

Jerusalem Open City

From Vision to Program

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Introduction

The International Peace and Cooperation Center (IPCC), an NGO specialized in Jerusalem studies and urban planning and development for more than 11 years, and Futura Institute (FI), an Israeli think tank, have developed a **joint vision** for Jerusalem. The main idea guiding this vision is that Jerusalem should be **an open city**. Essentially this means a two-state solution with two capitals, living side by side in peace. Jerusalem according to this vision should be politically divided but physically, economically and socially should function as one open city.

Guided by this vision and being aware of the current political obstacles, IPCC and FI seek to develop a pragmatic program that relates to both immediate needs and deeper conflicts. We believe that there is a need for a pragmatic approach that seeks to alleviate current problems through the advancement of concrete projects. This could be achieved through developing a functional approach formulated in a set of policy tools, programs and plans that deal with the current needs and shortages in East Jerusalem, while bridging the gap between East and West Jerusalem. Yet at the same time there is a need for a detailed program that identifies the contested issues within Jerusalem, and proposes a set of concrete solutions to these problems. This is to be achieved by creating a sensitivity map of Jerusalem that maps out themes and areas contested by the two parties and by suggesting a set of solutions to these issues. This paper thus seeks to address both short- and long-terms issues by proposing pragmatic and concrete solutions that can be applied before, during and after an agreement between the two parties is reached.

Rationale

The so called ‘peace process’ between Israel and Palestine has become notorious for both its longevity and lack of progress. The situation in Jerusalem is becoming harsh and

fractured; allowing the city to slip into a downward spiral of violence, hatred injustice and misery for all its inhabitants. With the absence of a current political solution, Jerusalem is at the brink of failure. Urban Deterioration and the rise of extremist groups on both sides are leading to intensification of conflict, domestic and public violence, which affect and reflect on the city as a whole. Planning has been characterized by a partisan and exclusionary approach, which has fostered inequality and alienation. East Jerusalem lacks basic infrastructure services and opportunities for development, and adequate and sufficient housing. Meanwhile the fragmentation of the city has resulted in the breakdown of the secular public spaces. East Jerusalem's public space is dominated by mosques that serve as the only available public venues. West Jerusalem is deserted by affluent and secular groups, the demographic presence of ultra-Orthodox is increasing, and the city is becoming one of the poorest in Israel. What intensifies the problem is the lack of substantial leadership on both sides, and a high degree of apathy on the part of the international community. In such a vacuum, extremism has flourished, and religious fundamentalism has grown amongst both Israelis and Palestinians. Subsequently, extremist and fundamental groups have the upper hand in local politics and planning.

Proposed action

Against this backdrop, there is an urgent need for intervention. Our preference is political agreement between the Palestinian Authority and Israel. However, in the absence of such an intervention, the foundations for peace in Jerusalem should be initiated by civil society and the private sector. Such an intervention requires equal involvement of both counterparts, i.e. Palestinians and Israelis. It is proposed that a joint team of Palestinian and Israeli professional planners and architects should lead the initiative. This team will develop tools, alter current policies and formulate programs and plans that respond to the housing crisis in East Jerusalem, and to contested issues that may hinder development in the future. The team's work will relate to the following issues:

Urban Planning and Housing in East Jerusalem: a joint Palestinian Israeli team of planners and architects will together work on the pending urban planning issues and problems. The team will work on planning of new areas, re-planning and zoning of

existing areas, as well as developing affordable housing projects for the Palestinian Jerusalemites. These actions will relieve some of the existing tension in East Jerusalem as well as minimally reduce the housing crisis.

Public Spaces and Services in East Jerusalem: the team will also address the issue of public space and services through designating sites for the establishment of public venues, and through privatization of some public services. The team will also approach the community to raise their awareness on the importance of allocating 40% of their land for this purpose. Moreover, the team will also approach the municipality to advocate for rising the spending on public venue, services and open green areas for the community. This will address the “evolving slum” image of the region, improve the quality of life as well as bridge the gap between East and West Jerusalem in terms of image and availability of public facilities and greenery. The private sector can play a leading part in this effort through the provision of public services contracted out by the municipality.

Unemployment in East Jerusalem: working on the two previously mentioned problems will reflect on this third aspect. Improving the housing conditions in the area as well as the image of the region can make the city more attractive for new businesses in both East and West Jerusalem. To attain this goal, the team will plan employment areas where commercial transactions and establishments can take place.

Sensitive sites and areas in Jerusalem: the team will identify sensitive themes and areas that are associated with conflicts and frictions among Palestinians and Israelis, analyze the nature of the conflicts associated with these issues and come up with a set of solutions. The major goal underlying this work is to transform areas of conflict into sites of cooperation along the vision of Jerusalem open city. The guiding idea is to come up with concrete interventions on the ground that could be implemented in the short mid- and long-term. In other words, instead of waiting for a final status agreement, it is suggested to start with concrete actions before, during and after the signing of an agreement. Such an approach perceives peace not only in negative terms – end of

conflict, but also in positive terms – the attainment of benefits for both parties in the short- mid- and long-term.

In practice this means the following:

- Proposed interventions will address sensitive places and themes which constitute real or potential friction areas
- The conflict sensitive mapping will present both the Palestinian and Israeli perspectives on all issues. Each side will speak with its own voice, for example ethno-national exclusion or strategic needs.
- By displaying clearly the perspective of each side to each area/theme a new educational approach will be developed to help people understand the fears, hopes, values and traditions of the “other”.
- On the basis of such a tool the joint Palestinian and Israeli team will search for practical and mutually beneficial interventions in order to build bridges between the communities in the city.
- The practical intervention will relate to policy (what is to be done), planning and design (how it is to be done).

In so doing the team will learn from the experience of other borders cities across Europe. The following table provides a conceptual framework to this section.

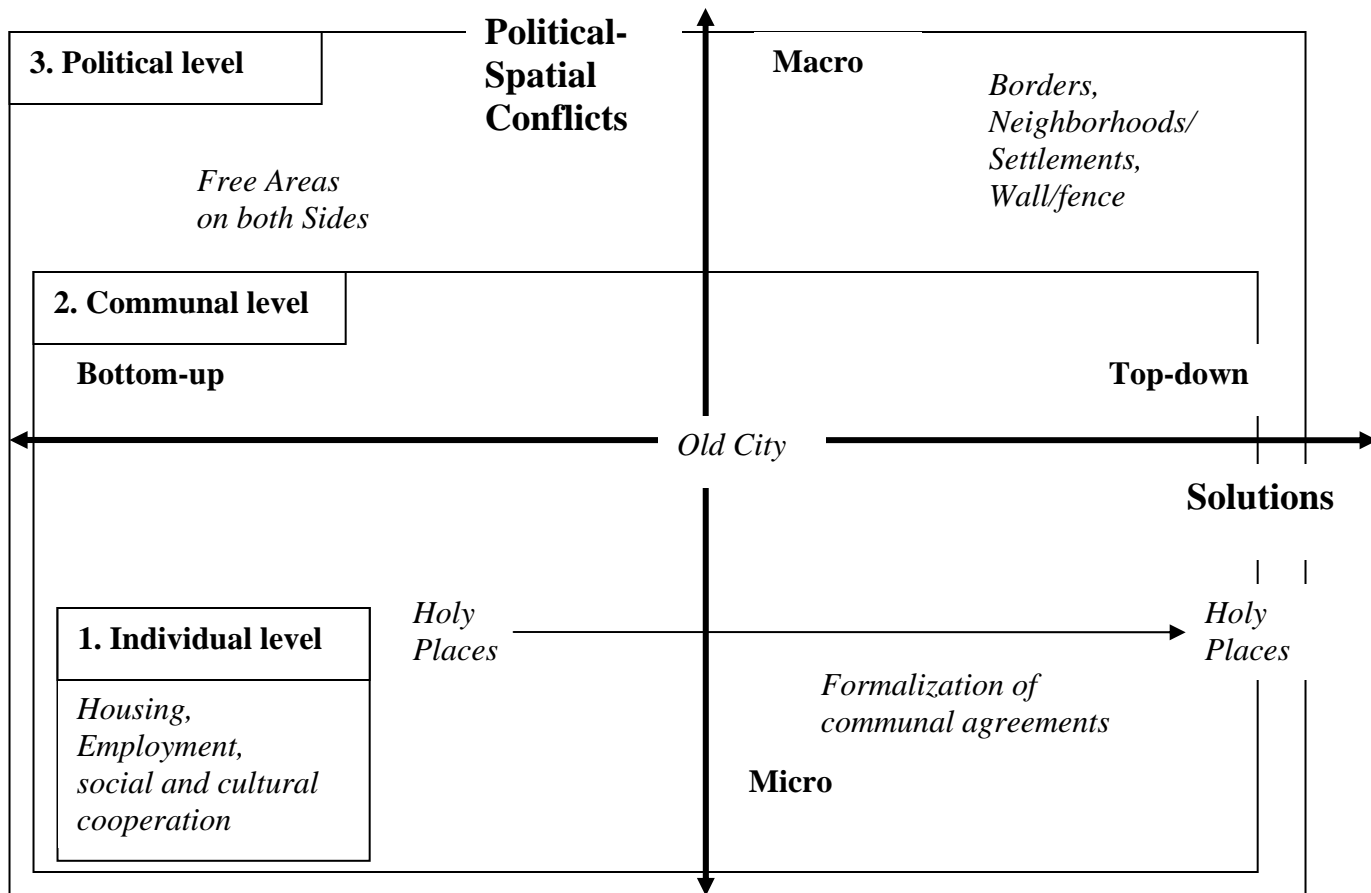
Table 1 presents a preliminary conceptual map of the sensitive places in Jerusalem.

Table 1: Sensitivity map of Jerusalem: a conceptual framework

Space	Sensitivity Dimension			
	Religious-Symbolic-Identity		Strategic-Demographic	
	Palestinian	Israeli	Palestinian	Israeli
Old City and the holy basin	Religious and symbolic center	Religious and symbolic center	Tourist and economic center	Tourist and economic center
Holy places	Haram al-Sharif Israeli Excavations	Temple Mount and the Western Wall Palestinian Building	Tourist and economic center	Tourist and economic center
East Jerusalem outside the Old City			Land confiscation for Jewish settlements, Planning (13%) and housing deprivation, legal rights, holding on to the land Outposts in Pal. areas	Jewish neighborhoods, Illegal Palestinian building
Between East and West Jerusalem			Joint and crossing transportation axes, Mixed neighborhoods	Joint and crossing transportation axes, Mixed neighborhoods
Separation Wall/Fence			Exclusion, discrimination, apartheid Urban fragmentation	Security measure and potential political border
Area E1			Geographic continuity with WB: N-S.	Geographic continuity: W-E.

Based on the analysis portrayed in the above table, the joint team of Palestinian and Israeli planners will propose a set of solutions to the different contested issues. These solutions will relate to individual (i.e., housing and employment), communal (i.e., holy places) and political themes (i.e., borders) to micro- and macro-spaces and to bottom-up and top-down solutions as portrayed in the conceptual chart outlined below. Please note that this chart serves only as an example, and many issues can be modified.

Set of Solutions: Conceptual Framework



As can be seen from the conceptual chart the contested issues in Jerusalem lend themselves to bottom-up and top-down solutions. **The joint team will prepare the bottom-up solutions** with an eye to the following issues:

- The situation in Jerusalem is grave, but there are also opportunities that need to be stressed. One opportunity is the rise of groups within the civil society on both sides that are willing to engage each other in attempt to alleviate current problems and advance bottom-up solutions.
- The advance of bottom-up solutions implies working on three levels: individual, communal and political with the knowledge that all levels are nested within each other. Even if the approach is bottom-up, and starts with the individual level of housing and employment it has to be coordinated with the communal and political levels.
- Most interventions have to be coordinated with the political level. There are however some things which can be implemented without coordinating with the political level, for example influencing the attitude toward public spaces
- It is expected to encounter political opposition locally. For this reason the joint Palestinian and Israeli team has to mobilize the support of friends and supporters from the international community.
- In addition the joint team has to convince people internally through marketing and education and to enlist the support of the private sector and civil society.

International conference: the team will organize an international conference to present its vision for Jerusalem, to discuss the policies, strategies and plans developed. The conference will also enable the team to learn from the experience of other divided cities and regions across the world.

Methodology. The first step is to establish a joint Palestinian-Israeli team, based upon the already established experience of IPCC and Futura Institute. This partnership will play a crucial role in presenting the Jerusalem case by members of the two national groups. It

may also facilitate lobbying with the Israeli Authorities to counteract the ongoing negligence of the east side of the city and its population.

The second step the team will take is to define locations of work. Jerusalem is home to a variety of conflicts and tensions, which take the form of urban, religious and symbolic issues. The joint team will be working on mapping and surveying Jerusalem in search of these troublesome locations and looking on identifying places where bridges of interaction (including both Palestinians and Israelis) in regards to spatial and functional relations may be developed. More so, they will also locate areas for development as well as allocate areas for the establishment of public facilities, commercial sites, and open greenery.

The third step is to engage international and local parties in the future of Jerusalem by convening an international conference. The conference's main aim will be to generate broad support for the joint Israeli and Palestinian initiative and for the joint vision of Jerusalem already developed by the team. The duration of the Conference will be three days. The Conference will also be a platform for presenting the various strategies developed in order to elicit support and involvement from concerned stakeholders. Local and international professionals including policy makers, media people, members of the grass-root community, international leaders, academia, business and community representatives, and experts from various fields will be invited to participate in the process. Possible donors and partners who might be interested in taking part in this visionary work through financial contribution or professional engagement and cooperation will also be invited.