

The Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies

THE JERUSALEM HILLS AND THE JUDEA COASTAL PLAIN

Policy for Land Conservation and Sustainable
Development



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**THE JERUSALEM HILLS
AND THE JUDEA COASTAL PLAIN
POLICY FOR LAND CONSERVATION
AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

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Abstract

Planning Background

This study is the first attempt made in Israel to encompass a view of a large region in terms of principles of sustainable development, as a program comprising all topics relating to spatial development.

The space of the Jerusalem Hills and the Judea Coastal Plain is considered the cradle of Hebrew civilization. The early Israelite settlement; the kings' reign during the First Temple period, and the development of the Halacha at the time of the Second Temple - all took place mainly in this area. The national historic memory, encompassing important events and landmarks in the history of the people, is embodied in the Judea Mountains. The landscape and the physical image of the region reflect the land and the roots of Hebrew culture, as described by visitors and travelers, poets, writers and painters who portrayed the Jerusalem Hills in their creations. This region occupied an important place in modern Jewish settlement as well. From the early stages of planning in Israel, it was perceived as the historic-cultural core of the land. The landscape and natural values, the heritage and culture, all were deemed worthy of preservation at a high level, as a space of tourism, culture and recreation.

Sustainable Development

The policy guidelines described here include aspects of conservation as well as development, both being basic layers of sustainable development. This term embodies the approach of this policy paper, which regards the Jerusalem Hills as containing unique values worthy of careful preservation. The plan does not overlook developmental needs, both real and imaginary. A population of nearly one million people lives in the Judea mountains, having real needs for growth, extension and development. The imaginary needs are expressed by pressures and extension aspirations not backed by sound arguments. These also must not be ignored. The fulfillment of these needs in such a unique region while taking into account the sensitivity of resources and the need to preserve them for future generations, is the essence of the term "sustainable development."

The present study strives to present a planning outline that takes into consideration natural resources, landscape, culture and heritage of the region, as well as its physical and economic development.

Open Spaces in the Planning Area

This study reflects a growing awareness of the scarcity of open spaces in Israel and of the need for careful, effective and economizing development. This is a central motif of national planning frameworks today.

There is a growing understanding to the need to conserve open spaces in the Judea mountains as a value in its own right. It originates from their position in the national map between the two main metropolitan areas - Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv - and their social and cultural importance for the inhabitants of both these areas.

The Planning Concept

The proposed planning policy follows the basic guidelines laid out in the Israel 2020 master plan - emphasizing uniqueness and variety (as against uniformity and vagueness), and the sharpening of identity and image of both open and built-up elements in the space.

Basic Principles for the Jerusalem Metropolitan Area:

- Distinction between open and built-up areas, and defining clear-cut rules in each domain.
- Clear delineation and reinforcement of the borders between open and built-up areas, and the prevention of their sliding out of bounds.
- Emphasis on the uniqueness and image of each region, in order to preserve its spatial variety and prevent vagueness and uniformity.

The distinction between built-up and open spaces and reinforcement of the borders between them, as well as setting different rules for each of the planning areas, are the basic tools for a reasonable and sustainable design of the land. This takes on special meaning in view of the expansion tendencies of Jerusalem, which may cause an uncontrolled spread toward the open spaces in the west - a state that may refute all the above-stated principles.

Components of the System

As the center of a metropolitan area, Jerusalem radiates into the spaces around it. This means that the city and the metropolitan area, including the settlements and open spaces, comprise one planning entity with structured and intertwined processes of growth and development. It

follows that supply and demand will be distributed over the whole space - the Jerusalem district and those adjacent to it.

The planning outline proposed here presents an open and broad region with unique qualities, comprising a series of settlements in a hierarchical order. This series of settlements includes a metropolitan city, urban centers, suburban communities, and rural settlements.

The proposed planning model perceives the whole space as one metropolitan entity, deserving of integrative design planning. Supply and demand are not specific to a particular city (not even to Jerusalem), and are distributed over the whole metropolitan space. This approach disregards specific local considerations, such as a particular consideration of Jerusalem, and strives to perceive the entire area in a comprehensive framework of planning.

Metropolis - Jerusalem

Jerusalem is a national metropolitan center attracting national, cultural and business activities in the heart of the country. However, its development requires special care in order to preserve its qualities as a capital of singular importance to Israel as well as to international community. Jerusalem has considerable absorption potential that may be realized both by increasing building density and by building in additional areas within the physical borders of the city. Directing resources internally and restoration and revival of neighborhoods will awaken the city as a whole. This study points to such a course as a main factor in the city development.

The study sets principles for defining the city limits, taking into account physical, morphological and functional considerations - based on elements related to the essence of this city. These elements are:

- The concept of Jerusalem as a walled city; its position on a mountainous plateau; the streams of Soreq and Refaim as natural borders; the connection of the city to the national watershed line; its delineation by visible, clearly defined basins; the conservation of the inward-directed character of the city structure, that contributes to functional efficiency and to public transport.

Settlements in the space

Several towns are situated in direct affiliation to the study area:

Beit-Shemesh, Ma'aleh Adumim, Beitar Ilit, Modi'in. All four are foci of urban search, a first priority for absorbing overflow of demand in the regional space. The suburban and rural settlements will be carefully developed around them.

Open Areas

Three large open spaces play a role in determining the proportion between open and built-up, in addition to essential local areas. These are:

- The Soreq Stream, delineating Jerusalem, aids in designing the built-up border of the city and serves - together with Emeq Ha'arazim, Giv'at Alona, Refaim Stream and the Soreq-Shalmon extension - as the Western Jerusalem Park, in which are concentrated leisure and recreation services for the metropolitan inhabitants, on the urban-regional level.
- The central part of the Jerusalem Hills up to the slope line in the west, is the "conservation core" of the area, part of a national ecological corridor, a space of natural woods, orchards and terraces. It is in large part protected as a nature reserve, national parks and forests, thus defined in the national outline plans. It should be treated - all or most of it, even those parts not protected so far - as a reserved area, a "national spatial reservation" with strictly limited development.
- To this space is added the open space of the Judea Coastal Plain, beyond the line of the Telem settlements, including the Har'el Hills, Massua, Adulam and Beit-Nir, whose landscapes and images are different but which together form the largest and richest open space at the heart of the country.

Epilog

The study before us sets an outline of policy for a given physical space, out of concern for its values and future. The purpose of all these values is to serve the people and afford them pleasure. Only man's affiliation, familiarity and commitment to the environment in which he lives will make it possible to preserve and renovate an area in which God's creation and man's actions intertwine with and complement each other.

The purpose of this program is to serve as a foundation and starting point for development and outline programs for the Jerusalem area. Its true test will be in its ability to influence future planning procedures, and to determine the image of this area.