

CONFLICT IN CITIES AND THE CONTESTED STATE

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The Development of Modern Sacred Geography: Jerusalem's Holy Basin

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Editorial note

This working paper relates directly to Research Module J2 - 'Holy Places, Holy City'. It presents a historical analysis of the idea of the special planning zone around the Old City of Jerusalem, referred to as the Holy Basin, from a critical architectural and urban perspective.

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The development of modern sacred geography: Jerusalem's Holy Basin 1917-1974

Wendy Pullan and Maximilian Gwiazda

Abstract

This paper analyses the development of Jerusalem's Holy Basin in its religious, intellectual and urban history. The Holy Basin is a geographic zone surrounding and including the historic Old City of Jerusalem; together, basin and walled enclosure contain the majority of sites holy to Islam, Judaism and Christianity in the city. The paper shows how imperial-nationalist and Romantic conceptions of landscape from the nineteenth century influenced the conservation and planning of Jerusalem in the twentieth century. The article focuses on the crucial periods of colonial perceptions and urban transformation in the 1860s, the early period of the British Mandate, and the first decade following the Israeli annexation of Jerusalem after 1967. The example of Jerusalem shows how western conservation practices and perceptions of 'sacred space', first introduced by the British profoundly altered not just the urban fabric but also the very understanding of the role and integration of the historic parts of the city with modern Jerusalem.

Keywords: Jerusalem; planning; landscape; conservation; colonial urbanism; picturesque; sacred space.

Introduction

Holy to Christianity, Islam and Judaism, Jerusalem's sacred character and many holy sites have undergone myriad representations, re-imaginings and physical reconfigurations across the centuries and into the present day. The visual appeal of the Old City and the immediate surroundings of its medieval ramparts took centre stage in the western colonial fascination with the city from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. As the city came increasingly under the direct influence and control of the British, and later the Israelis, the Old City and environs have been at the heart of planning policies in the city. Very recently the Old City and environs have been dubbed the 'Holy Basin'. It constitutes an idea increasingly central to current political discussions surrounding the future of the city and the administration of its holy sites. In fact, the Holy Basin is often seen as the crux not only of how the city is contested, but more generally of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Jerusalem's status within the proposed two-state solution. In this context, the Holy Basin is defined as a geographic zone that surrounds and includes the historic Old City of Jerusalem. The word basin is based on the bowl-shaped topography that results from the hills and valleys surrounding the plateau of the Old City. Significantly basin and walled enclosure contain the majority of sites holy to Islam, Judaism and Christianity in the city. Integral to the idea of a Holy Basin, is the assumption that the landscape of this area possesses a special visual, aesthetic relationship with the walled city which is part and parcel of Jerusalem's rich

religious and heritage value. How the Holy Basin has come to constitute the sacred character of Jerusalem and why it has been able to become central to both urban planning and the political discourse is far from clear, however. Questions remain over its borders, its functions and urban context. Eluding straightforward definition, the colonial origins, historical development and underlying assumptions behind the Holy Basin remain under-studied. Unpacking these origins in their constituent parts and how they interacted is the object of this paper.

This paper addresses the problem of the Holy Basin by exploring its complex development in its religious, intellectual and urban history. It traces the idea back to nineteenth-century understandings of sacred landscape and reveals the decisive influence on twentieth century conceptions through a discussion of the complex terminology that has been developed to describe the Old City and environs. The paper then focuses on key themes and developments that have contributed to the Holy Basin idea in the twentieth century at key turning points in the history of the city. Imperial heritage stewardship and the role of the picturesque landscape tradition are discussed in relation to the early years of the British Mandate in the 1920s. The final section discusses the adaptation of these attitudes and policies in the transition periods from the end of British planning in Jerusalem in the 1940s, through the period of Jordanian rule over East Jerusalem in the mid-1960s and finally the decade or so following the Israeli annexation of the East Jerusalem in 1967.

Far from presenting a way of simply describing Jerusalem's long history of sacred sites and topographic context, it will become apparent that the Holy Basin has itself been the instrument of reconfiguring sacred topography and the understanding of the city, that has been underway from the time of British exploration and survey work begun in the middle of the nineteenth century. The implications of this complex history for the current and future politics of Jerusalem are beyond the scope of the present paper, and are subject to a separate study that functions as its companion piece.¹

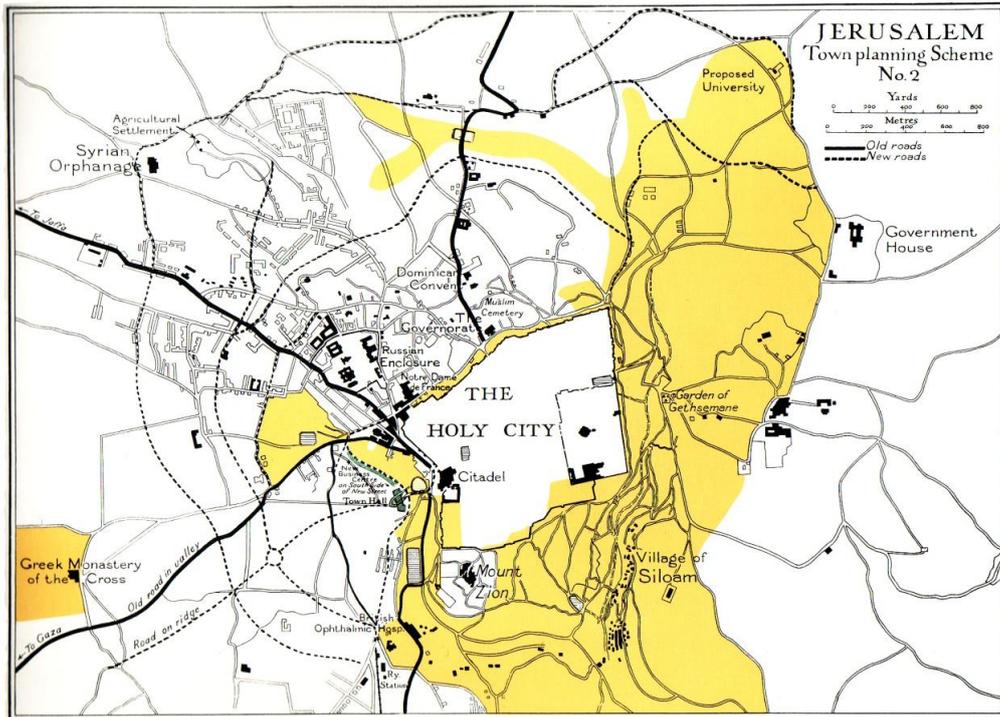


Figure 1: Jerusalem town planning scheme no. 2 by Ashbee based on Geddes (1922). Source: Ashbee (1922: 13).

1. Genesis of a term: reinventing sacred topography

In considering the history of the so-called Holy Basin, one is struck, and baffled, by the number of terms employed to describe it, including: the Old City and environs, antiquity zone, archaeology zone, special zone, Old City basin, Old City visual space, holy basin, historical basin, religious basin, and heritage zone. Since the mid-nineteenth century the idea of demarcating the Old City and area around it has persisted, coinciding with modern colonial efforts by Western and Christian interests. Yet, while the Old City itself is clearly defined by its wall, there has been little consistency in how to refer to the mostly open area around it.² The absence of an established title may simply be one of the oddities of the historical development of an idea; on the other hand, it may point to the tenuousness of the idea of a Holy Basin or it may indicate conceptual differences. We believe that analysis of the various terms offers insights into the nature of the area and will act as explanation for our choice to use 'Holy Basin' - not arbitrarily, or as a measure of convenience, or because it is most recent - but because it most accurately describes the geographical conception and the visual imagination that underlies it.

First of all, it is significant that the idea of a demarcated zone dedicated to articulating the geographical territory of the holy sites did not exist in pre-modern times. Each of the

religious groups (the three monotheistic faiths as well as the relevant polytheistic cultures) had holy places, and various forms of processional, liturgical and pilgrimage routes often linked them in some way. Symbolic associations between sites were also important. Some places were more holy and some less; people moved between sites both in and outside the city wall, which to some extent defined the city but did not determine the area of holy places. Jerusalemites and visitors can be said to have inhabited a sacralised world but not a geographical zone (Pullan 2004).³ The idea of actively designating an area of holy places, especially that which includes sites of more than one faith, is thoroughly modern, and so must be the terminology.

Although there has been a long history of reciprocities between the walled city of Jerusalem and its surrounding villages, the middle of the nineteenth century witnessed the first explicit attempts to address the area inside and outside the wall as one city. The impetus was not local but European. It was influenced by the first Western-style development of Jerusalem beyond its wall at the same time,⁴ but clearly, the main concern was locating the holy sites through surveys and archaeology. In his report for the first British Ordnance Survey in the mid-1860s, Captain Charles Wilson focuses on what is of biblical interest, often commenting upon the large amount of rubbish that has been allowed to build up on the sites over time to obscure them (Wilson and James 1865). In this document, the foreign view is set, of Jerusalem as the prime locus of the sites of the Bible, in need of Western archaeological excavation. While Wilson does not refer to the walled city and its environs as any designated or defined area, he voices a strong concern for identifying the 'original' landscape within which the biblical sites stood. The first quarterly statement of the Palestine Exploration Fund in 1869 which was to serve as the primary forum for British biblical archaeology in the Levant, opens with a detailed description of the primordial landscape, defined loosely as a city standing as a plateau on 'a tongue of land ... enclosed between two ravines' anticipating later definitions of the visual basin (1869: 3). Charles Watson, successor to Wilson as chairman of the Fund from 1905, later identified the verification of the exact physical contours and levels of the original topography as the key goal of Wilson and his contemporaries (Watson 1915: 41-42, 109). The motif of the 'débris of centuries' to denote strata of post-biblical development and contemporary life had become a common place by then.

A quarter of a century after his first survey, Wilson, now a colonel, knighted and the author of numerous books on Jerusalem, is more openly aware and concerned with the conservation aspects of the Holy City and its immediate surroundings. In a volume aimed at illustrating the holy sites for a popular audience, he writes that 'Jerusalem is no longer a

walled city ... on its northern side a large suburb, hideous in its upstart ugliness, almost conceals the familiar grey walls,' and mourns the loss of the view from a quarter of a century earlier that 'left an impression on the mind which time never deadened' (Wilson 1889: vii). His further comments give the sense that such 'progress' is inevitable, and he even notes that sometimes interesting archaeological remains are unexpectedly produced by the excavations carried out to make the modern buildings. There is still no explicit definition of a geographic area, but clearly Wilson is concerned with the nature of the Old City and its environs. The main themes are now well established: the holy sites are the *raison d'être* for the focus on Jerusalem and archaeology is the key to the holy sites. Conservation has become a nascent issue, and we see it as a nostalgic yearning with no practical clout.

One further aspect is evident in perusing Wilson's books and the many similar volumes published in this period by other authors: that is the fundamental importance accorded to the view.⁵ Nineteenth-century publications on Jerusalem are filled with photographs and engravings that offer views of Jerusalem to the reader. Typically, they show what will eventually become the Holy Basin: the walled Old City, drawn at an oblique angle to render it picturesque as a rustic medieval fortress, and surrounded by the Judean hills. Rarely do they depict the modern development of the New City; rather it is an atavistic and idealised scene, perhaps with a few simple houses and a shepherd with his flock. Urban life has been removed in favour of what can be seen as an ancient form of landscape, and the distant gaze removes the viewer from any need to engage with what might have been the reality of the town and its inhabitants. This image was propagated as much through pictorial representation, such as the hugely popular collection of lithographs published by David Roberts, as well as through the developing medium of photography. The fine texture of early photography, with long exposure times favouring deserted spaces without the disturbing movement of people, was particularly suited to authenticate and actualise with claims to scientific objectivity, the timeless tranquillity of the biblical landscape.⁶ British photographers reveal a particular debt to the picturesque landscape tradition, as their views of the Old City tended to be carefully framed by vegetation, rather than a more exclusive focus on monuments and built fabric characteristic of their French counterparts (Donadio 2008: 141-142).

The canonisation of the Old City environs within the new visual appreciation of Jerusalem's holiness still stopped short of drawing firm geographic lines. Yet the cartographic recording conducted under the auspices of the Ordnance Survey and the Palestine Exploration Fund from the 1860s,⁷ were key in territorialising the visual reimagining of the holy places through writing, pictorial representation and archaeological

investigation. Wilson's maps of 1865 presented a milestone in the long history of mapping Jerusalem, and indicate the author's predispositions and concerns. In the 1:10000 map of Jerusalem and its environs, finely rendered contour lines offer an excellent view of the natural topography, but little of the village buildings and their agricultural lands is portrayed.⁸ In the 1:2500 map of Jerusalem and its immediate environs, the landscape is rendered in an exceptionally detailed manner, again with contours, and every tree, hillock, cistern and wall. Here, the buildings of the village of Silwan are drawn in much the same manner as the trees and cisterns, giving them a deep affinity with the landscape as if they were there in some timeless fashion forever.

At the time, it was still common to show the modern Jerusalem landscape, cleared of the debris of history, with the Temple of Solomon as imagined in the nineteenth century inserted. Such free interpretations of both history and landscape became almost fetishised by General Charles Gordon's relocation of the 'true' site of Christ's tomb based on his anthropomorphic reading of Jerusalem's natural contour lines.⁹ His highly obscure theory received considerable attention when it was published posthumously, following his celebrated 'martyrdom' in Karthoum (Gordon 1884, 1885).¹⁰ Gordon determined the sepulchre to be part of a rocky scarp north of the city wall. Significantly, it became known as the Garden Tomb indicating that an archaeological site in a landscape setting within view of the walls was perceived by Protestants as a more authentic form of sacred space than any of Jerusalem's venerable collection of shrines and traditional place of worship. With the sanctification of the geological formation of Jerusalem's topography, the landscape could be formed and designated according to one man's vision of sacred space.

With the British conquest of Jerusalem in 1917, planning presents new opportunities to address 'the Old City and its environs' as the area was referred to in the first of a series of town plans. Fighting had not yet ceased when William McLean, the City Engineer of Alexandria, was brought to Jerusalem to make the first plan for the city in 1918. In the chaos of the war, he had no topographic maps to work with, but his rudimentary plan makes clear his aim to create an area around the Old City prohibited for building and 'to be eventually cleared of undesirable buildings and left in its natural state' (McLean 1930: 63-66). For the first time, the Old City and environs was outlined as a specific zone (**Figure. 1**). In the plans of subsequent British planners, notably Clifford Holliday and Henry Kendal in the 1930s and 1940s, the terminology shifted somewhat – 'antiquity zone',¹¹ 'greenbelt around the city wall',¹² 'archaeology zone'¹³ – highlighting different aspects of the concerns of the authors. But all of these ideas emanated from concerns of nineteenth century exploration and dissemination to Europeans; the difference in the post-World War I period is that the area

has now become a specific planning zone. Even after the division of the city in 1948, Israeli planners went on to plan the whole city in much the same way, creating a band of green space around the Old City which was in the hands of the Jordanians.¹⁴

The British influence remained strong in Israeli planning circles, and it is not surprising that after the Israeli conquest of East Jerusalem in 1967, a plan by Arie Sharon of the Old City and Environs is now called the 'special zone' (Sharon 1973: chapter 8). However at this time, we find another addition to the Holy Basin concept. Arthur Kutcher, a planner with the Jerusalem Municipality, believed that not enough attention was being paid to the view lines of the city that resulted from its hilly topography; in his 1973 study *The New Jerusalem*, he resists what he perceives to be the received response to modern Western culture in a city that he describes as 'relatively uncorrupted by contemporary urban ills' (Kutcher 1973: 8). He proposes an alternative based upon spiritual values as represented in the city's sacred architecture. The crux of this is a visual analysis based on the city's topography, most critically, what he calls 'the Old City basin' (Kutcher 1973: 11). In doing so, Kutcher gives modern form to the nineteenth century idea of view. Using drawings to make his case, he now renders the landscape in three dimensions and brings it together with the other main themes that we have seen in Wilson and his contemporaries: archaeology and history, heritage and conservation, and idealised landscape, all revolving around the holy sites, that in Kutcher's terms, focus on the Dome of the Rock (Kutcher 1973: chapter 2).

During the Israel-Palestine peace talks held at Camp David in 2000, aiming at a final status agreement between Israel and Palestine, including Jerusalem, Israeli negotiators first introduced the idea of a special regime for the Old City and environs. The term 'Holy Basin' was first coined at this time and it became a pillar of future agreements for the city within the framework of a two-state solution.¹⁵ The idea has subsequently gained currency in the wider Israeli and western discourse surrounding the city (Eldar 2009), but since the failed talks in 2000, the idea has thus become part of a legal and political framework, which was never accepted by Palestinians. No longer simply part of a landscape imagination and planning culture, it became inscribed in the politics of the wider Israel-Palestine conflict. Yet in many ways, the term Holy Basin presents the sum total of an idea that has been around for well over a century. It completes the gradual course of geographically demarcating and reifying the landscape, and the isolation and idealisation of the Old City and environs which had, in fact, begun just as the new city began to grow and spread in the 1860s. In preparation of the Camp David II summit, Israeli negotiators worked toward a complicated system which sought 'to create a high level of differentiation between the Holy Basin and its surrounding area' (Klein 2003: 56). More than simply a heritage or planning zone, the Holy Basin is

evocative of the view that so captivated the nineteenth-century artists and photographers and that distanced the Old City from viewer to give a sense of romantic, and unobtainable, holiness. Subsequent commentary and terminology such as ‘Historic Basin’ (Lapidoth and Ramon 2006), or ‘Heritage Zone’ (Boytner and Dodd, 2007), builds on the nineteenth century roots of the idea with remarkable continuity. And while Kutcher is correct to say that the world has focused upon Jerusalem because of its holiness, whether the city as a mystical event can be so easily translated into modern planning practice is a question that requires further analysis.

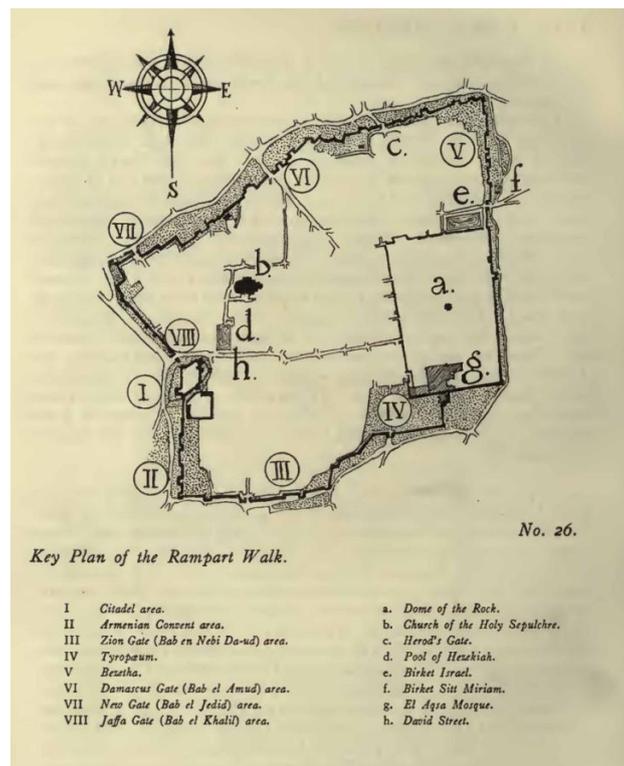


Figure 2: Old City Rampart open space Source: Ashbee (1921: 20)

2. Imperial-national stewardship and architectural conservation

Conservation was a central motif during British rule over Jerusalem, and played a decisive role in re-conceptualising the meaning of, and practical approach to, the Old City and environs. Instrumental for early British planning was the Pro-Jerusalem Society, founded in 1918 before the formal British Mandate was established by Jerusalem's military governor, Ronald Storrs; it lasted for eight years. The Society was composed of distinguished representatives of the city's various ethnic communities and was intended to work for the general wellbeing of the town and its inhabitants. Amongst its primary stated objectives were the preservation of antiquities and the elaboration of a working town plan. Most of the key

ideas and planning mechanisms, were established in the first years, and coincided with the contributions of Charles Ashbee, a disciple of William Morris and adherent of the English Arts and Crafts movement, who served as the secretary and civic advisor to the Society from 1918 to 1922.¹⁶

The rising concern for the topography of the Holy Basin in the nineteenth century had taken place in a climate of rivalling imperial claims of various western powers over the biblical heritage of the city (Silberman 1982). From the outset of their rule in Palestine, the British focused on what they regarded as enlightened stewardship of the holy sites on behalf of Christianity in particular and more generally, the three monotheistic religions.¹⁷ In doing so, they contrasted their rule over Jerusalem with that of their imperial Ottoman predecessors and rivals,¹⁸ framing their administration explicitly as non-sectarian and cross-cultural with a strong sense of the responsibility that needed to be assumed in relation to millions of faithful from the great monotheistic religions spread over the globe.¹⁹ As James Anderson and Liam O'Dowd (2007) have convincingly argued that sharp distinctions cannot be drawn between the rival ideologies and practises of nationalism and imperialism, particularly in instances of imperial arbitration in modern nation-building. In Jerusalem, the motif of preservation was closely tied to western imperial narrative of restoration from the desolation, justifying British stewardship after the centuries of alleged neglect by the Ottomans ('New Era' 1920; Silberman 1991). Yet, at the time of the British conquest of Jerusalem in the context of World War One, the British focused on propagating their superiority to the Germans. Allenby's humble and enlightened entry on foot in Jerusalem was contrasted with the crude motorised visit of the Kaiser (Bar-Yosef 2001). The Pro-Jerusalem Society, on behalf the Britain, felt uniquely able to fulfil the task of conservation in a city that possessed an 'appeal to the imagination that not Rome, nor even Athens could rival'.²⁰ Ashbee abhorred the physical evidence of nineteenth-century colonial development of other European powers that he encountered in Jerusalem.²¹ The British insistence on the need to cater for this international interest was built on a nearly exclusive emphasis on the religious and historic significance of the biblical heritage. The underlying motivation of much of the work undertaken by the pro-Jerusalem Society was the preservation of the image of biblical Jerusalem, which was understood as the primary essence of the city, in keeping with the distinctive concern for the holy places characteristic of the nineteenth century. Religion formed the main impetus for their policies, but imperial politics underlined their endeavours.

From the outset the ideology of imperial-national stewardship was translated into a practical programme of town planning and conservation practice for the Holy Basin. Storrs had been instrumental in inviting Charles McLean to draw up a regulatory canvass and

master plan for the city (McLean 1930: 64-65). Storrs explicitly states McLean's task to have consisted in advising 'upon the best method of preserving intact the appearance and atmosphere of Jerusalem'.²² The linchpin of the resulting scheme, a protective belt around the Old City, was composed of two concentric areas around the wall, both determined by building and conservation regulations. The inner ring was designated as an area of no building, the outer as an area of restricted building. The area within the walls of the Old City itself was to be preserved in its 'medieval character'. The plan was accompanied by a public notice specifying that no building or repair work to be undertaken without permit from the authorities within two and half kilometre radius around the Old City (Kendall 1948: 4). All subsequent British legislation and planning schemes for the Holy Basin have used McLean's plan as a reference point, giving legal force to the core idea of a special conservation zone (Hyman 1994: 88-90), and serving to 'sterilise development' in this area, in the words of Henry Kendall, town planning adviser for Palestine 1936-48. The principle of preservation and conservation zoning was in fact the only aspect of McLean's work to have made an impact. As Storrs notes in the first volume of the published records of the Pro-Jerusalem Society 'the distinctive quality of the McLean plan ... is that it isolates the Holy City, sets it, so to speak, in the centre of a park, thus recognising the appeal it makes to the world – the city of an idea – that needs to be protected' (Ashbee and Creswell 1924: 12). A special conservation regime for the Holy Basin designed to maintain and valorise the universal and unique appeal of Jerusalem became a commonplace amongst British planners.²³ Conservation was firmly established as the guiding principle of planning in the Holy Basin, prioritised above all other urban or developmental considerations.

The imperial nationalist ideology of heritage protection was intertwined with spiritual currents, which informed the rise of historic conservation in Western Europe from the late nineteenth century. The pro-Jerusalem Society was particularly indebted to the Arts and Crafts Movement and their romantic critique of the ills of industrialisation and the alienation stemming from the increasing mechanisation of the world. Charles Ashbee was very consciously chosen as a former collaborator and professed disciple of John Ruskin (Crawford 1985: chapter 7; Gitler 2000). Ashbee described the Society's task as the need to protect the 'singular romance and beauty' (Ashbee and Creswell 1924: 4) of Jerusalem from modernity, which he saw as irreconcilable with the sacred core of the city constituted by the Holy Basin. British plans for Jerusalem were premised on the assumption that it was necessary to segregate the historic city and landscape as much as possible from any new urban growth and transformation (Ashbee and Creswell 1921: 14). This had been the primary purpose of McLean's prohibited and restricted building zones; whatever adjustments were made to the borders of this zone in the thirty years of British planning, the inherent

sense that the sacred geography of the Holy Basin needed to be saved from modernisation was beyond question (Hyman 1994: 394). The perceived threat of modernity included the everyday socio-economic needs and activities of the local population. In the eyes of Ashbee the city needed to be protected: 'from the incursions of the grasping trader, the ignorant workman [and] the self-interested property-owner' (Ashbee and Creswell 1924: 4). The overall planning logic of the pro-Jerusalem Society clearly catered for the romantic view of the city as a timeless Holy City, steeped in biblical meaning. Since the nineteenth century the perceived spiritual value of a historic monument depended on the extent to which it was seen to be preserved in its primordial state, further alterations to be avoided at all cost.²⁴

The emphasis on the unique significance of Jerusalem and the possibilities of planning in a colonial context, allowed for Western-style architectural conservation to take a leading role in planning it was not able to play in European cities for decades to come.²⁵ As elsewhere in European overseas colonies, Palestine was not merely the passive receptacle of Western ideas, but an active playing ground in which various conceptions developed radically and took on new meanings in their interaction with diverse contexts leading to reciprocal influences between the imperial centre and periphery (Home 1997; Choay 2001: 130). British planning in Jerusalem stands as one of the earliest examples of a planning effort that aimed at preserving an urban fabric as a whole including its surrounding landscape, rather than just individual monuments, structures or ensembles, which was the common practice well into twentieth century.²⁶ The fact that Mandate authorities were limited by their recognition of the relative autonomy religious communities had enjoyed in administering their respective holy sites under Ottoman status quo arrangements, only heightened their determination to exercise full control over those areas in Jerusalem subject to no legal restraints.²⁷

The notion of a holy zone around the Old City was both part of the larger practice of colonial urbanism, with certain aspects that were peculiarly British and even specific to Jerusalem's own attributes. For example, in North Africa, the French were also dedicated to the protection of traditional, 'oriental' built fabric from new development and even monumentalised historic *medinas* as a whole through buffer zones for the purposes of their visual consumption (Wright 1991: 85-89). But they had different attitudes to the landscape, which British planners idealised as possessing an aesthetic-spiritual value in its own right. Henri Prost's buffer zones around the old city of Casablanca remained instrumental in character with some urban, albeit reductive function (Wright 1991: 144-145). The power of the Picturesque in the British approach to urban environments determined much of their conservation practice, firmly treating the walled enclosure of the Old City as part of a wider

landscape setting, the aesthetic attributes of which they sought to carefully protect and control.

European concepts of architectural conservation had a yet more specific influence on the idea of the Holy Basin worth underlining. The British tradition since Ruskin had valued vernacular and domestic architecture and this undoubtedly contributed to the pro-Jerusalem Society's effort to preserve the townscape of the old City as a whole.²⁸ Medieval walls were not uniformly perceived as desirable heritage in revivalist Britain (Creighton and Higham 2005: 243), but emphatically so in Jerusalem. Yet the Old City was treated more like a large monument than a living urban entity part of a larger hinterland, and connections to surrounding villages of Jebel al-Quds which had been active for many generations were often not respected or even recognised (Pullan, forthcoming). Unlike Eugène Viollet-le-Duc who used 'scientific restoration' for Carcassonne's ramparts in the second half of the nineteenth century, the British were happy to leave the walls of Jerusalem as a patchwork of different periods, with visible strata dating from the Roman to Ottoman periods. Yet their practice was also interventionist as they regularly cleared 'unsightly obstructions' (Ashbee and Creswell 1921: ill. 44) in and around the Old City walls that disturbed the aesthetic appreciation of the city and its landscape taken to constitute a single visual composition. The pro-Jerusalem Society equally espoused another leading nineteenth-century idea, namely that physical isolation dignified the historic monument.²⁹ Architectural conservation was selective and frequently heavy-handed, often focused not on preserving but on removing structures, which did not conform to the vision of a biblical city.³⁰ The clearing of buildings adjacent to the Old City walls rested on a planning regime intent on expropriation (formalised in the 1929 scheme), mainly of Palestinians, who had long occupied and used the land up to the city walls in a variety of ways.³¹

3. Arcadian yearnings and anti-urban planning

From the second half of the nineteenth century, urban parks and green belts, both nourished by the imagination of the Picturesque, were employed as the primary mechanisms for redeeming the ills of the industrial city, its poor sanitary conditions, overcrowding and its perceived moral degeneration.³² Colonial planning came to prioritise both conservation and the establishment of garden suburbs and urban parks in areas of the British Empire with rich existing urban traditions, such as Palestine, Egypt and parts of India. Parks and their planning legislation served as an ideal instrument for growth restriction (Cohen 1994). This anti-urban ideology and landscaping techniques were to resonate amongst British planners in Jerusalem.³³ Governor Storrs expressed his distaste for the urbanisation that Jerusalem's environs had undergone since the nineteenth century and his belief in what he saw as

enlightened colonialism: 'a discerning conqueror in 1850 could have established the new shops, convents and hotels well away from the Old City and have left the grey ramparts in a setting of grass, olives and cypresses' (Storrs 1937: 315). British policies for the natural landscape around the Old City may on some level have attempted to emulate the traditional topography and agricultural customs by leaving the valleys open and unbuilt, but this was perceived in largely aesthetic terms, and in practice the valleys often separated new neighbourhoods and provided a site for the construction of arterial roads.

The biologist and town planning theorist, Patrick Geddes, was a primary channel in Jerusalem for introducing contemporary ideas about the role of 'nature' in the city.³⁴ Originally acting as an advisor to the Zionist Commission for their plans to build a Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Geddes prepared a report on town planning for the Pro-Jerusalem Society, during a six-week stay in the city in 1919 (Geddes 1919). Although his specific proposals were soon superseded, his plans are most expressive of the ideas which were to shape the planning of the city both during British and Israeli rule.³⁵ Geddes paid lip-service to the planner's duty to respond to the 'needs and habits of prospective citizens' and the particular climatic, and socio-economic conditions of an 'eastern city',³⁶ but it was the sacred character of Jerusalem and its visual attributes, which consumed his attention. Even prior to his visit, Geddes had considered the ultimate significance of planning Jerusalem, to lie in the city's capacity to serve as a 'world impulse' to global spiritual renewal.³⁷ Elsewhere, new towns may develop alongside the old; in Jerusalem, however, the meaning of the city's 'future permanent existence' owes everything to the ancient city (Geddes 1919: 1). Central to the realisation of Geddes' plans was the scenic landscape east of the Old City, which he considered 'the most extensive and Sacred Park in the world' (Geddes 1919: 2). Using Wilson's contour maps and aerial photography of Jerusalem and environs, Geddes extended McLean's prohibited building zone across a vast area, covering what was later to be identified as the Visual Basin, connected up as a 'complete Park ring' (Hyman 1994: 26). Extensive agricultural lands, described as 'undeveloped', were to be subsumed into scenic parkland, revealing where possible the authentic biblical ground levels brought to light by ongoing excavations, such as the 'City of David' in the Tyropean valley, beneath 'gigantic embankments of rubbish' (Geddes 1919: 18-19). Geddes' insistence on archaeological parkland as the dominant and most appropriate form of urban landscape to valorise the Old City and its hinterland set the tone for planning in Jerusalem in the next century.

McLean's two concentric protective zones were increasingly defined in terms of parks and archaeology. By 1930, In Clifford's Holliday's town planning scheme of 1930, the areas of parkland and nature reserves were almost identical to 'antiquity zone' defined in other

plans.³⁸ Occasional references to Palestinian agricultural practices in the Holy Basin area, by figures such as Ashbee, belong in the realm of the virtual or partial presence of what Homi Bhabha has termed 'colonial mimicry', Bhabha (1994: 122-123) and was rooted more in motifs of biblical pastoralism, than an understanding of, or interest in, local communities.³⁹

4: The fruition of the British legacy: From Kendall to Israeli Planning post-1967

Henry Kendall's masterplan of 1944 represented the synthesis of twenty-six years of British planning in Jerusalem and was to exercise a direct influence over both Jordanian planning 1948-67 and, crucially, Israeli planning in East Jerusalem after 1967 (Efrat 1993: 348). In relation to the Holy Basin, the 1944 plan displayed elements of both continuity and transformation since the first plans drawn up under the Mandate administration. Continuity prevailed in so far as the fundamental principle of separating the Old City from new urban development through a belt of open green space was maintained. While the professionalisation of planning in Britain and its colonies in the 1930s and 40s may have changed many features of British planning in Palestine, (Hyman 1994: 22-30) the determination to isolate the Old City in a picturesque landscape setting remained at the core of the planning approach to Jerusalem. The iconic character of Jerusalem was beyond doubt to Kendall: 'When all is said and done and the matter considered in true perspective, the Mt. of Olives is probably the most outstanding site in the whole of the Colonial Empire which should be preserved.'⁴⁰ Nevertheless it is important to note that the green belt shrank considerably in the 1944 plan from the outlandish visions of the 1920s, epitomised by the vision of Geddes. Open space was now restricted to the immediate vicinity of the city walls corresponding closely to the strip of parkland planned in conjunction with the Pro-Jerusalem Society rampart walk of 1921 (**Figure 2**). The belt was connected at the north- and south-east corners of the Old City to a nature reserve centring on the area of the Mount of Olives. Kendall abandoned provisions for swathes of parkland or nature reserves to the south and southeast of the Old City basin, which still loom large in plans up to 1930. While Kendall saw his zoning plan for the Old City in direct continuity with the succession of plans going back to McLean, particularly in relation to protecting the Old City, he clearly adapted the 'park system' to the ongoing urbanisation of the city and the residential function of the areas of Palestinian habitation in the south and southeast.⁴¹

When the city came under Jordanian rule in 1948, the open space was further reduced to relatively enclosed and isolated zones within the Old City Basin. Kendall himself was invited by the Jordanian government to draw up a revised masterplan for the East city in 1963.⁴² The resulting masterplan of 1964 further reduced the nature reserve to yet a smaller area centred around A-Tur on the Mount of Olives.⁴³ It is not evident how the Jordanians

intended to deal with the green belt immediately around the Old City walls. Undoubtedly, the extraordinary circumstances of Jerusalem's physical division between Jordan and Israel impinged on the ability to effectively plan the historic core of Jerusalem, as the Old City stood right on the 1949 armistice line with stretches of no-man's land separating it and Israeli West Jerusalem. Furthermore, Jordan's policies with regard to Jerusalem were ambivalent. On one level the Hashemite kingdom was concerned with emphasising Amman as the unifying capital of the Jordanian nation at the expense of Jerusalem (Dumper 1996). On another level the Jordanians presented themselves as guardians of the Holy Places, appealing to wider Muslim and Christian interests in the city and thereby continuing the internationalist emphasis on the global heritage value of Jerusalem (Katz 2005). Yet from the 1940s to the 1960s the maximalist vision of deep parkland, enveloping the Old City from all sides and covering most of what became known as the Visual Basin, receded in response to the development of the modern city. This process was to be reversed in dramatic fashion in the aftermath of the 1967 war.

The planning of East Jerusalem following the 1967 war was subject to extreme levels of central state intervention and national legitimisation strategies. The deeply political nature of planning in Jerusalem was tied to, and to some extent shrouded in, passionate debates about the appropriate architecture and urban design ethos for the development of the city under Israeli rule. Alona Nitzan-Shiftan has analysed the contradictions and complexities of the Israeli architecture and planning in this period, their resonance with diverging impulses within international modernism, and their political circumstances (Nitzan-Shiftan 2004, 2005). Nitzan-Shiftan argues persuasively that the panel of international, almost exclusively western, experts called in to join the Jerusalem Committee, founded by Mayor Teddy Kollek to discuss the future of the city, exercised considerable influence over the architectural approach eventually adopted in relation to the Old City.⁴⁴ The decline of international modernism in architecture and the Israeli propensity for post-modernism in the 1970s in the context of Jerusalem (Ricca 2007), certainly favoured the revival and strengthening of the British emphasis on biblical landscape and sacred geography. For the purposes of the present discussion, the focus is on the immediate actions of Israeli authorities in relation to the Old City, basic assumptions embedded in planning schemes and legislation at an early stage, and their lasting outcomes for the overall urban treatment of the Holy Basin subsequently. A series of planning schemes were developed immediately after the annexation.⁴⁵ Most pertinent to the Holy Basin was the detailed outline scheme for the Old City and environs, prepared in 1970 and approved in 1977.

Like the British, the Israelis removed derelict buildings along the city wall,⁴⁶ and new buildings, such as the Mamilla project, were terraced downward from the wall, to rise above grade only at some distance from the historic city. Landscaped parkland was definitely accepted as superior to any form of built-up, urban structures around the Old City. The interventions in the fabric of the Old City in the aftermath of the 1967 war were cemented by powerful legal parameters embedded in the new Israeli planning framework for East Jerusalem. In 1968, well before the Jerusalem Committee was to advocate the preservation of the sacred landscape of the Old City, the National Parks Authority submitted a plan to designate a National Park around the Old City walls.⁴⁷ Despite criticisms by a local committee regarding the Park's appropriateness in light of the sensitive nature of the site, the proposal received full legal approval by the Ministry of Interior in 1974.⁴⁸ At least in Israeli terms, the Holy Basin had become a fully legal reality.

The new 'Jerusalem Walls National Park' now covered an area of eleven hundred square metres (Bimkom 2008: 17). It more than doubled the prohibited building zone of 1929. It also included fully built up areas and agricultural lands to the south and southeast of city, mainly of Silwan; areas that had been understood as urban residential by British planners twenty years earlier and despite Israeli projections of a rapidly growing urban population for the 1970s and 80s Kroyanker (1975, 1978, 1979). The Jerusalem Walls National Park buttressed the overriding planning goal of creating a non-urban landscape setting for the purposes of a specific conception of heritage, designed to prevent development and the accommodation of other urban interests and everyday activities, particularly those that relied on mixed land use and connections in and out of the Old City.⁴⁹ The Park legislation allowed for the prohibition of any extensions to existing buildings, amounting to a form of carpet expropriation on future development and urban expansion.

The National Park was set into a wider planning vision, which saw a dramatic return to a vast green zone strikingly reminiscent, in geographical scope and topographic demarcation, of the 'sacred park' imagined by Geddes in 1919. The Park was linked to fingers of green space reaching right throughout the 'Special Zone', a vast area of over ten square kilometres covering lands of densely popularised, urbanised Palestinian villages to the north, east and south of the Old City, including Sheikh Jarrah, Wadi al-Joz, A-Tur, Silwan, Abu Tor and Ras-Almud. The Special Zone covered territory exclusively in East Jerusalem, right up to new municipal boundary on the Eastern side. The Special Zone went to the very edges of the ridges around the Old City. The environs of the Old City were therefore identified explicitly in terms of their visual structure. While Kutcher published his study of Jerusalem in reaction and protest to the work of Sharon and his peers in the

planning establishment, he laid an even greater emphasis on planning for view-lines, passionately arguing for valorising what he called the Old City's 'visual structure'. Preserving the 'natural' landscape and catering to the visual consumption of the city became the guiding principle of the formal planning policy in relation to the Old City and environs.⁵⁰

Conclusion

Despite the dramatic changes in the politics, urban development, and planning cultures of Jerusalem between 1917 and 1975, the treatment of the Old City environs was remarkably consistent throughout this period. The first phase of Israeli planning following the annexation bares striking resemblance to the first years of the British Mandate. The Jerusalem Committee in many ways acted as a reincarnation of the Pro-Jerusalem Society fifty years before. Despite the sense of pioneering conservation work, and much altered architectural ideology in both the 1910s-20s and 1960s-70s, both remained firmly rooted in the nineteenth-century expectations and desires with regards to Jerusalem. The main ingredients that constitute the Holy Basin through the past century and a half are religion, landscape and heritage, but the catalyst for it has been planning.

Jerusalem's unique status as a Holy City, not just of a general or exotic sacrality, but one central to spiritual yearnings of the West, has allowed for the starkest distortions to assume the mantle of responsible stewardship and passionate conservation. A powerful planning apparatus has thus served to safeguard a nineteenth-century phantasm which stands not just in diametric opposition to a rapidly urbanising Palestinian topography and its everyday socio-economic life and needs, but one that was increasingly used to prevent its growth or sustainability. A deeply political project of uprooting the holy sites from their urban life-world was carried in the name of high-minded conservation. The sublimation of key modern concerns for heritage, sacred space and landscape in the context of Jerusalem, has allowed imperialist- and later nationalist-colonial claims to hegemony over the city, to assume a deceptive character of universalist neutrality and good practice.

While the contemporary politics of the Holy Basin are beyond the scope of this paper, it is nevertheless possible to point to the implications of the historical analysis presented here. The relative incapacity of international agencies to counteract the segregationist trend of planning in the city, is not due merely to its dependence of the political will of the nation-state, but also the fact that international world heritage discourse is itself an heir to the nineteenth-century conservation ideology. On a more fundamental level the fashioning of modern sacred geography in Jerusalem has been determined by romanticised notions of landscape and their place in the urban environment. While parks continue to be perceived as

desirable in cities, the vision of a biblical green land in the Holy Basin is deeply problematic. Current Israeli plans to expand the National Park into the neglected slums of Palestinian neighbourhoods of East Jerusalem, continue to use romanticised colonial landscape visions as legitimating strategies, which have never been more out of sync with the needs of the city than today.

Notes

¹ A short article on the current politics and urban implications of the Holy Basin may be found in Pullan and Gwiazda (2010). A more detailed journal article is in progress.

² The alignment of Jerusalem's city wall has remained constant since being rebuilt by the Romans in CE 135, but at various periods, Mount Zion has been included or excluded in the enclosure; today it lies outside the wall and is one of the few built-up extra-mural areas in the Holy Basin.

³ On the idea of a sacralised world more generally, see: Eliade (1961).

⁴ While villages and summer houses already existed around and as part of the city, specifically urban development was begun in the 1860s. On the urbanisation of Jerusalem outside the wall in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see: Pullan (forthcoming)

⁵ On the voluminous literature on Jerusalem by European and North American authors in this period, see for example: Ben-Arieh and Davis (1997) and Wharton (2006).

⁶ On Roberts, see: Proctor (1988) and Baram (2007); for an overview of western photographic representation of Jerusalem, see: Nassar (1997, 2006) and Howe (1997).

⁷ For a useful account of cartographical surveys in Palestine from the period see: Goren (2002).

⁸ At this time, maps of the villages were not normally drawn and their boundaries were known by customary geography, ie., using well-known landmarks such as trees and stones. It was only during the British Mandate that the villages were marked. On this topic, see: Pullan (forthcoming).

⁹ See: Monk (2002: chapter 1); Gordon's sketches are reproduced in: Frantzman and Kark (2008).

¹⁰ There are numerous accounts for the disdain experienced by British and other Protestant visitors at the traditional holy sites themselves; see: Wharton (2006: 198-200). The location and authenticity of the Holy Sepulchre was widely debated, and alternative sites suggested before and after Gordon's visit to Jerusalem. Gordon's prominence within the pantheon of the empire, lent his theory its widespread appeal; see: Kochav (1995).

¹¹ Kendall (1948: 6) in relation to the town plan prepared by Patrick Geddes in 1919.

¹² Ashbee and Creswell (1924: 2).

¹³ Plan of city in conjunction with 1930 outline town plan by Clifford Holliday, reprinted in: Hyman (1994: 457).

¹⁴ Heintz Rau produced a masterplan for Jerusalem, both Israeli and Jordanian, in 1950; this was adapted by Michael Sheviv for an outline scheme for the city in 1959; see: Efrat (1993: 386).

¹⁵ Klein (2003: 55-56). The talks were known as Camp David II.

¹⁶ Ashbee and Creswell (1921, 1924); for studies of Charles Ashbee and his activities in Jerusalem as part of the Society see: Hysler-Rubin (2006), Crawford (1985: chapter 7) and Gitler (2000).

¹⁷ The more divisive crusader motif complicated the discourse, but the official propaganda directive was to emphasise the image of benign stewardship of the holy places, see: Bar-Yosef (2001).

¹⁸ According to Storrs, 'the hand on the Turk on Jew, Moslem and Christian lay ... a dead hand, and where it stretched all hope of development, moral or material, faded and withered away.' 'The New Era in Jerusalem'. The Times. London, 30 December 1920.

¹⁹ In a telegraphy on 7 January 1918, to Gilbert Clayton, Sir Mark Sykes (then responsible for British Propaganda on Jerusalem) insists on the opportunities presented in Jerusalem's popular appeal to the: 'English church and chapel folk; for New York Irish; Orthodox Balkan peasants and Mujiks; French and Italian Catholics; and Jews throughout the world; Indian and Algerian Moslems.' cited in Bar-Yosef Bar-Yosef (2001: 103).

²⁰ 'The New Era in Jerusalem'. The Times. London, 30 December 1920.

²¹ Ashbee notes: 'Coming into the city from the old pilgrim route, Mons Gaudii, we notice how the ancient Jerusalem is all but obliterated; we see the once Golden Dome no more, we see a bastard Florence, a bastard Nuremberg, a bastard Moscow, an imitation Louvers, a Bavarian suburb and an imitation Oxford. JMA/361/A58 *Report by Mr. C. R. Ashbee on the Arts and Crafts in Jerusalem and District*, Memorandum to the Chief Administrator August 18 1918, 44-45. Quoted in: Monk (2002:29).

²² Ronald Storrs, typescript, first page and title missing, [September 1918]. Pembroke Storrs Papers, 111/1.' n.34, p.98.

²³ In 1942 Henry Kendall gives again testifies: 'When all is said and done and the matter considered in true perspective, the Mt. of Olives is probably the most outstanding site in the whole of the Colonial Empire which should be preserved from building speculation.' Letter to Chief Secretary from 12 May 1942 cited in: Hyman (1994: 90).

²⁴ Alois Riegl (1998) was the first to have systematically identified the power of what he termed the 'historical value' of the monument as a critical feature of modern conservation attitudes as early as 1903.

²⁵ A systematic approach to the conservation of historic urban fabric as a whole only gained currency in the West with the Venice Charter of 1964.

²⁶ Gustavo Giovannoni was the first to clearly identify urban fabric as heritage from the perspective of urban conservation and planning. He published a significant article in 1913, and a monograph by the same name in 1931; see Giovannoni (1913, 1998). However, Giovannoni's argument that historic centres could play an active and connected part in urban development were long ignored outside Italy, see: Choay (2001: 131-132).

²⁷ On the adoption of Ottoman status quo arrangements for the holy places during the Mandate, see: Dumper (1997: 25-27).

²⁸ Ruskin was a conceptual pioneer, when he valorised the vernacular in addition to individual historic monuments. This did not to affect conservation practice (and was not intended to do so) for some time, however; see: Choay (2001: 119-121) and Rodwell (2007: 33-37).

²⁹ Baron Hausmann was particularly influential in propagating the idea of clearing urban fabric around monuments for their aesthetic appreciation, already an influence in Istanbul under the Ottomans in the late nineteenth century (Çelik 1993: 59).

³⁰ The divorce between the discourse of conservation and the heavy-handed reconstruction in practice remained common paradox well into the twentieth century, even in Britain, where restoration was frequently shunned (Choay 2001: 115).

³¹ Ashbee's plans to replace these structures with new buildings were scrapped, see: Pullan and Kyriacou (2009). While the matter of clearing largely Palestinian buildings around the Old City was widely debated by the British, the 'public interest' of keeping the area as an open space was seen to override private interests and therefore warrant only minimal compensation. Hyman (1994: 464). Holliday (1938: 202) and Kendall (1948: 17) give favourable accounts of the demolition of buildings adjacent to Damascus and Jaffa Gates respectively.

³² On the affinity of city planning to park design through the aesthetic influence of the Picturesque in Western urbanism, see: Tafuri (1976: chapter 1). On the anti-urban spirit of mainstream town planning, particularly in relation to conservation, see: Rodwell (2007: 25-29).

³³ The British Garden City movement, itself an heir to the same romanticising Arts and Crafts ideology that informed the work of the Pro-Jerusalem Society, targeted colonial planning as an outlet for its evangelising, utopian visions; see for example Chambers and Purdom (1922). Zionist settlers were particularly receptive to their ideas. The German architect, Richard Kauffmann, chief planner of the Palestine Land Development Company, was involved in most of garden city developments, drawing on German precedents; see Home (1990: 25-26) and Hyman (1994: 145-151, 304-106). On the intimate relationship of landscape and imperialism more broadly see Mitchell (2002).

³⁴ On Geddes' wider influence on town planning, see: Meller (1993) and Rodwell (2007: 30-33).

³⁵ This is somewhat ironic, given that his relationship to the British administration in Palestine, was the least official among the cohort of planners to be active in Palestine during the Mandate (Hyman 1994: 303-304).

³⁶ Quoted from article published in *The Observer*, 2 July 1919, appended to the report by Geddes (1919: 3-4).

³⁷ 'In the long run, if you think of it, the renewal of Athens and its university symbolizes nothing short of the re-Hellenizing of Europe. ... And reviving Jerusalem stands for yet more--a true re-Hebraizing of Europe and the West; that is, the renewal of the ancient discernment of Unity, and this not only in the cosmic universe but in the moral order also.' Letter to Amelia Defries on 9 December 1913, cited in: Hyman (1994: 311).

³⁸ The original plans are reproduced in: Hyman (1994: 445, 457).

³⁹ On inherent limitations in Ashbee's engagement with local practices embedded in Jerusalem's fabric and topography, see: Pullan and Kyriacou (2009).

⁴⁰ Letter to Chief Secretary from 12 May 1942, cited in: Hyman (1994: 90).

⁴¹ It is possible that the detailed topocadastral surveys of the later 1920s and 30s, and the dense agricultural land use of Jerusalem's villages they brought to light (previously ignored by British administrators), contributed to Kendall's reduction of parkland; on British survey work in Jerusalem, see: Gavish (2005: 99-103, 163-166).

⁴² Kendall was active again in Jerusalem in 1963-66, see his biographical file at RIBA, London. Jordanian planning in East Jerusalem has not been subject to extensive scholarly investigation. Israeli architects and planners have focused (revealingly) on the Jordanians' apparent neglect of the open space and parkland policy in this period; see: Safdie (1986: 74) and Kutcher (1973: 51).

⁴³ Mount Scopus remained outside the jurisdiction.

⁴⁴ Nitzan-Shiftan (2008: 176) argues that the Jerusalem Committee contributed to 'solidifying nationalism and imperialism in sanctified landscapes and poetic geographies' in the basic planning policy and attitude toward 'unified' Jerusalem in the formative years of 1969-75.

⁴⁵ Another key document was the '1968 master plan' which never received formal legal approval but which has nevertheless been influential. The 1968 plan emphasised 'landscape values' and 'scenic unity' of Old City environs as objects of preservation; see: Hashimshoni *et al* (1968) and (Bimkom 2008: 23).

⁴⁶ This comes across powerfully in the writings of Kroyanker (1975: 19), the designated chronicler of Jerusalem Committee. It is important to note, however, that clearing medieval town walls was certainly common in Western conservation well into the 1970s, as for example in Britain; see: Creighton and Higham (2005: 244-245).

⁴⁷ Plan A'in Mem 6 as discussed in Bimkom (2008: 23-25).

⁴⁸ The National Park was approved two years prior to that of the Outline Plan for the Old City and environs.

⁴⁹ The National Parks, Nature Reserves, National Sites and Memorial Sites Law of 1998 enshrined the special legal status of National Parks, which existed from 1964 and was based on earlier British ordinances of 1924 and 1926. The Law accords priority to the preservation of heritage and nature without obligation to balance this with other planning or local interests. It also prevents any revisions to the designation of a National Park through an alternative planning process. While a Park respects existing land ownership all development postdating the declaration is subject to the Parks Authority's approval, which may bar building or land use without expropriation procedures; see Bimkom (2008: 12-14).

⁵⁰ In relation to the Old City basin, influential planning and architectural studies produced subsequently, such as those of Safdie (1986) were largely working within the framework established by Kutcher and Sharon.

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