Abstract


Jerusalem is the declared capital of Israel, fundamental to Jewish tradition, and a contested city, part of the Israel–Palestine conflict. Departing from an analysis of mainly interviews and policy documents, this study aims to analyze the interplay between the Israeli identity politics of Jerusalem and city planning. The role of the city is partly related to discursive struggles between traditional, new, and post-Zionism. One conclusion is that the Israeli claim to the city is firmly anchored in a master commemorative narrative stating that Jerusalem is the eternal and indivisible capital of Israel. A second conclusion is that there is a constant interplay between Israeli identity politics, city policy, and planning practice, through specific strategies of territoriality. The goals of the strategies are to create a political, historical and religious, ethnic, economic, and exclusive capital. Planning policies are mainly focused on uniting the city through housing projects in East Jerusalem, rehabilitating historic heritage, ancestry, and landscapes, city center renewal, demographic balance, and economic growth, mainly through tourism and industrial development. An analysis of coping strategies shows that Jerusalem planners relate to identity politics by adopting a self-image of being professional, and by blaming the planning system for opening up to ideational impact. Depending on the issue, a planner adopts a reactive role as a bureaucrat or an expert, or an active role, such mobilizer or an advocate. One conclusion drawn from the “Safdie Plan” process is that traditional Zionism and the dominant collective planning doctrine are being challenged. An alliance of environmental movements, politicians from left and right, and citizens, mobilized a campaign against the plan that was intended to develop the western outskirts of Jerusalem. The rejection of the plan challenged the established political leadership, it opened up for an expansion to the east, and strengthened Green Zionism, but the result is also a challenge to the housing needs of Jerusalem.

Keywords: Jerusalem, territoriality, national identity, commemorations, identity discourse, identity politics, commemorative narratives, city planning, traditional Zionism, place-making, city policy, green Zionism

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