

City and Ecology: Expert Networks and the Postwar Search for Environmental Internationalism

My dissertation explored the emergence of the international urban planning movement in the first half of the twentieth-century within the context of transnational knowledge circulation.

Using the case of Mandate Palestine as a locus of especially intense flows, I traced the rise of Zionist urban planning as a distinct encounter between German design modernism, British colonial planning practices, and the Zionist ideology, situating it within the broader context of shifting global hegemonies, decolonization, and bi-national conflict.

In my current project, I will proceed to explore postwar urban internationalism (1960s-1970s). I will do so by tracing a little-known transnational network of intellectuals and design practitioners—planners, architects, and landscape architects, from North America, Europe, and Israel, who together sought to pose an environmental-humanist alternative to the increasingly “mechanistic” postwar realities, at a crucial moment of global restructuring. Focusing on these multi-directional flows, with special attention to the Israeli participants, I will use the findings of this project to produce a journal paper on postwar professional internationalism. As well, these findings will serve as the concluding period in a book manuscript, based on my dissertation, on the history of Zionist-Israeli planning (between the 1920s and 1970s). The book will present a first-ever history of the field of planning in mandate Palestine and early-state Israel, tracing its development from the imperial era to the maturation of exportable nation-building expertise to developing countries in the Global South. As a postdoctoral fellow at the Zvi Yavetz School of Historical Studies, the direction and guidance of Professor Billie Melman, and her work on cities and urban planning, internationalism, and intellectual cooperation during the interwar period, would be of great benefit as I seek to take my research to this new direction.

My dissertation critically examined the first generation of Zionist planners who laid the foundations for the field in Israel: a milieu of émigré-experts who were trained in leading centers in the German-speaking world and later were integrated into the British colonial planning apparatus upon their immigration in the 1930s. By 1948, they founded the Israeli planning system, serving as central, though not well known, actors in the devising of the Israeli New Towns scheme (*Ayarot Pituah*), the major outcome of the first National Plan for the Dispersal of the Population (the Sharon Plan). Introducing heretofore neglected planning primary sources, both visual and cartographic, I excavated the work of three early statehood planners: Eliezer Brutzkus (1907-1987), Artur Glikson (1911-1966), and Ariel Kahane (1907-1986), who have been largely ignored in the scholarship. The three imported and reworked planning ideas, norms, and practices into the local settler enterprise.

Against the backdrop of increasingly intense flows of urban knowledge and expertise circulating during the interwar period, the dissertation discovers unknown cutting-edge work carried out by transnational planners operating on the margins of the hegemonic professional centers (including, for instance, the first ever full-fledged national plan, devised by Brutzkus in 1937).¹ By so doing, it upends one of the founding myths of Israeli nation-building, namely the architectural modernist bent and the socialist utopism of the Sharon Plan, associated with the Bauhaus-graduate Arie Sharon (Head of the first national planning team). Instead, I reveal how a cross-range of *planning* ideas, derived from economic discourse and the social sciences, but obscured by the overarching architectural narrative of design modernism, were in fact the crucial locus of influence.

¹ The field of modern urban planning is a distinct policy expertise, which originated in *fin de-siècle* industrial Europe. It evolved in the first half of the twentieth-century from a voluntarist, urban field to an influential public policy expertise, by the immediate postwar period, concerned with large-scale planning. The interwar period is characterized by intense processes of institutionalization and professionalization.

My chapter on Artur Glikson, the best known of my three protagonists, led me to the formulation of this proposed project. During the 1950s and 1960s, Glikson emerged as an international advocate of environmental planning, whose untimely death in 1966 brought to a halt one of the most original voices of environmental thought within mid-twentieth century planning and urbanism.² Glikson's continuous intellectual exchange with Lewis Mumford, the American public intellectual, and Glikson's vast international connections more generally, have shown that he was part of a larger dynamic network. In examining Glikson's work, it became increasingly clear that this largely unexplored network merits closer investigation.

This core network included figures such as Mumford; Benton MacKaye, the American wilderness advocate; landscape architect Ian McHarg, a pioneer of ecological planning; Aldo Van Eyck of Team X; as well as architect-theorists such as E. T. Gutkind and Glikson. The network extended to a secondary circle of participants, including the Le Carré Bleu group, and French-based urbanists such as Georges Candilis, Alexis Josic, and Shadrach Wood.³ The growing discontent which had arisen by the mid-1950s, on both sides of the Atlantic, with the trajectory of the modern city, brought together humanist generalists, avant-garde architects, and urban specialists, who collectively sought to create a synthesis of knowledge and an integrative framework for reconceiving the relationship between modern society, human habitat, and the natural environment.⁴

² E.g., special issue on Glikson, *Journal of Architectural & Planning Research* 21, no. 2 (Summer 2004); Rachel Kallus, "A Place for a National Community: Glikson's Integrative Habitation Unit and the Political Construct of the Everyday," *The Journal of Architecture* 10, no. 4 (2005): 365–87.

³ During the interwar period, Mumford and MacKaye had been core members of the "Regional Planning Association of America" (RPAA), which was perhaps the most profound, yet ultimately failed, attempt in the United States to promote an alternative to the capitalist metropolis. Rooted in Geddes's regionalism and Garden City principles, the RPAA promoted the idea of the "Ecological Region" as a response to the expansion of "Metropolitan America."

⁴ Other notable responses to the modern urban crisis included Jane Jacob's grassroots activism in New York City and Team X's rebellion against CIAM urbanist doctrines, which led to the ultimate disbandment of the latter in 1959.

Against the background of the high-water mark of postwar professional internationalism, ideas travelled via conferences, publications, professional organizations, study visits, personal correspondence, and experimental projects. Contrary to the much explored “Americanization” of postwar Western Europe, and the unidirectional exportation of consumer capitalism and car-driven suburbanization to European countries, these connections point to a reciprocal exchange between the US and Europe that sought to chart a different global vision, as well as to the multidisciplinary flows of this transatlantic dialogue.⁵ Loci of intense exchange ranged from landmark international conferences, such as the 1955 Wenner-Gren conference on “Man's Role in Changing the Face of the Earth” in Princeton and the 1957 International Seminar on Regional Planning in The Hague; the dynamic discourse in the UC Berkeley-based *Landscape* journal; and Mumford’s long-lasting intellectual exchange with both Gutkind and Glikson. Through these nodes, we can trace, for example, explicit connections between Mumford’s notions of the Ecological Region and van Eyck’s humanist architecture, and point to the direct influence that MacKaye, the father of the Appalachian Trail, had on Glikson’s OECD-funded planning of Crete (1964-1966), with the ‘Cretan Trail’ surrounded by designated conservation areas as its backbone.

My proposed project for the Arnold Fellowship thus seeks to locate, delineate and characterize the circulation of ideas, knowledge, and professional expertise on cities and ecology, networks of experts, and nodes that formed this vibrant multidisciplinary, yet unstudied, exchange. It intersects between the historical studies of urbanism, design, environmental history, the migration of professional knowledge in the twentieth century, and the thriving study of internationalism. I ask how the actors in this network, imbued with a sense of environmental

⁵ See special issue on “Transatlantic Exchange of Planning Ideas after the Second World War,” *Planning Perspectives* 29, no. 2 (2014).

degradation, negotiated postwar technological, social, and economic crises, and explore how their environmental concerns were translated into concrete urban schemes, plans, and architectural designs. Prefiguring much of today's environmental debates on sustainable development, the project will also consider their enduring legacies, as well as paths not taken, thereby inviting alternative environmental imaginations.

While much work in the history of urbanism and design disciplines has focused on the twentieth-century transnational circulation of ideas, knowledge and expertise, this exchange of high-order environmental sensibilities, and their encounter with urban and design expertise, has been overlooked.⁶ Moreover, in the exploding field that is environmental history, accounts of the postwar environmentalist movement have tended to focus on grassroots activism and tangible outcomes, omitting altogether from its self-conscious "genealogy and pantheon of heroes" the intellectual exchange and networks.⁷ Indeed, only recently has scholarly attention turned to consider Mumford as a harbinger of environmental consciousness.⁸ The current study will address these historiographical lacunae, giving recognition to a moment in which this multi-layered dialogue took place.

I will draw on archival materials in Europe and the United States (The International Federation for Housing and Town Planning (IFHP) in The Hague; The International Union for

⁶ E.g., the now-classic Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998); Rosemary Wakeman, *Practicing Utopia: An Intellectual History of the New Town Movement* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016); Christopher Klemek, *The Transatlantic Collapse of Urban Renewal: Postwar Urbanism from New York to Berlin* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011). A rare exception is Volker M. Welter, *Biopolis: Patrick Geddes and the City of Life* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002).

⁷ Ramachandra Guha, "Lewis Mumford: The Forgotten American Environmentalist: An Essay in Rehabilitation," *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 2, no. 3 (1991): 68. E.g., Joachim Radkau, *The Age of Ecology: A Global History* (Cambridge: Polity, 2014); David D. Kemp, *Exploring Environmental Issues: An Integrated Approach* (Psychology Press, 2004).

⁸ E.g., Aaron Sachs, "Lewis Mumford's Urbanism and the Problem of Environmental Modernity," *Environmental History* 21, no. 4 (October 1, 2016): 638–59; Emily Talen, *New Urbanism and American Planning: The Conflict of Cultures* (Routledge, 2005).

Shira Wilkof
Research Proposal

Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Gland, Switzerland; Clarence Stein's papers at Cornell University; Mumford's and McHarg's papers at the University of Pennsylvania), in addition to professional publications (e.g., *The Architectural Forum*, *Le Carré Bleu*, *Landscape*), conference proceedings (e.g., the IFHP biennial congresses and the UN Seminars on Regional Planning), and various published material of the period. As a historian of planning, I place special emphasis on visual and cartographic materials, including maps, drawings, sketches, blueprints, and plans. Copious planning materials are maintained in various ad-hoc settings, ranging from institutions to private collections in unconventional locations. Thus, I located the papers of Kahane (one of the protagonists of my dissertation), which were stacked, disorganized and unmarked, in a metal closet at the Geography Department of the Hebrew University, and rescued them, with the support of the German-Israeli project, "[Traces of German-Jewish History](#)," which funded their cataloguing and transfer to the archives of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.⁹ An article I wrote on the archive and its findings has been recently accepted to the peer-reviewed journal of the *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook*.

As a postdoctoral fellow, I plan to dedicate the fall semester to conduct archival work in Europe and the United States (in the archives described above). The remainder of the academic year will be dedicated to writing. I will incorporate these findings into my book project, as I prepare my dissertation for publication. I will also complete an article intended for publication in a top-tier journal in the field of urbanism and planning, intellectual history, or environmental history, aiming at introducing the network of environmentalist critics on urbanism to the scholars of the history of cities, planning, and internationalism.

⁹ A conference marking the collection's transfer, "In the Field and in the Archive: A Look into the Planning History of Jerusalem and Israel," was held in the Yad Ben-Zvi Institute, Jerusalem. See <http://www.ybz.org.il/?CategoryID=712&ArticleID=2630#.WOd2b6IIE2w>