

1960s ISRAELI ARCHITECTURAL DISCOURSE ON MORPHOLOGY

Alona Nitzan-Shiftan

During the Sixties the interest in morphology pervaded both academy and practice in Israel and sustained its cutting edge export of architectural knowledge to publications worldwide. Paradoxically, the enthusiasm with morphology served contradictory trends within post W.W.II architectural culture at large. On the one hand it adhered to a challenge B.Fuller and R.Banham posed to the architectural community to further radicalize the achievements of the Modern Movement by exhausting new technologies and scientific research, even to the point of changing the disciplinary rules of architecture. Rebellious efforts such as A.Neumann to break apart orthogonal architecture used morphology to support and order cutting edge architectural production geared toward international audience. On the other hand, a new generation of Israeli born architects found in the growing international attention to vernacular architecture an echo to their own will to become of the place, a place whose architectural language was drawn thus far from the European avant-garde. Understanding morphology as a revealed order rather than invention, it was now set to discover hidden order in a seemingly chaotic vernacular environment. Such efforts to bring morphology into the vernacular domain were done both in the academy, as in the work of A.Vachman, or in practice, where Safdie, for example, combined the lessons he learned from D'arcy Thompson with those of P.Rodufsky to devise a new prefabricated habitat.

This paper intends to explore contradictory trends within the morphological research and production of 1960s Israeli architecture, especially those, which pertain to the tension between academy and practice. It will examine the underlying themes connecting form and social order. Examining the architectural enthusiasm with morphology against social, cultural and political development in 1960s Israel, it will question whether the preoccupation with morphology was an escape into a world of forms, or whether it was a search into a hidden order of social and political dimensions.