

# The Architecture of Repeated Rituals

## Tel Aviv's Rabin Square

This paper examines the relationship between architecture and civil participation by specifically looking at the formal attributes of Rabin Square in Tel Aviv, its development as a public urban space, its nationally symbolic meaning, and its civic role. A major conclusion of this study is that public assembly and the physical space in which it occurs are indivisible, revealing architecture's unique contribution to the shaping of citizenship.

### Introduction

Some 100,000 people gathered in Rabin Square in central Tel Aviv Thursday evening to protest against an Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and part of northern West Bank . . . . At least 2,000 security officers and volunteers were deployed in Rabin Square and positioned on rooftops overlooking the area in case of violence. Dozens of police and volunteers were also posted at the memorial to Yitzhak Rabin, former prime minister assassinated by an extreme right-winger during a peace rally at the square in 1995. Some 1,000 coaches were used to bus in protesters from all over Israel.<sup>1</sup>

The above newspaper coverage with its quantitative description of a public protest that took place in Rabin Square in Tel Aviv represents one among many such civic events, where participants arrive by the busload and respond to speeches by calling on Israel's leaders. Constructed in the 1960s as Malchei (King) Israel Square, this square was renamed after Prime Minister Rabin was assassinated there in 1995. Today, the space is an urban void, approximately 260 m from north to south and 160 m from east to west (Figures 1–3), enclosed on three sides by six-storey residential buildings with commercial arcades on the ground floor. On the northern edge of the square stands the twelve-storey City Hall building, with its terrace and broad stairs that span Ben Gurion Street, connecting City

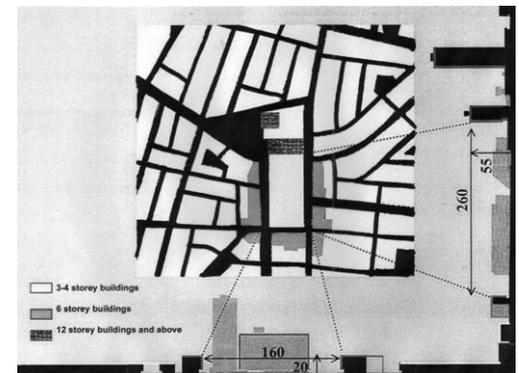
Hall directly to the plaza. In contrast to the empty plaza, the square's perimeter roads bustle with traffic, and arcades are filled, day and night, with people sitting in cafes, visiting shops and kiosks, and waiting at bus stops—creating the buzz of normal urban life. Nonetheless, despite these everyday activities around the square, the spatial composition of both the square and the City Hall suggests a hierarchical relationship between citizen and municipal authority.

1. Rabin/Malchei Israel Square—aerial view. Note City Hall on the northern edge of the square, with its balcony and formal steps bridging the street and retaining the continuation of the plaza with the building. (Source: Tel Aviv Historical Archive.) (1. City Hall building, 2. Balcony, 3. The plaza, 4. Holocaust Memorial, 5. Public garden, and 6. Shopping mall and a residential tower complex.)



The paper focuses on the way architecture influences this citizen-state relationship, analyzing what it contributes to the shape of national protests staged in the square. Civil participation is seen here as expressing the political alliance between citizens and state.<sup>2</sup> In the Israeli case, this alliance is further complicated by the continuous occupation of Palestinian land, a core theme of public debate. How has the square's architecture influenced the characteristics of this debate? What is the role of the space's design in the sociopolitical gathering occurring there? The paper investigates these questions by looking at the architectural definitions of the platform where the expression of the citizen-state's political alliance takes place and by studying the public assemblies' symbolic orders and forms.

2. Rabin Square, section emphasizing the scale of the City Hall by comparison with the typical three- or four-storey residential buildings. (Photo courtesy Tel Aviv City Council.)





3. Rabin Square facade. (Photo by Tali Hatuka.)

This role of architecture, as an active political agent, is currently under scrutiny, especially with regard to increasing surveillance<sup>3</sup> and the role of built space in the construction of national identity—essentially, architecture as cultural artifact with intricate power geometries.<sup>4</sup> Particular attention is given to the concept of architecture as a “mediator” between civic society and its urban image,<sup>5</sup> in which the professional is politically complicit. Addressing these ideas through analyses of civil assemblies in Rabin/Malchei Israel Square, the paper demonstrates how architectural placemaking in the square has shaped public discourse by reinforcing certain formal patterns of congregating. These formal patterns have been accentuated since the 1990s, when the Palestinian Intifada, and the ensuing fear of violent attacks, justified increased surveillance. In an arena of contested realities, space is modified by barriers and security guards and by spatial boundaries, use, and meaning. Thus, paradoxically, although civic participation often calls for political change by negotiating the existing order, it is, in fact, frequently a static ritual, and hence, it is unable to affect real social transformation. Still, this ritualizing, or institutionalizing, of protests in the square does not imply environmental determinism, or insinuate that it would be hopeless to foster social change in public spaces, but rather emphasizes the relationship between the square’s urban form and its use for civil gathering and the tension

between Tel Aviv and the square’s secular meanings against the religious identity of Jerusalem.

Addressing these arguments, the first section presents a framework for analyzing the relationship between civic squares and civil assemblies. The next two sections employing this framework look first at the formal evolution of the square’s design and meaning<sup>6</sup> and then at the evolution of the assemblies taking place there, from 1939 until 1995, the year Prime Minister Rabin was assassinated. The final part discusses their interrelationship and the contemporary form of gatherings as a sociospatial ritual.

### Urban Squares and Civil Congregations

Architectural theory and practice define the urban square as a public space demarcated by buildings. Scholars elaborate and explore this definition from at least three perspectives: the *formal*, the *psychovisual*, and the *sociospatial*. The formal perspective defines a square as a geometric space with distinct architectural features, typologies, and tectonic and morphological attributes as depicted in plans, facades, and sections, expressing scale and architectural language.<sup>7</sup> The psychovisual perspective explores how public squares and spaces are used and perceived by their users—individuals or human collectives—in the space.<sup>8</sup> Last, researchers and practitioners see the square as a spatial-cultural phenomenon<sup>9</sup> and insist on the need to envisage squares as representing power relations in a specific

cultural arena, that is, in relation to the groups that affect the squares’ design and create their spatial definitions. On the other hand, we employ a hybrid approach through a discussion of the socioanthropological dimensions of the square from within architectural discourse, which relates to the square’s formal attributes, design, and building processes.

Sociological and anthropological theories explore public congregations as ritual performances,<sup>10</sup> events at which participants follow a repetitive set of actions with known aims and symbolic meanings. This is true for formal religious ceremonies and also for some secular and civic festivals, protests, and assemblies. Civic events, unlike religious rituals, connect participants during a discrete time period and intend to increase social solidarity and reinforce an existing cultural-ideological construction of a regime.<sup>11</sup> Especially since the beginning of the twentieth century, challenges to the social order have given rise to meetings at which politicians court the masses in public spaces, strengthening the illusion of social order and unity.<sup>12</sup> Thus, anthropological theories see these assemblies as a particular type of ceremony in which the square functions as a public forum for voicing disagreements.<sup>13</sup> To further understand the relationship between the square’s design and its assembly, we delineate three interconnected defining factors of civic squares: (a) *symbolic meaning*, (b) *crowd configuration*, and (c) *order and surveillance*, all with both physical and cultural implications.

### Symbolic Meaning

Civic squares are key spaces for placing the individual in a meaningful social hierarchy.<sup>14</sup> In these spaces, architectural aesthetics are often recruited to emphasize symbolic meaning by integrating vistas and perspectives that promulgate the power relationships implicit in the square as did the theater and the agora of Athens.<sup>15</sup> Richard Sennett points to two visual rules, dominating in the Greek theater, namely, exposure of the speaker to the audience and the standard spatial configuration between the speaker and the audience

as observers. The agora, on the other hand, was an open space with few visual barriers, permitting a fluid transition between private and public, with the stoa allowing people to be engaged, even at a distance, in the event taking place. The spatial form of the agora includes both active participants and passive observers similar to the spatial forms of contemporary protests taking place in public squares all over the world that include both marchers and accidental observers (i.e., waving, cheering, standing).

This relationship of interaction, in contemporary assemblies, among the leaders, participants, and viewers is carefully planned. The formal space has a major role in defining this relationship and the setting of the assembly as a whole; a speaker standing in a center of a circular space, for example, would project a message of being part of the crowd, emerging from it, as opposed to a speaker standing on a high podium at the edge of a rectangular space, evoking distinct hierarchy and theatricality. Sometimes, the desired setting among the participants follows the physical setting of space, but more often, it is modified with additional means, such as an installation of a stage, microphones, flags, and posters, reinforcing the visuals and textual symbols of the event.

### *Crowd Configuration*

“The Crowd” is generally taken to mean an assembly of people. In psychological terms, “crowd” suggests that, under certain circumstances, a group agglomeration acquires characteristics different from those of the individuals composing it. Sentiments and ideas of every individual in the gathering cohere, and conscious discrete personalities vanish.<sup>16</sup> Often, the scale and geometry of a space designed to be populated by the masses support two kinds of crowds, that is, the *present* and the *absent*. In the case of a mass congregation and a present crowd, a space’s features, particularly its scale, contribute to transforming the individual into an anonymous participant,<sup>17</sup> an integral part of a virtual unified entity. When unpopulated, the

scale and physical features of a space project power and monumentality. These constant reminders of an absent crowd thus sustain, through the notion of an imagined crowd, an ongoing hierarchical relationship between the citizen and the authority.

Crowd configuration depends on the space’s physical attributes, surveillance, and enforced order in space. This can be manifested in the use of light, spatial proportions, and building masses, often defined by laws of symmetry and perspective, along with rules, laws, and social codes that govern space, all of which affect participants’ movements and performances. The well-known example of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires marching in circles reveals how an innovative act emerges from both the space design (the paved circle around the monument) and the legal limitations of protesting against the regime.<sup>18</sup> This example shows how groups appropriate space by redefining its access, appearance, and representation and reclaim the space by using some of its physical attributes and thus modifying its cultural origin. Another example is the Israeli “Women in Black” who temporarily appropriate “informal public spaces” throughout Israel every Friday afternoon.<sup>19</sup> These relatively small groups have the power to decide their own spatial configuration, performance acts, and means of action. However, in a case of large assemblies, it is the powers (i.e., political parties, institutions) that define the spatial configuration of the crowd by planning the size of the space to best suit the number of people assembling, enhancing the sense of “togetherness” and solidarity among participants, and reinforcing the crowd’s perception of its own power and reassuring those in power.

### *Order and Surveillance*

The term *order* designates two interrelated order systems: the order of the assembly and the order of the space. The order of the assembly and its ritual performance components (i.e., marching, gathering, singing, etc.), clothing, and schedule (i.e., timing and length of the event) represent the way

the participants see themselves, either as supporters or as protesters against social order, all within the culture of their society.<sup>20</sup> This order has a dual role: it is a mechanism for constructing meaning and for interpreting social reality and a device for negotiating between the state and the citizen. The order of the assembly takes place within the arrangement of a physical space, which includes the setting’s topography, boundaries, traffic movements, and buildings uses (i.e., governmental buildings, commercial, residential buildings). The space’s setting and design, defined by architects and authorities, is a representation of the civic identity of the society. Some of these characteristics are modified temporally to fit the order of the assembly, with barriers, blocked routes, and adjusted traffic rules to control the order of the crowd’s movement. In addition, police attempt to maintain this order through different means of surveillance, such as cameras and secret agents in a crowd to remain alert to any form of violence that might occur. Yet, in many of the assemblies, there is direct coordination between the organizers (activists or political powers) and the police. Surveillance is also empowered by modern technology and is clearly the most effective means to achieve what Foucault has named “docile bodies,” citizens targeted by power control.<sup>21</sup> However, one must be careful when using these terms, as surveillance and enforced order can be challenged through sociopolitical agencies, like the case of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, that operated under a military coup. The order’s significance, of both assembly and space, is that it serves as a means of control, but it can also be a means of liberation and mediation.

These three parameters, symbolic meaning, crowd configuration, and order and surveillance, are the lens through which Rabin/Malchei Israel Square is examined here. This lens is used to be able to analyze the square from a formal perspective through its spatial evolution, followed by a socio-spatial perspective discussing the way the space’s

physical setting influences the shape of public discourse and is influenced by it.

### Architectural Formalization of Malchei Israel Square

The area on the edge of the city border, near the Portalis orchard in the Arab village of Summeil, was designated as a square in the city plan of 1927, based on the 1925 Geddes report.<sup>22</sup> Pressed by the British, the Tel Aviv Municipality had invited the Scottish biologist-planner Patrick Geddes to report on the condition of the city. His six-month survey, presented in a thorough report, became the basis for a plan (Figure 4) that was approved by the British Mandate in 1927, amended in 1938, and is, to this day, the official master plan of the city.<sup>23</sup> The site was acquired in the late 1920s by the Tel Aviv Municipality from Ibrahim Shuka Effendi Harbitali,<sup>24</sup> a sale of Arab land to a Jewish community that was quite common in the context of the autonomy granted to Tel Aviv by the British Mandate. Following the transaction, the orchard was perceived by the Jewish community as a conflicted border region whose economic potential was not fulfilled. It was only a matter of time until the municipality decided to make use of the land, uproot the trees, and designate the area for a public garden and a zoo.<sup>25</sup>

The late 1940s and, in particular, 1948 marked the beginning of a new era of differentiating between Tel Aviv as the cultural and economical center of the state and Jerusalem as its national core with the relocation of power entities such as the Knesset (parliament), the Supreme Court, and government offices. As early as 1945, Yaacov Ben Sera, Tel Aviv's city engineer, had proposed that Malchei Israel Square becomes the civic heart of the city. He argued that the city's development had transformed the site into a central node, dictating that City Hall be placed there. His concept included the removal of the zoo and other recreational institutions to allow a new civic representation of the square.<sup>26</sup>

The architectural framing of the square stretched over two decades through the mechanism

of three different design competitions, all of which contributed to the reshaping of the square's urban form and symbolic roles. The first competition, in 1947, was for an urban plan to reconstruct the streets and define the plaza's boundaries to be implemented by private developers.<sup>27</sup> Competitors were asked to design a continuous facade and designate the heights of the buildings surrounding the plaza. As a result of this competition, the spatial urban setting was redefined along with the role and size of the plaza in response to crowd configuration. As envisioned by the city engineer in 1947, the space was to have "no vegetation, be paved, and able to accommodate crowds of up to 80,000 people."<sup>28</sup>

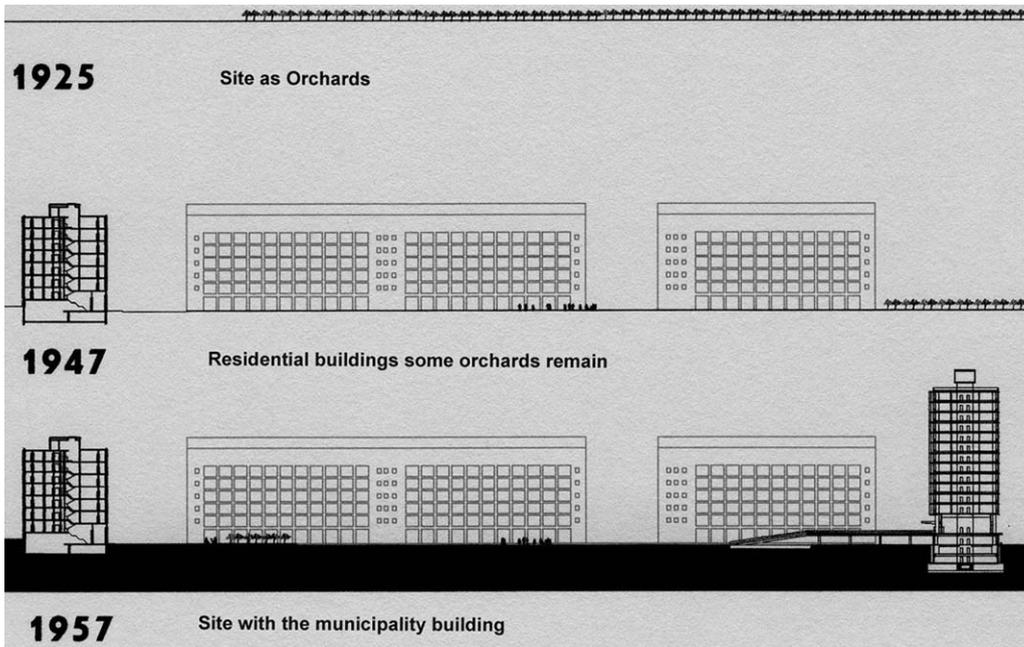
Four years later, in 1951, Abraham Yaski and Shlomo Pozner won the competition, focusing on the design of the plaza itself. Yaski and Pozner designed the plaza as an arena for public meetings but added some vegetation at the south end. However, it was not until 1957 that another competition to design City Hall reconfigured the relationship between the building and the plaza. The competitors were required to design a building to face the plaza that would "be of at least the same height as the buildings surrounding the plaza."<sup>29</sup> The winning entry, by architect Menahe Cohen, proposed a single high-rise building that would create a hierarchal relationship with the square and enhance its urban symbolic significance (Figure 5).<sup>30</sup>

Although the square was designed by three different architectural firms and constructed in three stages, its tectonic elements and materials remained consistent throughout the process. The architectural language was highly influenced by postwar modernism and, in particular, by Kenzo Tange's winning entry in the 1952 design competition for Tokyo's Metropolitan Government Offices. Similar to Tange's proposal, the dominant feature of the space is the twelve-storey City Hall building, supported by pillars of reinforced concrete, with a concrete and glass exterior, and with the ten storeys above ground featuring a repetitive array of windows facing the plaza. Broad steps lead



4. Tel Aviv, General Plan 1930. (Source: Tel Aviv Historical Archive.) Based on Geddes plan and report, the plaza is part of the boulevards and squares layout planned for the city.

to the terrace that spans the street and, with a pool of water, bounds the north side of the plaza. These steps were an attempt to connect the City Hall



5. Sections and site transformations (dates refer to planning proposal). (Drawings by Tali Hatuka.)

directly to the plaza; while not interrupting the street movement, they create a direct connection between the citizens and the municipality. The steps culminate in a wide terrace that extends along the southern side of the building, planned as the main ceremonial access to the building but used today mainly as a platform for speakers during public gatherings. Currently, the main entrance functions as a service entrance at the eastern edge of the building, facing a busy commercial street.

The plaza itself, with only a small area of greenery and pool of water, is paved with gray and white granulate in a repeating geometric pattern. Along its western edge are posts for hanging banners, loudspeakers, and light fixtures. The six-storey buildings around the plaza lack the decorative details or balconies that typify most residential buildings in Tel Aviv; rather, the street levels of these buildings form a continuous arcade that bustles day and night with people in shops, restaurants, and cafes in sharp contrast to the empty vastness of the plaza itself. This disparity between residential and commercial activity and the ceremonial space is intensified by municipal regulations prohibiting all billboards in the square to maintain its visual order and to emphasize its institutional dimension.<sup>31</sup>

The contrast between the intense informal activity of the arcades around the square and the formality of the plaza itself aroused public debate as early as the 1970s.<sup>32</sup> Proposals to establish cafes and additional green areas in the plaza were denied by the municipality on the grounds that “a square presenting the City Hall cannot include coffee

houses.” The symbolic dimension of the square was further reinforced with the decision to install a monument commemorating the Holocaust. This decision modified the municipal status of the plaza to a national square and furthered the argument against its quotidian meaning.

The Holocaust monument, larger than anticipated by the municipality, was designed by the artist Yigal Tumarkin, who saw it as a “small temple and a place for reflection by visitors to the city.”<sup>33</sup> This is also clearly expressed in the words of Abba Kovner, a poet and a partisan who fought with the resistance in the Vilna Ghetto in WWII: “The Square is surrounded by main roads. Men, women and children, old and young, cross it every day. What we ask is to add to the plaza, in the center of the first Hebrew city, a place to pause and remember.”<sup>34</sup> The monument is an inverted pyramid, an abstract sculpture in rusted metal (Figure 6). In Tumarkin’s own words, the monument expresses the weight of a prison, with the narrow base of the pyramid expanding and opening to the sky, sun, and light.<sup>35</sup>

The design generated much public dispute that went all the way to the Supreme Court.<sup>36</sup> The argument against the memorial focused on two main issues. Some council members claimed that a monument commemorating the Holocaust might be detrimental to the atmosphere of the square as an everyday space.<sup>37</sup> The second issue was the symbolic nature of the work itself, which the public felt was not an appropriate symbol of the Holocaust.<sup>38</sup> However, in 1974, despite public protest, the city council approved the monument’s construction.<sup>39</sup>

These architectural attributes of the square, with their contested evolution, created a hybrid space, one which combines Sennett’s two typologies—of the “agora,” an open space lined with commercial activity, and a “theater” with its rectangular geometry that establishes an elevated hierarchy (raised terrace) between the crowd and the speaker/performer. This hybrid space is also physically unique in the city: first, the continuous height of the buildings surrounding the plaza, unique to Tel Aviv, usually typified by its detached buildings; second, the square’s size that is large by comparison to other building complexes in Tel Aviv (and throughout Israel); and third, the relationship between City Hall and the plaza that is distinctive in Tel Aviv, where institutional buildings are rarely situated in plazas. These architectural features and the

6. Holocaust and Revival monument. (Source: Tel Aviv Historical Archive.)



geographic centrality of the space, along with the need for an arena for public debate over the Israeli-contested reality, contributed to the evolution of the square as an arena for political assemblies.

### The Evolution of Gatherings in the Square

On October 8, 1945, Tel Aviv's Jewish community gathered on the unbuilt site of Malchei Israel Square to protest the White Paper of 1939, a British proposal to create a Palestinian state that limited Jewish immigration.<sup>40</sup> A period photograph shows hundreds of people facing an open truck adorned with flags on which a figure stands, apparently making a speech. Other figures surround the truck, facing the crowd. Dressed in white, groups of people hold banners, one of which clearly reads, "Shoulder to shoulder against British policy." This organized protest by the Jewish community against British domination demanded that the country's gates be opened to concentration camp survivors coming from Europe. A municipal newsletter estimated the number of participants in the crowd at more than fifty thousand, reporting that the meeting in Malchei Israel Square followed a parade through the city. Analysis of this public gathering's characteristics and its spatial location, as of other Jewish congregations in the 1930s and 1940s, sheds light on the civil practices of the Jewish community during the British Mandate prior to the development of the space as a square.

The spatial location of the gathering looks flat and exposed, an unregulated city edge, with no particular attributes. It has a rectangular shape but is architecturally undefined, with no clear borders, access, or hierarchical definitions. The gathering activates the place, but the crowd configuration does not alter its spatial definition. Furthermore, the place and order of assembly, as practiced in the 1930s and the 1940s, was a dynamic sociospatial phenomenon repeated in other parts of the city.<sup>41</sup> The site of Malchei Israel was significant, but it was not exclusive for public gatherings. The absence of a defined public

civic space in the city allowed for flexible and imaginative forms of civil participation. Each assembly had its own order, its banners, and flags. Moreover, Jewish collective identity was not yet based on denial of, or resistance to, a Palestinian state. Rather, it focused on strengthening the national claims of the Jewish society. As an earlier assembly in Malchei Israel Square in 1939 described, "in front of the huge parade that numbered 70,000 people and stretched for 10 kilometers, marched the organizations . . ."<sup>42</sup> Marching as a precedent action to the gathering itself was also a way of engaging viewers and accumulating more participants for the event. The accumulation of people, often mentioned in the newspapers of the period, was significant both in terms of gaining credit for the claims of the Jewish community externally (i.e., with the British government) and internally (in the community itself). This latter fact is of particular significance, giving form to the fragmented, heterogeneous Jewish society that comprised different groups—orthodox, national-religious, secular, and workers.<sup>43</sup> These groups were neither politically nor socially hostile to each other. They adhered to a rational public discourse over the "struggle for a homeland."<sup>44</sup> Rallies like the one on October 8, 1945, promoted the shared belief that each group could develop an individual agenda that would contribute to the common goal of national struggle.

With the retreat of the British forces and the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, there was a radical reduction of informal public gatherings in Tel Aviv.<sup>45</sup> The main effort of the community was directed toward immediate concerns, such as housing the new immigrants and establishing state institutions. However, major efforts were put into the reconstitution of the fractured society as one state entity. Parallel to these social processes, and as part of the establishment of national institutions, the definitions of both assemblies and space altered.

With the architectural and urban design competitions in the 1950s to 1970s, the square becomes an arena for municipal events, such as public concerts, folk singing, secular celebrations,

religious festivals, like Purim and Hanukah, national holidays like Independence Day, and commercial events with cultural goals, like the National Book Fair. A photo taken in 1977 shows the newly adjusted order of gathering in the square. Crowd configuration and symbolic hierarchy are achieved by urban and architectural definitions. Thousands of people sit in the square on a summer evening, listening to a public concert (Figure 7). The seating is arranged as in a theater. At the southern end of the square, close to the Holocaust Memorial, people stand loosely. The floodlighted City Hall facade forms a backdrop to the musicians' small stage. Unlike the early parades in which each group carried its own banner, here municipal and national banners and flags hang on the City Hall facade, enhancing the sense of a unified community. Residential buildings define the boundaries of the huge square with their windows looking onto it, reinforcing the unification of personal lives with the formal national attributes and roles of the square.

This sense of national unity began cracking in the 1970s. The occupation of the Palestinian territories following the 1967 (Six-Day) War and the rise of the Palestinian national identity increased internal disputes over Israel's own collective identity. The square became the forum for public protest, an arena for expressing political diversity and argument. These public disputes further increased in 1977, with the political upheaval and the Labor Party loss in the national election. These events demarcate the square's status as a national arena for disputes (see Figure 8). Four key issues made the square a locus for political protest: first was the legal decision initiated by the vice mayor to increase the political use of the square during preelection period, resulting in the installation of facilities such as a temporary stage and speakerphones for national election campaigns, as allowed for discussions, lectures, and debates about controversial issues;<sup>46</sup> second were the square's open space and scale, as well as its construction as a national symbol; third, Tel Aviv as the geographic center of the state, and the most populated city in



7. Concert in the square (1977)—the plaza as theater. (Photograph by Lior Josef, Tel Aviv Historical Archive.)

power, competing to see which side could assemble the highest number of people in the square. As Zeli Reshef, a *Peace Now* leader and one of the 400,000 Protest rally's organizers, said, "What is the political power of the Square? It is perceived as a place of power due to its size. Pictures of the crowd taken from the roofs convey that power."<sup>51</sup>

### Current Gatherings in the Square

Since the 1980s, public gatherings at the site have become carefully crafted performances with repeated rituals. The crowd usually gathers on Saturday evening after the Sabbath. Flags and banners are waved; the crowd moves arms and bodies in support of the speakers. The City Hall terrace has become a stage for speakers, celebrities, and high-ranking supporters. Speeches alternate with musical

the area, made it easier for participants to arrive from all over the country; and fourth, unlike public spaces in Jerusalem, the square represented, and still does represent, the secular and civic core of Israeli society.

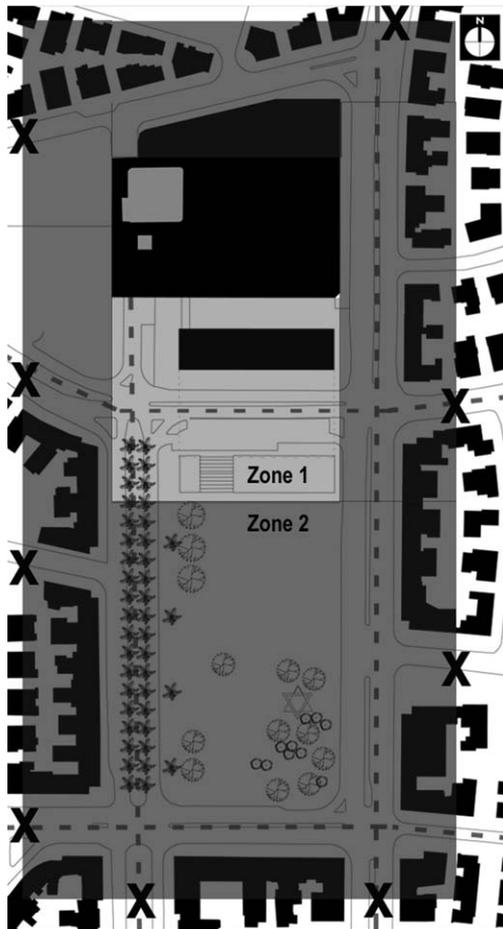
Since the early 1980s, crowd configuration and assembly order were established as a repetitive form. Examples are the assemblies of the competing parties held in June 1981 prior to the national elections. The Labor Party's meeting was described by a local newspaper as consisting of "more than 200,000 people from all over the country . . . Over 1,200 trucks and buses transported hundreds of people, arriving from distant settlements to participate in the event."<sup>47</sup> Another newspaper reported the Likud Party rally, held a day later, in the same terms: "130,000 enthusiastic people raised their hands and sang . . . Menahem Begin (the Likud leader) spoke for two hours to the hundreds of thousands of people who came to the Square in buses from all over the country . . ."<sup>48</sup>

One of the most famous demonstrations in the square of this period, deeply engraved in the Israeli collective memory, is the so-called "400,000 Protest."<sup>49</sup> It was held in the square on September 25, 1982, to demand a state investigation into the Sabra and Shatila massacres in Lebanon.<sup>50</sup> It urged the withdrawal of the army from Lebanon and the resignation of the government. Organized by the Labor Party and the Peace Now Movement, this assembly emphasized the Israelis' awareness of

their role in democratic decision making and their refusal to participate in government policy that went against personal conscience. Thus, we see that, instead of being an organic and lived experience, the public rally has been transformed into a test of

8. The square as a public and political forum. City Hall terrace becomes a stage for speakers, celebrities, and high-ranking supporters. Speeches alternate with musical performances, the audience responds loudly and enthusiastically, and every event concludes with the singing of the national anthem. In the photograph is Prime Minister Golda Meir, 1975. (Photo by Milner Moshe, November 13, 1975, National Photograph Collection.)





X Checkpoints and Barriers: Metal barriers blocking the movement of vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists from the surrounding streets, about one meter high.

9. Surveillance and control during civil protests. Zone 1—impermeable checkpoint; heavily guarded by policemen, barriers defining a sterile zone that includes the area of the balcony, and the alley at the back of the City Hall building; zone 2—permeable checkpoint; metal barriers guarded by two to three policemen looking for suspicious individuals: checking IDs and the content of bags and asking about weapons; only pedestrians are allowed to pass (vehicles or cyclists are not allowed). Surveillance Foot Patrol: teams (usually of two to three policemen) with flashlights surveying the backyards of the residential buildings in the area. Surveillance in the crowd: policemen in civilian clothing strolling through the crowd; all zones—surveillance watchers: policemen located on the first and second perimeter of residential and public building roofs. (Drawing by Tali Hatuka.)

performances, the audience responds loudly and enthusiastically, and every event concludes with the singing of the national anthem. Images of the event are transmitted live to millions of television viewers, and the demonstrations are often synchronized with the end of the weekend evening news, also becoming the next morning's leading item. Thus do political events become television stage settings, with aerial views of the masses.

Because of the increased tension between rival groups within the Israeli society, escalating Palestinian Intifada in the 1990s, and the growing involvement of the media in the assemblies, there has been an increase in surveillance in the square (see Figure 9). On days of assemblies, entrances to City Hall and to most of the restaurants and shops in the arcades surrounding the square are blocked by police at temporary checkpoints, which define new boundaries for the square, turning it into a "sterile zone." The increased media attention provides additional surveillance, controlling events simultaneously from above and on the ground. Ironically, as opposed to the fenced boundaries, the inner space of the square is unrestricted, allowing freedom of movement and departure via any of the barriers. This contributes to an illusion of democracy and safety, blurring the fact that the crowd's boundaries are strictly controlled, surveyed, and searched.

The ritual designed order was in use during the most dramatic event in the square, fixed forever in the national (and international) consciousness, that is, the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin on November 4, 1995, after a rally in support of the Oslo Accord.<sup>52</sup> As usual, this rally commenced at 19:00 with musical performances. Thousands of youngsters came to the square carrying Hebrew, English, and Arabic banners calling for peace. The organizers constantly updated the audience about the masses en route to the event. Hundreds of balloons were released after the speeches. As Prime Minister Rabin descended the service stairs below

City Hall's terrace, he was shot by a young Jewish extremist. His death was announced shortly after he was rushed to the hospital.

Rabin's assassination exposed the deep fissures in Israeli society and triggered ongoing public debate about how to heal them. The square became the locus of memory of the murder and a constant reminder of the tensions that led to it. Changing the name of the square was a memorial ritual, as was the placing of a monument at the exact site of the assassination. These acts reinforced the political formalization of the space and its assemblies, adding further symbolic meaning to it, and thus magnifying the importance of the square's ritual and its theatrical dimension.

### The Architecture of Repeated Rituals

The historical evolution of both space and assemblies demonstrates that the space's symbolic meanings evolved prior to the formal design of the square in the 1960s. Still, the architectural design is the creator of definite spatial boundaries and architectural attributes that dramatically change the vistas and perspectives of power relationships in the square. In particular, the design transformed the way in which the gaze of the crowd is controlled. The leaders stand on an elevated podium, high above the crowd at the northern edge of a square intensified by physical barriers unlike the open accessibility in 1945. Furthermore, distinct from the assemblies in the 1940s, the rectangular space of the square, with City Hall and its balcony, creates hierarchical relationships between the speakers and the audience. This is amplified with the use of lighting, in particular in/on the City Hall building, nonexistent in the 1930s and 1940s, which, again, contributes to the theatricality of the event. Thus does the design of the square contribute to transforming the individual into an anonymous participant, particularly when an assembly takes place. The scale and physical features of the square, the illuminated City Hall, and

the size of the plaza, all project power and monumentality that functions as a constant reminder of an absent crowd in the city's daily life.

Socially, since the 1982 protest, different groups have identified Malchei Israel square as their arena to reinforce their social and national identities. In the 1980s and 1990s, assemblies in the square illustrated the fragmentation of national unity. Protests there expressed the divided opinions of isolated sectors of the Israeli society, which had no outlets for communication. Unlike the situation in the 1930s, current sectors do not acknowledge each other's legitimacy. Even today, meetings in the square do not represent social diversity as much as a congregation in which the different groups protest against each other rather than against a common antagonist. Furthermore, tensions between the various groups using the square have increased, underlining their differences. Gatherings of orthodox Jews and other right-wing groups in Jerusalem's Zion Square have emphasized the rivalry between the two cities and their positions in the national arena. This antagonism is connected to Tel Aviv's role as the cultural and business center against Jerusalem's historic and symbolic role. Jerusalem's origins and urban development derive from an enlisted mythology, a mystical dimension that since 1967 has intensified, especially in contrast to the quotidian existence of Tel Aviv.<sup>53</sup> The concreteness and the physical setting of Rabin Square, along its centrality, nationally and within the city, have all reinforced a perception of it as an arena of contested civil democracy.

Finally, a form of repeated ritual exists through intentionality (i.e., design or structure) and practice (i.e., enactment). As noted by anthropologist Don Handelman, all public events began sometime and somewhere, regardless of whether their existence is attributed to tradition or invention. In instances of invention, the public event intentionality may be created whole, and therefore, its design and form have temporal priority over its enactment. As shown, the forms of both space and the rituals in

Rabin Square are expressions of negotiations that construct order, making the logic of how they are put together crucial to how they work and to that which their designs enable them to accomplish.<sup>54</sup> Although the sociopsychological perception of the space and its use for public gatherings precede its formal and architectural development, it is the latter that is responsible for the space's symbolic features, the order and scale, and the logic of the design of civic assemblies. But as Handelman reminds us, the square may continue to be modified, as these ritual "forms" or "structures" are never fixed once and forever, even though persons may refer to these as settled and set.<sup>55</sup>

Thus, in light of the ongoing conflicts over the design of the square,<sup>56</sup> including a proposal for new underground parking facilities, the political formalization of the space and its assemblies are in question—a question embedded in its hybrid role as a pragmatic space for the surrounding communities and as a democratic and national memorial. How will this process of new place-making modify the square? Will realigning this formal space contribute to less formal assemblies and encourage new everyday activities in the plaza? Although Richard Sennett rightly argues that "the square prepares people for debate; [while] the theater visually disciplines their debating,"<sup>57</sup> as a hybrid theater/agora, Rabin Square could be modified into a better combination of both. Architectural consideration could expand the square's embodiment as a national political partnership into a partnership between the citizens and their state.

#### Notes

1. Hundred thousand Israelis join antipullout protest in Tel Aviv, *People's Daily Online* (source: Xinhua), [http://english.people.com.cn/200508/12/eng20050812\\_201912.html](http://english.people.com.cn/200508/12/eng20050812_201912.html), (accessed April 11, 2007).
2. Defined by Aristotle as the highest form of partnership. Aristotle, *Philosophy*, Introduction and Commentary by Renford Bambrough (New York: New American Library, 1963), p. 382.
3. Setha Low and Neil Smith, eds., *The Politics of Public Space* (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 1–16; Paul Virilio, *Bunker Archéologie* (Paris: Éditions du demi-cercle, 1991), pp. 17–24.

4. Sibel Bozdoğan, *Modernism and Nation Building: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), pp. 3–15; Abidin Kunsu, *Behind the Postcolonial* (New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 1–24; Lisa Findley, *Building Change* (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 1–42; Kim Dovey, *Framing Places* (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 1–6; and Lawrence J. Vale, *Architecture, Power and National Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).
5. Richard Sennett, *The Spaces of Democracy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), pp. 6–48.
6. This analysis is based on the historical archives of the Municipality of Tel Aviv-Jaffa. The collections of the archives reflect the history of the city in all the fields in which government is involved: matters of education and culture, construction, gardens, religion, and so on.
7. Rob Krier, *Urban Space* (New York: Rizzoli, 1979), pp. 13–23; Aldo Rossi, *Architecture in the City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), pp. 20–27.
8. Jan Gehl, *Life between Buildings* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1987), pp. 7–32; Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960), pp. 1–13.
9. K. Dovey, *Framing Places*; Neil Leach, *The Anaesthetics of Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), pp. 17–32; Susan Torre, "Claiming the Public Space: The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo," in Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner, and Iain Borden, eds., *Gender, Space, Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 140–45; and L.J. Vale, *Architecture, Power and National Identity*.
10. See Emile Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: Free Press, 1965 [1915]), pp. 3–24; Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (New York: Beacon Press, 1963), pp. 1–19.
11. Sally Moore and Barbara Myerhoff, *Secular Ritual* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1977), pp. 3–23.
12. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), pp. 1–8.
13. Don Handelman, *Models and Mirrors: Towards an Anthropology of Public Events* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 10–21.
14. Victor W. Turner, *The Forest of Symbol* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), p. 19.
15. R. Sennett, *The Spaces of Democracy*, pp. 15–21.
16. James M. Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), pp. 20–23.
17. Kathleen James-Chakraborty, *German Architecture for a Mass Audience* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 10–20.
18. S. Torre, "Claiming the Public Space: The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo."
19. Sarah Hellman and Tamar Rapport, "The Women in Black and the Challenge to the Social Order," *Theory and Criticism* 10 (1997): 175–92 (Hebrew); Tova Benski, "Breaching Events and the Emotional Reactions of the Public: Women in Black in Israel," in Helena Flam and Debra King, eds., *Emotions and Social Movements* (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 57–78.
20. D. Handelman, *Models and Mirrors: Towards an Anthropology of Public Events*.
21. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), pp. 51–78.
22. On the role of the Geddes plan in demarcating urban spatial order, see Tali Hatuka and Leslie Forsyth, "Urban Design in the Context of Globalization and Nationalism: Rothschild Boulevard, Tel Aviv," *Urban Design International* 10, no. 2 (2005): 69–86.
23. For further details on the Geddes plan and its implementation, see Rachel Kallus, "Patrick Geddes and the Evolution of Housing Types in Tel-Aviv," *Planning Perspectives* 12, no. 3(1997): 281–320.

24. In a contract that included a north-south division of the orchard, it was agreed that the southern part and the big pond would be given to the city council, while the northern side, including the houses and wells, would be retained by the owner, who would supply water to the city. Documents from the early 1930s describe the Portalis orchard as owned and cultivated by the Jewish community. Despite good working relationships between the owner and the council, difficulties and suspicions continued. The partnership was terminated with the owner's initiative to sell his part to the city council. Israel Rokach, "To Mr. San Salim Arafa" (Tel Aviv Historical Archive, 1934, File 1263a); Tel Aviv Council, "An Agreement" (Tel Aviv Historical Archive, 1925, File 1263a); Ebrahim Shuka Effendi Harbitali, "To the Mayor of Tel Aviv Council" (Tel Aviv Historical Archive, 1933, File 1263a).
25. Secretary of Finance, "To the Mayor" (Tel Aviv Historical Archive, 1937, File 1263b).
26. Tel Aviv Council, "5th Protocol of the Planning Committee" (Tel Aviv Historical Archive, 1945, File 4-2615); Tel Aviv Council, "4th Protocol of the Planning Committee" (Tel Aviv Historical Archive, 1945, File 4-2615).
27. Yediot Iriat Tel Aviv, "How Will Malchei Israel Square Be Constructed?" *Yediot Iriat Tel Aviv* (Tel Aviv Historical Archive, 1947), p. 1.
28. Ibid.
29. The council did not see the building as a single unit. M. Amiaz, "The Committee for New Council Buildings" (Tel Aviv Historical Archive, 1954, File 4-1248a).
30. Udo Kultermann, *Kenzo Tange 1946-1969, Architecture and Urban Design* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1970), pp. 46-55.
31. Tel Aviv Council, "Proposed Regulations for Maintaining the Character of Malchei Israel Square" (Tel Aviv Historical Archive, 1966, File 13-51).
32. Avi Melzer, "Malchei Israel Square" (Tel Aviv Historical Archive, 1970, File 25-2531); Moshe Amiaz, "To the Mayor" (Tel Aviv Historical Archive, 1970, File 25-2531).
33. City Spokesman, "Competition for Design of the Monument" (Tel Aviv Historical Archive, 1970, File 25-1347). The decision to erect the monument was made in 1970, but public debate began with the announcement of the competition results in 1974.
34. Abba Kovner, "An Attempt to Define the Idea of the Monument" (Tel Aviv Historical Archive, 1971, File 25-1348).
35. City Spokesman, "The Monument for the Holocaust and Revival in Malchei Israel Square" (Tel Aviv Historical Archive, 1973, File 25-1350).
36. In 1973, a plea was presented to the Supreme Court to halt construction of the monument. Other delays were caused by the 1973 War and by local elections.
37. Aharon Papu, "A Demand to Cancel the Plan for Installing a Monument in Malchei Israel Square" (Tel Aviv Historical Archive, 1973, File 4-1349), p. 2; Zvi Avi-Gai, "The Holocaust and Revival Monument" (Tel Aviv Historical Archive, 1974, File 25-1350).
38. M. Savidor, "To Mr. Mayor" (Tel Aviv Historical Archive, 1972, File 25-1347); Yehuda Shochat, "To the Mayor" (Tel Aviv Historical Archive, 1976, File 4-1350).
39. Ombudsman, "Memorandum" (Tel Aviv Historical Archive, 1975, File 4-1350).
40. Statement of British Palestine policy, issued May 17, 1939 (the MacDonald White Paper), which also outlined a five-year plan for the immigration of seventy-five thousand (ten thousand per annum plus twenty-five thousand) refugees. This "White Paper" should be understood in the context of escalated hostilities prior to the outbreak of WWII. It was evident to foreign policy experts that it was not in Britain's interests to offend the Arab and Muslim world. The White Paper remained in force until 1947.
41. See, for example, the protest on August 13, 1946, in Habima Square; Yediot Iriat Tel Aviv, "Tel Aviv in a Settlement Struggle" (Tel Aviv Historical Archive, 1946), pp. 46-47.
42. Yediot Iriat Tel Aviv, "The Day of Command in Tel Aviv," *Yediot Iriat Tel Aviv* (Tel Aviv Historical Archive, 1939), p. 196.
43. According to Yatziv, a sector is a community or network of communities joined by their members' free will. Members usually agree about political, social, and cultural controversies; membership is active and usually indicates their views and beliefs. Gadi Yatziv, *The Sectorial Society* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1999), p. 12.
44. Ibid., p. 8.
45. An attempt to reduce society to a homogeneous mass, orchestrated by Ben Gurion's *Mamlachtiut* (statehood) project and intended to strengthen the political center and reinforce its authority over different groups and sectors of society. Dan Horowitz and Moshe Lissak, *Trouble in Utopia: The Overburdened Polity of Israel* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1990), pp. 40-66.
46. Yitzhak Arzi, "To the Council Members" (Tel Aviv Historical Archive, 1977, File 25-2532).
47. Haaretz, June 28, 1981, p. 1.
48. Ibid.
49. "The protest of the 400,000" refers to the (putative) number of participants. Maya Michaeli, "The State's Square," *Tel Aviv* (October 26, 2001): 44.
50. On the evening of September 16, 1982, a group of Lebanese-Christian militia of the *Falange* entered the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila (near Beirut). They murdered between 800 (official Israeli figure) and 3,500 (according to the investigations of the Israeli journalist Kapeliouk) men, women, and children. On the previous day, the Israeli Army in Lebanon had entered this part of the city, sealed the camps from the outside world, and stood by to observe these events.
51. Maya Michaeli, "The State's Square."
52. The *Oslo Accords*—agreements between the Israeli government and the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1993, officially named the *Declaration of Principles*. Secret negotiations were conducted in Sweden, with breakthrough meetings in Oslo signed on August 20, 1993, and a public ceremony in Washington, DC, on September 13, 1993, with Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin.
53. Zali Gurevitch, and Gideon Aran, "On Place (Israeli Anthropology)," *Alpiem* 4 (1991): 9-44.
54. D. Handelman, *Models and Mirrors: Towards an Anthropology of Public Events*, p. 16.
55. Ibid., p. 17.
56. On recent proposals to update the Square, see Tali Hatuka, "Revision Moments: The Case of Rabin Square," *Theory and Criticism* 24 (2004): 59-86.
57. R. Sennett, *The Spaces of Democracy*, p. 21.