

Tel Aviv University

The Yolanda and David Kats – Faculty of Arts

David Azrieli School Of Architecture

**The buds of the new Israeli collective housing;
Amid a quiet revolution and accelerated Neo liberalism**

This Thesis is submitted for an M-Arch. Degree

By: Ronit Biton

This Thesis was supervised by: Ph.D Arch Talia Margalith

September 2019

Abstract

In the last decade, against the backdrop of the housing crisis on the one hand and the growth of the sharing economy, on the other hand, we have witnessed a quiet revolution in architecture and housing, especially in the cities of Central Europe, the USA and Canada. Recently, in Israel too, more and more residential projects are promoted by group initiatives, under the broad term "collective housing". Most often, collective housing offers new forms of housing and shared ownership, thus allowing its tenants to live in reduced rent, protected from free market trends and enjoy rich community life. Beyond architectural typology, which combines small private apartments and communal spaces, collective housing changes the housing culture and influences the concept of property as a product.

This idea underpins criticism on the existing neoliberal agenda. In many people's view, the neoliberal agenda, which promotes privatization, entrepreneurship and individual liberty as ideal values, has led man to an individual and alienated lifestyle and has overridden social values such as community and mutual guarantee. Thus, as part of broad social and economic trends, collective housing offers an alternative housing model that challenges the known paradigms - both in its architectural typology, in economic models and in social organization.

A more in-depth look at the topic reveals a wide range of models, from cooperatives, which plan and manage their residences to entrepreneurial companies that offer rented condominiums and provide community services to their tenants. Distinguishing between the different instances overcomes the complexity of the term's inherent contradictions and raises a critical discussion on its relationship with the existing neoliberal agenda. This discussion is at the heart of this research work.

The research consists of a theoretical and an empirical part. The theoretical part deals with the background to the phenomenon, a study of its architectural typology and a search for its political-economic and social dimensions, in the light of various critical theories. The empirical section is based on comparative analysis, according to selected criteria. It compares between various case studies and between the world phenomenon and its crystallization in Israel. The survey of Case Studies in Israel is based on in-depth interviews with the main players and analysis of participation in conferences and forums. The comparison tables are gradually simplified and amount to a model bar that ranges from collaborative to entrepreneurial.

An analysis of case studies from around the world indicates the range of models: On the one hand - housing cooperatives, which represent a communal, stable and achievable housing alternative. This alternative undermines the existing order and brings with it values of collectivity versus individualism, shared property versus private property and neutralizing real estate speculation. This alternative, most commonly found in Central Europe, relies on an existing housing cooperative infrastructure and receives government support. On the other side, US-based entrepreneurial projects are accelerating the existing neoliberal agenda by reducing living space and using the Collective trend for economic efficiency and profit increase. Some may say that those models, who run a community as a business and provide a range of life services, encourage passivity and even sharpen the traits of individualism.

In Israel, the cooperative housing is situated between a rich socialist tradition and a definite neoliberal reality, which is preserved even after the 2011 protest. The study findings reflect the influence of Israeli characteristics on the nature of the phenomenon and on the emerging models. It can be said that the absence of government support for cooperative housing on the one hand and the absence of a proven economic model for entrepreneurial-business collective housing, on

the other hand, there are many barriers thus the phenomenon in Israel is still marginal. There are some initial organizing attempts and several initiatives that have been realized. Some grow in the form of urban kibbutzim, which are ideological relics of the traditional socialist view. These are by nature undermining the existing agenda. The other part develops as a product of new business-social thinking, which involves Impact funds. The Impact funds combine business activities for profit with the promotion of social and environmental values. This intriguing notion is beginning to blur the boundaries between the familiar dichotomies of "For profit" versus "Non-profit" and perhaps challenges the Israeli agenda.

The study of cooperative housing in the world has been developing in recent years. In Israel, due to the primacy of the phenomenon, in its new version, it is almost absent. This research study examining the emerging trends and his main contribution is in his critical perspective. In order to understand the possibilities inherent in collective housing and their contribution to Israeli society, it is necessary to monitor their development and to develop further studies from various aspects.