

RIGHT TO DEVELOP

Planning
Palestinian Communities
in East Jerusalem



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Right to Develop: Planning Palestinian Communities in East Jerusalem

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Many cities around the world have suffered as a result of conflict or from natural disasters, and many still are. Such events directly impact the lives of people living in these cities, as well as the quality of their living environment. East Jerusalem provides a powerful example of how political conflict, and the Israeli occupation impact the lives and livelihoods of Palestinians living in the city.

Palestinian communities living in East Jerusalem suffer from a planning crisis related to Israel's occupation, which dates back to 1967. This crisis impacts virtually every aspect of Palestinian life in East Jerusalem, whether it is housing; availability and distribution of public or open spaces; mobility and accessibility; or planning sufficient education and health facilities. In addition, Israel's construction of its Separation Wall in and around East Jerusalem in 2002 has made the situation even worse by segregating the Palestinian communities.

In effect, Israel's occupation has led to the creation of two separate spatial realities in East Jerusalem: a *de facto* Israeli spatiality characterized by excessive surveillance and control, where the police and military are ubiquitous, and a *de facto* Palestinian spatiality characterized by physical fragmentation, environmental degradation, and social disintegration. Every square meter in East Jerusalem is a plot of politics. Nowhere is this more evident than in the case studies of Beit Hanina (Houd Iltabil, Al-Addasseh, and Al-Ashqariya), Silwan (Al-Boustan and Wadi Yassol), Al-Isawiyyah, and At-Tur (khalet Al-A'in), which collectively represent some of the alternative planning initiatives local Palestinian communities are developing and promoting in East Jerusalem in response to plans prepared by the Israeli Jerusalem Municipality (IJM).

The 'Right to Develop: Planning Palestinian Communities in East Jerusalem' provides an overview of the planning praxis of Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem. Planning practice in the context of East Jerusalem is best understood as the set of strategies and policies needed to translate ideas about the right to the city into concrete action. Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem lack a number of planning rights and have little say in official planning consistent with their needs and aspirations. This publication analyzes planning practices utilized by Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem, while devising a set of planning guidelines that can help these communities better defend their planning and building rights. Furthermore, this publication helps to



enhance urban awareness amongst Palestinian communities, while increasing the capacity of Palestinians to better plan their communities. The lessons drawn and the conclusions developed in this publication could also be useful in other fragile environments and politically challenged contexts.

Especially when it comes to planning for Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem, there is a need for greater coordination and cooperation between planning experts, both individuals and organizations, alongside a greater focus on collective community-based planning initiatives buttressed by public-private partnerships. While the fate of Jerusalem as a permanent status issue is subject to the outcome of bilateral negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, planning for the present remains an urgent priority. This in turn merits a closer look at the urban geography of Jerusalem as an important component of improving planning in the city. In this undertaking, more collective efforts, networking and pooling, strategic interventions, and advocacy measures are needed to assist planning affecting Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem. Likewise, on the technical and procedural levels, more follow-up measures (monitoring mechanism, e.g. demolition orders), baseline assessment, build on planning experience, utilize mixed-scanning approach, localize standards, sustain incremental housing and economic development, increase capacity building, and initiate alternative/community planning are all encouraged to be adopted by the planning community in East Jerusalem.

This publication comes under the ongoing UN-Habitat programmes in East Jerusalem that focus on minimizing prospects for conflict by improving the living conditions and enhancing the livelihoods for urban poor and disadvantaged people. More specifically, the UN-Habitat urban planning support programme to Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem works to support Palestinian communities to secure development and building opportunities and rights through planning, aimed at facilitating the immediate improvement of living conditions, while reducing displacement pressures and securing growth opportunities.



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