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Who can advance Israeli-Palestinian peace? Contributing actors to the peace process

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From a space of conflict to a space of peace: The role of urban planners in advancing the peace process

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Abstract

This review paper is based on the concept of creating space to understand the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In fact, the paper argues, the conflict produces and is produced by a process of creating conflict spaces. Therefore, intervention is proposed in the process of generating space in order to create an alternative to the conflict space – a space for peace. A joint planning model places urban planners at the heart of the space producing process, and identifies urban planning as activity with great impact potential, both because it mediates between the global economy, national policy, and individual daily life in the production of space, and because it can promote the creation of a peace space born of professional consensus. Joint planning is the practice of bringing knowledge, experience and an alternative perspective into the planning process. Mixed cities that constitute core spaces in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are proposed as spaces that currently offer an opportunity to create change, or can be created as change, which will serve as a basis for turning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict space into the Israeli-Palestinian peace space.

A. Introduction: Creating a "Space for Peace"

The many complex components of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict all involve a spatial aspect. This is a conflict over space, centered inter alia on questions of territory, ownership and belonging to land, which underlie historical and spatial narratives that structure each other. It is a conflict *in* space, occurring in a series of defined spaces, and a conflict *of* space, that is, space is used as a tool by various forces. Therefore, a **conflict space** can be understood not only as an arena in which the conflict takes place, but also as a space produced by the different spatial aspects of the conflict. It is a space of separations:

between different categories of the organization of space, between uses, between users and their movement between the different spaces, between those whose presence in a particular space is legitimate and those whose presence is not. Thus, the conflict space is produced both *by* and *for* the conflict. It preserves those separations that are essential to the balance of power defining the ongoing conflict.¹ The planning act is a key component of space production and is therefore part of the conflict, as well as of any peace process. But only a planning concept fully cognizant of the process of creating space can promote an alternative product to the conflict.

If the production of space is the circular way in which the global market, the state and local society create a specific space that maintains and strengthens the same forces that created it, urban planners are the professionals who translate ideology and policy into spatial practices: land designation, accessibility and connectivity, restrictions and permits, etc. In this context, it is important to remember that urban planning, as a professional practice and a central component of the space production process, is not limited to the space of 'cities' (a specific spatial category whose definition depends on time and place) but is relevant to any space configuration. In the Israeli-Palestinian context, the process of creating space implies the potential of planners as central players in the production of an alternative space to the conflict space – **a peace space**. While a peace process can create different spaces, it is not necessarily an alternative to the conflict zone (for example, the division of the West Bank into different administrative areas under varying levels of Israeli control and limited movement between them). In order to produce an alternative space as part of the peace process, intervention is required **in the process** of creating space.

The essence of planning is assessing a given situation, placing it vis-a-vis a values-based vision, and formulating implementation measures in the present conducive to the desired future. That is, planning is both a forward-looking activity and at the same time an effort to influence it. It is an action composed of various stages, each of which is of potential impact on the peace process: identifying failures in the current situation; translating a values-based vision of the desired situation into planning measures; and building alternatives to the path from the present to the desired future. Intervention in the process of a joint Israeli-Palestinian planning model is a motivating ideology as well as an end goal. It is expected to affect each of these stages. In the immediate term, a common perspective for identifying and analyzing existing planning problems will create a common space within the planning process itself and will influence the way planners perceive space, its various functions and the professional solutions available to them. A shared planning approach also fits in with a values-based vision of a space that serves all of its users. This enables the positioning of sustainable planning solutions at the forefront of the professional stage, while setting aside national interests in the planning discourse. In the long run, intervention in the process of creating space will affect a change in the perception of space among its

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Lefebvre, H., & Nicholson-Smith, D. (1991). *The production of space* (Vol. 142), Blackwell: Oxford.

users – all of us – and among elected officials, as well as in the peace process.² A change in the process of creating space directed at the **creation of an alternative** space to the conflict space will actually advance the peace process itself.

In order to realize the potential of urban planners as key players in the production of a peace space, a common model is proposed for planning institutions: a commitment to the representation of Arab society among professionals. Beyond the Fair Representation Law, which establishes representation for various sectors among civil servants, joint planning implies a representation of the Palestinian space in its broad sense, including, inter alia, culture, history, and urbanization processes, within the professional planning process in official institutions. Creating a space from a common approach will, in turn, create a shared space that does not necessarily replicate the conflict's relationship of power, as explained below. Today, local efforts are being made to represent Arab society in planning, for example in the Government Authority for Urban Renewal. A binding lateral process should be applied for joint planning in all planning institutions.

The next section explains the power of urban planning and the resulting potential impact of a joint planning model. A proposal based on this model charts the different phases of creating a shared space and the spaces in which it will operate first – mixed cities – and serves as a suggested strategy in the peace process.

The third part of the document demonstrates the potential of joint planning and offers examples from the context of another conflict (Toronto, Canada) and from the areas of conflict in the local context (the Palestinian city of Rawabi and the Kafr 'Aqab neighborhood in Jerusalem). The examples highlight the centrality of creating space in shaping the conflict's balance of power. These examples demonstrate how the global and the private, together, create space, even if from conflicting ideologies, a space that regenerates the conflict even if it includes, for example, Israeli-Palestinian cooperation (in the case of Rawabi). Finally, 'mixed cities' in Israel, which are ostensibly common spaces but are created as spaces of conflict, are suggested as a suitable space for the first stage of joint planning implementation. Intervention in the process of creating this ostensibly shared space will begin to change towards a space of peace.

B. Urban planning as a tool for creating a peace space

The power of urban planning, challenges and opportunities

The production of space occurs simultaneously on three levels: the global plane, which is dictated by global economic processes and includes national interests; the private sphere, which is shaped by the day-to-day activity of the space users; and the urban plane, which mediates between the other two in the sense that space is produced as a specific form – not necessarily a city – that dictates certain social power relations (such as an agricultural area, a nature reserve, an industrial zone, etc.). The urban is shaped on the one hand by

² Cooperation on a professional basis promotes daily peace not only among professionals, but also among those concerned about the products of their joint work. See the medical staff training project of the Peres Center for Peace, <https://www.peres-center.org/foundation/projects/medicine/doctors/>

the global (capitalist ideology) and on the other hand by the users' day-to-day actions, thus preserving social power relations but also allowing space to challenge them. In the national context, the Israeli planning system serves strategies such as population dispersal or the preservation of a Jewish majority on the land.³ In the private sphere, the conflict space greatly affects the daily lives of Israelis and Palestinians, in different ways. IDF checkpoints throughout the West Bank are among the most obvious examples of this disruption. While checkpoints are a key component in creating a fragmented physical space for Palestinians, the daily life of Jewish Israelis, for whom the checkpoints are almost transparent, is completely different. An example in the field of urban planning is the mutual influence of construction in settlements on suburbanization processes in Israel.⁴ However, the day-to-day practices of users of the space are part of its production process. For example, Palestinian citizens of Israel who live in the Palestinian city of Rawabi conduct a commute that undermines efforts at spatial division dictated by the politics of the conflict. Space is produced by conflicting forces and is therefore not homogenous and always subject to conflict. The urban plane mediates between the economic-political ideology of state institutions and the private day-to-day, and in fact translates the relations among social, economic, and political forces into specific spatial forms. A neighborhood, a city, an industrial zone, an 'Arab village', a 'settlement' – are all spaces that recreate the balance of power that created them to begin with. Therefore, intervention in urban planning processes will affect the way that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is translated into a conflict space and thus will enable the creation of potential for a space that in turn creates an alternative – a peace space.

Planners are the professionals skilled at the practice of duplicating those power relations. The planning profession deals with identifying, measuring and analyzing failures in the existing situation, defining goals and objectives in accordance with a future vision, and outlining a path from the current situation to the desired one, taking into account various professional and ethical priorities and considerations. Different approaches to planning express different ideologies. Thus, for example, the process approach represents a rational view according to which data-driven planning by professionals will lead to a desired result, while the progressive approach recognizes the position of the planner in socio-political contexts and advocates democratic (even if data-based) planning that uses the knowledge and experience of space users in order to achieve a desired result.⁵ The progressive approach embodies different conceptions regarding the involvement of spatial users in the planning process and goes hand in hand with sustainable planning, since it considers the planning process in the context of environment, society and the economy.⁶ The planning approach has a great influence on the professional tools and the identity of

³ Yiftachel, O. (2006). *Ethnocracy: Land and identity politics in Israel/Palestine*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

⁴ Allweil, Y. (2020). Neoliberal Settlement as Violent State Project. *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, 19(1), 70-105; Haddad, T. (2016). *Palestine Ltd.: Neoliberalism and nationalism in the occupied territory*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

⁵ Alterman, R. (2020). "The theoretical basis of the planning process and its implications for setting goals and objectives," Master Plan for Israel in the 2000s, Technion Center for the Study of Cities and Regions. <https://alterman.web3.technion.ac.il/files/publications/i2020-theoretical-basis.pdf> (in Hebrew)

⁶ Dola, K., & Mijan, D. (2006). Public participation in planning for sustainable development: operational questions and issues. *International Journal on Sustainable Tropical Design Research & Practice*, 1(1), 1-8

the participants in the process, and therefore also on the final spatial product. However, practices of cooperation can also replicate existing power relations.⁷

Thus, the main strength that urban planners bring to the peace process is the professional ability to translate a vision based on values into practical goals and measures in planning, construction, legislation and public participation, which must be taken in the present. Moreover, the professional tools available to planners constitute a significant advantage due to their diversity and contribution to the peace process on different scales and at different stages of the planning process. Local and targeted change can drive broader change. Technical tools of determining land designations (residential, commerce, etc.) ostensibly define the population density of residences in a given area; allocation of land for public use and open spaces determine the nature of the space use and, as a result, the composition of the users and the interrelationships between the various uses. Planning tools directly affect the functioning of living, staying or transit space for different people, an impact with extensive implications beyond the geographical scope of a particular plan.

In cities where space is produced by national-ethnic conflict, urban planning practices, which shape aspects of personal security, health, accessibility, and other characteristics of urban life, can affect the location, character, and degree of interaction among different groups, thereby influencing manifestations of the conflict on a daily basis and the power relations that generate it.⁸ Intervention in the deployment of land uses, regulation of the expropriation of private land for public purposes, planning the movement of people and construction that enables certain types of activities in the public sphere are examples of actions on the urban level that can preserve or change the way in which power relations between different groups mediate into daily life and back. Thus, urban planning in spaces of national-ethnic conflict exerts great influence on the way in which users of the space perceive the conflict, interpret it and find opportunities to challenge and modify its various aspects.⁹ However, as long as the process of producing space remains unchanged, the potential for creating an alternative space to the conflict space is limited.

The potential impact of a shared planning model

In the Palestinian context, the planning system in Israel has been operating for decades as a mechanism for recreating spaces of discrimination and inequality between citizens. On the other hand, various civil society organizations are working to increase public participation in planning and ensure that rights are not infringed due to state planning actions. In recent years, Israeli governments have recognized, albeit to a limited extent, that the situation must be rectified through legal and planning change. However, increasing public participation in the planning process and allocating budgets for planning in Arab

⁷ Alfasi, N. (2021). Why public participation isn't a tool for democratizing planning. A comment. *Planning Theory*, 20(2), 175-178.

⁸ Bollens, S. (2013). Bounding cities as a means of managing conflict: Sarajevo, Beirut and Jerusalem. *Peacebuilding*, 1(2), 186-206; Shtern, M., & Yacobi, H. (2019). The urban geopolitics of neighboring: Conflict, encounter and class in Jerusalem's settlement/neighborhood. *Urban Geography*, 40(4), 467-487.

⁹ Allegra, M., Casaglia, A., & Rokem, J. (2012). The political geographies of urban polarization: A critical review of research on divided cities. *Geography Compass*, 6(9), 560-574; Shlomo, O. (2017). The governmentalities of infrastructure and services amid urban conflict: East Jerusalem in the post Oslo era. *Political Geography*, 61, 224-236; Strömbom, L. (2017). Counter-conduct in divided cities—resisting urban planning practices in Jerusalem. *Peacebuilding*, 5(3), 239-254.

society without a fundamental change in the practice of creating space may lead to continued duplication of the balance of power that generates the conflict, and will certainly not lead alone to the creation of an alternative space to the conflict space.¹⁰

On the other hand, a model of joint planning (which should also include public participation) recognizes that planners do not operate in a vacuum but as part of the process of producing space, a process that is driven by an ideology that translates into policy and at the same time by the individual interpretation of each and every one of us, including the planners, of space. Therefore, the model proposes intervention in the process of creating space by changes among the planners and integration of knowledge that does not stem from the conflict into the process of giving real form to space. Joint planning implies professional cooperation between Jewish and Palestinian planners who combine different perspectives of the concept of space, spatial history, insights and ideologies about space. In the context of the planning system in Israel, for example, the existing "unplanned" situation in the heart of Arab communities, which developed organically, can be considered as the basis for statutory planning.¹¹ This knowledge can be incorporated into the institutionalized planning system, for example, by conducting a binding social review as part of a plan's preparation, or by creating a planning proceeding that involves planners from Arab society in auditing plans. Joint planning affects the measurement, evaluation, and identification of failures in the functioning of the existing space, the identification of existing barriers to a shared space, and the future vision of a space that serves the needs of all users in a broad sense. This could potentially serve as an alternative space to the conflict space.

In the immediate term, a professional dialogue between Jewish and Palestinian planners will lead to a shared interpersonal space as well as a new framework of thinking to define the problems that planners must solve. In the medium term, the preparation of overall planning in conflict zones – determining land use, construction form, etc. – in order to respond to the needs of all users will affect the nature of the space use. This, in turn, will create a new daily urban reality. In the long run, new planning ideas driven by joint planning will be able to drive changes in and out of the planning system.

The concept of creating a shared space as a strategy for leading change in a national-ethnic conflict is not new. Most recently, Stern and Jacoby's study (2019) in Jerusalem found that 'spaces of interaction' generate friction that holds out opportunities that are also challenges. For example, in the Mamilla Mall, an interaction space was created based on commercial land use and profit motives. In practice, the mall serves as a shared space, but research shows that it also replicates, supports, and reinforces socioeconomic inequality between the Jews and Arabs who use it.¹² In other words, change in space does not guarantee a change of space as produced by socioeconomic relations in the context of a national-ethnic conflict. This argument was reinforced by Stern

¹⁰ Government Decision 550: The economic plan to reduce gaps in Arab society by 2026. Published 24.10.2021.

¹¹ Alfasi, N. (2014). Doomed to informality: Familial versus modern planning in Arab towns in Israel. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 15(2), 170-186.

¹² Shtern, M., & Yacobi, H., *ibid*

and Bollens (2021), who found, through a comparison between Belfast, Beirut, and Jerusalem, that neo-liberal practices of creating shared consumption spaces can 'bypass' the conflict, but also intensify class differences in the city.¹³ Findings of a 2018-2019 workshop held in Jerusalem for municipal planners and community leaders also demonstrate that the city's future depends on planning shared spaces in seam zones between neighborhoods of different communities. The joint planning model validates the production of space from the perspective of planners, and offers partnership as an ideological value that directs the act of planning. The focus on shared space, first and foremost as a planning value, is in line with contemporary concepts in urban planning that advocate mixed-use and user uses. This presents an opportunity to advance the first step in changing the process of producing space, which will subsequently lead to the creation of a peaceful space or an alternative space to the one produced by and re-generating the conflict.¹⁴

Strategy, challenges and opportunities in creating a peace space

Intervention among planners working within the framework of the state's planning institutions seeks to implement an alternative within a mechanism that was not designed according to the concept of partnership. However, this mechanism affords a number of opportunities since various parts of the civil service are no longer prevented from, and even explicitly promote, references to Palestinian space in Israel (such as a document of guidelines issued by the Planning Administration for unification and division of private land, which takes a small step in this direction and orders the preservation of original plots and equal provisions for public purposes).¹⁵ There is a certain openness on the part of planning institutions to new planning principles, such as the introduction of a social impact review for certain programs. Locating partners within the public service and establishing inter-ministerial teams that will work in accordance with the concept of partnership and for the goal of shared spaces is one way to implement joint planning.

What is more, planning is an action taken in the present and is supposed to produce a future reality, so that it is always open-ended and defies prediction of how a future space will function. There are various planning tools for coping with this challenge, such as volumetric planning that leaves land use to natural development.

Joint planning focuses on the planning process and not on the final product, not in the sense of preferring the process over the product but with the understanding that a change in the process will necessarily lead to a change in the product. In other words, the purpose of a joint planning model designed to promote a peace process is to have a partnership in the here and now. Thus, joint planning in itself is a goal that focuses on changing the

¹³ Shtern, M., & Bollens, S. A. (2021). B(u)ypassing conflict: Urban redevelopment in nationally contested cities. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 1-20.

¹⁴ Issar, Y. et al. "Shared spaces on the Seam: Jerusalem City Parks." Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research, 2019. https://jerusalemstitute.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Pub_499_Shared-Spaces-Seam_-2019.pdf

¹⁵ Consolidation and division of private land in Arab, Druze and Circassian communities: from theory to practice. Applied Tools (2021). Government Planning Directorate. https://www.gov.il/BlobFolder/policy/consolidation_division_private_lands/he/consolidation_division_private_lands.pdf (Hebrew)

production process of the space. The main challenge lies in the power that planners have to create a space in accordance with a particular vision and avoid risks of duplicating, preserving and strengthening existing power relations in society. The main opportunity is to create a shared space among planners, which in itself constitutes an alternative to the process of creating the existing space and therefore may drive a broader change to the creation of a peace space.

Although every planning action is fundamentally political, planning issues are generally perceived by the general public as an apolitical professional matter, especially in an urban context. This perception provides an opportunity to intervene in the process of creating space while taking advantage of the professional consensus on issues that enjoy public support, such as sustainable urbanism that promotes a diverse mixed-use space, replaces separations with links and serves the needs of all users.

We recommend 'mixed cities' as the venue for implementing a joint planning model. A series of violent incidents in *mixed cities* during the May 2021 war with Gaza (Operation Guardian of the Walls) has raised public awareness of the challenge posed by creating a shared space. The incidents demonstrated that not every interaction space is a shared space, and brought to the forefront of public discourse the distinct political context of the urban space. This, in turn, gave rise to an opportunity to call on professionals in Israel to recognize the deep and broad political implications of urban planning. At the same time, media awareness and publicly available information about various planning issues such as transportation, suburbanization, and the housing crisis has increased in recent years. Public interest in planning processes – in economic, political, and environmental contexts – is increasing, and with it the demand for collaborative planning that considers users' best interests. Therefore, the space of mixed cities is an opportunity for discourse among the general public about a shared space.

An alternative peace space to the conflict space is a space produced by an alternative ideology, using alternative tools. Partnership as a tool for changing the process of producing space, on which the forces that shape the conflict space depend in order to continue to exist, will achieve a number of goals: cooperation among the professionals themselves; improving the lives of urban space residents where the conflict has dictated neglect or lack of planning; and driving a long-term change in the perception of space among the general public and policymakers.

C. Joint planning in conflict zones in Israel: inspiration from Canada, lessons from the West Bank, and the importance of 'mixed cities'

Joint urban planning in Toronto, Canada

The Shared Path initiative in the Canadian city of Toronto offers an example of the central role of planners in changing the process of space production. The initiative was established in order to implement the principle of *mandatory consultation* (a principle enshrined in the Canadian Constitution to consult and involve indigenous peoples in any

decision that may affect them), which is usually implemented in the context of the exploitation of natural resources, this time in the framework of urban planning on a local scale.¹⁶ The civic organization that operates the initiative decided to focus on urban areas, recognizing within cities, where public participation processes in planning often take center stage in Canada, it is difficult to translate sharing into recognition of both indigenous rights to the land and the impact of a historical conflict between the state and its indigenous citizens over the right of the latter to participate in the production of the space today. When it comes to an urban history of conflict between an indigenous society and state institutions, preservation, remembrance and commemoration in the public sphere obviously play an important role in the construction of contemporary urban culture. However, the purpose of Shared Path is different: to examine the historical conflict from a contemporary perspective and not as a thing of the past, in order to outline tools for joint planning and, as a result, a shared space.

The planners participating in the initiative have diverse backgrounds and bring both the professional knowledge of the planning system of the Province of Ontario and the city of Toronto and the knowledge, experience and indigenous culture into the planning process itself. Solutions to local issues such as land use or urban renewal around major traffic arteries stem in part from an understanding of the historical importance of different places to the indigenous users of the space. In addition to the professional work, the planners also conduct educational workshops for different target audiences among the general public, academia and the world of planning, thus driving a broader change.

The main challenge of the Shared Path initiative is the interface with the local formal planning system, which obviously does not recognize indigenous identity as a planning value, in accordance with the ideology that shaped the system around the values of modern planning in the indigenous 'wilderness', not very different from Israel (despite deep differences in context, of course). However, the opportunity lies in the joint planning process itself that offers an alternative to the planning system and exposes many audiences to the common approach. Interpretation of the obligation to consult as a matter of joint planning and not just a collaborative one, along with the insight that change in the planning process is valuable in itself and has the potential to change the space, could inspire a model of joint planning in Israel.

Creating an alternative space to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict space

The of Rawabi in Area A of the West Bank (the area under formal civil and security control of the Palestinian Authority), although not planned in a joint process, hints at the potential as well as possible risks of a joint planning model. Rawabi, the first planned Palestinian city built under the rule of the Palestinian Authority, was established through private capital of Palestinian-American investor Bashar Masri and promoted as part of a national plan to achieve Palestinian economic independence.¹⁷ In fact, the city is the realization of the

¹⁶ Weinberger, S. (2017). Shared Path: Bridging Indigenous and Settler Notions of Urban Planning: An Annotated Interview with Carolyn King. *Journal of Law and Social Policy*, 27, 183.

¹⁷ Rabie, K. (2021). *Palestine Is Throwing a Party and the Whole World Is Invited*. Duke University Press.

aspirations for a Palestinian state through the physical development of infrastructure and urban spaces.¹⁸

As part of the planning process, a delegation of Palestinian professionals came to Israel to study the practice of establishing a new city. Palestinian planners met with Israeli counterparts and the professional dialogue had a direct and extensive impact on city planning (specifically, Rawabi was inspired by the city of Modiin). In addition, planning and building in Area A, where Palestinian independence ostensibly exists,¹⁹ depends on cooperation with various Israeli authorities, primarily in terms of establishing physical infrastructure. At certain points during the construction of Rawabi (such as connecting the city to the water network or paving the access road to the city), Israeli authorities put up obstacles. In other cases, Israel actively assisted in the development of the city (for example, by planting trees). In other words, Rawabi is a spatial product of actual joint planning, but not one stemming from an ideology of partnership but rather from the interests of the State of Israel, which saw advantages in having an alternative urban space to the poor, neglected, densely populated cities of the West Bank, which offers the Palestinian upper-middle class a high quality of life and urban services under Israeli auspices. But is this an alternative space to a conflict space?

The spatial product in Rawabi is very different from Palestinian urbanism in the West Bank. Accordingly, the composition of users has also changed. For example, Rawabi attracts not only the upper-middle class of the West Bank, but also Palestinian citizens of Israel who have purchased apartments for investment purposes (rented to Palestinians from the West Bank), for recreational purposes, and even for residential purposes. As a result, changes began in the daily reality of some of the residents. For example, Israeli citizens who work inside Israel and have begun to experience commuting through IDF checkpoints, ostensibly the way Jewish settlers live in the West Bank and commute to work inside Israel but at constant risk of being restricted by the military. In another aspect, Rawabi's planning, which was not a collaborative plan and involved the dispossession of farmers from their lands, drew criticism for being a kind of gated community for the rich.²⁰ This interpretation is reinforced when Palestinian citizens of Israel move to the city. Israel's deep involvement in a project that is supposed to represent and create a modern independent Palestinian identity has been widely criticized; Rawabi's case demonstrates that cooperation on an issue that is ostensibly not at the heart of the conflict – the consolidation of Palestinian independence by positioning the West Bank as a stable space for foreign investment – can create a new kind of dependence on Israel. Thus, a new kind of conflict space was created.²¹

The complex case of Rawabi raises questions about the potential for creating an alternative space to the conflict space. On the one hand, the difference between Rawabi

¹⁸ Haas, O. (2022). De-colonizing the right to housing, one new city at a time: Seeing housing development from Palestine/Israel. *Urban Studies*, 59(8), 1676-1693.

¹⁹ Khatam A & Haas O. (2018). Interrupting planetary urbanization: A view from Middle Eastern cities. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*. 2018;36(3):439-455.

²⁰ Grandinetti, T. (2015). The Palestinian middle class in Rawabi: Depoliticizing the occupation. *Alternatives*, 40(1), 63-78.

²¹ Rabie, *ibid.*

and other urban spaces in the West Bank has to do with a change in the daily reality of some of the users of the area, and hence the potential to undermine the divisions, separations, and restrictions *in* the space and *of* the space. On the other hand, privatized urban development and investment of foreign capital preserve the Palestinian Authority's dependence on Israel. In other words, building Palestinian independence by building a city expresses recognition of the role of space in shaping national, ethnic, economic, and social power relations, not unlike the production of Israeli space by the Zionist movement. In addition, the case illustrates the potential consequences of urban planning in shaping the conflict and the effect of a change in the production process on all levels of space production – global, urban and private.

Jerusalem's Kafr 'Aqab neighborhood is another example of shaping the power relations of the conflict by creating space on all three levels at the same time. Kafr 'Aqab is a Palestinian neighborhood located within the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem but "outside" the Separation Barrier, on the Palestinian side. As a result, this is a kind of no man's land, where the Jerusalem Municipality is responsible for providing services but is actually prevented from doing so in many parts of the neighborhood. In the area of housing, the lack of a master plans and the difficulty in obtaining building permits in the neighborhood have created a vacuum which attracts local entrepreneurs. In recent years, the neighborhood has developed significantly with high-density construction (without permits) that plays a vital role in East Jerusalem's Palestinian housing market.²² The intensive development process that the neighborhood has undergone has turned it into a magnet for Palestinians in the area, in part because it allows those who cannot afford to buy housing in East Jerusalem to retain Jerusalem residency.²³ But at the same time, the massive high-rise construction without a comprehensive plan for the neighborhood and without appropriate infrastructure leads to population density that endangers the health of the residents and the environment.²⁴

If in Rawabi the global sphere of space production includes aspirations for building a Palestinian state and investing foreign capital in the West Bank, in Kafr 'Aqab there are no forces that develop the space 'from above'. On the contrary, the development plans for Jerusalem, with which the neighborhood is officially associated, preserve it as detached from the urban sprawl, which is mostly planned by Jews, for Jews.²⁵ On the other hand, the neighborhood constitutes a significant force in daily life and extensive activity of the residents for the organization of the space according to their needs: whether in placemaking activities – the creation of a community place by its users - or vertical

²² Asmar, A. (2018). *Kafr 'Aqab*. Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research.

²³ Alkhalili, N., Dajani, M., & De Leo, D. (2014). Shifting realities: dislocating Palestinian Jerusalemites from the capital to the edge. *International Journal of Housing Policy*, 14(3), 257-267.

Chiodelli, F. (2013). The Next Jerusalem: Potential Futures of the Urban Fabric. *Jerusalem Quarterly*, (53).

²⁴ Alkhalili, N. (2019). 'A forest of urbanization': Camp Metropolis in the edge areas. *Settler Colonial Studies*, 9(2), 207-226.

Hammoudeh, D., Hamayel, L., & Giacaman, R. (2017). Quality of life for families living in East Jerusalem's Kafr 'Aqab urban sprawl: a qualitative study. *The Lancet*, 390, S14.

²⁵ Chiodelli, F., *ibid*.

informality²⁶, the above-mentioned saturated construction by local developers without comprehensive planning.²⁷

Presumably, if the Jerusalem Municipality had adopted a model of joint planning with professionals, knowledge and experience from within the neighborhood itself, solutions would have been created that benefit the residents without waiting for any political arrangement that will determine the future of the neighborhood and its authority on planning. It is possible, for example, to draw up a specific master plan for a neighborhood through a joint planning process, as has been done in various cases by third-sector planning associations in Israel. Although a master plan does not have the status of a statutory plan (building permits cannot be issued by virtue of master plans), it has significance in the planning system as a guiding document determining planning. Such a planning document will make it possible to express ideas in principle regarding the future of the neighborhood but will also be able to specify construction, land use, public areas and the relationship between them, in accordance with the Jerusalem 2000 Outline Plan that applies to the neighborhood.²⁸ Such a plan will make it possible to continue construction and placemaking activities in accordance with a neighborhood-wide outline that identifies the needs of everyone under one planning logic of a safe, efficient and sustainable space.

In the case of Kafr 'Aqab, joint planning that focuses on urgent local planning issues will make it possible to intervene in the process of creating space and mediate between the private and global spheres from the bottom up. By doing so, the re-production of the conflict space is interrupted, ostensibly without a peace process, but while changing the balance of power that shapes the conflict.

From mixed cities to shared cities: sites for joint planning

Since the model of joint planning proposes a phased change in the process of creating a space that begins with the creation of a common space among the planners themselves, we recommend implementing it in mixed cities, for two main reasons. First, mixed cities are at the core of the conflict zone, and function as internal border areas within Israel.²⁹ The urban space of a 'mixed' city is produced by ongoing institutionalized discrimination in resources, budgets, and planning, and at the same time by daily encounters between Israel's Palestinian and Jewish citizens. It is a space that reflects the conflict in its various aspects and regenerates it every day. Applying a model of joint planning to, out of, and in mixed cities will have a broad impact on Israel's day-to-day life. Second, precisely because of the challenge of coexistence, there is now a window of professional and political opportunity for intervention in the allocation of resources, including urban planning in

²⁶ Abu Hatoum, N. (2021). For "a no-state yet to come": Palestinian urban place-making in Kufr Aqab, Jerusalem. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*, 4(1), 85-108.

²⁷ Zugayar, M., Avni, N., & Silverman, E. (2021). Vertical informality: The case of Kufr Aqab in East Jerusalem. *Land Use Policy*, 105, 105395.

²⁸ *Jerusalem Master Plan – No. 2000*. Jerusalem Municipality. The plan designates the entire neighborhood of Kafr 'Aqab as a residential area with buildings of up to six floors. <https://www.jerusalem.muni.il/he/residents/planningandbuilding/cityplanning/masterplan/>

²⁹ Tzfadia, E., & Yacobi, H. (2011). *Rethinking Israeli Space: Periphery and Identity* (1st ed.). Routledge.

mixed cities. Among other things, following the violence during Operation Guardian of the Walls in 2021, mixed cities are on the government's agenda, which has dedicated resources for these areas. Various government ministries recognize the need to allocate resources to places where Jews and Arabs live side by side, in order to improve services, deal with violence, and build communities with socioeconomic resilience.³⁰

Establishing a special planning committee in mixed cities, led by the Governmental Planning Administration is one option for a joint planning model, which will include knowledge sharing and break down barriers within the planning process itself. As of 2022, a district committee (northern district) is working to implement various sections of Government Decision 550 on reducing gaps in Arab society, which can serve as an inspiration for a mechanism to introduce knowledge from the field (local authorities, residents, district officials of various government ministries) into the regulatory process. In addition, in August 2022, a government decision was adopted on complementary responses to prevent violence in mixed cities, which includes investment in education for coexistence. The decision is based on socioeconomic data that justify the allocation of resources and assistance tools to mixed cities in accordance with the law establishing areas of national priority. In other words, the political-regulatory infrastructure for focusing on mixed cities already exists.³¹

The urban space of mixed cities reflects and shapes power relations in the country. This power must be used to create a shared space. The practice of joint planning in mixed cities, using knowledge, experience, Jewish and Palestinian spatial past and present in urban renewal projects, for example, will first lead to the creation of a shared space among planners and therefore to the planning of shared spaces. Mixed cities can be the nucleus from which an alternative to additional conflict zones will emerge – and to the entire Israeli-Palestinian space – because a change in the process of creating the space of mixed cities will affect the way citizens live, planners, politicians perceive the conflict space and use it. Intervention in the production of space will undermine the very definition and concept of 'mixed cities' and the duplication of the conflict space.

D. Conclusion and a look ahead

The proposed model of joint planning relies on the central role of urban planners in the process of producing space. The unique opportunity of urban planners to contribute to the peace process is embodied in the essence of the planning action: a change in the present aimed at charting a path for a desirable future. Joint planning will lead to a change in the immediate term among professionals, in the medium term in the urban space, and in the long term in the perception of space. Although any planning action is open in terms of its future implementation and the future functioning of space, joint planning intervenes in various aspects of the space production process and thus contributes to the initiation of an

³⁰ For example, the Authority for the Economic Development of the Minority Sector in the Ministry for Social Equality is responsible for preparing a government decision to reduce gaps and develop mixed cities, as a derivative of Government Decision 550 to reduce gaps in Arab society.

³¹ Government Decision 1834. Published Aug. 29, 2022.

alternative production process – which in turn will enable the production of a peaceful space to replace a conflict space.

Issues such as mixed uses, opportunities in the use of space, and the importance of diversity for sustainable urbanism are gaining popularity among the general public. In addition to this trend, urban planning procedures portray an apolitical (albeit erroneous) image of bureaucracy and professional knowledge. Therefore, a change in the planning process, which is very powerful, has a practical force that can serve to change circumstances and take advantage of political opportunities without a costly political price – which increases the potential of urban planners as actors in the peace process. A process of joint planning (which includes, among other things, collaborative planning) by professionals who bring an alternative perspective of translating a vision of a peace space into planning measures in the present can be useful in various conflict zones, including where the conflict space creates separations and barriers to Israeli-Palestinian cooperation in various fields. This applies, for example, in neighborhoods in East Jerusalem that are in a planning twilight zone due to the route of the Separation Barrier, or in the planning of the infrastructure strip between Jenin and the Gilboa Regional Council.

Therefore, we recommend adopting a planning model that focuses on cooperation within the professional echelon as a mechanism that will promote a paradigm shift in the process of creating space and thus promote the peace process in practice. The creation of a common space, initially among the professional echelon around a planning issue in a particular place, will make it possible to provide a solution for local residents as well as promote the permeation of a substantive principle, even if informal, of partnership into the work of urban planners and into the planning system. The impact of one project is limited, obviously. But a mechanism of joint planning will cause a change in the actual production of space, and will drive a conceptual change in planning in Israel that can subsequently be reflected in discussions on urban planning in peace talks, if and when they take place: From the production of space by national interests of separation towards a common space produced by practical solutions of urban planning – and from a conflict space to a peace space.