

Guiding Principles for a Jerusalem Antiquities Master Plan – Proposed Policy Paper

Introduction - Guiding Principles

Jerusalem is a historic city and a locus of conflict. Culturally and physically multilayered and sacred to three faiths, it is also a populous and vibrant urban space. Conflicts between different communities, alongside a willingness to coexist, are an essential, permanent component of its living fabric.

The steering committee convened by Emek Shaveh at the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem comprises members of various disciplines, each with its fund of knowledge and its particular ethical codes: archaeologists, conservators, planners, geographers and historians. The knowledge and practices embodied by the committee form basic and vital tools for the presentation, interpretation, preservation and management of Jerusalem's historic landscape and its tangible heritage.

Current developments in Jerusalem's historic basin dramatically impact the city's physical texture and urban plan. They are being effected by a number of agencies with different and sometimes competing agendas, creating a multiplicity of projects that lack an inclusive view or a sustainable plan that respects the multilayered heritage of the city's residents and visitors.

We therefore wish to shed light on a number of important ethical and civil issues and formulate professional standards for the management of the tangible cultural treasures of the Historic Basin in the areas of our expertise. These, we hope, will help preserve Jerusalem's unique symbolic resources, as manifested in its archaeology, landscape and architecture, while ensuring free and equal access to these resources for residents and visitors. We believe that it is urgent and vital to protect Jerusalem's unique history from unilateral exploitation by nationalist, religious, corporate or economic interests.

Boundaries/Scope of the Discussion

The committee's recommendations apply to the Old City and its immediate surroundings, i.e., the Historic (Holy) Basin, between the Mount of Olives in the east, the Hinnom Valley and Mamilla area in the south and west, and the Tombs of the Kings in the north.

Guiding Principles and Recommendations for the Management of Excavations, Conservation and Site Development, and Construction on Antiquities in The Historic Basin of Jerusalem

1. Intensive archaeological activity has been ongoing in the Historic Basin since 1968, accompanied by conservation and site development. This trend has escalated over the last decade. The Israel Antiquities Law, originally intended to protect antiquities from destruction, is being exploited in Jerusalem by developers to initiate irreversible development projects through excavation, while avoiding both public oversight and planning and building ordinances. We

therefore recommend that wherever an archaeological excavation constitutes the initial phase of development for tourism or other purposes (e.g., infrastructure and public or private construction), it should conform to the standards enforced under planning laws, including, but not limited to, the presentation – ahead of excavation – of a comprehensive excavation and development plan and the implementation of extensive impact studies which take into account

the heritage and the built environment, public health and safety, and the social and economic implications.

2. Excavations, conservation and site development projects in the Historic Basin are to be part of a transparent master plan that will be subject to public discussion and should take account of developments in other areas of the city. A broad and comprehensive view will prevent redundancies such as the construction of competing visitors' centers without any real need. From a cultural perspective, it will enable a balance of narratives between different sites, providing a balanced and adequate expression of the cultures that shaped Jerusalem in the past, as well as the mosaic of communities existing today.
 3. A process of public consultation over excavation, conservation and restoration works in historic Jerusalem should be established, and strict inspection procedures should be set in place as a condition for the annual renewal of work permits. There will be no secret or covert excavations, and all building and development projects in antiquities sites will be published and subject to public inspection.
 4. Every excavation in the Historic Basin, apart from emergency work necessitated by health and safety hazards, will require a legal excavation license (and not a technical permit, as is currently the rule), granted after consultation with independent experts.
 5. The Old City of Jerusalem is a designated UNESCO World Heritage site in danger. The state of Israel, which ratified the UNESCO Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, is committed to observe UNESCO guidelines and instructions. One of these instructions requires the state to notify UNESCO in advance, through the Foreign Ministry or the local UNESCO committee, of culturally significant actions (modifications, exacerbation, improvements, construction, demolition, large excavations, conservation and development activities). Excavation initiatives, whether for scientific or development purposes, undoubtedly fall under "significant action" that require reporting.
 6. An effort should be made to separate the regulating body (the agency overseeing excavation and conservation) from the entities that carry out excavation and conservation in the field. The conduct of excavations and conservation projects by government agencies should be an exception, rather than the rule.
 7. Unilateral dismantling of architectural remains during excavation should be prohibited; the act of dismantling should be defined as an act of conservation, subject to the constraints applicable to conservation (below).
 8. Each act of conservation, whether of a site or of an object, should be based, as far as possible, on the principle of reversibility (restoration of the original state).
 9. Conservation and development plans must be presented to the public and to all primary stakeholders in Jerusalem's Historic Basin: residents, visitors, representatives of the different faiths and the various religious orders, and local and international professional organizations. The entire abovementioned public should be part of the decision making process concerning excavations, conservation and building over antiquities within this area.
 10. Excavation and conservation must be undertaken carefully, modestly and with restraint, in order to leave open the options for change in keeping with advances in technology and historical knowledge.
 11. Conservation intended to renovate spaces for public, business or tourist use should preserve the original 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 to different periods. Conservation should primarily serve the needs of local people, especially those living in close proximity to the renovated sites.
 12. Excavations and conservation are generally followed by actions and installations that shape visitors' experience at the site. Conservation, signposting, virtual reality presentations, tours and educational activity should meet professional standards and avoid indoctrination. They should faithfully represent all periods and cultures extant at the site and embrace the complex social and historical mosaic of which Jerusalem is composed.
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