

Sites *The Magazine*



www.idekel.co.il

Yehuda Dekel Library
The Council for Conservation of Heritage Sites in Israel



**The Council for
Conservation of
Heritage Sites in Israel**

Change and Adaptation in the Conservation Process

One of the most agreed upon principles of conservation is that of minimal intervention. It is based on the admission that any physical intervention could damage a cultural heritage property, even when aimed at restoration, renovation, or adaptation to a current purpose. Moreover, this potential damage could indirectly affect the values for which the property was recognized as worthy of conservation in the first place.

The English language offers different terms for different scopes of intervention (preservation/conservation), but in Hebrew existing terminology does not yet differentiate between the two meanings and their implications for the decision-making process.

The term preservation denotes minimal intervention, with the primary aim of stabilizing the property and preventing its further physical deterioration. It is used in conjunction with the state of the property at the time of listing or at a specific point in the past. On the basis of detailed study and documentation, this condition guides all works of intervention and preservation. In comparison, the term conservation extends beyond the physical preservation of a property, to encompass the values that make it significant. These values are dynamic and relative, varying with the social and cultural perceptions of their era. This is important: a property that represents values no longer seen as significant is susceptible to damage and destruction, while one whose values are perceived as ongoing is more likely to survive.

The activity known as conservation has a significant advantage over that known as preservation. When we add to the principle of Minimal Intervention that of usability and function – the survival of the property listed for conservation is guaranteed. The two principles do not contradict but rather reinforce one another, supporting and encouraging the adaptation of a listed property to a new purpose, based on careful consideration of its tangible and cultural values.



The "Children's Community" at Kibbutz Mishmar Haemek: Back to The Big House

Ruth Liberty-Shalev

This article describes the process of renovating the Big House, a modernistic, iconic building constructed between 1933 and 1937 at Kibbutz Mishmar Haemek, as the first educational institution of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi. The conservation and reuse of the House, which was completed in Fall 2017, included a decision-making process that involved many of the kibbutz members and incorporated "objective" pragmatic considerations of cost-effectiveness alongside "subjective" considerations related to the values ascribed to the building as one of the most significant institutions of the Hashomer Hatzair movement.

Since its construction in the 1930s – through the ups and downs of the kibbutz movement, the eventual abandonment of the building in the 1990s, and until its present renewal by means of change and repurposing – the Big House has continued to reflect the changing values of the community that built it, and to shape its evolving image. In response to the modernist claim that every generation must free itself of the chains of the past and create new structures that fit its times, this article will argue that the historical structure as a symbol, even if controversial, is a powerful tool in supporting the evolving identity of a community in flux, and creating a physical and symbolic axis around which different generations can gather and define themselves, time and again, as a community.

Keywords: kibbutz, education, Joseph Neufeld, modernism



Figure 1. The Educational Institute of Hashomer Hatzair at Kibbutz Mishmar Haemek. Zoltán Kluger, December 1938. Source: Government Press Office

Preface

Every architect knows that the busiest decision-making junction in any conservation project is that between the material and the intangible. It is that point where the need to intervene in the physical matter of an object, with all the richness of its more or less authentic tangible components, meets the meanings, values, and symbols enveloped in it, hanging on its walls like drops of dew on a spider web. With a careless move or an unnecessary blow, the web is torn and the drops disappear. In a perfect world, the conservation process would allow us to leave everything in its original place, adding and changing without damaging anything. But in reality, the

conservation process is often, clearly and intrinsically riddled with conflict. For example, the renovation of a historical building and its repurposing to an effective, living, and functioning structure usually involve removing original material and adding new segments, changing the proportions of space, or replacing obsolete functions.

This inner contradiction is exacerbated in the case of modernist buildings that were designed according to the functionalist model, which values above all efficiency and compatibility to purpose and era. Following the *Manifesto of Futuristic Architecture* (1914), Sant-Elia's statement that "our houses will last less time than we do, and each generation will have to make its own"

(Benham, 1967, p. 135), and Le Corbusier's declaration that "styles are a lie [...] our own epoch is determining, day by day, its own style" (Le Corbusier, 1931, p. 3), defining a modernist building as "heritage" worthy of conservation is paradoxical. If the compatibility between the modernist object and the purpose for which it was created has eroded, why should it be conserved? What is the "heritage" that justifies a compromise of functionality and utility?

This article describes the process of conserving and repurposing the Big House at Mishmar Haemek, an iconic modernist building constructed from 1933 to 1937 as the first educational institution of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi. The different stages of the design process were guided by a series of public consultations with kibbutz members, and embraced "subjective" considerations associated with the values and significance ascribed to the building, as well as pragmatic "objective" considerations of cost-effectiveness. The renovated Big House was inaugurated in the fall of 2017 as the kibbutz administration offices, central library and archive.

Since its erection in the 1930s, during in the heyday of the kibbutz movement, through ideological decline and gradual abandonment of the building during the 1990s, and up to its current revival, the Big House continues to reflect the values of the community that built it, and at the same time to shape the image of an evolving society.

Background

'Kibbutz' is a social community settlement which emerged in Palestine in the early twentieth century. The first kibbutz (Degania) was founded in 1909, but most of the kibbutzim in Israel were established after the First World War, mainly in the period 1921-1948. Their founders were mostly young radicals from Russia and Poland, who wanted to create a new society in a new country, free of the chains of the European bourgeoisie. In its early years, the kibbutz movement grew rapidly, and by the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, its pioneering members accounted for 8% of the entire population. In the 1960s and 1970s, the influence of the kibbutz movement was at its peak, producing a significant

number of political leaders who greatly influenced the national agenda. The kibbutzim were considered the ideological elite of the budding Israeli society, fulfilling the national Zionist task both in theory and in practice.

Kibbutz Mishmar Haemek was the second kibbutz of Hashomer Hatzair, a Zionist youth movement founded in Galicia, Poland in 1913. As embodied in Hashomer's "Ten Commandments", the movement aspired to create a "new Jew," who would be faithful to "Shomer values" that rebelled against the "decadent" life in the Diaspora. The ultimate goal of the graduates of Hashomer Hatzair was to physically participate in the establishment of a new society,¹ in the Land of Israel, and so from 1920 onwards, dozens of these young, idealistic pioneers began pouring into the country.

In 1922, Kibbutz A of Hashomer Hatzair (Beit Alfa) was founded, and the same year a decision was made to found Kibbutz B, which after its establishment in 1926 was called Mishmar Haemek. By 1927, three additional kibbutzim were founded (Merhavia, Ein Shemer, and Maabarot), and in April that year it was decided that these kibbutzim (except for Beit Alfa, which joined later) would unite into a kibbutz movement to be known as the Hakibbutz Ha'artzi – Hashomer Hatzair (Paltek, 1989, p. 3). At the end of the 1920s, then, Mishmar Haemek was part of a small network of kibbutzim whose members were in their late twenties, and some of them had children. How to educate the next generation had become a relevant question, which occupied a considerable portion of the discourse on the future of kibbutz society.

The Children's Community

Progressive education methods that viewed the role of the children as active partners in their own education were spreading at the time in Europe and United States,² and had a strong influence of the radical young pioneers. In Palestine of the time, the socialist, rebellious ideology of the pioneers was merged with the Zionist ideology. It was clear that "kibbutz society cannot use educational methods, ways of teaching, and concepts that are borrowed from the materialist regime

¹ For a concise explanation of the terms "community" and "society" in early kibbutz ideology, see Bar Or (2010).

² Examples include the progressive schools based on the teachings of Cecil Reddie (1858-1932) in England (beginning in 1889) and the teachings of John Dewey (1859-1952) in the United States (beginning in 1896); the Montessori schools (beginning in 1907) based on the teachings of Maria Montessori (1870-1952) in Italy; the Waldorf schools (beginning in 1919), based on the teachings of Rudolph Steiner (1861-1925) in Germany, and so forth.



Figure 2. The Fourth Commandment. Hashomer Hatzair Commandments, Shraga Weil, 1946. Source: Yad Yaari Research and Documentation Center

(Shapira, 1948, p. 64). Thus, the "new person" that the Zionist and kibbutz education would produce had to be a committed individual in a productive, cooperative, and egalitarian society: healthy in body and mind, educated and broad-minded, honest and just, acquainted with and appreciative of nature, attentive to the needs of society and others, and eager to cooperate in the spirit of human solidarity.

All branches of the kibbutz movement aspired to transform society through the education of the young generation, but as early as the 1920s, disagreements emerged regarding the nature of this education. In Hever Hakvutzot and Hakibbutz Hameuchad,³ it was

generally believed that education should be based on maximum integration of the young people in the existing adult social systems. In comparison, Hakibbutz Ha'artzi adopted the idea of a "children's community": an independent educational institution located outside of a kibbutz community, where children and teenagers live in dormitory conditions and conduct an autonomous society, free from real kibbutz responsibilities and from the influences of adults. In the book published by educators at the Institution in 1948 and in the writings of Shmuel Golan,⁴ the idea of the children's community was described as follows:

The behavior and habits of the child are a mirror of the values that the kibbutz creates and conveys to the growing generation . . . but the creative powers of youth are likely to reach their peak only in their independent "state," in distance from the direct personal influence of adult kibbutz members (Shapira, 1948, p. 69).

The children's community is based on recognition that if they are allowed to live full lives according to their needs, without coercion, children and teenagers have a powerful desire to organize their lives on healthy and logical foundations. They are willing to unite with the purpose of developing their lives, their home, their project . . . The collective conscience, which is not the fruit of external authority, but rather evolves in the course of a struggle of the self over the substance of life that is worthy of respect and identification with the moral and cultural values of the adult society, leads to an inner discipline in the hearts of the youth and imposes the rule of social and national, political and class-related, educational, ethical and esthetic values fitting of a civilized person of our times. (Golan, 1961, p. 178).

In 1928, the education committee of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi began working to establish a separate educational

³ In 1927, two kibbutz movements, Hakibbutz Ha'artzi – Hashomer Hatzair and Hakibbutz Hameuchad, were founded. In 1929, another kibbutz movement, Hever Hakvutzot Vehakibbutzim, was established. The three movements differed in their source of membership. Hakibbutz Ha'artzi was fed only by its youth movement; Hakibbutz Hameuchad, by all the youth movements; and Hever Hakvutzot, mainly by the Gordonia movement. They also differed in the models of kibbutz they aspired to (the "organic Shomer kibbutz," "the big collective," and "the small collective," respectively), and their party affiliation (Hakibbutz Ha'artzi – Hashomer Hatzair was politically unaffiliated; Hakibbutz Hameuchad identified with Ahdut Avoda, and later Mapai; and Hever Hakvutzot, with Hapoel Hatzair and later Mapai).

⁴ One of the leaders of the Hashomer Hatzair movement and founders of the collective education project of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi – Hashomer Hatzair.

institution for the children of Hakibbutz Ha'artzi (Paltek, 1989, p. 13). Several reasons led to the decision to locate the educational institution near Kibbutz Mishmar Haemek, one of them the simple fact that this kibbutz had the largest number of children – 18 out of 46 children in Hakibbutz Ha'artzi in 1929 (Paltek, 1989, p. 11). After the institution's location was settled, the young architect Joseph Neufeld (1898-1980) was commissioned to design a building to house it.

The Architect

Joseph Neufeld was born in Poland in 1899 and immigrated to Israel with Hashomer Hatzair in 1920. Like other pioneers from the youth movements, at first he worked in road construction. By 1921-1923, he was employed in the office of the architect Joseph Berlin in Tel Aviv, and following that decided to return to Europe to study architecture. Upon completing his studies in Vienna in 1926, he apprenticed for about three years in Erich Mendelsohn's office in Berlin, and then (until 1932) with Bruno Taut in Berlin and Moscow (Metzger-Szmuk, 1994, p. 312).

In 1932, Neufeld returned to Palestine and set up his own office in Tel Aviv. He began working on various public commissions,⁵ and at the same time, undertook extensive public activity. With Arieh Sharon and Ze'ev Rechter, he founded the well-known Architects' Circle and its architectural monthly, *Building in the Near East*.⁶ Both these projects quickly became the main promoters of the modernist paradigm in architecture in Palestine, making Neufeld one of the most influential modernist architects of the 1930s. However, in the 1940s, Neufeld left Palestine.⁷ Perhaps he lost his conviction in the power of modern architecture to generate social revolution (Warhaftig, 2007, p. 89), or perhaps defeated by the day-to-day hardship of living in the young, economically and security-challenged state. Whatever the case, he emigrated before his central role in shaping the face of architecture in Israel had been recognized.⁸

The Educational Institution at Mishmar Haemek – The Original Plan

With the decision to establish the educational institution as the ideological flagship of Hashomer Hatzair, it was clear that Joseph Neufeld was the right man for the job: a qualified architect, graduate of the movement, equally committed to and invested in both kibbutz ideology and modernism. The movement leadership approached him in 1931, when he was still working in Europe (Buras, 2000, p. 155), and he immediately accepted the assignment.

Neufeld's first sketches (which were used for fundraising among various European Jewish communities) show a complex of buildings consisting of several narrow, flat-roofed wings enclosing a long rectangular yard. Neufeld's architectural interpretation of the children's community proposed a single, independent building that included residences, classrooms, learning laboratories and libraries, dining rooms, and sports halls (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Acknowledgement of receipt of contribution towards the erection of an educational institution, 1931 (estimated date). Source: Mishmar Haemek Archives

⁵ For more on Neufeld's architectural work, see Buras, 2000; Metzger-Szmuk, 1994; Warhaftig, 2007.

⁶ The editor of *Building in the Near East*, architect Israel Dicker, was employed in Neufeld's office during part of the 1930s. See Buras, 2000, p. iii.

⁷ He first left in 1941, returned, and in 1948 emigrated to the United States. See Buras, 2000, pp. 325-327.

⁸ Today the central role played by Arieh Sharon and Ze'ev Rechter in building the country is widely recognized, while Neufeld's heritage has been almost completely forgotten, despite his continued activity in the country even after he left. His largest and most well-known project, Hadassah Ein Kerem Hospital in Jerusalem, was commissioned in the 1950s, when he was already living in the United States. At that time, he specialized in planning hospitals and taught at the Faculties of Architecture at both Yale University and the Pratt Institute in New York.



Figure 4. Two wings that shift horizontally and the vertically around a central staircase – view of the eastern façade. Illy Perl, May 2018

It is reasonable to assume that young Neufeld's apprenticeship in the architectural offices of two of the leading figures of contemporary European modernism had a strong influence on the modernist character of his design of the Hashomer Hatzair educational institution. Specifically, the plan reflected the utopian ideas of the architect Bruno Taut, such as the 'City Crown', which places the cultural center of a secular community on a high hill (Evers & Thoenes, 2016, p. 694), as well as Taut's attempt to apply his own ideas to socialist housing in Moscow (Warhaftig, 2007, p. 88). Other influences can be traced to the new functionalism of the flat-roofed garden city neighborhoods designed by Taut in Berlin in the 1920s (Evers & Thoenes, 2016, p. 695), and Erich Mendelsohn's horizontal line which incorporated separate functions into a unified mega-structure, as demonstrated by the WOGA Complex in Berlin (Buras, 2000, 222). Whatever the case, the large building that Neufeld designed stimulated reactions even before it was built, and all the more so after its completion.⁹

The initial megastructure that Neufeld proposed, and particularly the Big House as ultimately realized,¹⁰ could be "read" according to the principles of

international modernism as defined in Hitchcock and Johnson's (1932) seminal essay, *The international style: Architecture since 1922*.

In the Big House, one can clearly identify the separation of frame from shell (for example, in the division of the building into columns and infill panels of strip windows), the replacement of decoration with the aesthetic of regularity and rhythm, structural elements, and materiality (a repetitive module throughout the building), and the careful provision of light and air in all the wings. However, the most prominent modernist principle in the plan of the Big House was expressed in the rejection of symmetry in favor of proportioned masses. In the Big House, two identical volumes were vertically and horizontally shifted against each other around the central axis, so as to form a series of roof terraces and entrance balconies, all directly connected to the central circulation tower (Liberty-Shalev, 2013, pp. 5.7, 5.10). The building was thus accessible from all sides and levels, and integrated into the sloping topography (Figure 4).

When the educational institution opened in 1931, only 18 Hashomer Hatzair children were old enough

⁹ In addition to publication in the March 1937 issue of the local *Building in the Middle East*, which was dedicated to schools in Palestine (Dicker, 1937, pp. 11-12), the Big House also appeared in a special issue of the French journal *L'Architecture D'Aujourd'hui* devoted architecture in Palestine (Barkai & Posener, 1937, p. 8), and in the 1950s, in the *Encyclopedie De L'architecture Nouvelle: Ordre Et Climat Mediterraneens* (Sartoris, 1957, pp. 606-607).

¹⁰ In 1931-1933, it was decided to implement the construction of the institution in stages, which corresponded to the constraints of the funds raised. The southern wing of the Big House was built in 1933-1936, the northern wing, in 1936-1937, and the dining room, in 1939-1940. The full complex as designed by Neufeld was completed in 1949, with the execution of the building that created the northwestern corner of the inner courtyard. The need to execute the plan in stages was probably the cause for the breaking down of the original megastructure into a number of independent buildings.

(aged 6 to 9) to join it (Paltek, 1989, pp. 10-11).¹¹ After a few years of operation, it was agreed that the separation of young children from their parents was too demanding, and the age of admission was raised to 10 years, later to be further limited to ages 13-17 (Paltek, 1989, p. 28).

About a decade after it opened, nearly 100 adolescents lived and studied at Mishmar Haemek educational institution, of them about 60 children from the outside and 40 from Hashomer Hatzair kibbutzim (Paltek, 1989, p. 62). Until the 1940s, Hakibbutz Ha'artzi sufficed with one central institution, but the growth of the movement to include more than 50 kibbutzim, with about 3,000 children (Hazan, 1948, p. ix) necessitated reorganization. In 1944, Hakibbutz Ha'artzi Council at Beit Alfa decided to establish regional educational institutions. By the mid-1950s, 23 educational institutions were operating for children in Grades 7 to 12,¹² all based on the educational model that evolved at the Mishmar Haemek educational institution.

The Decline

Thus, beginning in the 1950s, the Mishmar Haemek educational institution became a regional institution, known as Shomriya. The young girls and boys of Kibbutz Mishmar Haemek and Hazorea studied there, later to be joined by those of Kibbutz Givat Oz and Kibbutz Meggido.

The Big House continued to serve as the residential quarters of the children of the institution until the late 1980s, and after that was occupied by a library, classrooms, and some institution offices. In 1996, as a result of the changes in the ministry of education policy on secondary education, it was decided to merge the "valley" and "mountain" kibbutzim into a single high school at Ein Hashofet,¹³ and the school that had operated in the Shomriya educational institution at Mishmar Haemek was closed. Thus, the educational institution ceased to function as a "study and work system" that holistically combined "a life full of learning and physical work, appreciation of education

and science, understanding of collective life and the ethics of work" (Shapira, 1948, p. 76). In the mid-1990s, Kibbutz Mishmar Haemek purchased the institution and its grounds from the partner kibbutzim (Hazorea, Meggido, and Givat Oz), and assumed exclusive control of the complex.

In time, as the ideological fervour of the early days waned and the standard of living rose, communal sleeping arrangements became one of the most controversial issues in the debate surrounding the future of the kibbutz. Against the background of the economic and ideological collapse of the kibbutz movement from the late 1970s onward, the revolutionary socialist lifestyle which was invented by a group of rebellious, radical and self-selected individuals who willingly sacrificed privacy and daily comforts, seemed extreme and outdated. To many of the offspring who grew up within the system that their parents' and grandparents' ideology had established, collective sleeping arrangements were now perceived as an extreme tool that mostly served the collective establishment in disempowering the family and crushing the individual (Dar, 1998, pp. 501-502).

In most of the kibbutzim in Israel, communal sleeping arrangements were abandoned as early as the 1970s, but in Hakibbutz Ha'artzi – Hashomer Hatzair, the practice continued as a mandatory framework,¹⁴ and remained a central pillar in the declared educational ideology of the movement throughout the 1980s.¹⁵ The internal disagreement on this issue was settled unexpectedly with the outbreak of the Gulf War in 1990, when the fear of unconventional weapons confined the residents of Israel to "sealed rooms," and the children of the institution to their parents' homes. Thus, with a whimper, the chapter of collective sleeping arrangements at Mishmar Haemek and in the history of the kibbutz in Israel came to an end.¹⁶

At the Mishmar Haemek educational institution complex, an educational body named Shomriya continued to operate as a sort of voluntary children's community, offering dormitories and social activities for teenagers. The Big House, which during the decline of the kibbutz fell into disrepair, eventually became difficult to operate

¹¹ In 1931, Hakibbutz Ha'artzi comprised 21 kibbutzim, of which only 6 were permanent settlements: Mishmar Haemek, Merhavia, Mizra, Ein Shemer, Gan Shmuel, and Sarid.

¹² See the table of educational institutions in Hakibbutz Ha'artzi in 1956. Container D5, 1957, Mishmar Haemek Archives.

¹³ The kibbutzim in the valley were Mishmar Haemek, Hazorea, Givat Oz, and Meggido; the kibbutzim in the mountain were Ein Hashofet, Ramat Hashofet, Ramot Menashe, and Dalya.

¹⁴ See, e.g., Magen, 1980.

¹⁵ In practice, many of the kibbutzim of Hashomer Hatzair decided to reject the official line of the movement and to independently convert to family sleeping arrangements. For more on this subject, see, e.g., Willfend, 1990.

¹⁶ With the waning of ideological separatism, in 1999 Hakibbutz Ha'artzi joined the ranks of the United Kibbutz Movement (the TAKAM).

and expensive to maintain. It now seemed Spartan and unfit for living, and in 1998 the Shomriya stopped using it.¹⁷ It should also be noted that during the 1970s, two blocks of bathrooms were haphazardly attached to the Big House, next to the tower of stairs in the center of the building (Liberty-Shalev, 2013, pp. 4.6-4.5). In addition to the stark disregard for the pure horizontal aesthetic of Neufeld's facades, these slapdash additions created a maze of corridors and indirect entrances into the center of the building, introducing water leaks that accelerated the deterioration of the aging building.

The Decision

Discussions about the future of the Big House began shortly after it was vacated. The opinions of various kibbutz members ranged from calls to restore the building to its days of former glory to proposals for its demolition in order to avoid the maintenance and renovation costs. Ironically, because of its strategic and highly visible position at the top of the hill, the abandoned and deteriorating Big House remained present in the consciousness of the kibbutz members, as a disturbing symbol of the rise and fall of kibbutz ideology. Its prominence aroused a complicated and polarized attitude among the different generations: the older members, who were raised within the walls of the Big House and saw it as the epitome of the kibbutz; those of the middle generation, who had experienced the zeal and the collapse of the kibbutz idea and found themselves dealing with economic and pragmatic considerations; and the younger generation, which was born into the regenerating kibbutz, seeking its identity.¹⁸

As early as 2000, a booklet was published on the kibbutz with a proposal to finance the renovation of the Big House by converting it into a museum open to the general public.¹⁹ About ten years later, the kibbutz promoted a plan to convert the Big House into a museum

of communal education. This plan, which was rejected by the kibbutz plenary in June 2010, was perhaps the clearest expression of the view of the building and the history it embodies as a marketable asset, able to project kibbutz ideology at its peak to a general public of heritage consumers.²⁰ Its rejection reflected a notion shared by many at the Kibbutz, that the heritage of the children's community was first and foremost a private matter, a significant component of their intimate identity as a community. Accordingly, the Big House was to be renovated by and for the local community, fulfilling public functions necessary for local daily life rather than attracting visitors from the outside.

After the initiative to convert the Big House into a museum had failed, the kibbutz appointed a new committee and in 2012 commissioned my practice (Ruth Liberty-Shalev Architecture and Conservation) to prepare a new plan. At the time, the kibbutz management offices, reference and reading libraries, Shomriya Archive, and Mishmar Haemek Archive were dispersed throughout the kibbutz, mostly in ill-fitted structures. The new plan proposed to assemble these functions under one roof, thus forming a small-scale "civic center" within the kibbutz. The Big House, with all its historical and symbolic significance, would primarily serve the kibbutz community.

The proposal was presented to the kibbutz plenary in late 2012 and approved unanimously. Beginning in 2013, the architectural team embarked upon producing detailed building drawings.²¹ With the beginning of construction on site in 2016, the design team was joined by an interior designer.²²

The Rehabilitation

Documenting the building was the basis for understanding its value and for the adoption of a design strategy that informed other decisions taken during

¹⁷ The building was not completely abandoned in those years: the Shomriya Archives and a few offices operated sporadically from some of the rooms, and the longstanding reference library continued to operate for a few hours a week on the ground floor.

¹⁸ For more on the relationship of the different generations on kibbutz to their heritage, see Amit-Cohen, 2006.

¹⁹ A copy of the booklet can be found at Mishmar Haemek Archives.

²⁰ The idea of the Big House as a museum was promoted with the strong encouragement of the Council for Conservation of Heritage Sites, which in 2003 included the building in the national conservation list. In master plan C-17937 – Mishmar Haemek, approved in 2011, the Big House was officially listed as a building for conservation.

²¹ "The architectural team" refers to Ruth Liberty-Shalev and Adi Har-Noy of Ruth Liberty-Shalev Architecture and Conservation, with landscape architect Rakefet Sinai.

²² Adi Tamir, a member of Kibbutz Mishmar Haemek.

the rehabilitation process. Modernist ideals of clarity, pragmatism and contemporaneity shaped the design of the original building, with the International Style and the materiality of the building (concrete) serving merely as the physical manifestation of those ideals. Reinforced concrete was cutting-edge technology at the time, and this was the aspect that we viewed as significant. First, a decision was made to remove the 1970s building additions. This was not an automatic decision, but rather a result of understanding the impact of these additions on the values of the building as a whole: they blocked the direct entrances into the central staircase and distorted the circulation system of the original building. Their removal reopened the entrance to the central staircase and with it, the possibility of focusing the new plan around a single entrance space.

The original core of the building served a structure with four identical wings (Liberty-Shalev, 2013, pp. 5.3-5.4). In its new function as a multipurpose public building, a legible, accessible space for gathering and orientation was needed. To obtain this, two major changes were introduced to the building. First, a double space was opened between the two floors of the northern wing, creating an internal visual connection between the kibbutz management on the upper floors and the library and archives on the "basement" floor (Figure 5).

Second, a new three-story "wing" of an elevator and conference rooms was attached to the center of the structure. In keeping with accepted conservation practice, this wing bears a contemporary stamp, clearly distinct from the original architectural composition while simultaneously attempting to integrate with it.²³ We considered the location of this additional wing – on the eastern or western side of the building – in relation to the identification of a "main façade." In the years of its operation as an educational institution, the western façade (facing the courtyard of the institution) served as a main entrance. However, the façade that has



Figure 5. The double space in the library. Omri Talmor, May 2018

come to represent and characterize the building is the eastern façade, which overlooks Mishmar Haemek like a crown on the top of the hill. In light of this reading (and with the support of the Council for Conservation of Heritage Sites), it was decided to avoid intervening in the historically iconic eastern façade, and to append the new wing to the western side of the building (Figure 6).

An example of a design decision that was brought on by the constraints of adapting the building to contemporary

²³ See the Venice Charter 1964, Article 9, Article 12.



Figure 6. The new wing. Ruth Liberty-Shalev, May 2018.

building regulations was the treatment of the roof of the northern wing, where the famous children's community morning exercises took place (Figure 7).

With the repurposing of the building, structural loading regulations had to be met, requiring reinforcement of the structure or limiting the number of people allowed on the roof at any time. In consultation with the construction engineer, it was decided to limit the area of the roof accessible to people by installing a green roof on part of it. Thus, to enable use and avoid unnecessary reinforcements to the building, a new design element was added (Figure 8).

One of the architectural motifs that Neufeld incorporated in the lengthwise facades of the Big House was the "thick wall": a wall that is not merely a boundary,

but also a space that challenges the rigid separation between interior and exterior. Wall closets, technical space for pipes, and roof planters were incorporated into Neufeld's thick wall. The most famous historical photos of the educational institution show groups of children sitting on the wide windowsills built into the wall space along the entire length of the building, using them as shaded "balconies" (Figure 9).

We identified this architectural element as significant to the modernist architectural concept that Neufeld developed for the educational institution. Accordingly, the wooden closets inside the long walls were restored, the electricity system was wired through the existing technical spaces in the same wall, and the roof planter was restored and even replicated alongside the eastern porch.



Figure 7. Exercising on the roof of the Mishmar Haemek educational institution. Unknown photographer, 1940s. Source: Generation onto generation: A record of the Hashomer Hatzair Central School at Mishmar Haemek (1948).



Figure 8. The green roof. Illy Perl, May 2018



Figure 9. Children on the windowsill of the children's house at Mishmar Haemek. Moshe Schwartz, 1944. Source: Bitmuna Collection, Younes and Soraya Nazarian Library, Haifa University

The new partitions on the upper story of the office wing were designed as a combined system of curtain walls and cabinets, providing acoustic insulation between the corridor and the individual offices, and in the façade, the thick wall was given a contemporary interpretation as a system of benches integrated into the aluminum slats of the new wing, alternately facing outside towards

the courtyard or inside into the conference room spaces.

Despite the early rejection of the suggestion to rehabilitate the Big House as a museum, the kibbutz members did not abandon the idea of a tribute to their history. Instead of converting the Big House into a building that houses a museum, they accepted the proposal of the architects to treat the building as the main



Figure 10. The Big House – Southern façade. Illy Perl, May 2018.



Figure 11. The Hashomer Hatzair flag flying over the roof of the educational institution at Mishmar Haemek. Unknown photographer, late 1940s. Source: Generation onto generation: A record of the Hashomer Hatzair Central School at Mishmar Haemek (1948)

exhibit. In the Big House today, stories of the children's community and the communal education are told not by means of an exhibition in designated spaces, but rather in all areas of the building, as an integral part of its daily activity.

A special committee of kibbutz members guided the collection, curation, and design of the different elements exhibited throughout the building. Near the basement floor's kitchenette, they placed a sculptural tribute to the mythological and notorious "shared shower"; the double space in the main entrance is adorned with a large map of the kibbutz, originally published in 1959 in Sonia and Tim Gidal's book, *My Village in Israel*.²⁴

"Towels on Hooks," created by the ceramic artist and kibbutz member, Pankaj Sharma, is hung near the new bathrooms, and throughout the building, quotes

²⁴ Sonia and Tim Gidal were German-Israeli-American photographers who together authored the series *My Village Books*, published from 1955 to 1970 by Pantheon Books. The books described in text and photographs their experiences living in different places of the world. See, for instance, *My Village in India* (1956), *My Village in Switzerland* (1961), *My Village in France* (1965), *My Village in Korea* (1968) and more.



Figure 12. The interior of the new library in the Big House. Illy Perl, May 2018

and historic photographs of key events and characters in the life of the educational institution are displayed.

At the southern façade of the building, where emergency stairs were built into a new wall, an abstracted figure of a boy, a girl, and a flag is impressed onto the wall.

All the graduates of the educational institution are familiar with this picture: it is the Hashomer Hatzair flag, ceremoniously, perhaps ritually, waved from the roof of the Big House in the late 1940s (Figure 10 and Figure 11). The oblique image – clearly a non-modernist "ornament," possibly a key to the secret code of communal education – offers an opportunity to reconcile with the fanatic and heroic Hashomer Hatzair past and to contain it within the emerging identity of the contemporary kibbutz.

Summary

Is it possible to justify the conservation of a modernist building that no longer serves its original purpose? Judging from the story of the Big House at the educational institution of Mishmar Haemek, it seems that the demands of the modernist movement to detach oneself from the chains of the past, to throw off tradition and embrace the new, did not take into account the power of symbols, the connection of symbols and rituals with the creation of a community, and the role of collective heritage in forming community identity. As the Big House demonstrates, even after many years of change and development, the significance attached to a historical building can serve as a social bridge, supporting the integration of one generation's legacy

into the evolving identity of another, and offering a physical and symbolic axis around which the community can gather in order to redefine itself time and again.

* Arch. Ruth Liberty-Shalev is a graduate of Bezalel Academy of Art and Design in Jerusalem and Oxford Brookes University in England. Between 2012-2016, she headed the Master's Program in Building Conservation at the Technion, and in 2016 was named head of the Conservation Unit at the Faculty of Architecture and Town Planning at the Technion. In 2008-2017, Liberty-Shalev served as head of the monitoring committee of the Israel National Commission to UNESCO, and as a member of the Israeli delegation to UNESCO World Heritage Committees.

In 2009, she established her architectural practice, Ruth Liberty-Shalev Architecture & Conservation, in Haifa. In 2012, the practice was commissioned to document, plan, and execute the conservation of the Big House at Kibbutz Mishmar Haemek, and to transform it into a library, archive, and kibbutz administrative offices. The renovation of the Big House was completed in September 2017.

rlshalev@gmail.com

- Amit-Cohen, I. (2006). Cultural heritage landscapes in the kibbutz: Values, assets and development. *Horizons in Geography*, 66, 154-175.
- Bar Or, G. (2010). The initial phases: A test case. In G. Bar Or (Ed.), *Kibbutz: Architecture without precedence: The Israeli pavilion, the 12th International Architecture Exhibition, the Venice Biennial* (pp. 17-50). Tel Aviv: Top-Print (in Hebrew)
- Barkai, S., & Posener, J. (Eds.) (1937). Architecture en Palestine. *L'Architecture D'Aujourd'hui*, 9, 2-34
- Benham, R. (1967). *Theory and design in the first Machine Age* (2nd ed.) New York: Praeger.
- Buras, N. (2000). *Josef Neufeld in Eretz Israel: Romanticism in modernism* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Technion – Israel Institute of Technology, Haifa, Israel.
- Dar, Y. (1998). The changing identity of kibbutz education. In Y. Dar (Ed.), *Education in the changing kibbutz: Sociological and psychological perspectives* (pp. 17-41). Jerusalem: Magnes. (in Hebrew)
- Dicker, B. (Ed.) (1937). The children's community at Mishmar Haemek (by the school administration and teaching staff). *Building in the Near East, 11-12*, 12-13. (in Hebrew)
- Evers, B., & Thoenes, C. (2016). *Architectural theory: From the Renaissance to the present*. Koln: Taschen.
- Golan, S. (1961). *Communal education*. Tel Aviv: Sifriyat Hapoalim. (in Hebrew)
- Hazan, B. (1948). Opening words. In S. Golan, B. Hazan, Y. Hazan, Y. Polsiok, & A. Shmidberg (Eds.), *Generation onto generation: A record of the Hashomer Hatzair Central School at Mishmar Haemek*. Merhaviva: Sifriyat Hapoalim – Workers Book Guild (Hashomer Hatzair Ltd., Palestine). (in Hebrew)
- Hitchcock, H. R., & Johnson, P. (1932). *The international style: Architecture since 1922*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Le Corbusier. (1931). *Towards a new architecture* (F. Etchels, Trans.). London: J. Rodker.
- Liberty-Shalev, R. (2013). *The Big House Central Educational Institution of Hashomer Hatzair at Kibbutz Mishmar Ha'emek: Historic and architectural documentation report*. Commissioned by Kibbutz Mishmar Haemek. (in Hebrew)
- Magen, A. (1980, July 6). Kibbutz Artzi children to continue to sleep together. *Davar*. (in Hebrew)
- Metzger-Szmuk, N. (1994). *Houses of sand: The International Style in Tel Aviv 1931-1948*. Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Foundation & Ministry of Defense. (in Hebrew)
- Paltek, Y. (1989). The mosad: The first Hashomer Hatzair school in Mishmar Haemek 1931-1940. Ramat Efal, Israel: Yad Tabenkin Research and Documentation Centre of the Kibbutz Movement. (in Hebrew)
- Sartoris, A. (1957). Ordre et climat Mediterraneens. In *Encyclopedie de l'architecture nouvelle* (pp. 606-607). Milan: Ulrico Hoepli.
- Shapira, R. (1948). The essence and image of the children's community. In S. Golan, B. Hazan, Y. Hazan, Y. Polsiok, & A. Shmidberg (Eds.), *Generation onto generation: A record of the Hashomer Hatzair Central School at Mishmar Haemek*. Merhaviva: Sifriyat Hapoalim – Workers Book Guild (Hashomer Hatzair Ltd., Palestine). (in Hebrew)
- Warhaftig, M. (2007). *They laid the foundation: Lives and works of German-speaking Jewish architects in Palestine: 1918-1948*. Berlin: Wasmuth.
- Willfend, Y. (1990, May 15). Kibbutz Hazore'a: Remaining with collective sleeping arrangements. *Maariv*. (in Hebrew)

P 184: The new conference room on the roof of the Big House. Ruth Liberty-Shalev, May 2018