British administrators employed urban planning broadly in British colonies around the world, and British Mandate Palestine was no exception. This article shows how with a unique purpose and based on the promise of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, British urban planning in Jerusalem was executed with a particular colonial logic that left a lasting impact on the city. Both the discourse and physical implementation of the planning was meant to privilege the colonial power’s Zionist partner over the indigenous Arab community.

On 9 December 1917, the city of Jerusalem surrendered to the British Egyptian Expeditionary Forces, “liberating the city,” in the words of its conquerors, from the heavy hand of Ottoman rule. But according to its new rulers, Jerusalem’s salvation had only just begun. Covered by a “thick pall” from four hundred years of Turkish rule, this “Oriental” space needed to be remade if it was to once again become a universal city under British control. If Britain intended to “fulfill in yet another sphere her historic part of civilizer of the backward countries,” its mission would have to begin with the redemption of Jerusalem. This article explores one of the most visible methods used to “redeem” Jerusalem: urban planning.

Urban planning projects began within months of the British occupation and continued throughout the Mandate, leading to the promulgation of six town-planning schemes and scores of planning ordinances and bylaws. Like many “benefits” of British rule in Palestine, planning was heralded for bringing modernity to all of the city’s inhabitants. However, it turned out to be a conservative exercise that held back the development of the Arab community in order to promote the interests of the colonial power and its Zionist partner. While scholars have written about the physical transformation of Jerusalem’s urban landscape, the aesthetic concerns of British planners, and the growth of modern Jewish neighborhoods during the Mandate, the question of how urban planning fit into the colonial project...

Nicholas E. Roberts is an assistant professor of history at Sewanee: University of the South. He is currently working on a book about the origins and rise to power of the Supreme Muslim Council in British Mandate Palestine. This article is based on dissertation research conducted under a Fulbright Fellowship to Israel and a Lady Davis Fellowship to Hebrew University.
remains largely unexplored. This paper addresses that lacuna by considering the colonial logic of planning and its impact on the city.

In her groundbreaking article on late-Ottoman Jerusalem, Michelle Campos argues that urban development projects in the late-Ottoman period brought together Jews, Christians, and Muslims to work with one another as imperial citizens, contributing to a sense of “civic Ottomanism.” This experience strengthened their sense of the city as a shared (though contested) urban space, an understanding that argues against the common assumption that the city’s communities were hopelessly divided by religion and ethnicity. As Campos rightly points out, this “omelet” of late-Ottoman social relations was ultimately “unscrambled” during the British Mandate when the colonial state adopted Lord Curzon’s “unmixing of peoples,” promoted “‘traditional’ tribal and sectarian differences,” and supported a Jewish national home rather than a “shared homeland.” Urban planning also had a role to play in this unscrambling by creating new physical and social divisions between the city’s inhabitants. Specifically, British planning recast Jerusalem as a city divided between a religious Old City, oriented toward the past, and a secular New City, facing the future.

Planning imposed a regimented colonial understanding of space on a local population that saw the boundaries between communities and neighborhoods as porous and overlapping. In introducing greater distinctions between the predominantly Arab Old City and the predominantly Jewish New City, British planning contributed to a division between the two communities that emerged in the Mandate period. This division stood in sharp contrast to the shared urban environment of late-Ottoman Jerusalem. By promoting modern development almost exclusively in predominantly Jewish areas of the city, British planning helped create unequal social and commercial conditions in the city that favored the Zionist position in Jerusalem.

**The “Filthy Medieval Town”**

Many were “disappointed” with Jerusalem because “it was so different to what they had expected.” The roads were even worse than the hotels and in place of the Holy City they found—a smell.

So wrote Ronald Storrs, the military governor of Jerusalem, in his memoirs. Lacking the attributes of a modern (read: European) city, such as regularly spaced roads, hotels, sporting clubs, playing fields, and open green spaces, Jerusalem was consistently presented as backward and disorganized in British accounts. C. R. Ashbee, brought in to organize the city as the Government of Palestine’s first civic adviser, complained upon his
arrival that “Jerusalem is a picturesque but filthy medieval town with sprawling suburbs; ill timbered, unwatered, with roads inconvenient and leading nowhere.”

Though Jerusalem looked dated, it did not fit British notions of what a holy city should look like. The occupiers carried with them an image of the “Holy City” built from disparate sources: travel accounts, historical and fictional texts, Orientalist paintings, and scriptural readings. Romantic and ahistorical, this vision of Jerusalem focused on those elements of the city that exuded history and sanctity: the Dome of the Rock, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and the Western Wall. It was in the buildings, walls, and ruins of the city—not in its inhabitants—that British writers found the “authentic” Jerusalem. But the problem that officials soon discovered was that those monuments had been covered up by the modern construction of the late-Ottoman period.

British urban planning was therefore built around what appeared to be two contradictory goals: (1) to make the city more modern and orderly, in a word more “European”; and (2) to return it to its religio-historical roots, that is, how it appeared before the city was ruled by the “cruel Turk.” The first goal entailed constructing a city that “made sense”—streets, buildings, public spaces, and “sights” would have to be named, organized, and made to fit together as in the modern European city. The second objective meant peeling back layers of recent local development to uncover and preserve the city’s glorious past. Urban planners, employing the new techniques of town planning and historical preservation, were tasked with sorting out this contradiction. Their answer was to divide the city.

Enter the Planner

The first urban planner, William McLean, arrived before World War I had ended, a testament to the urgency that officials felt in rebuilding Jerusalem. Indeed, despite the parsimony of his regime, Herbert Samuel, the first high commissioner, regarded urban planning as crucial for bringing modern development to Palestine: “Town-Planning is one of the most important movements of the Modern World. . . . In all countries people are beginning to devote themselves to plans in order to avoid the evils that have come down from our ancestors. Environment is an important factor and it should be the task of our days to improve environment.” Urban planning was then a relatively new practice, having emerged in the late-nineteenth century as a scientific means for producing a more productive, more hygienic, and politically stable city. By the turn of the twentieth century, social reformers and government ministers in Britain had come to view urban planning as the solution (alongside public health and social work) to two of the greatest concerns of the day: urban decay and the perceived decline of British manhood.
The term “town planning” was first used in Britain in 1906, and soon became a concern of the British government with the promulgation of the Housing, Town Planning, Etc., Act of 1909. The discipline was professionalized in 1914 with the establishment of the Town Planning Institute, and shortly after the war the Housing and Town Planning Act of 1919 obligated all towns with populations over 20,000 to prepare town planning schemes. Another new discipline that was to play a role in the redevelopment of Jerusalem was historical preservation, which received government support with the promulgation of the Ancient Monuments Protection Act of 1882 and the Ancient Monuments Act of 1913.

Britain soon brought both disciplines to its colonies, particularly to India, with town planning acts and ordinances enacted before World War I in Calcutta (1911) and New Delhi (1912), during the war in Bombay (1915), and after the war in Madras (1920), Palestine (1921), Malaya (1923), Singapore (1923), Nairobi (1927), and Lagos (1928). This fluorescence of town planning led to the circulation of experts around the empire; many of the planners and civic advisers who arrived in Palestine after the war came with experience either in planning or managing other colonial spaces. William McLean arrived in Palestine having worked as the city engineer of Alexandria. His successor Patrick Geddes, who also worked on projects for the Zionist Commission, worked on urban planning in India before coming to Jerusalem. C. R. Ashbee, the city’s first civic adviser, came to the city from working in Egypt. And although not a planner himself, Ronald Storrs had been a member of Cairo’s Comité pour la Conservation des Monuments Arabes while serving in Egypt before the war, an experience that led to his creation of the Pro-Jerusalem Society (PJS) to advance the preservation of Jerusalem during his term as the city’s governor. Although each brought a different experience and understanding of space to Palestine, they shared the same expectation that planning could serve the colonial state by bringing order to what they saw as the chaos of “Oriental” living.

DIVIDING JERUSALEM

The first urban plan for Jerusalem was developed by William McLean in 1918. He divided Jerusalem into four zones: (1) the Old City, in which a “medieval aspect” was to be preserved through the prohibition of all new construction; (2) a zone of non-construction around the Old City, where undesirable buildings would be cleared and the area left to its natural state; (3) an area to the north and east of the Old City, where buildings could be erected only with special approval; and (4) an area to the north and west of the Old City that was set aside for modern development (see figure 1). The plan was to set the Old City apart from the rest of Jerusalem, particularly from what would become West Jerusalem, where a modern city could be built, but also from the city’s agricultural hinterland to
the east. This division of the city was retained and refined in further urban plans from Patrick Geddes (1919) and C. R. Ashbee (1922), and its influence remains visible in the shape of the city to this day.

Figure 1. William McLean’s 1918 Plan. From Jerusalem 1918–1920: Being the Records of the Pro-Jerusalem Council during the Period of the British Military Administration, ed. C. R. Ashbee (London: John Murray, 1921).

The main text on the right side of the image reads as follows:

Description of the Scheme
1. Old City within the Walls. Medieval aspect to be preserved. New buildings may be permitted under special conditions.
2. Area between City Walls & Brown Line. No new buildings to be permitted and the area to be eventually a clear belt in its natural state.
3. Area between Brown Line & Dotted Brown Line. Buildings may be erected only with special approval & under special conditions rendering them in harmony with the general scheme.
4. Area outside the dotted Brown Line. This is the area planned for future development. The plan shows the alignments of future streets and open spaces and the improvements of existing streets.

At first glance, this vision of the city might seem to confirm a division of space that already existed in Jerusalem. The city walls, after all, had separated the Old City from the outside for centuries. And with the rise of new neighborhoods outside the walls during the late-nineteenth century,
Jerusalemites may have already begun to have some concept of a “New City.” However, the neighborhoods founded outside the wall in the late-Ottoman period were established in close proximity to the Old City and were still oriented toward Jerusalem’s holy sites. In addition, by the late-Ottoman period, the city walls did not so sharply demarcate a separation between the Old City and the rest of Jerusalem, for local businesses existed directly outside the city walls with some abutting the wall itself, blurring the lines between the Old City and the outside. McLean’s plan was quite different. It proposed a city divided between an Old City, oriented around holy sites, and a New City, centered on the administrative and commercial buildings of Jaffa Street and the Russian Compound. British plans to demarcate and police the boundaries between “old” and “new” space at the city walls—especially the decision to create a green space around the Old City—broke with past understandings of the urban fabric and became the basis for the current separation between East and West Jerusalem.

This division of the city resembled colonial planning elsewhere in the region, particularly in French North Africa. The plan for Jerusalem shared the same bifurcated urban form promoted in Morocco under General Lyautey, but there was one fundamental difference. Under French planning, the “backward” native medina was left to its own devices as planners concentrated on building a separate European ville moderne outside and separated from native space. But in British planning, the Old City was not meant to simply be a “conservatory of Oriental life,” as Nadia Abu El-Haj put it.20 With its historical and religious sites, it was seen as the paradigmatic holy city, the very object for which the colonial disciplines of archaeology and historical preservation had been developed. Insisting that the Holy City needed their love and attention, colonial experts never left the Holy City alone.

Another analog to the Palestinian situation might be found in the planning of colonial Bombay, where, as Preeti Chopra argues, British planners intervened not only in the “white town” of European settlement but also the “native town” or “black town” of Indian residence.21 But planning in Palestine was different from planning in India or other colonies. Because of the weight of the Balfour Declaration on British policy-making, planners had to be cognizant of the needs not only of British settlers, but also of Jewish settlers. For this reason, the New City was envisioned from the beginning not so much as a space for British settlement, which was negligible throughout the Mandate period, but as a space given over to Jewish colonial settlement.

**FIXING SPACE**

British urban planners contended that Jerusalem could function efficiently only if its modern elements (industry, commercial enterprises, and government buildings) were separated from its traditional ones (religious and historical sites). While the distinction between these spaces was easy
to make on paper, it was much harder to sort out on the ground. In the Old City, industrial and commercial enterprises mixed with religious space, to the annoyance of British planners. Meanwhile, the presence of monumental religious institutions, holy sites, and sectarian neighborhoods outside the city walls was regarded as an obstacle to the establishment of the New City. To maintain the plans’ crude distinction between the sacred space of the Old City and the secular space of the new western neighborhoods, planners, architects, and officials had to change how space was used both within and outside the city walls.

One policy paper submitted to the Palestine government offered an extreme proposal to fix space: transferring the Old City’s inhabitants to neighborhoods outside the city walls, removing its industries, and destroying buildings that did not have a religious or educational purpose. The actual plans adopted by the colonial government were much more nuanced and less destructive than this proposal. But removal, demolition, and expropriation were techniques planners advocated and government agents carried out during the Mandate period. McLean’s 1918 plan called for clearing buildings that abutted the walls of the Old City, removing shops and a Turkish clock tower adjoining Jaffa Gate, and rebuilding a section of the city wall that had been removed by the municipality in 1898. Geddes, who prepared the next plan, promoted the practice of “conservative surgery” to remove modern development from the city’s ancient sites. And Ashbee, who followed, demanded “pulling down” all houses and businesses abutting the ancient wall. These techniques of urban planning and historic preservation destroyed autochthonous elements of Jerusalem’s landscape: the clock tower, the businesses on top of and abutting the wall, and the vegetation on the wall.

Operations to “clean-up” the Old City occurred mostly at its margins—that is, at the walls and gates of the Old City or at the Citadel abutting the Jaffa Gate—where planners saw themselves involved in a zero-sum competition between tradition and modernity. Addressing the inaugural meeting of the PJS in French, its working language, Storrs made clear that such measures were necessary to protect tradition in the Old City: “Est-ce qu’on peut faire de Jérusalem (je parle toujours de Jérusalem intra muros) une ville moderne? Oui, Messieurs, on peut; mais à une condition, qu’on la détruise. Mais voilà une tâche à laquelle personne ne pourrait se livrer de bonne conscience.” What he did not add, but which was clear in his Society’s attempts to move businesses and markets out of the Old City, was that the Jerusalem outside the walls would be open to modern development.

**Controlling Action**

British planners strongly believed that Palestinians (both Arabs and Jews of the old yishuv) lacked the sense of “civic consciousness” that Europeans
(both Britons and Jewish immigrants) had. As Ashbee explained to readers
back home, “The impulse of the Moslem when he built was always dif-
f erent from ours. He never thought things out either in structure or in
policy. He picked up the beautiful fragments, botched them together,
made an exquisite patternwork that should help dreaming, then sat
down and dreamed.”

Ashbee’s dismissive attitude revealed a profound ignorance of the work of the Jerusalem Municipality and the local Cham-
ber of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture in promoting development
in the late-Ottoman period. He relied on an Orientalist belief in the
inability of non-Westerners to be agents of modernity. As the local
population could not be trusted with developing the city, British officials
instituted controls on local construction.

Storrs and McLean issued a proclamation on 8 April 1918 specifying that
no one could “ demolish, erect, alter or repair the structure of any building
in the city or its environs within the radius of 2,500 meters of the Damas-
cus Gate until he had obtained a written permit from the authorities, the
penalty for the contravention being a fine not exceeding $P.200.”

Regulations attached to the proclamation stated that in this area no buildings
could be constructed that would appear on the skyline of the Mount of
Olives; no building could be taller than eleven meters above ground level;
roofs could only be constructed out of stone; industrial buildings were
prohibited; and only buildings that were an extension of the small villages
would be permitted. Public notices followed that banned the use of stucco
and corrugated iron in construction, and prohibited placing advertise-
ments on the sides of buildings, all in an effort to keep the Old City look-
ing appropriately aged.

Gideon Biger has argued that these restrictions simply reflected the con-
servatism of a military authority committed to protecting the status quo, an
Ottoman policy originally adopted to protect preexisting religious arrange-
ments at the city’s holy sites but which was almost immediately used by the
colonial authorities to present Mandate rule as following ancient prece-
dent in religious and legal matters. Many scholars have noted how Brit-
ain’s Jewish national home policy broke its commitment to the status quo,
and the everyday proclamations and ordinances designed to control the
behavior of local residents constitute another example of Britain’s bad faith
in following Ottoman precedent. By shifting control over the entire con-
struction process from the municipality to the colonial state, British offi-
cials created a new system of oversight that consolidated the power to
rebuild the city in the hands of the planner. That power was soon extended
through the establishment of building codes to dictate how projects would
be drawn up, the introduction of permits to control which projects would
proceed, and the development of a system of fines to punish those who
ignored the government’s urban plan. The power of the state to control
construction was complete; the local population had no recourse to chal-
lenge the building process except through government agencies.
Preserving the Old City

With the British now in charge of the planning process, a new organization was established in 1918 to direct the preservation of the Old City: the Pro-Jerusalem Society. Consciously modeled on the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty, which was founded in Britain in 1895, the PJS brought the National Trust’s mission of preserving “places of historic interest or natural beauty permanently for the nation to enjoy” to the streets of Jerusalem. The PJS made its understanding of urban planning clear in its mission statement, which outlined its role in Jerusalem as “saving the antiquities of the City, preserving its amenities, protecting the Ancient City from industrial desecration, and laying out the modern City with some sort of plan or dignity.” Made up of leading figures from various religious communities, it was intended to be a nongovernmental organization representing all of the city’s inhabitants (though its members also included a member of the Zionist Commission, an international body). In practice, however, the PJS, with Storrs as its president and Ashbee as its secretary, spoke for the interests of its British members and until its dissolution in 1926 functioned as a semiofficial organ of the government.

Like the National Trust (founded by Ashbee’s mentor William Morris), the PJS was primarily interested in preserving the past for public consumption. Its projects almost exclusively concentrated on the Old City: rebuilding the city’s suqs, reinstating a walking path atop the city walls, cleaning up the city gates, rehabilitating the citadel at Jaffa Gate, resuscitating “local” handicraft industries, and creating schools in the Old City that taught traditional crafts. As with the French authority’s planning efforts in Morocco, the PJS “fell prey to the desire for stopping time and history that is always implicit in a preservation campaign.”

Paradoxically, however, preservation also produced new historical features. For example, Ashbee’s decision to recreate an old Ottoman guard path on top of the rampart—which had been out of use for decades—led to the removal of wild vegetation and numerous “encroachments” upon the wall built by local residents, such as building extensions and secondary walls to create private space, and ended the customary use of the wall for family or business purposes. He justified these measures by arguing that the PJS had a duty to protect such public historical spaces from private development. But as Alan Crawford has argued, “That sharp sense of the difference between public and private space which allowed Ashbee to sweep away encroachments so ruthlessly was not a part of Jerusalem’s urban traditions; and in making Jerusalem more explicitly a historical city, Ashbee’s rampart walk also made it more modern.”

The re-creation of the ramparts walk was just one of a number of ways that British planners preserved aspects of Jerusalem’s architectural and craft history that were more relevant to them than to the local population.
Such creative anachronism suggests that strict historical accuracy was not always the most important value in preservation campaigns. The colonial state instituted admission fees to the citadel and the ramparts walk; erected street signs in English, Arabic, and Hebrew; showcased Jerusalem’s history at local exhibits; and published numerous guide books to the Old City. These decisions suggest that a more significant consideration for British officials was, despite their claims to the contrary, to turn the Old City into a kind of living museum.

Repackaging the Old City in this way helped the colonial state gain some control over the historical heritage of the city. The preservation of the citadel, the walls, and city gates by the PJS and Palestine’s Department of Archaeology extended British oversight to some of the city’s most visible elements, whose images the state in turn used on Palestinian stamps and banknotes and in fundraising campaigns back home in Britain. Moreover, through these preservation campaigns, the state became an actor on the ground in the Old City, establishing a presence that allowed it to control access to and monitor the use of space.

Establishing the New City

In contrast, the hillsides of western Jerusalem were “envisaged as a modern urban metropolis, a counterbalance to both the history-laden Old City and the first Jewish quarters outside the walls.” New buildings and neighborhoods had been established outside the Old City during the latter years of Ottoman rule, and at the time of the British conquest approximately 2,000–2,400 Muslims, 20,000 Jews, and 5,000–6,000 Christians lived outside the Old City. A growth in population outside the city walls in the latter part of the nineteenth century had been accompanied by the construction of modern public features in the new neighborhoods such as a municipal hospital (1890), a municipal park (1891), a museum of antiquities (1901), a theater (1901), public toilets, and places for public leisure, like cafés and bookstores.

The civic-minded Jerusalem municipality had also undertaken beautification projects, including tree-planting, erecting street lamps, street cleaning, and paving roads. But to British planners, who used Ottoman modernity as a foil to their superior understanding of modern development, those efforts were amateurish at best. To Geddes, “the new town, outside the walls, has much lacked good laying out hitherto. It has too many dull and confused masses of buildings, even in overcrowding and slum.”

Before the New City could be built, land had to be made available. At the time, most of the convenient, undeveloped land outside the city walls was owned by religious groups and rarely sold. But the insolvency of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate after World War I and the Russian Revolution allowed the Palestine government an opportunity in the early 1920s to bring some of this land onto the market by forcing the Orthodox Church
to sell some of its landholdings in West Jerusalem to remain solvent.\textsuperscript{45} Since this land, established as \textit{waqf} (a religious endowment), was by tradition inalienable, the decision clearly went against the British pledge to protect the status quo.\textsuperscript{46} But the sale went forward because it made sense both for the dual-city plan and for granting Zionist immigrants, who were demanding land in the city, a space to construct new neighborhoods.

Construction in the New City was guided by the terms of the 1921 Town Planning Ordinance, which with its various amendments controlled all urban planning and construction in the country.\textsuperscript{47} Based on the British Housing and Town Planning Act of 1919, the ordinance prohibited unplanned construction, and called for the preparation of a detailed blueprint for every town in Palestine and the establishment of local committees to regulate building proposals and issue permits. The ordinance made clear what type of development would take precedence by stating that local municipalities would be expected to expropriate lands and buildings “for the purpose of widening existing roads, or opening new roads, for housing requirements, including garden villages, for public gardens or public squares, public buildings, hospitals, schools, museums or cemeteries and kindred purposes.”\textsuperscript{48} Tellingly, allocating space for religious buildings in the New City was not considered or promoted at all in the ordinance.

In contrast to the Ottoman custom of ruling from the Old City, the planners established the political prominence of the New City by locating all of the institutions of the Government of Palestine outside the city walls.\textsuperscript{49} Unlike the French in Rabat, the parsimonious British did not institute a formal program of colonial construction. Instead, British officials took over preexisting buildings, such as the Augusta Victoria Building on the Mount of Olives (the first residence of the high commissioner) and the Russian Compound on Jaffa Road (home to the colonial law courts, the police headquarters, the prison, the municipality, the government’s stationary and printing offices, and other government offices). Although these buildings had not been part of any religious endowment, they had been previously owned by religious groups and used for religious purposes. Their conversion to government space represented another example of how space in the New City became more secular under British rule.\textsuperscript{50}

The creation of a downtown commercial district also contributed to the modernization of the New City. The government promoted commercial zones in town planning ordinances, provided concessions to encourage business development, and made land that had previously been part of the Greek Orthodox \textit{waqf} available to commercial businesses and Jewish land-purchasing agencies. British policies also encouraged modern forms of residential development. But in a break with the past, new neighborhoods were not oriented toward the Old City but toward the commercial and governmental institutions of the New City.

New Jewish neighborhoods—Talpiot (1922), Rehavia (1924), Beit Hakerem (1924), Makor Hayim (1924), Kiryat Moshe (1925), and Bayit...
Vegan (1928)—were built according to the principles of the English Garden City movement and were settled by Zionist immigrants as secular settlements within the urban environment. Some Arab families, particularly affluent Christians, also settled in the New City in the 1920s to be closer to their jobs, moving to such neighborhoods as Talbiyya, Qatamun, Baqa’a, the German Colony, and the Greek Colony. However, Arab settlement was not as significant to the growth of the New City, as fewer Arabs settled there (by the end of the Mandate, the New City had 97,000 Jews versus 31,500 Arabs). Most Arab families remained in the Old City; when they did move outside the city walls, they settled in these new western neighborhoods but also in neighborhoods to the north and northeast of the Old City, including the older Shaykh Jarrah and Bab al-Zahara neighborhoods, which British planning did not consider part of the New City. Furthermore, the gerrymandered way in which the British authorities drew the boundaries of Jerusalem included areas of Jewish settlement to the west of the Old City, but not Arab settlements immediately adjacent to the east, such as Silwan and Azariyya. Local Arabs also had less influence in the planning of the New City because they lacked the same kind of cozy relationship that Zionist land purchasers and developers had with British officials.

NEW AND OLD ROLES FOR JERUSALEMITES

In addition to controlling the construction activities of local residents, British urban planners also worked to change their “civic consciousness” by giving them new roles to play in British Jerusalem. Education was one part of this effort, with Geddes putting on the Civics and Town Planning Exhibition in Jerusalem and Ashbee promoting craft schools and civic guilds in order to inculcate a sense of civic pride among the local populace. But more significant was the manner in which planning itself created new roles for Jerusalemites. In British planning, the inhabitants of the Old and New Cities were given rather different roles to play.

Those who lived in the Old City (the majority of whom were Arab) were cast in the passive role of guardians of the city’s religious heritage. As a result, they were neither expected nor allowed (thanks to restrictive building ordinances) to actively participate in the planning and construction of Jerusalem. In contrast, individuals who lived in the New City (predominantly Jews) were expected to be part of the city’s modern development and were given a leading role in the construction effort. This replicated the imbalance of roles crafted for Jews and Palestinian Arabs in the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate for Palestine. Jews were recognized as having national rights and were given a political role in British Palestine, while Arabs, referred to in the declaration merely as “the non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine,” were granted only the protection of their civil and religious rights.
The limitations that these roles imposed on the Arab community became apparent within the first few years of the British occupation. On the one hand, Arab groups were encouraged to participate in the preservation of religious sites. The Supreme Muslim Council, created by the British in 1922, was enlisted in the mid-1920s to play the leading role in a British-inspired project to refurbish the Haram al-Sharif. It was warmly praised by British officials for its success in securing financial and moral support from the wider Muslim world. But when Arab groups tried to intervene in planning projects outside the Old City, officials were not so welcoming.

As early as September 1919, members of the Muslim-Christian Association, a nonsectarian nationalist group founded by the older generation of the Palestinian notability, complained that Arabs were not being included in British plans for the city. Though they accepted that Patrick Geddes was “one of the authorities in town planning,” they questioned his impartiality because of his work for the Zionist Organization in drawing up plans for the Hebrew University. Their criticisms show that members of the Arab elite accepted the importance of town planning—giving lie to the British idea that Arabs lacked an understanding of urban development—but recognized its potential to be abused for political purposes.

In a 1925 memorandum submitted to the League of Nations, the Arab Executive pointed out this abuse by detailing how British urban planning was promoting Zionist settlement in Jerusalem at the expense of the city’s Arab community. The first of these complaints dealt with the disposal of the landholdings of the insolvent Greek Orthodox Church in the New City, which I have discussed earlier. The division of that land into small plots by the British authorities, ostensibly to discourage land speculation, was argued to be a deliberate act of favoritism toward the Jewish community because it allowed Zionist land purchasing agencies to buy land at a reduced rate.

A second complaint addressed the response of the British authorities to the overflow of waste from a sewage system (built for the Jewish neighborhood of Mea Sha’arim in 1920 with outside funding from the Zionist Executive). The waste overflow caused the contamination of “the Muslim quarters of Shaikh Jarrah, Wadil Joz and Babil Zahira [sic], and the very sacred vicinity of St. Mary’s Tomb” in January 1922. Here, the British revealed their favoritism toward the Jewish community through the government’s failure to respond to Arab petitions and their unwillingness to reroute the sewage system away from Arab areas, despite the fact that this measure had been recommended by a British expert brought in from Egypt.

A final complaint was aimed at the Government of Palestine’s treatment of the Mamilla Cemetery, Jerusalem’s oldest Muslim cemetery. Due to the explosive growth of predominantly Jewish neighborhoods promoted by British urban planning around the cemetery, the British urged
the Muslim authorities (specifically the Supreme Muslim Council) to close the cemetery—that is, discontinue burial there—for public health reasons. Explaining that the medical experts of the Supreme Muslim Council had found nothing wrong with the tombs (there is no evidence that the testimony of these experts was presented to the League of Nations), the Arab Executive accused the government of using the public health explanation as a pretext for controlling the use of “the only Muslim Cemetery in the neighborhood of Jewish quarters.”

These complaints of the Arab Executive, like that of the Muslim-Christian Association earlier, did not so much criticize the practice of urban planning, but the way that it threatened Muslim neighborhoods and holy sites in Jerusalem. In these complaints we can see how the Arab elite saw planning in the New City as a tool of the colonial agenda that marginalized their input and favored the needs of the city’s mostly secular Zionist immigrants. This suspicion was shown in the Arab Executive’s opinion of the British reaction to the Zionist sewage project: “On the face of it the undertaking seemed to be [a] very plausible one, had there been any sincerity in it. It was found later that the undertaking was carried on for political propaganda rather than for Public Health.”

The British response was to brush all of these Arab criticisms aside, which was not surprising because the colonial authorities never recognized the Muslim-Christian Association or the Arab Executive as representatives of the Arab community. British officials boldly stated to the Muslim-Christian Association that the issue of “the town planning of Jerusalem is entirely one for the Administration to deal with.” In response to the Arab Executive’s complaints, officials granted that the drainage project was problematic but was only a “temporary nuisance” and that the closing of the Mamilla Cemetery would not involve any “serious hardship as Muslim burials could still take place on the east side of the city.” The overall tone of the British responses was one of condescension, for while it was granted that a few procedural mistakes had been made, their planning should not be questioned, least of all by these Arab groups.

This treatment contrasted greatly with the role given to neighborhood committees and building cooperatives in the New City, the bulk of which were Jewish and overwhelmingly Zionist in orientation. Zionist land purchasing agencies, architects, and neighborhood committees all participated closely in shaping the New City. The Palestine Land Development Company, dedicated to the development of the Jewish community, was particularly instrumental in purchasing land in the New City as part of the release of Greek Orthodox lands. Its participation at a seminal stage in the planning process was unique and met with “sharp objections from Muslim and Christian circles resistant to the sales of church lands to Jews.” Despite these protests, it was commonplace for British planners to work with Zionist groups, a partnership that built on British support for the establishment of the Jewish national home, and the British belief that, despite
occasional differences, Zionists were working toward the same kinds of modernist (and colonial) goals as the British administration.\textsuperscript{63}

### 1948 AND BEYOND

British colonial urban planning rebuilt Jerusalem as a divided city. In the Old City, the “cleaning-up” of space led to the production of a more orderly city that could easily show off its religious and historical value to the world. Urban planning was one of a number of tools that British officials used to transform the Old City into a more traditional and religious space. Measures such as the prohibition of prostitution, bars, cabarets, and dance halls in the Old City; the designation of certain areas as closed archaeological sites; and the prohibition of major industry and commerce within the city walls were also adopted to create a cleaner and more orderly space that fit with British prejudices about how a holy city should look and operate.\textsuperscript{64}

Meanwhile, the New City with its bourgeois neighborhoods and its downtown commercial district became the modern face of Jerusalem. The establishment of the seat of colonial government in the New City also meant that Jerusalem’s political heart was located outside of the city walls for the first time in history. That heart was now European and Christian, hastening Jerusalem’s “transformation into a more European city both in terms of physical appearance and in demographic composition and culture.”\textsuperscript{65} No longer the nineteenth-century Arab-Islamic city, which had been centered in the Old City and tied to a Jordanian hinterland, Jerusalem was now a colonial capital linked to the world market and imperial politics.

The eclipse of the Old City by West Jerusalem affected the city’s various communities in different ways. The growth of the New City undoubtedly represented a political and economic upswing for the Jewish community, particularly for Zionist immigrants. A local newspaper article summed up the pride felt by these immigrants:

> The transformation of Jerusalem from the stronghold only of the old orthodox Yishuv into the centre of activity for all branches of Hebrew life in Eretz Israel is gradually taking place. The new large offices of the Zionist Commission have been opened, situated in the Jaffa Road opposite the Gan Ha’ir and the American Zionist Medical Unit offices. The Departments, so far, include Political Committee, Relief, Finance, Agriculture and Colonization, Trade and Industry, Secretariat…[T]he progressive community in Jerusalem will increase as a result of the city’s becoming the headquarters of the Zionist Administration.\textsuperscript{66}

Given a role in planning by the British authorities that had previously been denied them under the Ottomans, Zionist Jews worked closely with
colonial planners (their offices were just down the road from each other) in drawing up neighborhood plans and applied for far more building permits than any other community. Indeed, the confidence of the new yishuv was so great that there were calls within it for the creation of a separate New City municipality that would allow it to secede from the Jerusalem municipality, much as Tel Aviv had broken away from Jaffa. Zionists also became adept at using the language of urban planning within their conquest of land, as shown in their calls for the removal of the Maghrebi quarter adjacent to the Western Wall on the grounds that it was aesthetically displeasing, unsanitary, and had no place in a modern city.68

The effect on the Arab community was much less positive. Around 97 percent of the nearly 100,000 Jews living in Jerusalem in 1947 lived in the New City, whereas roughly 48 percent or 31,500 of the 65,000 Arab inhabitants lived there, with Arab Christians settling outside the city walls in greater numbers than Muslims.69 Movement to the New City was expensive and limited to the wealthy, given the fact that Arabs, unlike Jewish immigrants, did not receive any assistance from outside land-purchasing agencies. Moreover, the strong symbiotic relationship that existed between Arab neighborhoods in the old and new cities meant that there was less pressure to build an enclosed, self-sufficient Arab community in the New City.70 Most importantly, the British did not invite Arabs to take a prominent role in the New City. As a result, most Arabs and certainly the bulk of the Muslim community remained in the Old City, where British preservation policies prohibited them from building viable commercial, industrial, and political institutions for the national struggle. The results were devastating, as the mayor of Jerusalem, Ruhi al-Khatib, observed in 1949: “Our heritage from the Mandate government in this part of Jerusalem was a distressed city of shaking buildings, a paralyzed commerce and industry, devoid of any financial resources and without a government, water, or electricity.”71

British control over urban planning also undoubtedly had a profoundly negative impact on how the city’s communities worked and lived together. Not only was the city more divided under British rule, but the colonial state’s control over planning meant that the city’s various communities had little opportunity or incentive to come together to work on development projects. Gone was the shared experience, described by Michelle Campos, of Jews, Christians, and Muslims coming together to work on civic projects, an experience that strengthened their sense of sharing an identity as Jerusalemites and Ottoman citizens.72 To be sure, conflicts over the Western Wall and other sites in the city did the most damage in destroying this shared sense of space. But urban planning, with its rigid demarcation of space, also played its part. Indeed, further research on British planning...
may well reveal that it contributed directly to conflict and competition over the city’s holy sites.

The war of 1948 all but eliminated the Arab presence in the New City and the Jewish presence in the Old City, and policies since then, such as renaming roads and neighborhoods, have worked to wipe out traces of that presence. Because of this, the history of urban planning in Jerusalem has often been written as the triumphant story of the development of Jerusalem as the capital of the Jewish state. In this teleology, the Arab presence in the New City has been consistently and comprehensively occluded, as Rochelle Davis and Salim Tamari have pointed out. What is also true is that the British colonial presence has been ignored. The colonial state’s vision of the city and its empowerment of certain groups over others had a profound effect on the development of Jerusalem. This should not be forgotten and deserves further study by historians.

ENDNOTES

2. Herbert Samuel, “The Future of Palestine,” p. 2, Middle East Archives, St. Antony’s College, Oxford University, Samuel papers.
8. Campos, Ottoman Brothers, pp. 231, 250. The promotion of a communitarian approach under British rule has also been discussed at length in Rashid Khalidi, The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood (New York: Beacon Press, 2006).

11. For example, British officers in Palestine were encouraged to emphasize the city’s holy sites in their reporting back to London. TNA, PRO, FO 371/3383/9333.

12. The idea that authenticity was found in material objects had earlier been part of the British Palestine Exploration Fund’s assessment of Palestine. See Nadia Abu El-Haj, Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 27.


14. Social reformers and administrators were influenced by the successes of Hausmann’s redevelopment of Paris, the Garden City movement in Britain, and the City Beautiful movement in the United States.


22. Shlomo Fonaroff, “A Reconstruction Scheme for the Old City of Jerusalem,” Jerusalem City Archives, Box 3593, File 33. A footnote on the proposal indicates that the paper was initially read at a meeting of architects and engineers on 23 July 1943, and was later published in the Journal of the Association of Engineers, although I could find no additional information on the article.

23. The Ottomans had removed part of the city wall near Jaffa Gate to accommodate the entrance of Kaiser Wilhelm II into Jerusalem in 1898.


26. “Is it possible to make of Jerusalem—and I’m speaking here of Jerusalem intra-muros—a modern city? Yes, good sirs, it is, on one condition: that we destroy it. But this is a task that no one could undertake in good conscience.” Jerusalem City Archives, Ashbee Files, Box 362.

27. Ashbee, Palestine Notebook, p. 52.

28. For more information on their efforts, see Campos, Ottoman Brothers, pp. 166–82.

29. Kendall, Jerusalem, the City Plan, p. 4.


32. The Town Planning Ordinance of 1921 stated that objections to town planning could be brought only to the offices of the Local Town Planning Commission.

33. This information is taken from the National Trust’s website: http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk. Information on the National Trust had been requested by the Government of Palestine, and in his memoir, Ashbee noted that the PJS had been modeled after the National Trust. See Israel State Archives (ISA), RG 1/M/570/9 and Ashbee, Palestine Notebook, p. 139.
34. Pro-Jerusalem Society Quarterly Bulletin, no. 1, accessed in Jerusalem City Archives, Ashbee Files, Box 361.

35. Members included the mayor and mufti of Jerusalem, the Franciscan custodian of the Holy Land, the Greek and Armenian patriarchs, the chief rabbi, the chairman of the Zionist Commission, and the Anglican bishop of Jerusalem.

36. The PJS was the sole authority in urban planning until the establishment of the Central Town Planning Commission under the Town Planning Ordinance of 1921. Even then, the PJS continued to have a major influence, not least because some of its members also served on the new commission. The PJS was dissolved in 1926 when Storrs became the governor and commander in chief of Cyprus.

37. An example of creative anachronism was the PJS’s revival of “local” craft traditions. The revival of tile-making in Jerusalem, for example, combined the workmanship of potters from Kütahya, Anatolia, with Persian pottery techniques originally popularized in Britain by William de Morgan. See Inbal Ben-Asher Gitler, “C. R. Ashbee’s Jerusalem Years,” Assaph Studies in the Arts 5 (2000), p. 36.


39. One business use of the wall that was stopped was the baking of dung cakes on top of the wall. Crawford, C. R. Ashbee, p. 182.


42. The figures for the Jewish and Muslim populations are taken from estimates provided by Yehoshua Ben-Arieh based on Ottoman census data from the early-twentieth century. The Ottomans only counted households, and the figures used to compare populations are taken from different years, so Ben-Arieh’s figures can be treated only as rough estimates. See Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, Jerusalem in the 19th Century: Emergence of the New City (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1986), pp. 240, 354. The figures for the Christian community come from Rochelle Davis, “Ottoman Jerusalem,” in Tamari, Jerusalem 1948, p. 17.


45. The land sales were undertaken by The Commission Appointed by the Government of Palestine to Inquire into the Affairs of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which British officials established in 1921 to fix the financial problems in the church.

46. The commitment to protecting the status quo began with General Allenby pledging in the very first speech of the occupation that “every sacred building, monument, holy spot, shrine, traditional site, endowment, pious bequest, or customary place of prayer, of whatsoever form of these three religions, will be maintained and protected according to the existing customs and beliefs of those to whose faiths they are sacred.” Kendall, Jerusalem City Plan, p. 8.

47. Biger, Empire, p. 198.


49. Some administrative buildings had been built shortly before the British conquest, such as the municipality building at the junction of the Jaffa and Mamilla Roads and the law courts built near Herod’s Gate. These were exceptions to the Ottoman practice of housing government institutions in the Old City.

50. The Augusta Victoria Hospital was the original residence of the high commissioner in Palestine. A new purpose-built Government House was opened in 1933 in southern Jerusalem. The Russian Compound was originally established in the nineteenth century to house the great number of Russian pilgrims that would visit Jerusalem every year but fell into financial difficulty after the Russian Revolution and was rented out to the British.

51. In the words of David Kroyanker, they “represented a clean break, conceptually and physically, from the cramped ghettolike traditional neighborhoods.” Kroyanker, Jerusalem Architecture, p. 157.


53. Ernest Richmond, director of antiquities and head of the renovation project, wrote in his report that “a more appreciative outlook” toward the monuments had developed not only by the
Supreme Muslim Council, but, among “educated Moslems” more generally. TNA, PRO, CO 733/160/12.

54. Muslim-Christian Society to chief administrator of Occupied Enemy Territory Administration (South), 18 September 1919, ISA, RG 2/M/4/140.

55. Executive Committee of the Palestine Arab Congress to League of Nations, 8 April 1925, ISA, RG 2/6/176.

56. ISA, RG 2/6/176.
57. ISA, RG 2/6/176.
58. ISA, RG 2/6/176.
59. Chief Administrator’s Office to the president of the Moslem-Christian Society, undated, ISA, RG 2/M/4/140.

60. The British response is found in a short paper, “Comments by His Majesty’s Government on the petitions of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Arab Congress; April 1925,” ISA, RG 2/M/4/140. Interestingly the British view of the drainage problem was strongly contested by Ashbee, whose own house had been destroyed. See ISA, RG 1/574/4, 574/7. The episode is further discussed in Ashbee’s Palestine Notebook.

61. Traditional Jewish neighborhoods in the New City were looked upon with a certain amount of contempt by British and Zionist officials and were not intended to have a role in the modernization of the New City.


63. This belief also reflected a stereotypical idea that “innumerable benefits will accrue to the country by the application of Jewish money and brains.” Cox to Haifa military governor, 28 November 1919, ISA, RG 2/M/4/140.

64. Storrs, Memoirs, pp. 416.

67. This turning away from Jerusalem was criticized heavily by Zionist leaders. See Kark, Jerusalem and Its Environs.

68. During his aborted attempt to buy the Western Wall in 1918, Chaim Weizmann made his case by arguing in a letter to Arthur Balfour that the Wall was surrounded by a group of miserable, dirty cottages and derelict buildings, which makes the whole place from the hygienic point of view a source of constant humiliation to the Jews of the world. Our most sacred monument, in our most sacred city, is in the hands of some doubtful Maghreb religious community, which keeps these cottages as a source of income. We are willing to compensate this community very liberally, but we should like the place to be cleaned up; we should like to give it a dignified and respectable appearance.

See Weizmann to Balfour, 30 May 1918, Central Zionist Archives (CZA), L3/310. The erasure of the Maghrebi neighborhood would ultimately be achieved by the Israeli government in the wake of its victory in the 1967 war.


70. The social and economic interdependence of the Arab sections of the city inside and outside the city walls is detailed in Davis, “Growth of the Western Communities.”

71. Quoted in Davis, “Growth of Western Communities,” p. 54.

72. See “Sharing Urban Space” in Campos, Ottoman Brothers.

73. See for instance Kark, Jerusalem Neighborhoods and Ben-Arieh, Jerusalem.