

‘CONSERVATION RURAL SPACE’ – THE CASE OF AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVE SETTLEMENTS AND OPEN SPACE IN ISRAEL

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ABSTRACT

Progressing development trends threaten the continued existence of open space, natural resources and cultural heritage sites in rural areas. These trends are evident in many countries worldwide, yet they are especially conspicuous and threatening in Israel, a small and densely populated country with limited land resources. Moreover, the present urban-biased development trends pose a threat to the continued existence of Israeli rural cooperative settlements (*Kibbutz* and *Moshav*), which comprise universally unique settlement models and are therefore very highly valued cultural heritage assets. The purpose of this paper is to offer the ‘missing link’ in creating an integrated planning approach to conservation of rural areas, their settlements and agricultural lands together with open landscapes that have been declared for preservation. Such a framework will utilize the prevailing act of the planning authorities which, at present, rarely develop (or at least stabilize) agricultural heritage assets, most of them vernacular, embedded in open space or natural reserve, or part of a rural landscape which holds historical and cultural values.

Keywords: conservation, cultural heritage complexes, Kibbutz, moshav, open space, rural landscapes.

1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years, rural areas, namely, agricultural settlements and cultivated land, are perceived as a part of the overall spatial open space system (Draft National Landscapes Typology [1], Eetvelde & Antrop [2], Fleischman & Feitelson [3], Maruani & Amit-Cohen [4], Melnik [5], Stern [6]). This conception evolved in response to increasing development pressures since the last decades of the 20th century that consumed large tracts of open space and natural landscape resources, while also creating irreversible changes in the rural countryside. The impending loss of open space was further strengthened by low density urban sprawl at the rural fringe. In other words, the progressing development trends threaten heritage values that are embedded in the agricultural zone as well as natural attributes and resources that exist in non-agricultural open landscapes with their ecological, environmental and social amenities (Alanen & Melnick [7], Kaplan et al. [8]).

While the trends described above characterize, in varying rates, developed and developing countries worldwide, in Israel they are particularly conspicuous for two main reasons. First, Israel experienced an intense demographic change in the 1990s, due to mass immigration from the former Soviet Union. This, coupled with an exceptionally high natural growth rate, lead to increased demand for development, primarily for housing and employment purposes, thus aggravating the pressure on open space and agricultural land. Moreover, given the limited land resources in a small country like Israel, the conflict and competition for land between various land uses are further intensified.

Second, Israel has a unique structure of rural settlements, especially cooperative settlement types such as *kibbutzim* and *moshavim* (singular – *Kibbutz* and *Moshav*), which together make just above 80% of total rural settlements. The *Kibbutz* is based originally on communal property, in which members have no private property but share the work and the profits of some collective enterprise, agricultural as well as industrial. Although this system

has undergone some changes towards privatization, the ownership of the properties remains communal and profits are shared equally, or by seniority – years of being a member of the Kibbutz. The moshav is based on family households operating their farms and personal property individually. It is characterized by equal allocation of land and means of production. Size and structure of farms are determined by natural conditions and income potential. Holdings include a built-up plot and agricultural plots that are legally inseparable. The multi-purpose cooperative organization was originally supposed to handle joint purchasing and marketing, to underwrite individual loans, to provide assistance in times of crisis and to run municipal affairs. This is not the case today.

These types of settlement are distinguished by their ideological, social and structural characteristics, and are tangibly expressed in their spatial organization and built assets (Amit-Cohen [9, 10], Feinmesser [11], Kahana [12], Kliot [13]). Their significance for cultural heritage both in discrete tangible assets such as public facilities, agricultural structures, tree avenues, groves and also in their overall spatial organization reflect a unique combination of principles, values and lifestyle characteristics (Applebaum and Sofer [14]). Such unique cultural heritage entities based on historical association of settling the land deserve special attention and ought to be considered for conservation in the face of progressing development.

Planners and preservationists may successfully work together in urban areas, mainly in the conservation of historic neighbourhoods, as long as the two groups encourage solutions that present balance between the old and the new. Thus, a neighbourhood's historical values must be weight against: (a) economic development needs and associated land use changes, and (b) the preference of both current population and intended residents (McCabe and Gould Ellen [15]). Such cooperation does not always exist in the case of cultural heritage properties that are embedded in open areas, which were designated for preservation mainly because of their natural characteristics. In these cases, while conservation of nature and natural landscapes have already become customary over the last decades through various approaches and methods (Maruani and Amit-Cohen [4]) – approaches to the conservation of cultural heritage as part of the open space are still evolving.

The conservation of cultural heritage in the rural zone is intertwined with the issues that relate to conservation of open landscapes and natural resources in general. This linkage may lead to the identification of an integrated fabric distinguished by visual, social, cultural and economic properties that are to be preserved as whole heritage landscape entities. The link between cultural heritage assets and open landscapes has already been recognized in past documents and studies. For example, in 1999, a classification of rural landscapes that was developed in the UK, based on the European Landscape Convention in Florence, 20 October 2000, assigned considerable weight to cultural heritage assets (e.g., settlement patterns, farm types, field patterns, agricultural facilities, rural built heritage). These ideas were in contrast to former approaches that primarily stressed the physical-ecological attributes of the landscape [1]. This classification method was also driven by the UK Countryside Agency's desire to preserve the character of England as a land of rural landscapes. The US National Parks Authority also classified the landscapes where the natural encountered the created cultural landscape, emphasizing both the historical dimension and landscape characteristics (Birnbaum & Asla [16]). This classification was based on the 1992 decision of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, which added a new definition, 'Cultural Landscape', to its document from 1972 (Charter of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage [17]). According to this, cultural landscape relates to cultural sites that represent the integration of natural landscapes and human cultural creation. It also expresses the concept that natural landscape serves as the background and inspiration for cultural creation. Cultural landscapes reflect the evolvement

of human society and settlement over time and the manner in which these are affected by the physical environment (Birnbaum [18]). The term 'cultural landscape' is not new to research. In 1925, the geographer Carl Sauer explained that spatial observation is based on recognizing the integration of physical and cultural foundations of the landscape. Thus, nature does not create culture, but instead, culture works with and on nature [19]. However, the 1992 decision to include cultural assets of exceptional universal value in the world heritage list endowed them with a new status and encouraged to protect them.

Conservation of natural and cultural heritage landscapes contributes to the quality of life and is currently perceived as an indispensable part of sustainable development (Stephenson [20]). However, while conservation of nature and natural landscapes have already become customary over the last decades – through various approaches and methods [4] – approaches to the conservation of cultural heritage are still evolving. Moreover, natural and cultural heritage are rarely considered together, even when both are closely linked within certain landscapes and could be conceptualized as inseparable. These are also managed separately, often based upon separate legislations and institutional structures (Speed et al. [21]). In addition, even in cases where planning addresses both natural and cultural heritage in a given area, heritage assets are treated as individual items within the open landscape (Agnoletti [22]), thus disregarding the potential synergistically increased value of the heritage landscape fabric. Moreover, natural and cultural landscapes involve such common values as continuity, stability or aesthetics, and are perceived as important factors contributing to both the quality of life and the creation of an environmental experience. Similar functions, representative rather than economic, have contributed to the rising demand for natural and cultural landscapes. Open space containing cultural heritage assets or adjoining a heritage complex such as rural texture, fields and orchards, an industrial site alongside a mine and an agricultural school, further reinforce this argument. Both of these serve as a 'romantic' object for the urban society – a mass society in which the individual has lost his identity, and pines for 'other landscapes'. The contribution of this continuum is not merely social but also synergetic, an expansion that stresses the public importance of the landscapes and facilitates their planning, management and protection (Antrop [23, 24]).

2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this paper is to present the 'missing link' in creating an integrated planning approach to conservation of rural areas, its settlements and agricultural lands together with open landscapes, which were declared for preservation because of their ecological and social values (natural reserves and open space for recreation, tourism and public uses). This approach is a challenge to planning systems, which need a guiding framework for integrated conservation. Such a framework will utilize the work of the planning authorities, which, until now, are divided into two separate systems: the natural planning authorities and the cultural heritage authorities. To present this approach and to prove the missing planning framework for integrated plans in cases of heritage landscape fabrics in the rural zone, this research included three stages: 1. A review of the national and district statutory outline plans in Israel in order to identify and document the manner in which they treat and relate to open space resources and cultural heritage properties. 2. A field survey in order to document tangible cultural heritage (existing built assets, agricultural fields, groves, settlement lay out, etc.) of each Kibbutz and Moshav, describe their physical condition and location, note their former and present function and identify their linkage to events representing national and local memory. This stage included classification of the assets and identification of their spatial distribution in relation to designated open space resources as marked in the national and

district statutory outline plans. 3. Compilation and mapping of the information of the first two stages, using a GIS system. The understandings and insights gained by this methodology were served to draw the target product of the research, which was used to present a guiding framework for integrated conservation of heritage landscape fabrics. To describe the need for special planning system for integrated landscape in rural area, a region was selected in the rural space of the Central Coastal Plain of Israel. This area is located within the jurisdiction of two regional councils, The Lev HaSharon and Emek Hefer regional councils (Fig. 1). This area is essentially rural, with many kibbutzim and moshavim that are representative of the

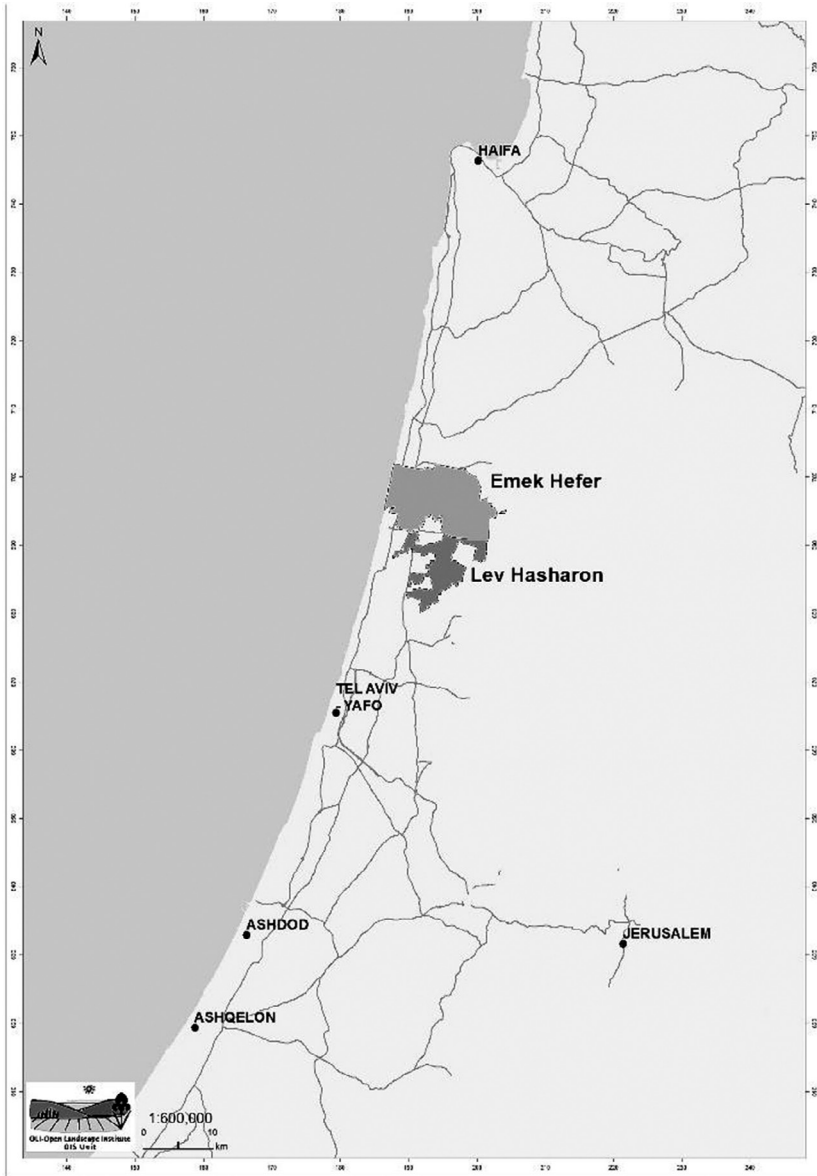


Figure 1: The Central Coastal Plain of Israel and the two regional councils.

cooperative settlement models which are unique to Israel, and are therefore of a special value for conservation. This rural zone is naturally characterized by an abundance of open space landscapes – agricultural cultivated land, rural land (not cultivated) and natural landscape. Moreover, these two regional councils are located at the northern section of the rural-urban fringe of the Tel Aviv metropolitan area.

3 COOPERATIVE RURAL SETTLEMENT IN ISRAEL

As this article is being written, the Kibbutz Movement has already celebrated the 100th anniversary of the founding of the first Kibbutz (Degania 1909), while the moshavim are preparing their festivities to celebrate the founding of the first moshav, Nahalal (1921). Both these settlement types represent a unique form of settlement, combining social values of equality, cooperation and mutual aid with economic accomplishments in agriculture and industry. They are organized as a legal cooperative society, and incorporate several unique structural principles – both ideological and practical. Notable among these is the principle of state-owned land, which stipulates that the land will not be sold but leased for renewable periods of 49 years to the members of the cooperative. These sought to create scale economies for the member farmers (in the case of the moshav) and the community (in the case of the Kibbutz) by handling joint purchasing and marketing, underwriting individual loans (in the case of the moshav), providing mutual aid and running the municipal affairs of the community.

The uniqueness of these two settlement forms, the moshav and the Kibbutz, is tangibly expressed in their physical layout (Kliot [13]). The ideological distinction between them, as expressed primarily in respect to cooperation, is stressed even further in the physical layout of each. For example, the demarcation and separation between the family farming sections in the moshav is the result of the location of farm fields adjoining the family homes. Usually, the layout of the houses within the space, commonly referred to as the ‘towel’ moshavim, which are stretched along axes, or the centralized ‘fist’ moshavim, characterized by separation between the residential unit and the farming plot, with central public areas, differing from the Kibbutz layout. The latter is characterized by zoning, division of its area into ‘spaces’: residential space, economic space, public space, education space, agricultural space and green space (Feinmesser [11]). Due to its deserved distinction and its historical and cultural values, a cooperative settlement is entitled to a cultural heritage status: a space whose built textures, layout and fields constitute a single landscape unit worthy of conservation for the generations to come, and thus the development within it or in its proximity must take this distinction into account.

The last three decades have witnessed extensive changes in the cooperative settlements in Israel, in ideological concepts, physical, organizational and economic structure and in their social composition. For example, they have witnessed occupational changes (Palgi and Reinharz [25]) and a continuous decline in the number of families whose principal income is from agriculture [14]. The variety of occupations among residents within the rural space has expanded while economic cooperation between residents of the rural settlements and entrepreneurs residing elsewhere is on the rise.

There have also been demographic changes. Rural settlements in their various forms have opened up to new residents as part of community expansions, and thus, they began to undergo organizational, economic and physical changes; this development has recently been accelerated in the kibbutzim (Charney and Palgi [26]), *Yearly Book of Kibbutz Movement* [27]).

In recent years, changes in the rural settlement from occupational-economic, physical and social standpoints have been examined extensively. In addition to these studies, there is an

intensified interest in the implications these changes bring to bear on the status of cultural heritage assets among the residents [9]. These studies, however, just as the planning, lack an integrative examination of the frequent confrontation between open space, which was legally designated by the planning authorities, and rural space in the limited sense of built texture and adjacent agricultural areas, whose distinction justifies their definition as cooperative settlement heritage landscapes.

4 PLANNING IN ISRAEL: ATTITUDE TO POSSIBLE LINK BETWEEN CULTURAL HERITAGE AND OPEN SPACE

The planning authorities in Israel function on three levels: national, regional and local. National planning is based on Israel Master Plans (also called Israel National Outline Plans – INOP), which serve as an outline for long-range planning and policy. These plans are guiding proposals, and once they are statutory, the government's budget must follow their outlines. Regional and local planning is based on planning regulation. Israel is divided into six districts and the district outline plans (DOP) represent decisions that are accepted at the district level. Local planning represents planning decisions taken by local governments: city councils, local councils (small municipality) and regional councils (a group of communities often of a rural nature).

Over the years, several national and DOP present in Israel were not restricted to merely proclaiming a cultural heritage item or an open space or nature reserve, but related in some manner to the entire heritage complex and possible encounters between cultural heritage and quality open spaces. Following is a review of these plans, citations and attitude to the encounters between heritage complexes and open space, since these are the objects of this article.

The first attempt to create a unique national plan for the preservation of cultural heritage assets in Israel was the 1969 National Outline Plan for Preservation Cultural Heritage (NOP 9 [28]). This plan showed a preference for settlement sites of historical importance, and did not relate to open space or heritage complexes. The plan mentioned the layout of the first *Moshav* in Israel (Nahalal) and the first *Kibbutz* (Degania), together with their agricultural fields, but there was no mention whatsoever of open space or nature reserves which were adjacent to them.

The National Outline Plan for National Parks, NOP 8, 1981 [29] was intended to consolidate areas designated as national parks or landscape preserves. Since the plan was not intended to deal with cultural heritage, it merely noted the possibility of an encounter between cultural heritage properties and open space in the definition of national parks.

The National Outline Plan for Tourism and Leisure, NOP 12 (1983/1989) [30], defined tourism regions as 'including areas of tourism quality due to their nature, landscape and historical assets, among others'. This plan included, within the rural sites, fields and orchards, as well as nature reserves adjoining built textures. In other words, the attitude of the plan represents an approach suggesting the existence of heritage complexes and the possible linkage between these and open spaces.

NOP 31 – Combined National Outline Plan for Construction, Development and Immigrant Absorption 1998, was created in response to the need to cope with the large immigration waves of the early 1990s and the consequent development momentum [31]. The plan called to protect open spaces and was the first outline plan that also designated these as 'open rural landscapes'. Eventually, this designation contributed to an inclusive approach presented in the National Outline Plan for Construction, Development and Preservation, NOP 35, 2005 [32], which is the main Israel's NOP at present.

NOP 35 stressed the social, cultural and environmental importance of open spaces, while, at the same time, presenting the necessary balance between areas slated for development and areas slated for preservation. In seeking to present the 'image of the land (of Israel)', the plan considered the open spaces to be not only as nature and ecology, but also their contribution in reflecting culture and historical social processes. The plan divided the Israeli space into five textures, one of them being rural texture, which included 'areas of occupation, agricultural areas and tourism areas'. The plan mentioned the importance of continuum of open and agricultural spaces and titled it combined landscape, which unites the values of nature and agriculture landscape. It also stated that the aim is to preserve the ecological and cultural values of these continuous areas but did not include an exact definition or any management plans.

The approach for bringing together open spaces and cultural properties has also been presented in recent years in the district and specific outline plans. Such are the Central District Outline Plans, which, relating to rivers, detailed the historical assets scattered along their banks (CDOP, 21/3 2003 [33] and Outline Plan for Alexander Stream, 27/3 2005 [34]).

Altogether, the plans mentioned above lack a mode of examination and characterization of the continuum between the rural heritage landscape, built textures, agriculture lands and the open spaces in this region.

5 PLANNING, CULTURAL PROPERTIES AND OPEN SPACE IN THE STUDY AREA

5.1 Planning

Analysing NOPs and DOP showed that, notwithstanding the expanding discussion of the landscape-cultural uniqueness of Israeli space as well as attempts to define these landscapes, there is a lack of a plan, which focuses on the cultural heritage of the rural space. To wit, not much attention has been given to the importance of cultural heritage assets located in the cooperative settlements, and to the synergetic contribution observed when a continuum exists between the heritage complexes, built texture, tilled fields and the open space, whose importance has been stressed in the various outline plans.

In the study area, the Lev HaSharon and Emek Hefer regional councils encompass open space of considerable preservation value from the standpoint of national as well as regional planning (NOP 31). These areas are perceived to be a link in the national 'spinal column' of open space in Israel. This link is also important for maintaining open space between the metropolitan areas in the Central Coastal Plain of Israel.

According to several National Outline Plans (NOPs' 8, 31 and 35), eight protected open spaces were declared in the study area, most of these as national parks. Only five areas were designated as nature reserves. This small number is due to the extensive agricultural activity in the area, primarily citrus orchards planted from the 1920s onward. The largest concentration of citrus plantations led the planners of NOP 35 to believe that the Sharon citrus orchards and the rural settlements were among the most important historical elements of Israel in the past 100 years. Their concern about its disappearance led to a decision to 'mark' and place them under the definition of 'a rural landscape complex' worthy of preservation.

District and Local Outline Plans of the two regional councils in general are not aimed at identification and protection of the 'Image of the Land' as stressed in the National Outline Plan (NOP 35). The district plans are partial and their treatment of unique landscapes, textures or assets of prominent design or historical value is very general, lacking direction, details and the means for their protection. The emphasis in these plans is mostly on streams

and their rehabilitation (the Central District Outline Plan, CDOP 21/3 2003 [33], the Outline Plan for the Alexander Stream [34] and the Outline Plan for the Poleg Park and Stream, 2009 [35]). The two streams and their drainage basin dominate the landscape of the region and the plans state the importance of a survey of natural landscape and the area of the streams and their tributaries as a contiguous open space system.

Altogether, the plans mentioned above lack a mode of examination and characterization of the continuum between the rural heritage landscape, built textures, agriculture lands and the open spaces in this region.

5.2 Rural heritage complexes of cooperative settlements in the study area

Altogether, among the 51 settlements in the two regional councils, more than 78% of them have more than 11 cultural heritage sites within their territory. About 22% are located within the open areas: the farmland (fields and plantations), along the streams' banks and agricultural roads. The total number of cultural heritage sites in both regional councils are 1,172. Within the kibbutzim borders, in the built-up area and the fields, there are 537 assets, averaging 59 assets per Kibbutz. Among these properties, those related to agricultural structures and public services are the most prominent. Within the moshavim borders, there are 635 properties, averaging 15 properties per moshav. The number of properties related to agricultural structures and residential property, those representing unique style, are the highest in numbers.

The vernacular assets are scattered throughout the settlement texture – built areas and fields – in three forms: cluster, axis and solitary items. In the moshavim, it is possible to identify a heritage cluster encompassing public buildings and agricultural services in the centre of the moshav (water tower, silo, agricultural sheds, cold storage warehouse, synagogue, grocery, community centre). Found also are memorial sites, a memorial park or monuments, located usually at the centre of the moshav or at the edge of the built area.

Identifiable in the kibbutzim are groups of heritage assets in two areas. First, the production area, otherwise known as the yard, is usually located close to the Kibbutz entrance. It contains agricultural structures, many of which have lost their original designation, such as a water tower, silo, barn, poultry houses, bakery, garage, carpentry shop, shoemaking shop and the secretariat, the latter located at the edges of the yard, adjoining the public space. Second, the public space, the heart of the Kibbutz, which includes the dining room, central lawn, kindergartens and children's houses (where in the past, children lived separately from their parents), cultural centre, memorial centre and memorial park and the residential area. School classrooms are usually located at the edge of the public area, adjoining the residential area, or as a separate education area located between the residential area and the production area. At times, sports facilities are also located in this area.

Identifiable alongside the heritage asset clusters are the 'tangible heritage avenues'. These are the tree alleys at the entrances to the moshavim and kibbutzim, the sidewalks in the Kibbutz and historical roads, security roads and trenches for defence purposes. Included are items of some physical prominence (architectural, construction material and construction technology), a tree or a bush related to some event or a person who is part of the local history (local memory) of the Kibbutz or moshav or is connected to national events (national memory) (Amit-Cohen [10]). In the Kibbutz, such properties are located within the various spaces, while in the moshav, within the built area or in the agricultural space. These can be a guard post, hidden armament store, a solitary tree, bridge, etc.

Within the agricultural areas, in the two regional councils are 'spots' of citrus orchards that once covered the entire red hills (red sandy clay loam), area typical of the central coastal region of Israel. A few of these spots represent a relic of an old Arab orchard house, as well as the family-house and the packing house from the mid-19th century until the 1920s, while others are typical of the Zionist settlement process in the Sharon area. The latter include remnants of private agricultural activity in the Sharon region in the 1920s and 1930s. A combination of a shortage of water, residential pressure on the land and reduced profitability of citriculture led to the uprooting of a considerable portion of the orchards. Yet, it is still possible to identify components related to this vanished landscape: avenues of trees, primarily cypress that separated the groves and served as windbreakers, packing houses, pools and water well structures. These components remained in the landscape as clusters, avenues or solitary items.

The above vernacular cultural heritage properties were classified into seven groups (An example of a specific group of widespread assets, related to supply of water to agriculture and residential purposes is shown in Fig. 2):

1. Water structures (water tower, water reservoir and well)
2. Agriculture structures (silo, cooling structures, chicken coops, dairy barn, etc.)
3. Residential properties (the 'first' building, wooden sheds, the children's houses)
4. Public services (library, schools, kindergarten, dining hall, cultural hall)
5. Green space, gardens (the central lawn, memorial garden, the historical grove)
6. Defence infrastructures (secret hiding place for weapons, watchtower)
7. Memorial sites (cemeteries, memorial hall)

Within these two regional councils, five heritage complexes were observed (Fig. 3). All the complexes include cooperative settlements, built and vegetative cultural heritage assets within the settlement textures and in the agricultural fields. Four complexes were characterized by a high concentration of assets linked to the history of the kibbutzim and the moshavim. The fifth complex also includes, in addition to the settlements' assets, various remains within the landscape – antiquities and structures dating from ancient times. All complexes contain many vernacular assets and their distribution within each settlement shows a high degree of similarity. Notwithstanding the landscape 'uniformity', the unique characteristics of each complex can be identified.

5.3 Open space and nature reserves in the study area

Most of the area encompassed by the two regional councils examined in this study consists of open space. It contains few natural reserves recognized in NOP 35 as being worthy of preservation due to their quality and ecological sensitivity. These natural reserves are few and of limited extent. On the other hand, the rural fabric, built-up area and agricultural lands dot this open space with moshavim and kibbutzim being the most predominant. While the open space and agricultural lands were recognized as a continuum landscape and were defined as rural open space, the rural built complex was not included. The land cover of the study area can best be described as a patchwork with open spaces in many of the moshavim and kibbutzim, various forms of land use, heritage assets and small protected areas. While on the face of it, moshavim, kibbutzim and heritage assets are scattered within them, they actually interrupt the open space continuum.

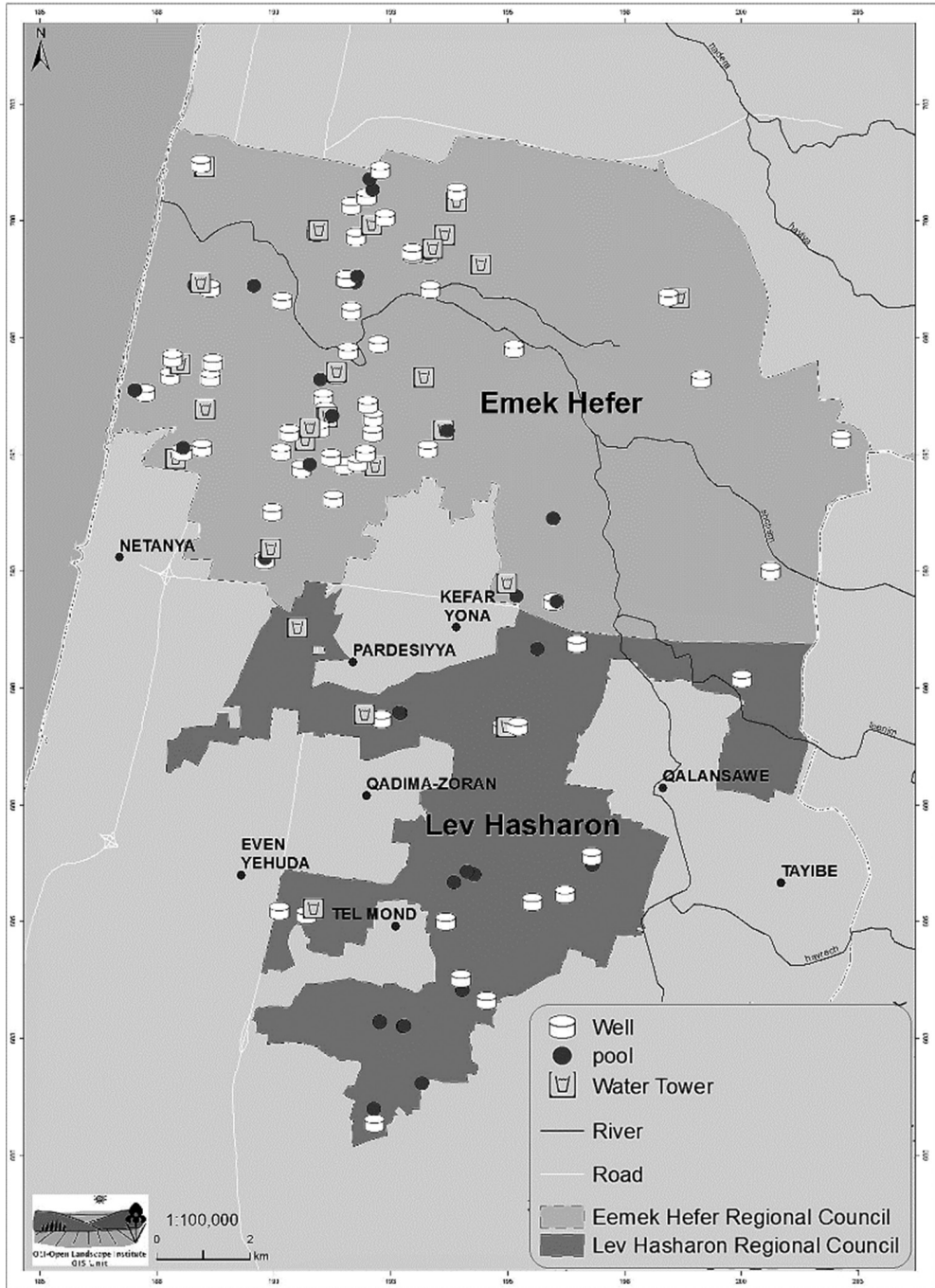


Figure 2: Water structures.

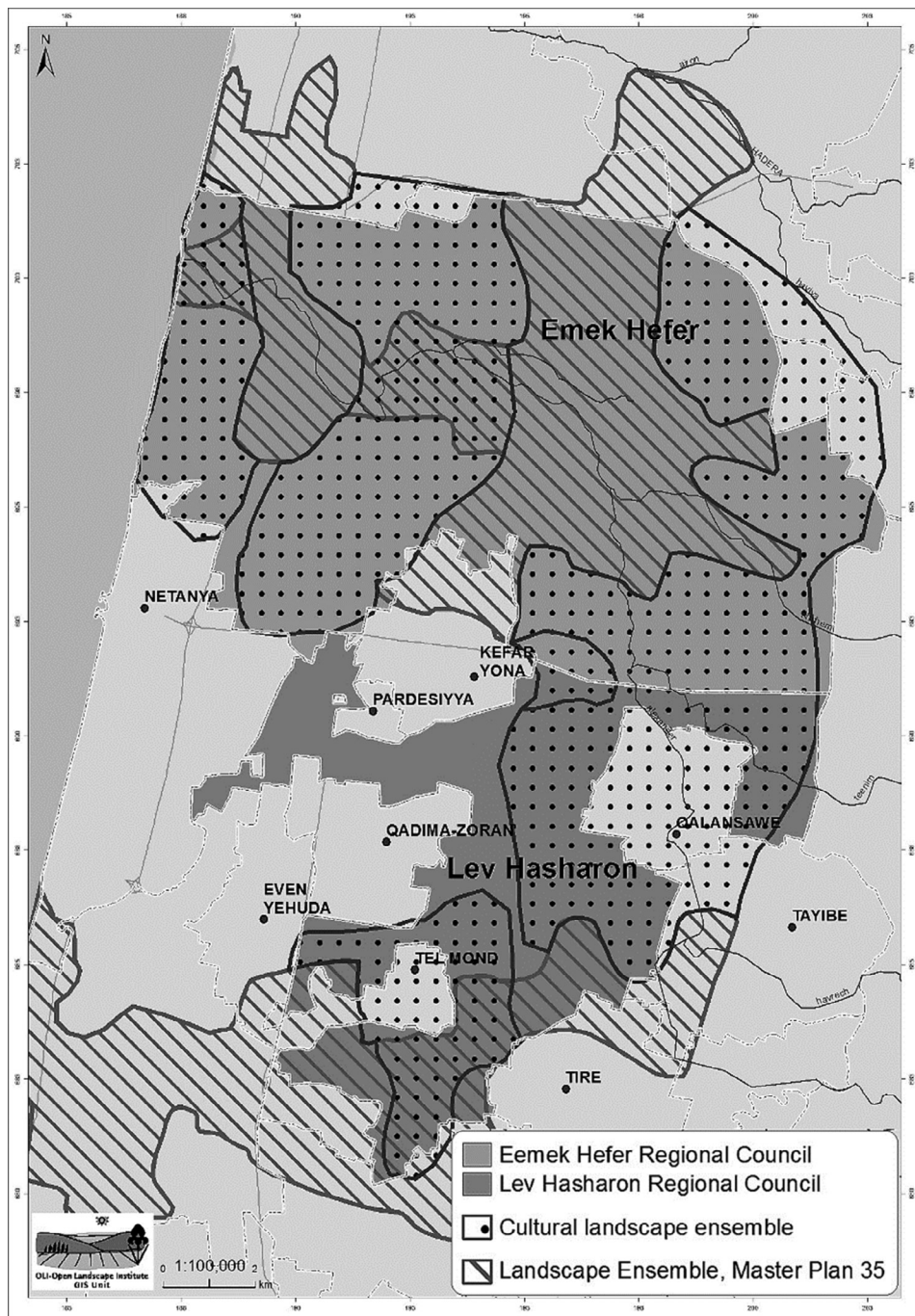


Figure 3: Heritage complexes within these two regional councils.

6 CONCLUSION

Israel, like other countries, promotes local or universal recognition of cultural heritage assets, cultural landscapes and landscape complexes worthy of preservation, including rural complexes (NOP 35). However, unlike other countries, the rural complexes in Israel present a unique manifestation not observed in other countries, the cooperative settlement complex, the kibbutzim and moshavim. This complex not only expresses a functional interdependence between its land designations, but also a settlement ideology displayed in two dimensions: the textural dimension – the settlement outline and its internal division for land use, as well as a point by point dimension – heritage assets ensconced within the settlement texture, in the built areas as well as in the fields.

Heritage assets of the cooperative settlements in Israel are a common manifestation reflecting folk architecture and common crafts. Yet it is precisely this common incidence that expresses its uniqueness. At present, the survival of these cultural complexes is threatened by economic, social and ideological developments, bearing implications on the planning structure of the moshavim and kibbutzim and the cultural heritage assets within them. Recognition of the importance of these complexes would bestow upon them the status of cultural heritage and thus, include them in the list of assets worthy of preservation. Because of development needs, the planning authorities are not favourably predisposed to declare the cooperative settlement heritage complex, covering a substantial land area, as deserving preservation. However, an additional examination of the relationship of these complexes to open space could change this situation. The national and DOP published in Israel in the past two decades refer extensively to open space as well as to agricultural land. And yet, although these plans linked the agricultural areas to open space, they did not express the uniqueness of cooperative settlements nor recognize it as part of a unique continuous complex within the mosaic of Israeli rural landscape. As such, this continuum should be recognized as rural conservation space.

As shown in Fig. 3, the recognition of agricultural areas as part of the open space and part of the Kibbutz or moshav heritage complex actually creates continuous unique landscape units due to the encounter within them between open space and the cooperative settlement complexes, cultural built heritage and agricultural lands. This continuum covers more than 80% of the area of the two regional councils, in the form of a crescent with its two ends in the coastal plain and surrounding the built texture of the city of Netanya and its suburbs. Within this continuum are heritage complexes of the cooperative settlements, including the built texture, the agricultural areas and the heritage assets, representing the local and national memory. Since these complexes overlap the defined municipal borders of each moshav or Kibbutz, they could also be referred to as heritage villages or focal points of rural heritage while also distinguishing between the moshav tangible heritage and the Kibbutz tangible heritage.

This situation, however, is threatened by real estate development pressure from the urban textures, as well as by the opening of the kibbutzim and moshavim to new populations moving into newly created adjoining 'expansion' and 'community' quarters.

Since the planning bodies and the new populations seeking to develop extensive areas within the space of the regional councils are often unaware of the importance of the values that are part of both local and national values, their attitude to the heritage assets expressing these values depends on their landscape and design prominence. Since most of these properties are vernacular, their value is not sufficiently recognized, while their importance even less so. Compared with the low awareness of the historical or design value, there is considerable awareness of the importance of open space, due to its perception as 'alternate landscapes'

compared with urban landscapes and the growing demand for quality of life. This situation encourages emphasis on continuums containing open space and settlement space entitled to conservation – and in the case of the present study, the conservation of rural space, cooperative settlements and open spaces. Defining these continuums endows this entire manifestation with synergetic qualities leading to several recommendations:

1. The various planning procedures should properly address the linkage between quality open space declared in the national and district plans as worthy of a high degree of preservation and cooperative settlement heritage complexes – the built environment, the landscape agriculture within the surrounding agricultural layout and assets that, due to their unique value, are worthy of preservation. Such linkage could encourage preparation of local plans that integrate the preservation and development programs promoted by some of the settlements with the local plans promoted by the regional councils themselves.
2. Comprehensive planning relating to a continuous preservation space can minimize development in open spaces, such as economic development in a built heritage asset, packing house or a remnant of an Arab house in the midst of an open space. Preservation of such assets and the experience of developing these to realize their economic development potential can cause harm to open space of high ecological sensitivity. Such assets deserve to be stabilized and preserved, and are under continuous supervision and examination of their physical condition, but without any attempt to imbue them with any economic content whatsoever. The presence of these assets contributes to the landscape and cultural character of open spaces and is worthy of being viewed as a ‘memory reserve’ within the open space. The development may be directed to heritage assets within the built texture of the heritage complex of a moshav or Kibbutz. Thus, for example, assets such as a silo, water tower, farm buildings and public buildings located within the built texture of the moshav and Kibbutz, which are owned by the cooperative society, can be rehabilitated by using their value potential (ability to express their historical values and settlement’s ideology) as well as their inherent economic potential (size and location). The fact that they are owned by the cooperative society simplifies the decision making process and increases the likelihood of broad consent regarding their preservation and development.
3. The likelihood of overall planning devoted to ‘preservation space’ is high, precisely because of the multitude of public bodies involved therein: national and district planning authorities, regional councils and local committees. In the case of heritage complexes within a Kibbutz or moshav, since these also constitute heritage assets representing the local memory of each and every such settlement, it is also highly possible that the population of these settlements will also become involved in this process. The fact that so many are involved in the process removes economic and/or social concerns and facilitates the decision to join in its realization.

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