

TECHNION - ISRAEL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE AND TOWN PLANNING

22 February, 2021

To: The Azrieli Foundation

Re: Recommendation for Dr. Shira Wilkof for the Azrieli Early Career Faculty Fellowships

**Brief Timeline:** Shira Wilkof completed her undergraduate studies in General History and Geography at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (2008) and her master’s degree studies in the field of urban and regional planning at the Technion (2011), completing both degrees with honors. She wrote her doctoral dissertation in the Department of Architecture at the University of California, Berkeley on the impact of global planning processes on the history of spatial planning and design in Israel (2017).

She completed all of her academic degrees with honors at recognized universities, supervised by leading researchers in the field (Prof. Ronnie Ellenblum at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Prof. Alona Nitzan-Shiftan at the Technion, and Professors Nezar AlSayyad, Andrew Shanken, and Kerwin Klein at the University of California in Berkeley.

Since Shira returned to Israel after completing receiving her dissertation, I have had numerous academic interactions with her, involving shared issues of interest and the transfer of significant knowledge and sources. The connection between us was immediate and natural, and led to the joint decision that she would continue her further PhD studies under my supervision at the Technion, for which she has received recognition and support from the Lady Davis Fellowship Trust on behalf of the Technion.

In all our encounters, as well as when reading her published articles, I have been highly impressed by her intellectual abilities, originality of thought, strong capabilities, exceptional level of conceptualization, and tremendous passion for research. All of this is accompanied by her positive demeanor and proven ability to collaborate with her colleagues.

At the outset, I would like to point out that the breadth of Shira’s academic education and the range of disciplines she has mastered during her studies are equal to those of most faculty members currently working in the fields of architecture and planning in Israel. There are not many architects or landscape architects working in the academic world with such a wide range of areas of knowledge that can be applied in their research.

With her impressive scope of expertise, Shira has great inherent (and proven) potential for future research, which, in my opinion, is a critically important consideration for accepting a new faculty member. In addition, with a multidisciplinary approach now unquestionably the hallmark of research in this new world, Shira has a distinct advantage over many other scholars. The many fields in which she is knowledgeable include geography, history, urban and regional planning, architecture and landscape architecture, and her multidisciplinary PhD thesis encompasses theory, history, and criticism pertaining to the space between the global situation and that in Israel.

Since completing her doctorate, Shira has been awarded an impressive number of scholarships and prizes. She has already published three articles in leading journals, a fourth article in a book, a number of articles on urban planning between the two World Wars, and has submitted another article for publication. As a result of the momentum of her research projects, she has multiple articles in various stages of preparation, which will soon result in additional publications. Shira has been invited to give presentations based on her research at a number of academic conferences in Israel and abroad. These represent impressive accomplishments for a researcher who graduated in 2017 and does not yet have a steady position.

I will add a provocative remark: we all know young researchers who internalize the rules of the academic game and, trying to create the impression of productively, immediately begin writing books and articles that get published in various forums, even if the academic weight of their publications is sometimes meager and weak. Shira is the opposite; she avoids shortcuts and does not compromise the quality of her research to comply with the rules of “publish or perish.” She invests intense effort in her publications, and each is scholarly, well-reasoned, and makes a significant contribution to the subject under study. In my opinion, she is exactly the type of researcher who should be promoted in academia. Such an investment will bear fruit, not from merely from one day to the next, but for years to come.

In light of all of the above, I heartily recommend awarding Dr. Shira Wilkof with an Azrieli Early Career Faculty Fellowship for researchers beginning their academic journey in order to help her cultivate and realize her research potential. Shira is a young and promising researcher, among the best, if not the very best, I have met for many years, at the Technion or abroad. I have no doubt that the Technion will benefit immensely from its investment in her, and will be proud of the choice it makes.

Sincerely,

Nurit Lissovsky

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