

## **Roundtable: Israel's Colonial Projection and Future Plans for Jerusalem**

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with comments by  
Maha Samman and Raja Khalidi

*On 28 July 2016, Nur Arafeh presented al-Shabaka policy brief “Which Jerusalem? Israel’s Little Known Master Plans” at the Kenyon Institute in Jerusalem. Her presentation was followed by comments from Maha Samman and Raja Khalidi. What follows is a lightly edited text of this roundtable discussion.*

### **Nur Arafeh: “Which Jerusalem? Israel’s Little Known Master Plans”**

In 1995, Edward Said warned that it is “only by first projecting an idea of Jerusalem [that] Israel could then proceed to the changes on the ground,” which “would then correspond to the images and projections.”<sup>1</sup>

What is Israel’s “idea” of Jerusalem for the next thirty years and how does it intend to turn its image of Jerusalem into reality? This article examines three Israeli master plans that reflect Israel’s broad vision of Jerusalem as a largely Jewish high-tech tourist destination with a minimal Palestinian presence by 2050. These Israeli plans are being implemented while a huge planning, leadership, and institutional vacuum characterizes Palestinian areas in East Jerusalem. The article thus concludes with policy recommendations to fill the current vacuum in East Jerusalem.

### **Three Israeli Master Plans for Jerusalem**

While Israel has thousands of plans for Jerusalem, three Israeli master plans convey Israel’s “idea” of Jerusalem and its plans to implement its vision. The best known of Israel’s plans is the “Jerusalem 2000 Master

Plan” or the “2020 Master Plan.”<sup>2</sup> Prepared by a national planning committee and first published in August 2004, it is the first comprehensive and detailed spatial plan for both East and West Jerusalem since Israel’s occupation of East Jerusalem in 1967. Although the plan has not been validated yet, as it was not deposited for public review, Israeli authorities are implementing its vision. The plan addresses several areas, including urban planning, tourism, economy, archeology, education, environment, transportation, culture, and art.

Another plan that is not very well known is the Marom Plan, a government-commissioned plan for the development of Jerusalem, which should be implemented by the Jerusalem Development Authority (JDA) – a major planning body for the Jerusalem municipality – the land administration, and other organizations. The Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies (JIIS), a multidisciplinary research center that plays a leading role in the planning and development policies for Jerusalem, is responsible for conducting the research and monitoring for the plan.

The third development plan is the “Jerusalem 5800 Plan,” also known as Jerusalem 2050, a private initiative founded by Kevin Bermeister, an Australian technology innovator and real estate investor.<sup>3</sup> The plan is said to be the only long-term plan for Jerusalem, as it provides a vision and projected proposals for Jerusalem up to the year 2050. It is represented as a “transformational master plan for Jerusalem,” and is divided into various independent projects, each of which can be implemented on its own, with other municipal and national government agencies.

While these plans are advanced by different actors from different sectors, they reinforce each other through one common thread: they all aim to Judaize Jerusalem – that is, to ensure and expand Jewish political, demographic, economic, and territorial control over the city, while further evicting and dispossessing Palestinians. To achieve this goal, the plans address four common areas: tourism, high-tech, higher education, and urban planning.

### ***A Jewish International City***

The development of the tourism sector in Jerusalem is at the heart of Israel’s master plans for the city. For example, under the 2000/2020 Master Plan, the Jerusalem municipality aims at promoting the tourism sector, especially the cultural aspect of Jerusalem. It thus plans to do a marketing campaign in order to increase the potential of real development, support international and urban tourism, and invest in tourism infrastructure to ensure the sector’s development.

Similarly, one of the main goals of the Marom Plan is to develop Jerusalem as a tourist city. In 2014 alone, the JIIS conducted 14 of its 18 studies on the tourism sector, and presented them to the Jerusalem municipality, the Ministry of Jerusalem and Diaspora Affairs, and the JDA. The JDA has also been offering incentives to entrepreneurs and companies to encourage them to build or enlarge hotels in Jerusalem, and organize cultural events to attract tourists.

Promoting the tourism sector also lies at the core of the “Jerusalem 5800” Master Plan, which envisages Jerusalem as “the Middle East’s anchor tourist attraction and resource.” The plan seeks to: increase private investment and construction of hotels; build

rooftop gardens and parks; transform the areas surrounding the Old City into hotels and prohibit the use of vehicles; build high-quality transportation routes; and construct an airport in the Horkania Valley between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea to serve 35 million passengers per year.

However, Israel uses the tourism sector not only to fuel economic development. Israel's development of, and domination over, the tourism sector in Jerusalem is also seen as a major tool to substantiate the Jewish narrative of the Holy Land. Israel has thus strict rules over who can serve as tour guides and the narrative and history that the tourists are told.

These plans to develop the Israeli tourism industry have been accompanied by severe Israeli hurdles on the development of the Palestinian tourism industry in East Jerusalem. Israeli obstacles include: the isolation of East Jerusalem from the rest of the occupied Palestinian territories, especially after the construction of the wall; weak physical infrastructure; high taxes; shortage of land; restrictions on the release of permits to build hotels or convert buildings to hotels; and difficult licensing procedures for Palestinian tourist businesses.

### ***A Jewish Destination for Higher Education and High Tech***

Another shared goal by the three plans is to attract Jews from all over the world to Jerusalem through the promotion of two advanced industries. The first industry is the higher education industry. The 2000/2020 Master Plan aims to build an international university in the city center, with English as the main language of instruction. The Marom Plan seeks to make Jerusalem a “leading academic city” that is attractive to both Jewish and international students. Similarly, the “Jerusalem 5800” Master Plan views the development of the higher education industry as an opportunity to create jobs and achieve economic growth through extended-stay educational tourism.

The second industry that the plans seek to develop is the high-tech, bio-information, and biotechnology industry. The 2000/2020 Master Plan calls for the establishment of a university for management and technology in the city center of Jerusalem, and for government assistance in research and development (R&D) in the fields of high-tech and biotechnology. In the same vein, the Marom Plan aims at promoting Jerusalem as a center of R&D in the field of biotechnology. The “Jerusalem 5800” Master Plan also seeks to develop and invest in the high-tech and healthcare industries.

While Israel plans to develop Jerusalem as a business center that attracts Jews from all over the world and provides them with job opportunities, the economy in East Jerusalem has been collapsing and left to fend for itself. Economic conditions in East Jerusalem are characterized by: a squeezed business and trade sector; weak physical and economic infrastructure; a lack of investment; de-industrialization; erosion of the productive capacity of the economy; and a tourism sector held hostage by the Israeli tourism operators.

### ***Conquering the Land through Urban Planning***

Since the occupation and illegal annexation of East Jerusalem in 1967, Israel has used urban planning as a major geopolitical and strategic tool to contain the demographic and urban expansion of Palestinians, in an effort to Judaize the city. Israeli planning policies

have aimed at circumventing the “demographic threat” posed by Palestinians by: illegally annexing 70 square kilometers of West Bank territory, including East Jerusalem (6.5 square kilometers) in 1967; designating Palestinians as “permanent residents” and allowing Israeli authorities to revoke their residency permits; constricting Palestinian building to 13 percent of the land of East Jerusalem while confiscating 35 percent for Israeli settlements; demolishing Palestinian houses; and expanding illegal Israeli settlements.<sup>4</sup>

Urban planning is also at the heart of the 2000/2020 Master Plan. Although the plan presents itself as a technical plan, never referring to the occupied status of East Jerusalem, it is a political plan that uses urban planning as a political tool to ensure Jewish demographic and territorial control in the city. In fact, one of the main goals of the plan, which envisions Jerusalem as one urban unit and the capital of Israel, is to expand Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem and reduce negative migration in order to “maintain a solid Jewish majority in the city.” Hence, the plan seeks to build housing units for Israeli Jews by building new neighborhoods or through densification of existing ones.

The plan recognizes the acute housing crisis and weak infrastructure in Palestinian areas in Jerusalem, and thus aims to allow for the densification of rural villages and urban neighborhoods. However, it remains inherently discriminatory against Palestinians. In fact, the plan allocates only 2,300 dunums for Palestinian construction compared to 9,500 dunums for Israeli Jews, and does not take into consideration Palestinian growth rate in East Jerusalem and the accumulated scarcity of housing for Palestinians.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, 62.4 percent of the increase in Israeli Jewish building will happen through expansion and building of new settlements, thus increasing Jewish territorial control. By contrast, more than half (55.7 percent) of the addition of housing for Palestinians will happen through densification (vertical expansion), that is, building within the existing urbanized areas.<sup>6</sup>

The plan’s proposals to address the housing crisis in East Jerusalem will most likely remain ink on paper due to serious barriers to their implementation. In fact, several preconditions should be met before Israeli authorities issue building permits, including: an adequate road system;<sup>7</sup> parking spaces; sanitation and sewage networks; and public buildings and institutions. These requirements, however, are the responsibility of the municipality, thus making it extremely difficult for Palestinians to build new houses.<sup>8</sup>

The Palestinian presence in Jerusalem will also be severely restricted by the plan’s commitment to “a strict enforcement of the laws of planning and building . . . to impede the phenomenon of illegal building.” However, according to *Ha’Aretz*, only 7 percent of building permits in Jerusalem were issued to Palestinians in the past few years, and two-thirds of these permits were issued for the neighborhood of Bayt Hanina.<sup>9</sup> This discrimination in issuing building permits to Palestinians, coupled with the high cost of these permits (around \$30,000), has led many Palestinians to build illegally.

## **Palestinian Planning, Leadership, and Institutional Vacuums**

As Israel plans for 2050, the Palestinian Authority’s (PA’s) “idea” of Jerusalem remains vague. In 2010, the Jerusalem Unit at the president’s office published the *Strategic*

*Multi-Sector Development Plan for East Jerusalem (SMDP) 2011–2013*. The PA's current national development plan for 2014–2016 does not have a specific section on East Jerusalem and simply refers back to the 2010 plan, which is about to be updated by the Jerusalem Unit.

The huge planning vacuum goes hand in hand with an institutional and leadership vacuum. Since 2001, Israel has closed more than thirty Palestinian institutions, including the Orient House and the Jerusalem Arab Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in order to tighten its grip over the city and control Palestinian activism. The PA's Jerusalem governorate and the Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs operate from a building in al-Ram, outside the Israeli-defined municipal boundaries of Jerusalem, and have very limited power in Jerusalem. There is also a big sense of political abandonment of East Jerusalem. For example, while East Jerusalem is officially presented as the capital of the state of Palestine, in 2015 the PA planned to allocate only 0.44 percent of its budget to the Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs and to the Jerusalem governorate, further restricting their roles in East Jerusalem.

Several measures could be taken to fill the existing planning and leadership gaps in East Jerusalem, including:

### ***Establishing Popular Committees in Each East Jerusalem Neighborhood***

Such committees could: raise East Jerusalem residents' awareness of their rights as residents and about Israel's plans for the future; encourage voluntary work; monitor and prevent Palestinians from selling their land to Israeli Jews; represent the neighborhood at national forums; and cooperate with each other to reinforce their efforts to defend Palestinian land.

Once these committees have been established in all neighborhoods, they could form what Jerusalemite organizations believe is also urgently needed: a representative body for Jerusalem at the national level, an inclusive body that would include the Jerusalem governorate, representatives of civil society organizations, and the private sector, as well as independents. This body would work as a channel between Palestinians in East Jerusalem and the PA, as well as with the rest of world. Such a representative body could work on three main fronts:

1. The Palestinian Authority and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). A representative body for Jerusalem could lobby the PA/PLO to propel Jerusalem to the forefront of the Palestinian government's commitments and ensure that it receives the budget and other support it needs in order to counter Israeli policies of Judaization.
2. The Arab and international community. In this sphere, a representative body for Jerusalem should take the lead in advocacy, lobbying, and campaigning at the regional and international level, in coordination with the Palestinian diaspora. For example, Jordan – as custodian of holy places in Jerusalem – should be lobbied to help maintain a secure environment for Palestinians in East Jerusalem. Other Arab countries, in particular Morocco and Saudi Arabia, given their special relationships with Jerusalem, should also be mobilized.

Greater effort should be made to reach out to countries that have already shown solidarity with Palestinians, such as Sweden, Latin American countries, and BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), among others, so that they might use their good offices directly and in collaboration with other countries to hold Israel accountable for its illegal annexation and colonization of East Jerusalem. The European Union (EU) also has an obligation to ensure full compliance with the principle of non-recognition of Israel's sovereignty over East Jerusalem. The EU should translate its rhetoric into effective measures by halting all direct and indirect economic, financial, banking, investment, academic, and business activities in Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem and throughout the rest of the occupied Palestinian territories.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) could play a major role in safeguarding Palestinian rights in East Jerusalem, providing direct support as well as lobbying the EU and the UN to provide support and to take measures to halt and reverse Israel's violations. Such measures could include the establishment by the UN and/or the EU of a register of Israeli violations of human rights and the damage incurred by Palestinians as a result of Israeli policies of Judaization and settlement expansion in East Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territories.

3. Palestinian communities in their homeland as well as in the diaspora. These communities should develop and project a clear vision and operational strategy for Jerusalem. Practical measures should be identified to counter Israel's policies of Judaization; enhance the productive capacity of the Palestinian economy in East Jerusalem and strengthen its links with the economy of the West Bank and Arab world; promote the tourism sector to support the limited economic development possible under occupation; revive the cultural and economic status of the Old City; enhance the educational and health sector; and foster the integration of Palestinians in East Jerusalem into the rest of the occupied Palestinian territories.

However, to ensure that these plans do not remain ink on paper, implementation mechanisms and accountability measures should be identified in order to hold accountable all actors responsible for the implementation of the plans. Future plans would also require donor realignment while making sure that Palestinian control and lead their own development strategies.

### ***Creating a Development Bank***

The establishment of a funding body or a development bank is crucial to overcome the lack of funding, which is considered one of the major issues faced by Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem. Such a body could have different roles, including: providing credit facilities to Palestinians; offering incentives to increase investment in East Jerusalem; building infrastructure; and so on.

### ***Developing a Media Strategy***

A coordinated media strategy is urgently needed to raise Palestinian voices; challenge Israel's de-politicized and de-historicized representation of Jerusalem; and expose the truth about Israel's occupation and oppression in Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied

Palestinian territories. There's also a dearth of research on the socio-economic development of East Jerusalem and Israeli future master plans, with very few research institutes working in East Jerusalem. Future research should have a proactive rather than reactive approach and should devise creative solutions instead of merely diagnosing problems. The existing gap between intellectuals and policy makers/influencers should also be bridged to ensure that all efforts are united towards the objective of achieving dignity, freedom, and justice.

### ***Effort Coordination***

The existing legal bodies that offer legal assistance to Palestinians in East Jerusalem – for example, regarding revocation of residency permits, family unification, land appropriation, house demolitions, and zoning and planning – should coordinate their efforts.

Palestinian civil society, particularly the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement can also play a crucial role in targeting Israeli plans for tourism and high tech in Jerusalem, through campaigns to boycott Israeli academic and cultural institutions as well as businesses that are involved in the Judaization of Jerusalem.

## **Discussion:**

### ***Maha Samman***

It is important to become aware of the sectors that are producing these Israeli plans, whether they are the official bodies of the government and/or the municipality (for example, the 2020 plan); semi-official bodies and/or NGOs (such as the Marom Plan done by the Jerusalem Institute for Israeli Studies); or the private sector (in the case of the 2050 plan). It is also worth noting that there are other plans such the transportation plans and others done by settler bodies. All these create a myriad of layers of plans and agencies which make it increasingly difficult to address them all in a coherent manner. What I would like to add are some suggestions on how to begin to tackle such plans collectively.

### **Theoretical Aspect: Settler Colonialism**

If we look at these plans within the context of a settler-colonial paradigm, and compare with other settler-colonial or colonial cases like Algeria under the French, or Delhi under the British, we can draw similarities of the results of using different colonial urban planning strategies.<sup>10</sup> Urban space in these cases was characterized by the development of systems of surveillance, development of an infrastructure of segregation, and boundary construction. These characteristics can be seen easily on the ground in Jerusalem, and in an even more developed form.

Systems of surveillance in Jerusalem take forms both physical, that is, supported by the military, and technological, which is supported by satellite systems that enable the geographic information system to cover any location in the city and a network of cameras that monitor people's movement within the Old City. Segregation was implemented by

different strategies such as acquisition of land, regulation, and physical construction of settlements, and these are clearly visible in Jerusalem. Boundary construction is marked by most starkly in Jerusalem in the form of the separation wall, thus creating spaces of inclusion and spaces of exclusion. This, as a result, dictates the direction of movement of the indigenous population and consequently affects their relationship with space and with other people, depending on where the people are located with respect to the constructed boundaries. This has left crowded neighborhoods with spatial, urban, social, and economic problems, experiencing hardship on a daily basis.

The aim of the colonizer is to control not only space and people, but also time, and to have the power to control it indefinitely. Power can produce time and obstruct others' time. We see this in Jerusalem, especially after the construction of the wall, where an Israeli settler can move a long distance in a short period of time by using highways, while for a Palestinian a short distance may need an extended period due to checkpoints and the separation wall.

This is an outcome of strategic planning, which includes: clear strategic actions, such as the 1948 or 1967 wars; continuous ongoing strategies, such as building settlements and bringing settlers from abroad; and also pending strategies, such as the dream of rebuilding the temple. Urban planning is one of many tools used in attempts to fulfill those strategies.

The main point I would like to emphasize with regard to what has been elaborated is that given the complexities of the various plans regarding Jerusalem, and before moving to the stage of proposing alternative planning bodies and gathering support regionally and internationally, I think what is needed is to develop an alternative ethos for planning which addresses the colonial and does not inadvertently reproduce colonial characteristics.

### **The 2020 Master Plan**

When we talk about the Israeli plans, especially the 2020 plan<sup>11</sup> – which was not officially ratified but is nonetheless the current reference to planning and is considered the first comprehensive plan since 1967 – what is interesting is that the aims and goals were officially expressed. These plans consider Jerusalem neither an occupied city nor a “conflict city,” and give the impression in their initial statements that all the residents are equal without any tensions or conflicts between them.

According to OCHA, only 13 percent of land is zoned for Palestinian construction,<sup>12</sup> and most of this land is already inhabited. How does the plan go around this issue? In terms of housing there are two strategies suggested in the plan: densification and expansion. A higher percentage of densification is suggested in Arab neighborhoods while a higher percentage of expansion in Israeli settlements. This would lead to further land-grabs by settlers and more dire situations in Arab neighborhoods.

In practice, the expansion of the settlements can be easily implemented while in the Arabic neighborhoods it would be very difficult, especially since many of the areas identified for densification have already been densified by housing units built without building permits. This is the outcome of the very expensive, complicated, and lengthy bureaucratic procedures required to acquire building permits. Thus, rather than being an opportunity to build, densification may become a threat to demolish, especially in the

areas which do not have detailed plans – a plan being a prerequisite to apply for permits.

When the number of buildings constructed without a permit is low, then one would think that the problem affects a small group who work against the law, but when their number is very high then this reflects a problem in the planning itself. This kind of planning increases restrictions on the development of Arab neighborhoods. By 2020, over one hundred thousand people will be in need of housing units, and as the municipality issues around 100 to 150 permits per year, this number is expected to increase. The plan is founded on the policy that the Palestinian population will diminish and therefore it does not take into account Palestinian needs and services. In fact, it calls for the reduction of percentage of Palestinians in Jerusalem from forty percent to thirty percent. One can conclude that these are intentionally designed to produce a high attrition rate in the collective existence of Palestinians while at the same time enlarging settler colonial existence on the same space.

### **The “Jerusalem 5800” Plan**

The “Jerusalem 5800” Plan is a private plan devised by a wealthy Australian businessman.<sup>13</sup> It appeals to terms such as creating “a global Jerusalem” to absorb tourists and post-graduate students to take up permanent residence. With its own airport outside Jericho, it would seem to be a response to regional competition with touristic and economic hubs such as Dubai and Istanbul. Such a plan does not in any way address the development needs of the Palestinian population in Jerusalem, but rather looks for a modernization strategy with high-rises and hotels to attract 12 million tourists per year, even in areas such as Wadi al-Jawz or around the Old City.

Another aspect is the pretext of “natural growth,” which has been used to build new settlements. Examples are Pisgat Ze’ev A, B, and C (which are now grouped under the same name), and Ma’aleh Adumim, which is expanding to adjacent hilltops. New terms such as “globalization,” “modernization,” and “high-tech” are being used to build new settlements to implement the same attrition strategies, particularly as the geographical area of 5800 Plan extends to include the Ramallah, Bethlehem, and Jericho districts.

It would seem that this dynamic will produce further cantonization – but now on a more localized level. (In contrast to cantons in the West Bank, now the cantons would be in and around Jerusalem.) The contrast here is that these same plans not only curtail any current and future development needs of Palestinians collectively, but limit Palestinian aspirations to seek jobs.

### **Conclusion**

There have been discussions about several approaches to deal with Israeli plans. Some have called for *working within the system*, which means trying to improve conditions within the existing realities and trying to find outcomes within existing planning structures and strategies. While this may produce some accommodating benefits, the drawback is that it keeps one within the power structure that favors the occupying power. Another option discussed has been *compliance*, which means that the Palestinians become *passive*

*subjects* without seeking alternatives. A third is *rejection* of anything Israeli: within this strategy there could be a lack of objective perception of existing circumstances and thus it provides no strategy to tackle the challenges at hand.<sup>14</sup> These three approaches do not approach the situation in its multifaceted and compound complexity. What is needed is an overall strategy based on the following three important aspects: (1) To make use of the settler-colonial paradigm to develop an ethos that capitalizes on previous colonized experiences. (2) To develop a multi-disciplinary and multi-leveled approach to counteract the Israeli plans as it is not only about policy, or strategy, or urban planning. It is a compound challenge. (3) Consequently, the ethos of the response needs to articulate three main groups of variables: (a) the roles of knowledge, power, and technology; (b) the roles of strategic and urban planning and the concept of sovereignty; and (c) the roles of demographic, social, economic, and cultural aspects.<sup>15</sup>

## ***Raja Khalidi***

### **Israel's Superior Planning System**

Borrowing from V. I. Lenin, it may be said that “Israeli planning represents the highest stage of settler colonialism.”<sup>16</sup> Since 1948, Israel has developed, indeed perfected, a well-organized, legally grounded, and efficiently implemented spatial, demographic, and economic infrastructural planning system. It is a well articulated, modern, and best-practice system combining national, regional, and local levels that are designed through distinct processes and with differential mandates but in harmony with each other, involving all stakeholders (public and private) in a non-stop effort of Jewish state-building. This entails a comprehensive vision on the part of Israeli planners that spans from Ras al-Naqura in the north to Eilat in the south, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean, and in which there are no Green Lines, walls, or other boundaries to the optimal emplacement of Israeli human and economic capital throughout the territory of historic Palestine. Jerusalem has been the jewel in the crown of the Israeli planning regime, with several aims, especially to: ensure an ethnic imbalance favoring Jews, integrate Jerusalem into the overall Israeli disposition, and use its history and touristic attractions to promote an exclusively Jewish narrative of the city's history. This boils down to a major political aim: Judaize the city, incrementally if need be, but with few compunctions about the fate of 400,000 Palestinians living in and around it.

### **Impact on Palestinians**

The economic collapse of East Jerusalem has resulted in deteriorating socio-economic conditions. While annexed East Jerusalem's Palestinians have long been one of poorest communities covered by Israeli statistics, their conditions have drastically worsened over the past years. The poverty rate of East Jerusalem Palestinians increased from 66 percent in 2006 to 82 percent in 2014.<sup>17</sup> In comparison, the poverty rate in Israel as a whole was 22 percent in 2014.<sup>18</sup> East Jerusalem's approximately 300,000 residents (within the separation barrier)<sup>19</sup> are also affected by high unemployment rates (19 percent in 2014),<sup>20</sup> especially

among fresh graduates<sup>21</sup> and the most educated.<sup>22</sup> Social disintegration is characterized by the spread of phenomena such as cultural alienation, drug addiction, delinquency, family violence, and petty crime, as well as a gradual de-skilling of the labor force.

As the Jerusalem economy struggles to maintain historic links with the West Bank and to resist greater incorporation (without integration) into the West Jerusalem and Israeli economy, a process of de-industrialization has ensued since the 1990s, if not before, accompanied by a stunted growth of Palestinian tourism facilities, which remain hostage to the larger, richer, and better connected Israeli tourism sector. Palestinians in East Jerusalem also suffer from a proportionally high tax burden. While they pay the same amount of *arnona* (property) tax as Israeli Jews, less than ten percent of the municipal budget is allocated to East Jerusalem neighborhoods.<sup>23</sup> Palestinian merchants in the Old City are also subject to a burdensome and an unfair tax regime. High taxes, coupled with the weak purchasing power of East Jerusalem residents and Israeli restrictions on Palestinian trade and tourism, have caused a deep recession of commercial markets in the Old City.<sup>24</sup>

Meanwhile the political vacuum arising from the absence of the Palestinian Authority, limited involvement of Jordan in safeguarding the Muslim holy places, and neglect by the Israeli municipality has led to Palestinian institutional atomization and the inability of East Jerusalem community leaders to break the taboo of political representation in Israeli-run local and regional governance structures. This amounts to a classic situation of taxation without representation.

### **Against All That: Palestinian, Arab, and International Neglect**

While Israel has a comprehensive vision for Jerusalem, a unified Palestinian vision and strategy for East Jerusalem remain elusive. There have been some efforts to develop a plan for East Jerusalem. For example, the Welfare Association established a special program in 1994 for the revitalization of the Old City and published a first comprehensive vision for the renewal of the Old City in 2001 (in Arabic) and 2003 (in English), with the aim of preserving the cultural heritage of Jerusalem and promoting the socio-economic regeneration of the Old City.

In addition, the Jerusalem Unit at the office of the president issued in 2010 the *Strategic Multi-Sector Development Plan for East Jerusalem* (SMDP) for 2011–2013.<sup>25</sup> However, and as argued by many PA officials, the plan failed to be implemented because of the absence of an operational arm. More significantly, the development approach used in the SMDP is problematic as it reduces Palestinian struggle to that of “survival” instead of freedom and takes the Israeli occupation as an exogenous constant instead of seeking to end it. Even with the best of intentions, however, Palestinian national spatial planning is an oxymoron in conditions defined by Areas A, B and C, the separation barrier, the blockade of Gaza and the isolation of Jerusalem.

Other attempts to develop planning schemes or development programs for East Jerusalem have been recently undertaken by international donors such as the UNDP and the GIZ, while the EU has also devoted some resources to the city; USAID remains noticeably absent from the scene. Islamic and Arab development funds have provided some relief through old city renovation and social service projects. The Palestinian private sector has

done what it could to boost tourism investment and provide new housing for overcrowded middle class Jerusalem households. However, despite these fragmented efforts guided by competing or incoherent agendas and a scarcity of risk capital, there is a huge planning vacuum, alongside the institutional and political vacuum, in East Jerusalem. Ultimately Palestinians in Jerusalem are sidestepped and squeezed by Israeli planning and absent from Palestinian state-building efforts of recent years.

The political leadership and institutional deficit has been the outcome of a number of accumulated failings. These include a political abandonment of east Jerusalem by the PA, even failing to implement its own Presidential decisions on establishing an Arab municipal council to maintain the semblance of a legitimate claim to governance, as well as a defensive diplomatic posture in recent years whereby Palestinian rights in Jerusalem are rarely the subject of confrontation or campaigning by Palestine in the international arena. Overall the decline of Jerusalem in Palestinian political, economic and social consciousness is the (reverse) corollary of the rise of Ramallah as the de-facto capital and commercial centre of Palestine. This situation has led to the growing disenchantment of Palestinians in Jerusalem with both the Israeli authorities and the Palestinian leadership, and a sense of regional and international abandonment, despite the sympathy and occasional support that Jerusalem receives from some donors.

### **Some Options to Consider in the Future**

There is an urgent need to confront openly and in a collaborative way among Palestinians the political taboo of local governance in order to reverse the current situation and give hope to beleaguered Jerusalemites. Several political and institutionalization options may be considered, ranging from the most acceptable to the most problematic.

1. *Let the Palestine Liberation Organization assume its declared responsibilities:* renewed efforts should be pursued to pressure the PLO to take the lead in representing Palestinians in East Jerusalem, through municipal level or other forms of governance. This option, however, has so far failed to deliver any results other than some minimal alleviations to difficulties faced by Palestinians in East Jerusalem.
2. *Create sector working groups:* A feasible and relatively acceptable form of local (non-political) representation could be through strengthening and empowering sector working groups (culture, economy, housing, social welfare, taxation, etc.), along the model of the Tourism Cluster and the Art/Culture Coordinating Forum, that would act as thematic sectoral representative bodies, devise joint solutions, and represent needs and demands to the authorities in place, including Israeli municipal bodies, without engaging in electoral participation.
3. *Establish local community committees:* Such committees already exist informally in several of the east Jerusalem quarters, and engage a spectrum of local activists but function outside the existing PA and Palestinian factional frameworks which see in them possible competition or even liable to influence by Israeli authorities. Hence their expansion is a risky option, and unless such committees can be linked to existing PA/PLO factions, they will most likely remain peripheral or stunted and ad-hoc

in their functioning, filling in some gaps but unable to create new representational dynamics on the ground.

4. *Other options, some of which are problematic, include:* municipal participation; asking the joint list of Arab Israeli parties in the Knesset to represent East Jerusalem interests; pursuing the idea of international protection; and even going so far as calling for a tax revolt as long as the community's municipal service needs are not met (schooling, sanitation, poverty alleviation programs, youth rehabilitation programs, low-income housing, etc.).
5. *With respect to physical planning:* there is a need to rethink such processes in terms of the territory of historic Palestine rather than that of the elusive State of Palestine, Areas A/B, Jerusalem, inside/outside the barrier, Gaza, etc. This would contribute to programming and political approaches that emphasize links between the economy of East Jerusalem with the Arab economy in Israel as well as the economy of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.
6. *In a longer perspective:* it would be useful in the Jerusalem context to study the concept of "universal basic income," a concept recently gaining traction in rich and poor countries alike, according to which every citizen is entitled to a basic living income that allows them to supplement that with chosen work and income according to their ambition and needs. While this assumes the existence of a social welfare state and resources that currently are not available (for example, oil and gas wealth), donors could play an important part on this front and could try the approach selectively by starting in Jerusalem or the Gaza Strip or Area C.
7. *Finally:* a Palestinian diplomatic offensive strategy on Jerusalem is long overdue and should be combined with serious efforts to increase Palestinian engagement in advocacy, lobbying, and campaigning at the regional and international level, without which it cannot be expected that international friends will do the PLO's job for it. UN and other international resolutions on Jerusalem establish an excellent framework for protection, if not conflict resolution, and should be referred to as efforts to enforce them pursued more vigorously by Palestinian diplomacy.

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## Endnotes

- 1 Edward W. Said, "Projecting Jerusalem," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25, no. 1 (Autumn 1995): 5–14.
- 2 The plan is available online in Hebrew and Arabic at the Civic Coalition for Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem (CCPRJ), see: CCPRJ, *Dirasat al-mukhattat al-haykali al-Isra'ili 2000 li-madinat al-Quds* [A Study of the Israeli Master Plan 2000 for Jerusalem] (Jerusalem: CCPRJ, February 2008), online at [www.civiccoalition-jerusalem.org/ar/system/files/drs\\_lmkhtt\\_lhykly\\_lmdl.pdf](http://www.civiccoalition-jerusalem.org/ar/system/files/drs_lmkhtt_lhykly_lmdl.pdf) (accessed 17 October 2016); this article draws on the "Local Outline Plan, Jerusalem 2000 – Report No. 4: The Proposed Plan and the Main Planning Policies Prepared for Jerusalem Municipality," originally available on the website of the Jerusalem municipality ([www.jerusalem.muni.il](http://www.jerusalem.muni.il)) and available online at [pcc-je.org/arabic/Publication/jerusalem\\_master\\_plan/engchapt/Intro.pdf](http://pcc-je.org/arabic/Publication/jerusalem_master_plan/engchapt/Intro.pdf) (accessed 17 October 2016).
- 3 More information on the "Jerusalem 5800" Master Plan can be found on the official website of the plan, at [www.jerusalem5800.com](http://www.jerusalem5800.com) (accessed 17 October 2016).
- 4 CCDPRJ, "Urban planning in Jerusalem" (Jerusalem: CCDPRJ, n.d.), online at [civiccoalition-jerusalem.org/system/files/urban\\_planning\\_in\\_jerusalem\\_final.pdf](http://civiccoalition-jerusalem.org/system/files/urban_planning_in_jerusalem_final.pdf) (accessed 17 October 2016).
- 5 Rami Nasrallah, "Planning the Divide: Israel's 2020 Master Plan and Its Impact on East Jerusalem," in *Decolonizing Palestinian Political Economy: De-Development and Beyond*, ed. Mandy Turner and Omar Shweiki (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 158–178.
- 6 Francesco Chiodelli, "The Jerusalem Master Plan: Planning into the Conflict," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 51 (Autumn 2012): 5–20.
- 7 Building permits for six-floor buildings are conditioned on access to roads that have a width of at least 12 meters.
- 8 Nasrallah, "Planning the Divide."
- 9 Nir Hasson, "Only 7% of Jerusalem Building Permits Go to Palestinian Neighborhoods," *Ha'aretz*, 7 December 2015, online at [www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.690403](http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.690403).
- 10 Maha Samman, *Trans-colonial Urban Space in Palestine: Politics and Development* (New York: Routledge, 2013).
- 11 Chiodelli, "Jerusalem Master Plan."
- 12 OCHA. 2011. *East Jerusalem: Key Humanitarian Concerns*. p. 29.
- 13 See "Jerusalem 5800 – Executive Summary," online at [www.jerusalem5800.com/system/resources/W1siZiIsIjIwMTYvMDcvMjUvMDdfMDJfMDRfMjc5XzU4MDBFcGVjdXRpdmVtdW1tYXJ5LnBkZiJdXQ/5800ExecutiveSummary.pdf](http://www.jerusalem5800.com/system/resources/W1siZiIsIjIwMTYvMDcvMjUvMDdfMDJfMDRfMjc5XzU4MDBFcGVjdXRpdmVtdW1tYXJ5LnBkZiJdXQ/5800ExecutiveSummary.pdf) (accessed 17 October 2016).
- 14 See Samman, *Trans-colonial Urban Space*, 54–65.
- 15 Samman, *Trans-colonial Urban Space*, 25–41.
- 16 In reference to his "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism."
- 17 According to the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), the poverty rate in East Jerusalem was 75 percent in 2014. See ACRI, *East Jerusalem 2014 – By the Numbers*, updated 24 May 2014, online at [www.acri.org.il/en/2014/05/24/ej-numbers-14/](http://www.acri.org.il/en/2014/05/24/ej-numbers-14/) (accessed 17 October 2016).
- 18 Nir Hasson, "Four Out of Five East Jerusalemites Live in Poverty, a Sharp Rise over Past Years," *Ha'aretz*, 22 June 2016, online at [www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.726357](http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.726357) (accessed 17 October 2016).
- 19 According to ACRI, Palestinian residents in Jerusalem represent almost 37 percent of the city's population. See ACRI, *East Jerusalem 2015 – Facts and Figures*, updated 12 May 2015, online at [www.acri.org.il/en/2015/05/12/ej2015/](http://www.acri.org.il/en/2015/05/12/ej2015/) (accessed 17 October 2016).
- 20 Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), *Kitab al-Quds al-ihsa'i al-sannawi 2015* [Jerusalem Statistical Yearbook 2015] (Ramallah: PCBS, June 2015), 117, online at [www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/Book2131.pdf](http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/Book2131.pdf) (accessed 17 October 2016). See also, PCBS, "Jerusalem Statistical Yearbook, 2015: Summary," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 62 (Spring 2015): 110–124.
- 21 According to the PCBS, 40.2 percent of those aged 20–24 years were unemployed in 2014 in East Jerusalem, while the rate was 19.4 percent for 25–29 year-olds. PCBS, *Kitab al-Quds*, 122.
- 22 The unemployment rate among the most educated was 25.4 percent, which was the second highest rate behind those with less than 6 years of schooling (27.2 percent). PCBS, *Kitab al-Quds*, 121.
- 23 Nathan Thrall, "Rage in Jerusalem," *London Review of Books*, 4 December 2014, online at [www.lrb.co.uk/v36/n23/nathan-thrall/rage-in-jerusalem](http://www.lrb.co.uk/v36/n23/nathan-thrall/rage-in-jerusalem) (accessed 14 October 2016).
- 24 Nur Arafah, "The Current State of the Markets in the Old City of Jerusalem" (Ramallah: Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute [MAS], July 2016), online at [www.mas.ps/files/server/20160808100552-1.pdf](http://www.mas.ps/files/server/20160808100552-1.pdf) (accessed 17 October 2016).
- 25 Jerusalem Unit, Office of the President, *Strategic Multi-Sector Development Plan for East Jerusalem* (Palestinian Authority, 2010), online at [www.scribd.com/document/50425401/Multi-Sector-2010](http://www.scribd.com/document/50425401/Multi-Sector-2010) (accessed 17 October 2016).