



Guiding Principles for a Jerusalem Antiquities Master Plan - Policy Paper

Why is There a Need for an Antiquities Master Plan?

Over the past decade and a half, Israel has been creating a reality in Jerusalem's Historic Basin that is designed to preempt any political solution that doesn't leave Jerusalem under full Israeli sovereignty. To this end, massive resources have been invested in what is defined as "archaeological and touristic development", which includes excavations above and under ground, conservation and the tendentious presentation of antiquities to the public. These large-scale development efforts are led by private organizations and government bodies with abundant resources who are placing Jerusalem's antiquities at the forefront of the political struggle over the city. The result is a transformation of the physical, cultural and religious identity of the Old City and the village of Silwan into a historic city that highlights the periods associated with Jewish history while playing down or frequently effacing periods associated with other cultures and faiths. The increasingly stronger identification of Jerusalem with Jewish history serves to reinforce the notion of non-negotiable historical rights in the public mind and the conclusion that Israel should remain the only sovereign entity in the city.

One of the key structural problems facilitating this pace of development is the absence of a master plan for Jerusalem's antiquities. This fact enables the various actors in the Historic Basin to implement projects in a piecemeal fashion. We believe that urgent action is needed in order to preserve Jerusalem's multilayered past, its multicultural social fabric in the present, and the possibility that a future political solution will

reflect Jerusalem's multicultural character. To that end we are promoting a comprehensive master plan for Jerusalem's antiquities. The document titled "Guiding Principles for a Jerusalem Antiquities Master Plan" discussed below formulates a set of professional principles that will serve as a guide for a comprehensive plan.

The Authors of the "Guiding Principles"

In 2015-2016, Emek Shaveh brought together an interdisciplinary committee of experts, among them archaeologists, conservationists, urban planners, historians, geographers, tourism researchers and architects. Some of the members are academics while others have had decades of experience working in their field of expertise. All members are well-known in their field. They were brought together to shed light on ethical and civil issues and formulate professional standards for the management of the treasured heritage sites of the Historic Basin, in the areas of archaeological development, conservation, planning and building. These standards will ensure the preservation of Jerusalem's unique symbolic resources, and are designed to protect Jerusalem's history from one-sided, nationalistic, religious, corporate or economic exploitation.

Key Points in the “Guiding Principles”:

1. The excavation, conservation and development of sites in the Historic Basin shall be conducted as part of a comprehensive broad vision, which will prevent excess and waste, such as the establishment of a series of competing visitor centers without any true need. From a cultural point of view, a comprehensive vision will empower one narrative at site A and another narrative at site B, making for a balanced and appropriate expression of the different periods and cultures that have shaped the history of Jerusalem, as well as the mosaic of different communities existing today.
2. Excavation, conservation, and restoration processes in the Historic Basin shall be subject to public inspection procedures, which will set the conditions for proceeding with the project from one year to the next. Covert excavations will not be permitted and all building and development projects in antiquities sites will be published and subject to public inspection.
3. Checks and balances will be formulated and integrated into the Israel Antiquities Authority Law in a way that will allow heightened public involvement in decisions concerning the antiquities. These changes to the law will also create a separation between the regulator (the entity that oversees excavation and conservation activity) and the entity that executes excavation and conservation activities in the field. In addition, they will prevent a conflict of interests between the Israel Antiquities Authority’s mandate to protect the antiquities and the need to conduct paid excavations in advance of development projects.
4. Any conservation undertaken to convert spaces for public, commercial and tourism use shall preserve the architectural and historical context and refrain from significant changes to structures or from creating artificial links between structures that were used for different purposes or that date from different periods. Conservation should primarily serve the needs of the local residents, especially those who live in close proximity to the renovated sites.
5. Unilateral dismantling of archaeological remains shall be prohibited during excavation, and the act of dismantling shall be defined as an act of conservation, which entails all the constraints applicable to the process of conservation.
6. Conservation and development plans must be presented to the public and to all primary stakeholders: residents, visitors, representatives of different faiths and the various religious orders and local and international professional organizations. The abovementioned publics should be part of the decision-making process concerning excavations, conservation and construction over antiquities.
7. Excavation and conservation activities are often accompanied by activities that construct the visitor’s experience, such as signposting, presentational films, tours and educational activities at the site. These activities shall meet professional criteria and be free of tendentious slants. They shall be true to the preserved remains in their representation, and reflect the cultural diversity and the complex social and historical mosaic characterizing Jerusalem today.

Next Steps:

1. Endorsement of the “Guiding Principles” by international heritage bodies (such as UNESCO and ICOMOS) followed by a recommendation for a comprehensive master plan.
2. Endorsement by the international community of the “Guiding Principles” as a key means to safeguard Jerusalem for a future political solution.
3. Endorsement by the professional community of the “Guiding Principles” as the principal guidelines for any work undertaken in Jerusalem’s ancient sites.
4. Promoting the “Guiding Principles” amongst Israeli decision makers and government bodies working in the Historic Basin, ultimately achieving official endorsement of the principles.

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