

BA: What did you do professionally since then?

MB: In my third year of working in Aronson's office, I started my master's degree in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, in the field of historical geography. I went to study with Ifat from the office. It was her idea, I didn't know much about the master's degree, I thought it was something like a course. I didn't realize how demanding it was until I started. After one year Ifat [Gal] left, if I remember correctly, and I continued because I enjoyed it very much; I started to realize that I really loved this field of research. It was the first time in my life that I did academic research, and it was very interesting to me. By that time, I had received one day off from work a week. When I started to write my thesis, I asked you for another day, and you said to me "okay, this is starting to be problematic for the office. You need to decide where you want to be." Maybe I didn't understand it well enough at the time, but you helped me realize that I cannot do both. I left the office, it was in 2006, after five and a half years in the office.

I then re-directed myself to an academic career, continuing with a PhD degree at the Hebrew University. This was the period when I didn't work at all in a professional office, only in academic research. After finishing my studies, I returned to work in a few offices, and then worked for one year in Gideon Sarig's office. Throughout this whole time I had teaching jobs in professional colleges.

Today I am teaching at the Technion and I started my postdoctoral research. I understood with time that the thing most interesting to me is the research field, and that I enjoy the professional side less. I feel that I can contribute more in the field of academia.

BA: You are in an interesting position to look at the office's work from the academic point of view, but you know it also from the practical side. That brings me to the second question, which is, what do you think represents the legacy of our office, of Shlomo Aronson's office, in terms of design philosophy, projects, office culture and structure?

MB: I feel now, after I went back and reviewed the office's work as part of my research and teaching, that what I appreciated most in the office was the respect the office has for the site, the history of the site and its local characteristics. Aronson's legacy is to be very sensitive to the site. I felt that they take a lot of energy to study the site, to understand all the nuances: the historical, cultural and ecological context, not rushing to use innovations that are not connected to the place. I remember Shlomo's statement about history guiding him, about how we should treat history as a client. This created a very stable palette, to be added on here and there, but derived from the country. I think it's very Israeli, the landscape architecture of Shlomo Aronson gives you a sense of stability, of belonging, not trying to force something else from the land. Compared to other offices, for instance the office of Gideon Sarig who I worked for, his focus was about the true clients, the people, the users, giving them a higher consideration than (the history) of the land.

Working for Shlomo Aronson Architects was the first time I worked in landscape architecture; I didn't know what to expect but I thought it was unique. From the time I arrived you took me in and told me to sit with you in your room, only you and me, and I felt like I have a personal guide. It was really amazing for me. You weren't the boss then, but you were senior staff, and I knew that I was in very good hands. I only started my career, my professional life, but I had somebody that saw to it that I'm doing the right thing. It gave me a lot of courage. I felt very secure on the one hand, but also amazed that I received so much freedom the first time you gave me a project. I think that everyone in the office was feeling good about this freedom you gave us, because we didn't feel that somebody is always looking over our shoulder, checking every line we draw. We understood that you are expecting things from us, but also trusting us. It created a great atmosphere in the office.

BA: Okay. So, which experiences in the office were most memorable and influential on your future career?

MB: There were several. The first experience happened in my first week at work, when I was sent by airplane for site supervision to Kiryat Shmona. I thought to myself "how much trust do they give a new person?" Actually, I thought you were crazy, all of you. It was really amazing, but I thought "I don't know what I am supposed to do there". It was my first time to supervise and it went really well. I don't remember, but I don't think I was completely alone though.

BA: I don't think… we wouldn't have sent you alone.

MB: Yes, but I felt that I contributed. I did express myself there and it was a really great experience, because somebody trusted me; that gave me a lot of self-confidence. I remember also the office-internal competition you made between all of us to come up with a concept for the healing gardens at the Hadassah hospital project. You gave us three hours to think about a concept and everybody presented afterwards, and you liked my concept! It really was fantastic for me; it was a great experience. There was also the time when Jorge [Salzberg] worked on a proposal for the Technion and he involved us in helping him.
The competition for the rehabilitations of the Heriya garbage mountain generated a lot of excitement, and a feeling of working together and transferring ideas. Other than this, I don't remember a lot of occasions that we worked together with opportunities for knowledge exchange.

BA: I think you were in a special situation because we sat together in the room and you had direct access to me if you wanted to know something. I believe you answered the question about your personal highlights, about different scenarios for knowledge exchange and opportunities to contribute to the knowledge of the office.
Now, the next question is, which set of professional skills do you think you received in the office?

MB: What I learned from you is accuracy and working very methodologically, to be very precise in all steps of design, to be very organized and to organize everything. I learned from you how to work with AutoCAD correctly, with all the layers and more. I internalized it and I am bringing it today to my students, this understanding that it is hard to work in a messy environment. In your office, I started from scratch and I think it really built my professional skeleton: to be very aware of everything you see, to work step by step. I think you gave that to me.

BA: I mean, because we set together in the room…

MB: Yes, we sat together and you also directed me. I also watched what you are doing and I saw the way I should work.

BA: What did you learn specifically from each of the lead designers: Shlomo, from me and from Ittai, who I believe, was then already in the office. You were there when Shlomo started showing signs of his ailment, although he was still very much in his peak. So maybe you can elaborate a little about what you learned from Shlomo.

MB: With Shlomo it was a little bit difficult; I mostly remember the last period, that I talked to him and he forgot things. It was mostly a problem of communication. One time I showed him a scheme and he said it is too flamboyant, and I didn't know what he meant. My communication with him was limited from the beginning: I always felt that I didn't quite understand what he wanted from me, so I went to you.

BA: No, that's fine. I mean, it depended on who worked with him. It's interesting what you're saying because last week I talked to Adi Noy, who worked in the office until much later than you, 2004 to 2014, but she had a lot of very patient talks with him, she learned a lot from him, but in the daily life of the office it was a different story.

MB: I have to say that I was very, very young. And I was lacking confidence, it was a period in my life when I was looking for a partner, and I felt in general insecure. I didn't know what was expected of me, I wasn't 'ripe' enough. So, if I was the Michal of today, working in the office, it would have been different. Later on, I learned a lot from Gideon Sarig, and I'm sure I would have learned a lot from Shlomo if I knew how to communicate with him. I didn't know… I was actually quite afraid of him.

BA: That's understandable. You worked in the office and as part of your academic career, you're also frequently reviewing what's going on in the country. In addition, you're editing the magazine of the Landscape Architecture Association. You might be familiar with past and present office projects, which leads me to my last question, which is, can you identify a difference in the designs of the office since Barbara and Ittai took over the office?

MB: Yes. I spoke before about the palettes. I feel that your generation dares to create another palette, or more palettes. Because I really feel that the projects from Shlomo's generation, there was something conservative about them, their selection of plants and selection of materials and shapes. Definitely in your generation, you realize that you cannot always see a united line between all projects. In Shlomo's time there were very classical details, fine materials and geometry. There is a difference. You dare to bring more materials, more ideas. But you're still very connected to the place, you're not neglecting what you find in a site.

BA: So actually what you're saying, and that is what has been said by others about our work today, is that it is not apparent anymore what is an Aronson project and what not, which you can interpret as a bad thing or you can interpret it as a natural departure from certain sets of formal elements.

MB: It's a hard question, because there is something very comforting, something that makes you feel safe when you can say "Ah, this is his". It reminds you of other projects or families of projects. It reminds you of earlier projects, history, and it brings up other memories. There is something very strong about keeping a line that is unique to the office. But on the other hand it can be very boring. I'm sure that there are projects that you are receiving inspiration from older projects, I think it's natural. It's not sad or something, it's a natural evolution. It's very positive, it's a privilege for your office to be an office of generations, because not many offices succeed in this. There are others where the founder is no longer here and the office is dead. So, you are very lucky to have this continuation.

BA: Thank you Michal. Is there something that you want to add that I didn't think of putting in the list of questions?

MB: I think the office is a wonderful 'school'. When I started working in Aronson I felt that I hadn't learned anything in the Technion, it was like starting from a blank page, and you gave me a great opportunity to enter the profession. You had a lot of patience, a lot of trust, in an office with a very positive atmosphere, not pressuring. Although the projects were very demanding and one needed to stay much longer, I didn't feel that somebody was forcing me or was angry at me or not satisfied. It's amazing because in other offices there are emotions like this, and in Aronson there weren't, so the good atmosphere was really not to be taken for granted. I was very lucky to work in this office and to meet you.

BA: That's an interesting point you are making, that we understand ourselves also as a 'school'. Obviously we are a place where we hire people to do work, but we've realized over time, and that's maybe our legacy that we received from Shlomo, that if you give people opportunities and you trust them, they will rise to the challenge and they will feel responsible, and they will want to do good work and meet their deadlines. We believe it to be a much healthier way to operate. One of the major jobs for us managers is to not transfer the pressures that we're getting from our clients to our staff, but to encourage our workers to do the work and do it as best as they could.

MB: This is amazing. Another point: I don't know how you manage the office today, but there weren't any staff meetings. I don't remember that we did regular staff meetings.

BA: No, because the organization was that Shlomo or me or another senior staff member would work with one or two more people, and they would actually do the projects among themselves.

MB: What I meant to say is that something might have been lacking, from today's perspective. When I worked on some projects, I didn't know what others did. All I had to do was ask them, but nobody explained us the larger picture. I think it could have been very helpful for a common feeling that we are working together. It is something that I saw in other offices.

BA: It's a very good point. One of the things that we do nowadays is that we have a lecture every Thursday with somebody else each time talking about their project, or what they did. Things are surfacing as part of this PhD, as I talk to people, so it's already bearing fruits. Well, thank you.

MB: You're welcome. It was very nice to remember.

Adi Noy Ivanir

BA=Barbara Aronson; AN=Adi Noy Ivanir.
Date of conversation: Jan-10-2020.

BA: Hi, Adi. Before we start: When did you work in the office, for how many years, and what was your position?

AN: I've worked for a decade from 2004 to 2014, and I came to the office after five years as a landscape architect in another firm; and in the last two years that I worked, I also wrote my Master's thesis about the work of Shlomo Aronson.

BA: I will ask you a number of questions and I would be interested in getting your perspec-tive to these questions. So, the first one I want to ask you is, What do you think is the is the legacy of our office?

AN: I researched Shlomo's work as part of my master's thesis, and I had hundreds of hours in conversation with Shlomo, so for me the legacy of the office is firstly the ideas of Shlomo Aronson, and the way he perceived the profession of landscape architecture in general. Maybe, the main thing is having an agenda, which is not obvious for landscape architects in general; I think I really adopted the agenda of Shlomo. Now in my current position, I use it and I quote Shlomo, and I really feel that he gave me the foundation of my own direction, of my perception of landscape architecture and life in general.

The legacy is first that landscape architects must be involved in a project from the very be-ginning and they have to understand all the considerations and aspects of engineering, environment and ecology. Not to be a professional expert in these fields but to know them, to understand and to integrate them into a project. It gave me a non-apologizing attitude to the profession which is not obvious for landscape architects where many of them are apologizing all the time.

I have written about it, and it is easy for me to quote Shlomo's credo, or design principles: 'the past as a client'; to have an idea and to decide what is the story, to be a storyteller and to choose from all the stories in the public space, to choose what to emphasize; the attention to details; and in this way, 'making peace with the land'.

I cannot say what is more important: it depends on the project and on the situation: all of them are important and the balance changes.

I think I mentioned most of the main ideas and that I still adopt them, I live them, and I work with them. That is the legacy's intellectual aspect.

Since I work now in a large organization (the Jewish National Fund, JNF) I thought a lot about the physical legacy of Shlomo's office, especially in the beginning: I call it the working environment, the rituals, which starts with the location of the office. I am sitting here in your office in Ein Kerem, watching the Russian church (Moscovia), seeing the tourists com-ing around, that's the basic foundation of coming to work here; and then the shared lunches, shopping at the local grocery store and at Gili's, the greengrocer, going there and buying things and then eating together, and once a year the office trip. Even the chart of the cars and of the dishwashing duty, or the policy that you have to tidy up the entire of-fice twice a year.

Also, the working hours: 15 years ago, when I arrived to the office, at four o'clock every-body had left, unlike in many other architects' offices. I don't know how it is today, but I didn't follow this rule, I worked much longer.

For me working in the office was not just friendly but very collegial. Even with Shlomo, we could see eye to eye and I knew I felt equal, although he was the 'big' Shlomo Aronson. He had respect for each person. These are the some of the things you appreciate when you are faced like me today working within a hierarchical organization where my bosses can tell me, "I told you, that's why you should do it", even though I don't think it makes sense. Very rarely and maybe never did I feel such a thing here at your office. My opinion was always heard. And I was very independent but also always had somebody to consult with.

BA: You talked a lot about Shlomo, but the office is actually now in place for 50 years and in these 50 years, Shlomo was active for 40. I entered the office as a student something like 30 years ago, and today there's also Ittai, and you actually worked with all three of us. So, my question would be:
From whom did you learn most, but did you actually also have an interface with the other two partners who - when you were there - weren't actually partners?

AN: Sure. Barbara, I think our main interface was the design, because I'm not a designer, I could do some things but I don't see myself as a designer; and whenever I had to design something, I came to you and we did it together, usually.

And when I planned the work process for a project, I think we usually did it together. How do we build the tender documents and what do we need? What is the list of plans; and when I had professional problems that I had to solve, I think that in the first years I came to you, afterwards I consulted the other people in my room, usually it was handier. And I came to you when there were problems

with the clients, when we had to consider how to deal with the clients and the time schedules, the scope of work, and other technical as-pects of the work.

BA: So actually, what you're describing is that the office has not a formalized hierarchy, but operates on the assumption that people will seek advice from others that have specific knowledge; and that it's kind of understood that not for everything you have to go to people that are higher up in the hierarchy, but that you might go to a person that has the same level of seniority but has experience in a particular field: so it's like a studio atmosphere.

AN: Definitely, like talking to Porat about AutoCAD commands or new applications, new software. I think with each one, also the secretary, I could consult with; I really think this is very personal, whoever in the office can give you advice when you have to build a set of details, you can go to everyone: did you use such a detail? Can you give it to me? and the same for specifications or cost estimates. There were very few people that I didn't consult with, I think.

BA: So maybe that relates to the question Which set of professional skills did you receive in the office?

…and professional skills not just as an architect, but maybe as a person who knows how to organize things, how to mentor, how to lead a team. Maybe you can elaborate on that a little bit.

AN: Yes, everything you said. I came here with the experience of five years, a bachelor's degree in landscape architecture, and I knew the basic tools of the profession. Here in the office I became much more, not specialized, but more focused and skilled in the profession. I got the experience to be a team leader and to instruct new students or new young architects that joined the office. In my 10 years in the office, I really developed skills in all aspects of landscape architecture, those you mentioned and others: how to make a good set of plans for a project; how to deal with infrastructures; how to design open spaces in the non-urban and rural landscapes; how to deal with the huge scale of the entire country, e.g. in the a national master plan for the identification of biospheres. It also had to do with the kind of projects that the office received, and that I had the luck to work on, to deal with all of these extremely interesting projects like the 'Arazim' Valley.

BA: And that brings me to the next question. If you would have to choose - you decide how many you want to choose: three, five or more, Which professional experiences in the office were most memorable and influential on your future career? Experiences on projects.

AN: I think the Arazim valley was one project in name, but with 20 different projects under it. I was the first to count them when I took over from Tomer and Ofri. I made the list of 20 different projects with 20 different clients, infrastructure bodies like the train and the wa-ter company, the Ministry of Defense, JNF and the parks authority; That definitely was my best 'school'. At times, I think five different people worked on various things in the same landscape unit of the valley.

I also tell it to students that I meet: you finish your degree in the university and then you start working but you never stop studying. All those young people think that they know everything: they come to work and they really come to learn.

BA: We should explain that the Arazim Valley is actually the design, or the development, of a Metropolitan Park over a very long span of time, with a lot of the major infrastructure going into Jerusalem, crossing the valley. It was very complex in terms of developing recreational areas while managing these national infrastructures traversing the valley.

AN: For me, it was extremely interesting because I definitely prefer the rural areas over the built environment. It was there that I met the people who are managing these land-scapes like the forest authority (JNF) and the parks authority. And nowadays I work for the forest authority. This personal connection and my professional experience brought me to my present position; the work in the Arazim valley with the infrastructure bodies and authorities gave me the very important experience of understanding landscapes and understanding engineering and engineering challenges.

BA: You said before, probably the most influential thing in the office was your working with Shlomo and learning from him, but also meeting him as a mentor. Would you say that Shlomo understood himself also as a person whose role is to educate people?

Definitely. I think for Shlomo, it was very important to teach and to be a mentor and to spread his ideas, his credo, his perception of the country's landscapes, of the profession, and the role of landscape architects. He was very proud of the people who came out of the office and became independent landscape architects or started working with authorities; he was proud of them and I never heard him being angry or offended that they had left the office. He understood that it is the natural process of things, and he accepted it even if it was upsetting for him from a personal point of view, like with Jorge, who left and Shlomo missed him. But he wasn't angry that he left. He really understood

him and thought that he did the right thing.

BA: I'm not going to ask you if you're familiar with the seminal projects of the office; be-cause of your research you obviously are, but given the fact that in Israel we are still a very small community of landscape architects, and because you have looked into the past, be-cause of your professional position today, maybe you can make an attempt to see if the office today is kind of a continuation of the legacy, or the things that we all learned from Shlomo, and where maybe you see what are the similarities and what are the divergencies in the practice from back then and today?

AN: Not sure I understood the question well.

BA: Okay. You know, there are offices that continue to practice over a long time, but there is a very clear formal or philosophical set that you recognize in the work. If we're looking at another office, that of Gideon Sarig, I think his projects are very recognizable because he uses defined sets of formal approaches and also works on particular types of projects. Would you say that, in the past 50 years, the office has been doing the same things or that you actually see a divergence at some point, obviously what I'm trying to say, but you don't have to agree with me - is that with a different leadership there are other things becoming apparent, formally, or otherwise.

AN: Okay. I think it's very recognizable in the annual conferences of the Association of Landscape Architects. When I finished my thesis in 2016, I really wanted to give a lecture. I didn't do anything about it, but each year I came to the conference, and I said to myself that it could be interesting to talk about the process, about the ideas that underlay Shlomo's work. But maybe some of the participants aren't interested…. It's not the discourse today.

I think, the main body of his work was in very different times; that the country was much more open, much less dense, with much less regulation. There was little understanding or consideration of the ecological situation, not like today. And the things he managed to accomplish as a matter of personal will could never happen today, which is something he said in one of our conversations. And in a way he was kind of old fashioned in some of the works, maybe a bit naïve?

I think the works of the office in the last 20 years, 15 years, since you're the most domi-nant in the office, are much more complex in the understanding of psychological considerations and in sociological aspects and even in the details. Well, some of the details are a continuation; I don't remember where I saw lately a project, and I said, this is Barbara's, I could recognize it, and there are a few things that are continuous.

I think the work of Shlomo was more simple. It was easier to decide you're a storyteller. That's the story and here you go. Today, it is much more complex, and it is evident in the projects. I think Shlomo wasn't much aware of sociological aspects, which Gideon Sarig is mainly interested in, and less to ecological aspects, which I think Halprin was more aware of. He had his agenda and it was good and he brought it into great places.

Today, I can be more critical, but I don't think it's fair because times have really changed. And the challenges are different. I think that's the shift I can see.

BA: It's of course also a shift that is global. Today, that's how we think, that's how we understand the landscape.

AN: But some of the foundations of Shlomo are timeless and eternal.

BA: They are winners.

AN: I think the notion of 'making peace with the land' is still relevant and maybe even more relevant than it was before. Attention to heritage is something that is not enough in the discourse.

I really felt it recently in my work: there is now a new design for the Meggido road junction. I believe this intersection is as important as the Sha'ar Hagai Interchange on the way to Jerusalem because of the historical importance of its location throughout time. The road authority presented to us the most trivial and obvious interchange, and I came to the district committee and showed them the presentation I had prepared, pointing out what had been overlooked or could be done differently. I also showed them the Sha'ar Hagai Interchange. I told them "You can do it differently, think creative, think out of the box, it can't be treated like any other simple interchange."

BA: You started out saying that Shlomo had an agenda, that he had a vision for the landscape and for the country, and more and more we see that people are only looking at budget and only looking at a specific project.

AN: I think it was always about the budget.

There is nobody else to take care of the heritage aspect and the landscape aspect but the landscape architects. There are a lot of ecologists today, everywhere. Ecologists and hydrologists, there are plenty. There is nobody to think of heritage in the landscape except landscape architects who inherited that spirit from Shlomo.

BA: The last question is: Do you think that there were enough opportunities in the office to learn from, and to be mentored by other people?

AN: Yes. Plenty. I think it really depends a lot on the person because there are people that don't like to ask and they don't know how to ask. Each one because of his personality, some are sure that they know everything, and some are shy, and they don't want to be perceived as somebody that might not know something: "I will do as a know." Men!

BA: Men.

AN: Men: "I know everything!"

I'm a person that loves to ask. I think it's important. When I came to my new position, I started to interview all the people I work with. What is my position? What do you expect from me? What do I have to do? What does the forest authority do? What's our role? I didn't get any answers. People were really surprised that I asked all these questions. "Do your job! But what is my job? Whatever you want to do, go!"

I remember that I came to the office of Aronson after working for five years in another firm where the boss was very involved. Every day he went to look at my computer, asking "What are you doing? Why do you do this? Do it like that."

And I came here and after a week, nobody asked, what are you doing? Why do you do this? I was really surprised, and I got the feeling that I can do everything and whatever I want. And I was scared because I am making plans for the Aronson office, and it has to be very professional, with the language and the quality of Aronson, and I don't know anything about it. Nobody's teaching me. What am I supposed to do?

And then I think I came to you and I came to Jorge, sometimes to Shlomo, and asked: Is it okay? and you gave me your critique and ideas; but if I didn't come, nobody would come to me. And that was very surprising for me. And also, in contrast to the other office, which is a good firm, but you can never recognize the projects of this firm. There is no design idea, or I didn't think there was, and I didn't feel they have principles or a clear agenda.

And so I asked many questions. The first time I had to go to supervision in the Holyland project, I asked Shlomo to come with me because I didn't know what to say; he didn't un-derstand what I wanted from him, but he came with me.

BA: But that's interesting what you're saying. And I think that there were other reasons at the same time. You worked between 2004 in 2014, and actually, Shlomo in 2004, was not yet formally diagnosed as having Parkinson's, but he was actually already effected; and some of the things - by looking at the evolution of the office - we know there was this period of about 7-10 years that Shlomo, because he was ill, but we didn't know it, he had his pet projects, he had things that very much interested him, and the rest, he was kind of thinking that it's okay to not supervise in a more structured fashion. And I think that you, for good or for bad felt that. Sometimes it was good for you. But I think that in this period, we did projects that could have profited from a firmer supervision in all the planning stages.

AN: Today, are you checking every tender file that is going out of the office?

BA: There's much more control.

AN: I don't remember you ever checking.

BA: Not me, but there is much more control. No, I think we're still an office that operates on the assumption that a person responsible for a project will rise to the task and will ask the right questions. No office manager can say that the quality control in his office is perfect, or the way you would like to see it. But I remember that period, there were projects done that were wild, that we're not wild in a good way, they were actually neglected.

AN: It is true, but also afterwards I never felt, maybe you trusted me and ....

BA: Obviously I trusted you.

AN: Or you trusted that if I don't know something, I will come to you; because some people, I don't know, Tal or Ofri, the men would never come to Barbara: Can you check it? Is it okay? Nicholas, I remember that Gilad once called me from the Ministry of Housing and said: "Did you see the plans?" Yes, embarrassing, and I think it was after the time of Shlomo.

BA: It was in the transition phase when he was already sick, but it takes time until a new generation of managers goes in and actually sees all of the holes. I remember this distinct feeling at the time, when we realized the situation, that there's not enough quality control in the office. And that definitely happened also when we were there. It is true. And it still happens, you know, of course, it still happens but not to that degree.

AN: But also, well you don't do it anymore, but if you do

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a project and it goes out, if you do it all by yourself, it is definitely always better to have another person looking over it.

Maybe I didn't say it before, about the mentoring. Shlomo was of course the chief mentor, but in the practical professional practice, you directed me a lot. Always when I came to you, you never came to ask me. It's fine. I think it's good. I try to do so in my department now.

And Ittai was the king of details.
Also, the both of you, your political understanding of the project, of how you deal with clients, with authorities. I think I did quite well by myself, but when I had to consult somebody, both of you are good politicians, and politics is always important.

BA: I think we kind of covered the questions that I have. If you have anything to add that I didn't ask you, you're most welcome.

AN: Well, when we talked about the legacy, I mentioned mainly the big ideas of the storytelling. 'The past as a client', 'making peace with the land', but I think it is important to talk about the legacy in the professional daily work: a lot of the legacy is in the details, in the choice of materials, the stone, the vegetation. Another thing that changed: I don't think anybody uses Pennisetum grass anymore!
The design ideas, using the water; and in the end how the 'Lego' parts of the big legacy reach the last detail.

What I really liked about working here was the understanding and the considerations from the very big perspective and scale to the very small scale; although myself, I am a big scale person; of course the Arazim valley was everything, also from the smallest detail to the big master plan, the national master plan scale even.

I would like to mention the other important projects that I worked on: the Biosphere manual, which was thinking big, and bringing together the strength of landscape architecture, culture and heritage, and the understanding of landscape; another project was the Mizpe Ramon master plan. It ran a long time, with great partners like Yair Avigdor; and also the Holyland housing project which brought me for the first time to the police, I hope also for the last time; but it was a great learning project, working from the tender stage to the supervision stage, to design plans and detailed plan for construction. It was very holistic, very varied and also about working with great people; so I think putting aside the name of the project, it was - I think - the project which gave me the professional confidence of understanding the construction aspects; and afterwards it repeated itself in Yavne, and other projects.

When I arrived to the office and received from Osnat my first projects, I was very disappointed: for this I came here, for the housing projects of Holyland, Gvahot, and Beit Shemesh? But with the years I really understood what I learned from them.

And then I got the 'cherry' project, the top for me personally, the present that I really liked, the Arazim valley project.

Also, during my being here, I think that there weren't the formal lectures that people are doing now. Once in a while I remember Lilach gave us a lecture about Road 1, and then I gave certain lectures, and you; but even if it wasn't a lecture, I was very involved with my friends in the office, particularly with the colleagues in my room: I asked and I wanted to know, and still, even though I wasn't part of the team of a project, I felt I understood them: Herzliya Park, I didn't even plan a single line there; Hadassah hospital, road 38 and road 1, I felt a part of them all.

What do people know about the office's legacy? I'm not sure. If you do a survey in the office, obviously I am interested to know.

BA: The present office staff have told us already that they don't know the legacy! That's one of the things that we do now in the lecture series. We have realized that Ittai and me must go back and show them, and tell them about it. That's one of the premises: that knowledge gets lost. Very, very, very fast actually.

AN: I think in March I should come to give a lecture. Lilach wrote me.

BA: Yes. You're part of the lecture series. Good. Well, thank you very much.

Moshe Safdie

BA=Barbara Aronson; MS=Moshe Safdie.
Date of conversation: Jan-22-2020.

BA: Talking about legacy.

MS: I think that many of these questions (about legacy and transferring knowledge) I am addressing in my own practice. I'm still there, but I'm 81, so I'm aware that at some point they (my partners) will be on their own. I've set it up so that they can continue. It will be up to them, obviously, after they finish whatever work is on the tables already, to determine what jobs they take, and how they do them. And I know that there will be a change.

So, it does bring us to the question of legacy. What is the legacy of an office?

Permit me, I will answer it first subjectively and then reflect on your issues.

In the case of my office, the legacy is the sum total of concepts, ideals, values, designs, with all the methodologies that have evolved over 50 years.

So, if I try and summarize what is there for the young people to continue with, it is a lot about the principles. In fact, when we did our website, (we decided) to focus on principles and then to show projects, talking about issues that really matter and define them, no matter which project; because I write a lot, a lot of it is documented in writing.

But then also, there is the question of taking ideas and concepts and implementing them.

You are an office, not of theoreticians, but of doers. The legacy of theoreticians is quite different. In your case, there is the ideas, the values, the sensibilities that Shlomo brought to the world, but also the methodologies, the knowledge of how to analyze the land, how to study a site. How to consider issues of water, microclimate and so on; and then, in the case of a 'doing office', a building office, methodologies are part of the legacy.

You can conceive of Jewel (Jewel Changi Airport) as a garden, a retail space, and this and that, but from there to making it a reality, is thousands of man hours and skills and coordination, and that's part of the legacy. So, some of it is documented, some of it is not, some of it is in people's heads.

I've already retired one group of people and brought in my 40-year-olds or 30-year-olds, to become the senior people. I actually forced the generation that started with me to retire, and I did it because I felt I had to make space. And you could argue: Why didn't you retire yourself then? Well I guess I feel there is a difference.

So, let me just now reflect on your office, on Shlomo and you and Ittai.

You are the second generation; you are blood relatives. But it's not very different from my third generation. Why I am I saying that? The generation that founded the office or started with me, I have retired for the second generation to give them space. So, you know, they are in their 40ies and 30ies, but they have already been there 20 years.

How long have you worked with Shlomo?

BA: I came as a student 35 years ago; I am in my end fifties.

MS: So, you are in between (in age).

And then there is the question of the younger generation that forms many of the 40 people in your office. In our office, we really work at it now, to pass things on to them. We have lunch lectures and talks. We have weekly meetings on Monday mornings where we serve breakfast, and particular people present their work in the office. All the others become aware, like whoever is working on Singapore, Facebook or else.

And for example, when young people come and join the office, we now give them a pack of books. Some of the books written some years ago, and a monograph, they can't just dive into it (the office work). So, we'll work at it.

What I've learned is that the most effective way to pass the legacy is to hire talented people, young, straight out of school. All five partners and stock owners today in my office, came as students. They've all been with me between 15 and 25 years. And that, in itself, is a methodology of passing things on. In the end, it is about people and people working together.

BA: Going back to our office and because you've been actually working with Shlomo for 35 years or 40 years, doing quite a few projects together. You know that we are doing very, very different projects: from infrastructure to designing neighborhoods, urban design. Even if you don't know all of our work, where do you see was the biggest imprint of our work on the country? In contrast to you, our work is exclusively in Israel.

MS: In our relationship there have been different scales.

The Modiin town scale is truly urban, its landscape at the urban scale. Certainly, it is a fundamental part of your

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heritage that you, as landscape architects, are able to work and to think in that scale. And I'm aware of your work with infrastructure, which is even beyond that scale, or similar in scale of what happens when a road goes through a landscape, national parks.

But then there is also the scale of landscape and architecture cohabiting, and I guess our most exciting collaboration in that respect is Yad Vashem (The World Holocaust Remembrance Center). It is at that scale where land and architecture and landscape become one. Yad Vashem sits in the Jerusalem Forest. It's more pastoral let's say than the Hebrew Union College which we actually did not do together.

All bring up different issues, and I suppose some of the themes are 'working with the land' and having a sense of the plant life that's part of it and belongs there, the details of the hardscape and the softscape and how they cohabit, you developed a whole sense of structures that go into the landscape.

Work I didn't work with you on, but I'm aware of, are the Promenades.

BA: Yes, the Sherover Promenade; the Haas Promenade we did with Larry (Halprin).

MS: The Sherover Promenade. Is it in good shape?

BA: It is in pretty good shape, but there are now these plans to add a lot of attractions to it.

MS: Are you controlling it?

BA: I wish.

MS: The cultural tradition of respect for designers in this country is disgraceful.

BA: There's no respect for design and there is an incredible hunger for attractions.

MS: That is true worldwide, but when there is respect for the professionals involved, we can guide them and educate them. When we got Jewel (Jewel Changi Airport) the program said: major world attraction, and the client said we should have a Dinosaur Park. We steered it our way, but the hunger for attractions is worldwide and has to do with media. The term 'wow effect', 'wow them out', it is a disease. Anything but subtlety, that's part of the problem. How does the heritage confront evolution and culture.

BA: My research is also talking about legacy as moving things ahead, like you said in our office, also the design moved from one generation to the next. You've been working with Shlomo, and you have been also working with me for quite a while. I mean, you got to know me when I was pretty green and we're still doing things together, now that I'm more mature.

MS: Shlomo evolved in a fairly puritanical, if that is the word, restrained attitude toward things. In other words, understanding, or not overstating, which is part of my own tradition. I think you and Ittai come into the picture at the age of hunger for attractions, since we touched on it, and pizzazz.

You use architectural means more than Shlomo did, and you tend to allow yourself greater, and I don't know if it's coming from you or you're being pushed to it because it's part of the culture, greater ornateness, greater complexity. You are not minimalists, or less minimalists than Shlomo.

BA: It's true.

MS: From my perspective being of his generation, sometimes I like it and sometimes I miss his understatement.

BA: I think that's very true even if you're saying that we're more complex, more ornate, it still comes very much from an effort to create something that is, if not timeless, something that you're pretty sure will survive beyond 10 years in terms of materials, colors........

MS: You are not Martha Schwartz! But you have been affected by landscape architecture reaching beyond landscape to enrich itself. Sometimes for the better sometimes for the worse. I don't like Martha's work, because I don't think it is landscape design. I think it is installations of some sort. Sometimes good, sometimes.... depends on your taste.

To me landscape (design), at its purest, is working with buildings and the land and plant life. It's bringing plant life into our lives. Of course, in landscape we have street furniture, we have buildings and pavilions, and they're all tools. But the moments where they become primary at the expense of the primacy of plant life and architecture (..) I haven't talked or thought about that before. What comes to me as the issue is, when I look at Dan Kiley, his work I mean, there is a primacy of the landscape. And little bit in that tradition, but much more monumental, the work of Pete Walker. But it is still the effects are reached primarily with plant life and architecture.

A lot of the younger offices, they just feel the need for the other tools. And sometimes the tools are compelling, sometimes they are not. It's tough. It's hard. When it's done

independently of the architecture, it's a problem, because then there's a problem of the architecture and then landscape being whole. I don't think that's your problem, but I think that problem is out there. This tradition, that clients hire an architect, and then (separately) a landscape architect, is not helping. We are always the ones insisting that the design team is our collaborators. signage, landscape, lighting.

BA: But you always had a great appreciation for the landscape architect.

MS: I am an exception in two respects: for me, the day I begin an approach, the structural engineer is on one side and the landscape architect on the other.

Landscape thinking is here. I evolve my feeling about the landscape as I do about the architecture. It is one thing for me. That's true for some architects, but very few actually. Renzo (Piano) has little bit of that. A lot of architects are kind of blind. Zaha (Hadid) didn't think landscape. She thought forms of landscapes in her buildings.

BA: Her buildings tend to sit on a plinth of some sort.

MS: Yes, detached.

BA: Well that was very interesting. Thank you very much.

Nurit Lissovsky

BA=Barbara Aronson; NL=Nurit Lissovsky.
Date of conversation: Feb-07-2020.

BA: Hi Nurit. Let's start with the formal things. Please state what is your connection to the office and for how long you've known the lead designers?

NL: I met Shlomo many years ago, when I was a student at the Technion in the early '80s; but I really got to know him well in '86 when I was at Harvard, and he came as a visiting professor. It was then that we became not just a mentor and a student, but also friends, and we spoke about many things, about landscape architecture and about Israel. I met Barbara actually in two ways, one through Shlomo, who told me about Barbara and about her coming to the Graduate School of Design, and I remember that he came to your graduation and he was very proud when you got some kind of prestigious prize, and also for going to study in the United States. I heard stories about you from Shlomo, but then I met you, I think at the GSD and then later in the office. And I know Ittai and the Aronsons from the last 10 years when I was very close to Shlomo and visited him in the office and at home. In this period, I was involved in organizing the evening in his honor, speaking to him and collecting materials about him with the help of the entire family.

BA: What are you doing today professionally?

NL: I'm a faculty member at the Technion, I teach landscape architecture, including many lectures about Shlomo's work and about Shlomo's vision for landscape architecture. Shlomo was very influential and very inspiring for my own career and for the way that I perceive landscape architecture and landscape architecture education.

BA: What do you think represents the legacy of the office in terms of design, philosophy and project, but also in terms of the office as an institution of learning? Many prominent landscape architects of today 'graduated', if you want, from the office.

NL: I'll start with the second part, and then I'll speak about the first part, using something that I wrote about Shlomo, because it will help me focus on the things that I consider as his philosophy and main contribution. As I told you before, I think that Shlomo's contribution to education of landscape architecture is in two parts. The main one is the office. I think that the way Shlomo structured the office, the way that he treated the people in the office, the responsibility that he gave them, the way that he shared his ideas with them was very thoughtful and very nuanced, which is strange because he was not articulate in his speech, but he was very nuanced about his ideas. I mean, everything that he described was based on a lot of previous thinking and on reading, and upon intellectual exchange. He was, I think, intellectually a very curious person. And when he put forward an idea, the way that I experienced it, it was something that he had thought about a lot, it was very defined. And although I think that Shlomo had very good intuition, his design and his ideas were a combination of knowledge, of intellectual thinking, and of an ability to give form, to give shape to very abstract ideas.

People that worked in his office, and some of them are good friends of mine, really see this period, even if they worked for a very short time, as a very important milestone in their development, both in terms of the way they perceive landscape architecture and in the way they see Shlomo as more than a mentor, somebody that was crucial to their own personality. And it's interesting for me because these are people that either worked for him as students or just in the beginning of their career, and now many years after running their own offices, when they speak about their view or their development as landscape architects, they always refer to Shlomo as the most influential figure.

Shlomo didn't teach a lot. He gave lectures periodically; he spoke in annual conferences of the landscape architecture association. But although he was not an educator in regular terms, he was an educator in his attitude and he took public positions as the chair of the Israeli Association of Landscape Architects. He was a member of "Beautiful Israel", and he was very involved with the Society for the Protection of Nature. So, in a way, he put his mark or his ideas not just in the office but also in the public realm, in the public discourse. And even today when I meet people from the Nature Reserve Authority, from the army, from the ministry of housing they speak about him as somebody very unique, somebody that didn't just come to do the work and to design, but always put it in the larger framework of philosophy.

BA: Of policy making?

NL: But in a way more than policy. One thing that characterized him, was that when he was asked to do something he always looked at the bigger picture to see how it's connected to other things, how he can do it in a way that will influence not just the same place or people, but have a bigger impact in terms of the natural environment and also the social or the cultural environment. And I remember that he said that in Israel, in contrast to Europe for example, ideology is something very abstract, whereas in Europe when you speak about the gothic churches or the gothic ideology, it comes with a form that is very much connected to the theory. But in Israel, he always spoke about the two different ideologies that are basically

related to social forces or to political forces. One is the ideology of conquering the land, that he always put in the bigger context of the idea of conquering the land in the United States; and the other one is the ideology of preserving a mythical past. But these ideologies have no form, and because of that, the task of the architect or the landscape architect is to give form, to give shape to these ideologies, providing the designer with a lot of freedom, but also with a lot of responsibility.

I think that he ran the office not just as a practice that has to design and to meet deadlines and so on, but always put his work in a larger context of case studies in other places, of theories in landscape architecture. He made the office a very special place where people felt that they could not only develop as designers or as practitioners, but also grow as people, as human beings. When I taught at the Technion, I invited Shlomo several times to give lectures. And I have students up to this day, who tell me that this was really a changing point in their career. The way that he spoke about landscape architecture and the way that he connected it to engineering, ecology and to art, was very special for them and kind of a trigger for them to go places and always look for other examples and always read about other places.

BA: I have a question. Clarifying, you said that the idea of conquering the land, you're talking about Zionism in Israel?

NL: Yes, about Zionism in Israel, or the New Deal in the United States. The idea that men in a world that experienced progress in technology and rapid changes, the idea of conquering became some kind of a mission of conquering the land. I remember that in a way the last statement in his book "Making Peace with the Land", he basically spoke about it, that we have the power to change the land, but we also have the responsibility to do it right. I remember very well that he spoke about these two ideologies that, in a way, he found his own way to deal with, both the conquering of the land and dealing with progress, but also preserving the land, preserving the natural landscape and preserving the cultural heritage of this land. But when you think about it, these two ideologies come with no manual for design, they are very abstract. The way in which you give them form is very individual, and Shlomo in his time, now it's a bit different, but in his time, he was the only one that spoke about the void in theory or in clear methods or in writing in a way that the people can base their design and their approach on previous knowledge. And it's interesting for me that now you identify the same gap or the same void, and through your research, you are trying to fill this void. And he was the only one that I can think of that wrote about his work, put it in a bigger context, lectured about it, understood the importance of publishing, something that in academia we recognize, but in practice there are very few landscape architects that spend the time and give enough thought to the questions of why and how they do things. As far as I know, he was the only landscape architect that did it for several decades. Nowadays, when we have younger people that are more exposed to the outside world, it has changed a little bit. But even now, how many landscape architects write about their work?

BA: They post pictures on Instagram. The first part of my question is What represents the legacy of the office, the second part is Can you identify a difference in the designs of the office since Ittai and I took over the office?

NL: I'm going to look at something that I wrote about Shlomo when I suggested his candidacy to the "Emet prize", because I think that in a way it summarized his own legacy, but also his contribution to landscape architecture in Israel. So the first thing that I said was that Shlomo is an example of a fascinating combination between an intellectual ability, being very original and creative, but also the way that he put together theory and practice. But then I mentioned six points that in my opinion, characterize his legacy.

The first one is the way he viewed landscape architecture as a comprehensive field, one that actually should lead and connect other fields. His mentor for that was Olmsted, and in this way, he felt that landscape architecture is the one field that can really bridge engineering and art, or ecology and culture. And he followed the example of Olmsted, or Lenne in Germany in several projects that he did.

The second point was the way he introduced the agricultural landscape into landscape design, something that has two aspects: one, the recognition of the importance of the agricultural landscapes to the image and to the inner character of the Israeli landscape, and the idea that this is not just the color or the grid or the form, but that it carries cultural and symbolic meanings for the people of Israel. And in a way the idea of taking these characteristics and planting them into the urban landscape or near roads and intersections is something that is correct in terms of sustainability, but also preserves many layers in the Israeli collective memory.

Another point is that he was very attentive to the place that he was working in: in one way he was very much involved and aware of what's happening in the world, but he always looked at the site where he was working and tried to look for clues in geology, hydrology or in the visual character as a starting point for a design solution.

The way that he used abstraction as a design tool was

very sophisticated on the one hand, but very real and very clear on the other hand. Whether it's the water channel in Kreitman Plaza in the Beer Sheva University, or the idea of the Sherover Promenade; I remember that he described the Old City of Jerusalem as the equivalent to what is the sea or a river to European promenades. It's not often that a promenade is placed in the landscape in the way that the Sherover Promenade is, or the Contour Lines on the way to the Dead Sea. These attest to his unique ability to create a design language that takes or is born out of abstract ideas.

Two other points; I think that he was the first landscape architect in Israel that was very aware of ecological principles in landscape planning, and he identified the landscape of Israel as kind of an edge between the desert and the Mediterranean. He was very determined to highlight the qualities of being on the edge in terms of seasonal changes, in terms of understanding drought and dealing with it. I think that he was really trying to find the right solution; the right solution in terms of the context in which he worked. Now, we all, as landscape architects, say that we do it. But we don't always do it, not in terms of form, not in terms of the infrastructure, not in terms of vegetation. But I think that he was really searching for the balance between ideas of design and between what fits the place best. And in this regard, he was basically the one that made the change from the previous generation of landscape architects that came from Europe, from Germany, and aimed to create Europe in Israel in terms of green, water, and in terms of creating an oasis in this desolate landscape. Shlomo was the one that made the transition to a landscape which reflects much better the local environment and the local people and that responds to biblical sources and to historical remains. I can see it in the way that he created water features, it was with sensitivity to the local place; or when he used green vegetation, it was a different shade of green, it was not the European green, it was the Mediterranean green. I quote Martha Schwarz who said about him, "acting locally and thinking globally". I think that is a very good understanding of the way that he acted.

You asked me before about the change between the original Aronson and the next generation, your generation. I think that the original Aronson went through several stages. It was an office that every 10 years had a very different focus, so in a way I think that the developments of Barbara and Ittai are another stage, although it's a big jump. The previous transitions were more moderate and more of a continuation. Let's say, in history we speak about processes of change and processes of continuity. So, in the first 35 years the office developed with continuity, with minor changes of focus. And then, when you and Ittai took over, it was a process of change with continuity.

I never spoke to Shlomo about managing an office. I observed and I spoke with people that worked in his office, but they never spoke to him about whether he had some kind of a philosophy in running the office, other than the fact that he ran it as a studio that always had architects, landscape architects, geographers and other professionals, and I think that you are right that he followed the model of Larry Halprin. I think that you and Ittai are better managers than Shlomo was and can deal with more people and with more diversity in the office. I think that the idea that you are, not just now when you write your thesis, but I think that you are very knowledgeable and are invited to many places in the world, and actually this exposure to the world is much easier today than it was 50 or 40 years ago. And in this respect, if I'm trying to imagine which path Shlomo would have taken if he had had another 20 or 30 years. It would not have been identical to your path, but I think that he would be very proud of the work that comes out of the office now. And, again, it's strange because in the last years when I spoke to Shlomo he was on the one hand, very admiring of what you are doing, but on the other hand he didn't let go, he wanted to be in full control and he felt that it was still his work, even on projects that his involvement was very marginal at the time. In a way, he was very lucky that it was you and Ittai that continued his work because sometimes the second generation is not as capable or not as sensitive as the founder of the office. And sometimes what was is not what is now. And I don't want to give examples, but even in Israel we have some examples for that. So, I think that he really trusted you and he felt that the office is in good hands. But there are several of your projects that I think he would have felt lost in. You are doing them with a lot of confidence, but he would have felt that his input or his knowledge... that he could not have led in these projects. Shlomo was a leader, (and so are you), but when he could be a leader in places where he felt confident to put forward new ideas. And I think that today many of the projects require different knowledge and different compromises that I'm not sure he would feel comfortable with. In one of the exercises that I gave to my students I asked them to divide into two groups; one group was looking into your design of the Park of the Groves in Tel Aviv, and the other group was trying to guess what Shlomo would have done. They had to present two designs next to each other. It was a very interesting exercise, because the designs were different, but still, there were a lot of similarities. I think that if you had ended up in the United States, working in a different office, or in Germany in a different office, I think that you would be a different landscape architect. So, although your education is from the GSD, and you're a very capable designer and a very capable landscape architect, I think that there is a lot of Shlomo Aronson now in your blood, in your way of thinking.

BA: You said that you think there would be projects in the office today that Shlomo might feel less confident doing. What were you thinking about? Which project?

NL: I didn't think about specific projects. Maybe the train to Eilat is something that he would feel very frustrated about, because there are so many players, and although the landscape architect has a very central role, he's not the one that can make all the decisions. I also think that the role of technology and digital representations is something that came when he was still working in the office, but I think that he felt less comfortable with it. His ability to take a piece of paper and sketch something and then let other people develop it was much better than his ability to perceive a project on the computer screen, on AutoCAD. He had an inner way of feeling topography, to read the landscape, and he knew the landscape very well. It is something that I also see in school today, that the students are less familiar with the physical landscape and with the historical background, but they can still be very good students and very successful designers and very creative and very able in using advanced tools when looking at the landscape at large.

Shlomo really believed that you have to know the place you work in. I don't know very well the projects that he did outside of Israel, but I think that he felt less comfortable there, and in fact they are less known, or less representative of his vision. I'm trying to compare, for example, Peter Walker to Shlomo, and I think that there is a big difference between them, and this may explain why I think that he wouldn't be that comfortable today. The ability of Peter Walker to work in Dubai and Saudi Arabia and China and America on the same scales with the same philosophy, is something that Shlomo couldn't do because of his strong belief in the meaning of place, and in the intimate knowledge of the place. And I'm saying it in favor of Shlomo, not in favor of the global landscape. But I think that today, even in Israel, the exposure to global landscape architecture and the fact that there are less barriers or less connections to the place would make it difficult for Shlomo to adapt.

BA: I think it's also because it's not just us that are so exposed to these things, it's also our clients that come to us and say "we want the Highline", and they don't understand that you can't do the Highline in Israel. It's difficult for us to deal with it, it would be very hard for Shlomo to deal with it.

NL: That's what I was trying to say.

BA: If you believe that you should always conceive an idea from the local, it's very hard to get client satisfaction from somebody who wants prefabricated concrete and the level of excellence and maintenance that you will never get in Israel. That is one of the things I try very hard in the office, not to fall into global trends or use clichés when we do our work, although the pressure is there, both from the clients but also from the younger generation.

NL: That's what I'm saying. And I know that you are attuned to the place. But I also know that our students, when you look at their final projects, you see images with the same hot air balloons and birds that you see all over the world. I think that Shlomo would find this trend hard to adapt to. I think that you will stand up for what you believe in but at the same time also be open to other ideas, and to see the advantages or the way that you can use it to your benefit.

BA: I have one last surprise question for you. Nurit, if you would have to think of five projects that best represent ideas of the office, and not just of Shlomo, but also of the period that the office is in today, which five projects would you include?

NL: That's a tough question. I would say that I will try to take one project of each decade that I think represents Shlomo, and also has influenced the way we think about landscape architecture in Israel. So these don't represent necessarily my personal preference, but more an academic choice, maybe. Actually, I'll go from the present to the past. I think that as a project of the current office, I'll choose Herzliya Park, although there may be other projects that are now on the table that I'm not familiar with. The reason is that I think that in the Herzliya Park... it's a great park on many layers, the way it deals with the swamp and the ecological parts of the park.

I think that Herzliya Park is a great park on many levels, both in the way it responds to the natural swamp and the issues of the ground and the water level, and has been developed as an ecological park, but not a simple one: a very layered or sophisticated one. I think it's the big image of the park and the way that it works in terms of hierarchy, scales, while providing activities and services to young and all; and the connection to the city. In fact, it really changed the way that the people of Herzliya look at this place. I know that you have projects that are bigger and more expensive and more complicated: the train to Eilat and the Dead Sea Promenade and even the Park of the Groves, but I think that in terms of bringing real issues and solving them by design, Park Herzliya is a very good example of the landscape architect playing the major role or the lead role and managing to put all the other players under your wings.

For the project from the previous decade, or maybe kind of summarizing Shlomo's active participation in the practice, I think that the National Outline Plan, Tama 35, is the most

important project because of the way Shlomo viewed his role and his contribution to the project. And although it's in a way an abstract contribution because it's not a built design, I think that it changed the way people speak about landscape, and about landscape ensembles and cultural landscapes, and it's going to affect regional and national plans. His vocabulary is already part of the language, and it's on national scale, I mean it's not a project, it's about the country.

And then when I think about the projects, let's say of the '80s to '90s, it's basically all the famous projects: Suzanne Dellal Plaza and Kreitman Plaza, the Contour Lines on the way to the Dead Sea and the Sherover Promenade. It's maybe a very banal answer, but I still think that the Sherover Promenade is the project that brings together a lot of the things that Shlomo spoke about, both in terms of what's the idea of a promenade when it's not next to a seashore or a river, the use of the agricultural landscapes, the choreography of the view, design at its best. In this time period it's hard not to choose other projects.

Then in the '70s, and I'm really doing it by 70 to 80, 80 to 90 and so on, it has to be his work in Jerusalem. Again, I don't know if it's the best project, but I think the way that he accumulated impact on Jerusalem is very powerful. Both the original way that he treated the gates in Beit Shalom Park, with the archaeology, trying to study the language of Jerusalem, but giving it a modern interpretation. So this is the work in Jerusalem. And then, from the early work...

BA: I think that was the early work, Jerusalem was the early work. He came back to Jerusalem in 1967. It's true that the gate renovations were in '85.

NL: I think that his first two projects were the Judean Hills Master Plan and the road to the Dead Sea. I don't think that they're the most important projects by themselves, but through them Shlomo proved to himself, but also to the outside world, that landscape architects don't just do beautiful parks and gardens, but that they can have a very important role in national or regional projects. So I don't know if I'll mention them among the five projects, but I think that it's very unique for a person to come back and in the first five years of building a practice, to deal with three projects on regional and national scale: the road, the Judean Hills Masterplan, and the Masterplan for housing in Mevasseret Zion. When you think about it, most people, when they start an office, they take on very small projects, small in scale.

There are several projects that I love personally and I think they are very great projects. I actually didn't put here Beit Guvrin National Park. I was there last year, and I think that it's maybe the best national park in Israel, in terms of a national park that brings the landscape context into the design, and not just preserves historical or archaeological remains. I think both Beit Guvrin and the Caesarea Archaeological Park are great projects. The fact is that I go to the Tel Megiddo National Park only when I have guests from the United States and I have to show them around, but I go to Beit Guvrin and to Caesarea and Beit She'arim almost every year, just to be in a beautiful place, even if I don't go to visit a specific cave or specific theater, because they provide a richer experience beyond their archaeological finds. I have a personal attachment to Caesarea. It's a place that I love and I think that Shlomo managed to shift the focus of the intervention there in a way that made this project what it is, because the previous designers, Yahalom-Zur, focused on the attractions, on the theater and on the Crusader moat. But Shlomo was the one that put his finger on the fact that the chief player in Caesarea is the sea, and in a way the main effort there is not on the theater and the Crusader city, but on the space in between and the experience of walking along the sea. And it looks now very natural, especially when they found the hippodrome and all the other archaeological finds. Typically the landscape architect wants to focus on the archeological or the historical remains. In both Caesaria and Beit Guvrin there is a lot of attention to the landscape, but in Caesarea, also to the sea and to the experience of walking along the sea, and in Beit Guvrin to the outside landscape of the agrarian fields and of the natural forest, and they are a part of the overall picture. I mean, you're in the national park, but you are also in the Judean foothills. And, of course, I love and everybody loves, the Contour Lines along the road to the Dead Sea, but this is a brilliant design, something that happens once in a lifetime, it's not a regular project, and by the way, it's in terrible condition.

BA: Yeah, most of it was destroyed as part of the road widening.

NL: This is something that every time I go past, makes me smile and I must stop on the roadside and take a photograph before it disappears. Now, remind me of some projects that I forgot...

BA: No, but that's the point. I think that you as an academic and somebody who has been researching Israeli landscape architecture more than anybody in the country, I think that what you point at is something that is based on a lot of intuitive insight that you've gained over many years, so there are always other projects.

NL: Yes, but I forgot a project that I think is very important, the Sha'ar Hagai interchange. It's not just the design, it's the whole approach of changing the location of the intersection and the shift in the way that we look today at intersections and road design. It's not that I don't think

that the intersection looks great with the olives and the anemones, when they are blooming, but I think that the idea that the major road, an intersection, can be beautiful and can enhance the experience of going to Jerusalem, that is a real shift in thinking about the role of landscape architecture.

I'm trying to identify projects that changed the way we think about an ecological park, about landscape ensembles, about roads, about the historic preservation and about a promenade. I'm trying to identify not just the beautiful projects, because Shlomo has many beautiful projects and you have many beautiful projects. I took guests to the Dead Sea and they were speechless. But what I was trying to do is to identify the projects that I think changed the way that we look at things. And I remember that when Shlomo gave his series of lectures at the Hebrew University, and I participated in some of these lectures, he actually tried to identify themes in the work of landscape architecture, rather than just showing a beautiful project, and he always put it in the context of what's happening in the bigger world.

BA: That was very good, thank you very much. I think there's strength to not preparing, because it shows really the personal view but also really the most memorable things surface. Sometimes when we think too much about things and we're trying to cover everything, we're actually not able to identify the most important issues. I mean, you've been writing about his work, so there is the comprehensive look. But sometimes the conversations bring up the most important and significant issues.

NL: One thing that comes out every time that I think about Shlomo's projects is that many of them are very moving, very powerful, in a way that there are very few projects in the world that make me feel the same way. So, it's true that I'm also connected to this landscape and to this culture, to the story, so it means more to me. But in the GSD once there was a conference and several landscape architects were asked to state the five most influential projects in landscape architecture in the United States. And it was very interesting that there were different people on the stage, but they basically named very similar projects. One was Central Park, of course, and one was Levi's Plaza by Halprin and the fountain at the Science Center by Peter Walker. So, maybe they didn't say the same five, but there were, let's say, eight projects. If you go to a student at the Technion, I was even blamed for it, and you asked them "what are the most powerful five projects in Israel?", four of them would be Shlomo Aronson. I'm saying four because somebody may say a Yahalom-Zur project - Ben Gurion's Gravesite or the Valley of Communities, but I don't think any other projects. Whereas when they asked this question in the United States, you get five different designers.

BA: Well, it's a 'slightly' bigger country.

NL: But it's not just that. I really think that a lot of the projects that Shlomo did and projects that you do now can be in any list of international projects. It's true that the fellow that you brought from Portugal (Yoao Nunez); it was beautiful what he showed. Or Danish landscape architect Carl Theodor Sorensen, they are all very much connected to the place.

What are the five that you've listed?

BA: The ones that you said were all there. I started with 10 and my professor said it's too much, it's too ambitious. I should go down to much less. I think that we should actually also include a project that is now on the table, one that is not built, because it's an opportunity to investigate. I think that you've helped me make a decision of which ones to include. Thank you very much for this talk.

Marti Franch

BA=Barbara Aronson; MF=Marti Franch.
Date of conversation: Feb-06-2021.

BA: Hi, Marti. Thanks for joining me for this interview session. How long you have known the work of Shlomo Aronson Architects?

MF: I discovered Shlomo Aronson Architects' practice in 1999 during the first edition of the Biennale in Barcelona. I was looking for the best practitioners to invite as speakers to the Biennale, and I had spent much time in the library when I found this American publication about Shlomo Aronson's work [Making Peace with the Land]. It was a very powerful discovery. I felt, boom, that's it! I worked on this selection process with two other architects. Until then we had found mostly 'Northerners', all American or Northern European practitioners. Then I found Shlomo Aronson. Here was a landscape architect who was not only a 'Southerner' but also a 'Mediterranean'. He was doing all these impressive projects on the infrastructural scale. We invited him and he came and gave an inspiring lecture.

BA: You and I met in 2016 when we were jurors for the Ideas Competition for the Memorial Site at Babyn Yar in Kyiv. You have been familiar with our practice, and its lead designers, for more than 20 years. Could you make an attempt to answer the following question: What do you think constitutes the legacy of the office?

MF: For me, the legacy of Shlomo Aronson Architects is above all about the breach between landscape and infrastructure. At the time of the Biennale, the Negev Phosphate Works, the erosion control projects in the desert, the Jerusalem motorway junctions, and the afforestation plans were pioneering works in our field, all projects that you would not find in magazines, and not the types of projects that a landscape architect like me would be invited to work on. Now, when looking at the current work of your practice, I can see the continuation of this legacy, of working outside the limits of the discipline and crossing the standard definitions of traditional landscape architectural work. In the Nesherim interchange and the new housing planning schemes, I see this infrastructural, functional, practical approach, that cares about what really matters. You get involved influencing projects at the very beginning, and this gets back to your working at the infrastructural scale in an interdisciplinary mode. To me, this is very powerful. Unfortunately, our profession tends to focus on the iconic aspect of projects; what you see mostly in the media are very pretty universal designs, often lacking the depth of considering what matters beyond the project's borders or what is appropriate in a specific location. Your work shows a strong background in good engineering and ecology, and also design, but there are so many people doing nice designs, and so very few people doing good designs on large-scale projects where so many other considerations factor into the decision-making process. You also design beautiful benches, playgrounds, and details, but I think what is strong about Aronson is that you get to be there at the seminal early moments of the project and make relevant decisions at the policy-making level. We Southerners who work in dry countries, and I would include the Australians in that bracket, have very few relevant references to learn from: most of our references come from northern or richer countries. What I find in Aronson's work, and more recently, in Australian projects, is a kindred spirit of practitioners who work in similar environments and innovate in tough climate conditions. Considering climate change, it's clear that we are moving in the south more toward your climatic reality than to the Scandinavian one.

BA: Could you expand on that a little? Which types of projects of the office do you think were most influential, or set a standard for future reference in the profession at large? If you would have to choose one or two projects that Shlomo or we did, which one would you single out as something that made an impression on you?

MF: There is not one project that stands out above all others, but several from Shlomo's time, and three or four from recent years. I mean it: when I started eventually to teach, I really used them as references. One was the Negev Phosphate Works: I just couldn't believe that a landscape architect was working there. It showed the power of earth modeling. You could argue about whether the chosen shapes were a bit romantic, like saying that naturalistic forms work better than artificial ones, but to me, sculpting this massive engineering excavation was mind-blowing. This project and the erosion control projects in the Negev desert were exceptional: the idea of designing only by moving earth with very simple means, but also about understanding the workings of natural drainage in changing desert conditions. The other projects from this period, which can be linked to current projects, are the Jerusalem highway interchange [at Sha'ar Hagai], the one with so many olive trees; and the regional planning documents. These works are about using plantings that are more inspired by agriculture, not trying to be pretty and beautiful but to blend in and expand the scale. Not long ago, when we drove through your Nesharim interchange project, you had to point out to me that we were driving through the vast plantings of a transportation project. I mean, it just felt like the agricultural landscape of olive and carob tree groves came right up to us. This extensive way of using agricultural plantings is simple and unassuming, yet powerful. It expands the reading of the landscape beyond that of the actual intervention.

I can see in your current projects that water management continues to be a strong aspect of your work; I think it's a bit of an obsession for you. It can be traced way back to the erosion control projects, about taking advantage or enhancing ecological processes. The way you work with water includes a wide range of situations, managing what happens with nature, creating the conditions for nature to work, but also designing completely new places for people to enjoy water in a playful and exciting way; such as in the case of the water promenade that we visited in Modiin which is really a children's playground. I believe this is your part, that of Ittai and you, in evolving the legacy of the practice, improving it, making it more complex. I see that also in the stonework you are doing now and the way you understand its materiality. I mean, the passion for using natural stone clearly comes from Shlomo but I can see how its use is getting more refined. In both instances, it attests to the fact that you are not just sustaining the practice's legacy but that you are building on it. I find a sort of affinity with the way you design, that it's more about the location and the kind of spaces that you create and less about the detailing or the architectural moments.

I feel you are moving today towards urban conditions, working on massive urban planning projects, again involved right from the beginning. The work you're doing with Ari Cohen in Tel Aviv [Sde Dov] is very impressive to me: the way you are designing such large systems of new open spaces, at the same time considering their uses, character, water management, and future maintenance requirements. I think that this is indicative of the new era of Aronson. These urban development plans and the light rail projects in Jerusalem you are doing are immense projections into the future. There are not many landscape architecture offices in the world that get so close to working on such massive projects. It must be tough to get your priorities right, deal with so much information, and not lose track of your goals and the vision of the project as a whole. I see your concern for wellbeing: using pergolas and trees to provide shade, and the care you take to create quality microclimates. This precision and quality in the work in the urban projects can be seen in build projects, like the light sculpture and fountain in Modiin, modern in a very poetic way, still using natural stone in the details, very beautiful. I wanted to mention that. The Arazim Valley Park is another interesting example of this tension between the scales of planning, the continuity of the park, and moments of intensity. I think you're really moving a step ahead, in your country and within the profession at large. I am not sure if the earlier work from Aronson was so influential in that area. This is part of the new legacy of Aronson, and you are widening the path for others.

BA: So again, you have already answered the next question, which was about the differences in the designs during Shlomo's tenure and today, I think we can go on. I have told you that my interest in this research started out twofold. One is to reflect on what we did and how we did it. The other is to understand how we can convey what I learned, and what we learned collectively as a practice, over the 50 past years, to the younger generation in the office or possibly other architects in the country. In that respect, I would like to ask you:

What is your opinion on how important is knowledge exchange with the younger generation of architects in any office as a tool of innovation?

MF: For this question. I emailed you just before a very beautiful piece of text. Did you get it?

BA: Sure.

[*"Creativity is like an atmosphere that has to do with setting the conditions for the open, the conditions for failure, the conditions for the unfinished, the conditions for the distributed, for the different. Where the experiences and the energy of all the people involved in the process can be mobilized. It is something that has more to do with the ability to listen than with the ability to talk."* Antonio Lafuente · CSIC Sciences studies.]

MF: I have seen you at work in different situations for three or four days during my last visit to your office. From what I can tell, I think you do give room for innovation. Also now that we are collaborating [on the coastal park of Sde Dov], you create the conditions for new things to happen, for unexpected things to happen in your team. This is precious because you are probably at once in a position of great influence and under great pressure when entering large-scale projects at their conception stage, pressure from lobbyists and public figures who are making all these rules and statements, and financial pressure within the practice to manage the project in the right way. And so it's difficult in such conditions to create room for little mistakes, for youngsters to say possibly stupid things, for engaging somebody from another country to give an opinion. What defines innovation in the process? I think it has to do with persistence, hard work, having creative intuition, and working on it; but it has also to do with creating conditions for different things to happen. And I think that you do that very well.

BA: Let me ask you something: you are younger than me, and because of that, at a different stage in your career. You are approaching your peak period, but I would say that you haven't reached it yet, although you have already incredible achievements under your belt. I am not sure if you have experienced this feeling that people say you are doing wonderful work, but that, at the same time, you

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are having this nagging thought that you might just repeat yourself and not think about new ways of approaching designs or design problems. Do you see the younger generation in your practice as an important part of the design process, contributing innovative ideas that even you, as a relatively young designer, have not considered due to the many changes in the way we practice landscape architecture, and methods used in analyzing sites and creating designs? What is your view on it? What's your experience?

MF: Not easy to answer. I am very much relying on other people to not just present but to design and to do the projects. I have this feeling that I am mostly connecting things, but not spending real time drawing and planning. At this very busy moment in my practice, I have even less time to spend with the staff, counting more and more on their skills, intuitions, and their capacity to create. I don't know if this happens to you. So I try to plant the seeds of an idea into somebody's brain, hoping that it will spread following the initial intuition. I have these strange conversations with one particular person in my practice, who asks me: 'tell me what you want!' and I frequently answer, 'I don't know. I don't know what I want.' I guess what both of you and I do to find out what we want, is to sit with our teams, planting the seeds of our legacy, of our knowledge, in young people with more energy and more time, to focus on one single project. Your question is very good because it is about understanding how we innovate as a practice. I guess it is me and the team as an entity that is innovative. We are going through a similar process as you, getting more urban projects, an area where we don't have that much experience compared to other types of projects. We find ourselves often in a not-so-comfortable position, where the client and the people we collaborate with, expect us to have all the answers and be super confident. You asked me to talk about innovation, but I never think about our design process in terms of innovation itself. I would say it's about the degree of experimenting with new ideas, letting things happen, and creating conditions for trying out new stuff. I don't want to see my practice going always the easy way, but we also have to deal with money concerns. When you struggle at times, you know how to do things fast. It is a necessary part of facing the business aspects of the practice. On the other hand, innovating is always time-consuming, risky, and it doesn't help the practice in a general way. I am going to add another thought, maybe a little strange. When you look today at Instagram, you see these new practices, who produce very distinct drawings, which I find at the same time beautiful and very hard to understand. Is this part of the path they are following to get their amazing commissions? I wonder if am I getting a bit out of touch with the realities of our profession because these young practitioners certainly work very differently from us. So I am not sure if we are innovating anymore.

BA: I hope we're still innovating, but how we promote ourselves is a new thing. Some young businesses post twice or three times a week on Instagram and are active on all kinds of social media platforms, putting themselves at the center of popular discourse. I've seen this in Israel, young practices receiving commissions because they convey this vibe that everybody is now looking for: to have social issues on your main agenda, to be interested in public participation, to work on installations and instant urban interventions that look fantastic, but might really fall apart after a couple of years. This is also part of municipalities and politicians asking for fast, visible results that help them in the next election. All of this is out there and we have to decide on how much we want to be part of this approach. On the new platforms of social exchange, we need to learn how to present ourselves in a way that represents our design philosophy, our way of working, and creating. There are always conflicting interests between making money, being true to ourselves, and continuing to be innovative and progressive in our designs.

MF: Let me ask you the same question that you asked me, so I can get an advance on your PhD insights. In your opinion, how important it is the exchange with the younger generation of architects in your practice as a tool of innovation?

BA: I think it is very important. Sure, it is sometimes hard to take what they are saying. Their comments feel occasionally aggressive, critical of things that we have been doing so far; but it is because their vantage point is different from ours, because of the changes that are happening in our society here, but also on the global stage. That is a good reason for listening to them, and that's part of this citation that you sent to me, to be open to what others have to say. It is extremely important not to automatically respond with 'it will never work', 'that won't work because we didn't manage to build it correctly in the last project', and 'they won't be able to maintain it'. Exactly because of their different point of view and their inexperience, the younger professionals push us to be courageous, the way we were as young practitioners, and, when talking about myself, the way I was courageous in pushing design agendas that were very not proven at the time. What happens little by little is that we become more cautious, that we bear scars from projects that did not work out. And so we dismiss things categorically based on these bad past experiences. One of the things I am telling myself in this last year, as I am standing next to myself, talking to these younger people, is: I'm not going to immediately say 'no', I am going to take the time to digest what they are saying. Relating to what you have been saying about being totally dependent on the young

architects to work on all the different computer programs and to work with GIS, is especially true for the large-scale, complex projects: it is their knowledge of new technical skills which enable us *all* to be inventive and explorative; We still have this incredible advantage of being able to do sketches and to produce very fast vignettes of our ideas, but this will take us only so far. It is clear that we're not just looking at them as a source of professional labor but as a source of inspiration in terms of their thinking, and about the new methods that we employ in our designs, and that is something that is advancing the practice in a very positive way.

MF: Very interesting. I was just taking notes myself. I am going to say just one more thing. Creating conditions for exchange is a beautiful thing: I have seen it here, and think this is a genuinely nice landscape attitude. And I am going to say something else, I could be wrong, and you never would have mentioned that, but I think you are a very influential female landscape architect. It should not matter, but it is true. I mean, how many women planners are in such influential positions? You do things that women are often good at, you know how to listen, manage time, and to let people participate and not take it personally. I think this is part of the legacy. You say that the young generation is courageous and that they are extremely important, and I say in your way of working you give room for that! Our recent collaboration in Sde Dov shows your unusual generosity, and I don't think it is only towards me, but that it must be also part of the work with your staff, and I am sure this generosity, or polyphonic attitude towards creating, will pay off in terms of innovation.

BA: The research has definitely crystalized some of the answers to my questions, things we feel instinctively, but the busier you are, the less you find the time for creating these conditions that we talked about. What I found out by talking to the staff, and lately, by working with them in a conscious effort to engage them, is that they are sponges ready to absorb as much knowledge as possible from us, but also how much I can learn from them, how much any given project can profit from our creative discourse. That is one of the very important things I am taking away from my reflection on the practice, on our work.

MF: What you are saying is very nice, and encouraging. In itself, this is a piece of knowledge. The way you explain it, I haven't heard it expressed in these terms. I think you are creating knowledge by acknowledging that, and if you find a way to make it explicit not only to your staff, but to others outside your practice, then you will have achieved something.

BA: Thank you very much for this informative interview and frank conversation. As usual, it was a pleasure talking to you.

MF: Thank you very much.

Dr. Nachum Fossfeld

BA=Barbara Aronson; NF=Nachum Fossfeld.
Date of conversation: Feb-10-2021.

BA: Hello Nahum. Please describe your job to me.

NF: I am a founding partner of a consulting firm called Ergo Management Consulting. Our company is engaged in the field of Management Consulting and accompanies large and medium-sized organizations in Israel that are undergoing a process of change. The advice we provide to clients is a combination of management advice, operational advice, and organizational advice. In every change process, organizations need to address two main matters that are extremely important for the success of the change and that must be coordinated. One element is the industrial engineering aspect that deals with work processes, pressures from overloads, technology, information systems, etc. The other element is organizational psychology, which deals with the process of implementing change amongst employees, handling resistance, motivation, knowledge management, knowledge preservation, ergonomics, etc. I specifically lead the consultancy in the field of organizational psychology.

The issue of preserving the knowledge of an employee who has played a significant role in the organization and has accumulated much experience and knowledge over a significant period of time [in the following referred to as the expert], is a classic challenge that plays a part in the changes that organizations are going through. When such a person leaves, the organization undergoes a process of change, and the greater the experience and more unique the knowledge held by the departing expert, the more significant the process of change. In such a case, it is very useful for the organization to do an orderly and professional process of preserving knowledge for that person.

BA: Maybe you can give an example of a process that you have been through with a specific person who was very important in a company and was intending to leave or approaching retirement.

NF: The process begins not with the expert but with the general organizational framework that revolves around him. I start by meeting with the client, who is usually the CEO of the organization or another senior manager, such as a human resources manager, who was in charge of the expert who is leaving. Our firm is typically hired because an organization realizes that the expert's loss could pose a significant risk to the efficient running of the business, and feel the need to minimize the damage by conducting a knowledge retention process. I try to understand the issues about which the expert has unique and important knowledge from the manager's perspective, and whether this knowledge is also unique only to the expert, or whether similar knowledge can be found in other employees as well. At this stage I begin to put together with the client a relationship map of the expert and his colleagues, identifying the personnel in the organization with whom the expert had significant working relationships, and in what situations would they approach him with requests for professional knowledge, information, helpful advice, problem-solving strategies, etc. There are organizations in which I recommend doing an additional quick survey, using a questionnaire that I develop specifically for the organization, and distributing it to the main staff who have been in close contact with him: they may be his managers, his colleagues, and also subordinates to him. Through the questionnaire, I ask them to write down the subjects of knowledge and information which he was for them the best and only professional address.

The survey and initial identification of the expert's knowledge relationship map are the starting point. This network of contacts usually includes between four to eight employees for whom the expert's retirement may create a problem of missing knowledge for them.

Capturing the different types of knowledge that the expert embodies is of great importance. The more concrete the knowledge is, the easier it is to identify it and then to make a decision on how it can be preserved. If knowledge is more abstract and approaches levels of more strategic thinking, it is more complex and requires more thought about how it can be preserved.

To improve my understanding of the retiring expert and heighten our ability to identify the details of the knowledge we should document, I often propose to do a series of trilateral meetings. Each meeting includes the expert, me as a consultant accompanying the process, and one of the employees included in the network of contacts. The purpose of these sessions is to identify more accurately the types of relevant knowledge that interests each of these employees, or "internal clients". My role in these meetings is to help the expert and the remaining employee to accurately identify the type of information relevant to the interaction between them during their years of working together.

Two parameters are important to clarify in these meetings, so that we do not invest effort and money in preserving knowledge that is better and more systematically presented elsewhere, in which case, no one will bother to use the products of the knowledge preservation work we have done. One is to determine if other people in the

organization possess the same knowledge, in which case the value of the expert's knowledge drops drastically. Another is to determine if his knowledge appears in professional literature or can be studied in courses. If his knowledge is not unique, the organization will quickly find a way to continue working and succeed without him.

I ask the participating employee to try to explain in what situations he/she needs the expert, on what occasions does he/she contact him because he is the only source of information? Are there "emergencies" that only the expert knows how to give judicious advice on, about how to solve problems? What kind of knowledge does the employee expect to receive? Does anyone else in the organization have similar knowledge? Is this knowledge not found in professional literature or one of the procedural guidelines written in the organization? Can it be extracted from academic sources? Exploring these questions helps identify the knowledge that is unique to the expert, and to discover the ways to document it and make it accessible to those who need it.

Up until here, I have described the initial mapping process. This stage can be completed within 1-2 weeks, depending on the time the employees can devote to this purpose. After I finish this clarification process and established that the employee possesses unique knowledge, understood his network of contacts and the types of knowledge worth harvesting, I can proceed with the expert to talk about the list of concrete topics assembled during the trilateral meetings. We then arrange the topics according to their perceived importance, because the budget or time at our disposal does not always allow us to address all issues. Sometimes, we turn for clarification to one of the "internal clients" to explain exactly what his/her need is for certain types of knowledge in order to find the optimal solution for the preservation of that knowledge. Quite often the expert refers to a certain piece of knowledge that he views as "trivial", without realizing that it is really of great value to other employees in certain situations. The process of working through all issues helps both of us to accurately identify the critical knowledge worth saving.

I help the expert understand what I'm looking for by asking him about what the main tasks in his job are, followed by more indirect questions, such as "What process would you go through?" "What questions would you ask?", and while we are speaking, we manage to identify interesting and relevant pieces of knowledge. This process is similar to casting a fishing line into the water to catch fish, and from time to time an item of information or a particular element of knowledge is caught on the fishing rod, which helps define its relevance to preserving knowledge. Typically at this stage, the expert understands the added value of the process and even begins to get excited about it. He also realizes that this is an opportunity for him to leave his knowledge as his legacy to the organization. Recording the details of the expert's knowledge in a dedicated knowledge management system provides the opportunity to give credit to the expert that will remain within the organization as time goes by.

Additional questions are aimed to elicit the expert's sources of knowledge: "Where did you acquire this knowledge that allowed you to know what you know about this?" "What big and significant projects within the organization have you done that has given you the opportunity to develop in this field?" "Are you familiar with professional literature, databases, or any other place where there is knowledge to be found relevant to this topic, which is worth recording so that other employees can also reach it?" "In cases of emergency or professional catastrophe - who was the person in the organization you would contact?" "Who was the person in Israel to whom you would turn on this issue?" "Who was the person in the world you would seek advice on this subject because he is a great expert on the specific subject, and you know him, and he knows you, and he will also agree to assist if necessary?" Every serious professional has "professional secrets" which include a network of contacts in Israel and abroad, experts he consulted with in person or over the phone during his years of work. Sustaining and nurturing this network of contacts to the organization is an important element in the preservation of knowledge. It's not enough to record technical information about these contacts but to provide personal introductions. For example, to show the employee who is replacing the expert that on such or such a subject he can contact "Yankele Schuster" in Miami in the United States, who is a global expert on this issue but to also introduce his name to the foreign expert, increasing the chance that "Yankele Schuster" will help him if necessary. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't…I then go through a similar process with the employees who worked with the expert. In the end, I "cross-reference" the information I received from everybody and identify the knowledge that is most valuable in preserving the retiring expert's know-how. A final report documents all findings in an orderly manner. Part of this report is a presentation of the "job structure" of the expert. It is shaped like a "tree", with several "branches" splitting off from each subject. This helps those who read the report can quickly find the relevant topics they are interested in.

I want to clarify something. I usually work with a specific person. I have a feeling you are asking about knowledge management on the organizational level, relevant for your landscape architectural office.

BF: I think it all comes from the situation wherein Ittai and I plan to retire from the office at some point in time, and

we are thinking about the processes we need to install to get to the point where those who inherit the firm can do it optimally. This includes thinking about the documentation of our knowledge.

NF: Are you talking about written knowledge?

BA: No, not just. The problem of any organization is the transfer of explicit knowledge, something that can be documented, and that of tacit knowledge. For architects, there are things that we can write down and there are learning opportunities that we create around us, for example, when inviting people from all kinds of roles in the practice, and with different seniority, to participate in brain-storming sessions, for them to 'see' how we think, how we promote a solution with pencil on paper. I think there are two levels for us to deal with knowledge assessment, documentation, and knowledge transfer of it.

NF: I understand what you are saying. You're talking about knowledge that is at different levels of concretization, the knowledge that is pertinent to designing projects. You are dealing with very large projects and small ones, and different project typologies. The basic level of knowledge retention at the organizational level is a document management system, into which are entered all documents that enter the organization and those that are put out from the organization. Do you have a system like this in your organization?

BA: No.

NF: Today's document management systems have a lot of flexibility and are also able to classify the document, for example by how crucial it is, its relative level of importance, the areas in which the document deals, and so on. If you start working with such a system, and in the ongoing work you are talking about in the future, you will have a lot more documents lying on shelves or boxes than today. The question you have to ask yourself is, do you have the time and budget today to take all these documents, go through them, do what's called "indexing".

These types of systems address the company's procedural and managerial business needs, which include documents with a more bureaucratic businesslike nature, and I assume that these documents are less interesting to you in connection with the topic of our conversation. When you manage to cope with the challenge of integrating a document management system – you will have a good organizational infrastructure that enables knowledge management, as well as the preservation of knowledge, and the organization has taken a very big step forward. From this moment on, employees will be able to retrieve material dealing with a particular topic relatively easily, for example, a seaside promenade project, and see how similar projects of this type have been handled in the past, special challenges in such projects, how they were handled, etc. Also, employees will be able to retrieve relatively easily professional/ theoretical material that deals with aspects of professional thinking relevant to this type of project, which was developed and written by the leading professional manager in the past.

It is possible, of course, to make a specific organizational effort to preserve the knowledge of a particular person without a document management system, but then this effort will be specific to the subject, a one-time job, and requires planning and execution of a different kind.

BA: I think that the direction of implementing a management system is only partially relevant to our field. We write very little about what we are doing, and the translation into action of what you are saying is about making sure that there is a full record of the whole process, including drawings and a variety of other means we need to examine. The written word plays a very small part, it is scant in our processes. There is no one list of actions to follow, that will guarantee the success of our next design for a sea promenade. I think it's very interesting what you said, about the processes and the question that's so basic: what knowledge is really relevant to preserve so that it may be passed on to the next generation of employees, and we should focus on that. I think it's fantastic.

NF: When you say what knowledge is relevant, to me that's the most basic and important question. If you manage to crack it then you have taken a very big step forward. For starters, I want to point out that knowledge has different levels of concretization. There is very concrete, pertinent knowledge, which is relatively easy to find if you do orderly document management. What interests you in particular, as I understand it, are the less concrete and most abstract types of knowledge. Let's talk now about project management. I assume that you have projects whose work is essentially technical, where it is more or less clear what steps need to be done, and what the expected output at each stage looks like. But more complex projects require strategic or abstract thinking, and the success of the project is contingent on having someone like you, your partner, and maybe two or three senior designers, create the vision and direct the process of how such a project should be realized. It is this knowledge, based on experience and talent, that is so very critical to an organization like yours, and so very difficult to convey to others. I can understand that the way to preserve this kind of knowledge in your organization is not by you sitting down and writing a 100-page article, because it's very difficult and no one will read it anyway. For you, the way is probably to try and discover the exact methods that can

explain your thought processes. You will have to identify the main challenges and steps, position them in the right order, and create some kind of rational flow. Even then, it won't be 100% but it will start to give employees some idea of what they're up against in the profession.

BA: The more I progress with my research, the more I identified this specific type of knowledge as something very valuable, and certainly working in the PhD framework deals with the non-verbal description and teaching of tacit knowledge, with 'translating' our ideas into planning, into something that other people can understand. Together with this, the sum of our accumulated knowledge is also based on the knowledge that we acquired from other people, or which we read about. All these layers of knowledge assemble the total picture, all of which has to be unraveled and understood. This conversation is very helpful in understanding what we can do inside our office to ask ourselves the right questions.

NF: Today you have meetings in your office designed to enrich the creative knowledge of your employees, especially the junior ones of course, in which you expose them to the thought processes of an expert like you. How do you start doing it?

BA: Finding the answer to your question is part of the process that I'm going through right now. If I could give you an answer it would mean that I found the right method or way to explain our way of creating, which I haven't, yet.

This conversation with you has offered me a starting point for assessing and understanding the breadth of our knowledge. Thank you.

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09 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND CREDITS

09.01 Bibliography
09.02 Image Credits
09.03 Ethics Approval

"I discovered Shlomo Aronson Architects' practice in 1999 during the first edition of the Biennale in Barcelona. I was looking for the best practitioners to invite as speakers to the Biennale, and I had spent much time in the library when I found this American publication about Shlomo Aronsons's work [Making Peace with the Land]. I felt, boom, that's it! [...] I worked on this selection process with two other architects. Until then we had found mostly 'Northerners', all American or Northern European practitioners. Then I found Shlomo Aronson. Here was a landscape architect who was not only a Southerner', but also a 'Mediterranean'. He was doing all these impressive projects on the infrastructural scale. "

Marti Franch (2021, appendix, p.293), founder of Catalan practice EMF

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09.03 Ethics Approval

College Human Ethics Advisory Network (CHEAN)
College of Design and Social Context (DSC)
NHMRC Code: EC00237

Notice of Approval

Date:	**5 December 2019**	
Project number:	**CHEAN B 22514-10/19**	
Project title:	**'Toward the Future of a Practice: Understanding the Fundamentals of its Legacy.'**	
Risk classification:	**Low risk**	
Chief investigator:	**Dr Charles Anderson**	
Status:	**Approved**	
Approval period:	From: **5 December 2019**	To: **1 November 2021**

The following documents have been reviewed and approved:

Title	Version	Date
Risk Assessment and Application Form	3	03.12.2019
Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form	3	03.12.2019
Recruitment Advertisement	1	03.12.2019

The above application has been approved by the RMIT University CHEAN as it meets the requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (NHMRC, 2007).

Terms of approval:

1. **Responsibilities of chief investigator**
   It is the responsibility of the above chief investigator to ensure that all other investigators and staff on a project are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure that the project is conducted as approved by CHEAN. Approval is valid only whilst the chief investigator holds a position at RMIT University.
2. **Amendments**
   Approval must be sought from CHEAN to amend any aspect of a project. To apply for an amendment, use the request for amendment form, which is available on the HREC website and submitted to the CHEAN secretary. Amendments must not be implemented without first gaining approval from CHEAN.
3. **Adverse events**
   You should notify the CHEAN immediately (within 24 hours) of any serious or unanticipated adverse effects of their research on participants, and unforeseen events that might affect the ethical acceptability of the project.

I:\Human Ethics_RM\HE_DSC\2019 Applications\22514 - C Anderson\DSC CHEAN B 22514-10-19 -A-Prof C Anderson - Notice of Human Research Ethics Approval.docx

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