

Constructing Home: consumerism and the participatory turn in housing in Israel 1970s

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This paper will address the accelerating consumption of 'home' products in Israel during the 1970s and the prime role of institutional housing management in shaping its form. It will explain how early modes of market liberalization in that period, coinciding with conflicting national development goals led to a 'participatory turn' in housing management. After two decades of a centralistic public housing apparatus reflecting the nation-building efforts of the new Zionist society, the 'participatory turn' presented a new mode of housing distribution. The paper will focus on the emergence of a new form of housing programs— the 'Build Your Own Home' program (BYOH), which offered Israeli citizens the opportunity to participate in building their own house on state-owned land. Shifting responsibility for home-building to the private owners proliferated a vast market of house-components, building materials and products.

The paper will explain how home-consumption served as a two-fold cultural mechanism. On the one hand, as an opportunity for home-ownership, BYOH enabled the governmental institutions to resettle Israeli citizens in different areas in accordance with national goals. On the other hand, as these programs shifted responsibility for home-building to the private owners and allowed them to participate in the actual building, it also shaped consumption as a form of construction, both material and cultural.

At the time Israel was developing as an immigrant society in the 1950s, Israeli citizens had no home-building tradition and no historical imaginary of 'placeness' or 'locale'. Interviews with Israeli BYOH participants during the 1970s and 1980s reveal how the rejection of early modernist visions by the builder defined the home as an *empty signifier*. They disclose how the emergent practice of 'consumption and production' served as an arena for personal exploration -- envisioning Israeliness, and the relation between society, self and place.

The participatory turn, I argue, constructed the 'home' as a multi-faceted arena of both institutional and personal practices. Furthermore, I will suggest that the articulation of consumption with the abovementioned two-fold mechanism (direction of citizen desire for home ownership through national planning to different territories; actual home-building and its construction of imaginary of

Israeli place) actually drove a wedge between these two distinct practices in the re-shaping of the relation between Israeli society and its 'place'.

Dikla Yizhar is a researcher at the Faculty of Architecture and Town Planning in the Technion - Israeli Institute of Technology. She holds a professional degrees (B.Arch and M.Arch) and Ph.D in architecture. Her research examines the historiography of the user in relation to architecture culture; cultural aspects of materiality - especially in relation to housing and home; and spatial outcomes of policy measures.