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THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM – A STREET MUSEUM

Meirav Davish Ben Moshe

The Old City of Jerusalem is a magnet for life, for life that occurs all the time yet it actually revives again and again what was once there and thus takes a look at the future. While walking in the Old City of Jerusalem, everything is crowded, charged, bustling, flooded with smells, colors, sounds and a sense of touch.

We are surrounded and flooded with an emotional and sometimes deeply religious awakening, feel and experience people who have dreamed all their lives about their holy city. Alongside them are walking and talking people that this has been their home for generations or those who are currently staying here, and those for whom this is their business, which opens and closes every day. Every alley is a full world, evoking longing and a sense of old memory that awakens to a life that existed, exists and will exist in the Old City of Jerusalem. There is a sense of home, people, food and shopping, of routine alongside holidays, of intensive

Architect Meirav Davish Ben Moshe. (see p. 21)

All photos, excluding the opening photo, were taken by the author.

cosmopolitanism of people of different religions, and special events: days of meeting, walking and ceremonial restoration on the path of torment, intending to the moment of Muhammad's ascension to heaven, alongside new festivals - the Light Festival that has already become a new tradition, mass Iftar meals, breaking the fast during Ramadan and others.

"Museums are democratising, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures. Acknowledging and addressing the conflicts and challenges of the present, they hold artefacts and specimens in trust for society, safeguard diverse memories for future generations and guarantee equal rights and equal access to heritage for all people."

The question is: what is the purpose of the definition and the classification? Do they change anything in our attitude to the place? In the modes of behavior in it and toward it? And does this definition carry values and commitments to those operating in it?

The purpose of the article is to clarify these concepts and present a position on questions about the place and modes of action for dealing with the future challenges in it.

Definition

A museum is a place where collections in a certain field or in several fields are concentrated: works of art, craft objects, antiquities, science and the like. It is an institution that allows the public access to exhibits that represent a variety of natural, cultural, historical and heritage phenomena, for the purposes of education, research, study, interpretation and presentation, and enjoyment. This common definition of a museum concept can be found in similar forms in dictionaries and popular information sites. Is it necessary to update the concept and why does a discussion of it become the center of controversy? What has changed in the way we perceive our cultural and visiting sites, what is the correct language of discourse when we come to curate exhibits? What is the correct context for understanding culture/a place? How does one convey a place experience and what is the relationship between the built and the out-door? Who understands and can define, curate, guide? Who decides?

The definition of a museum was discussed at a special meeting of ICOM¹, the International Museums Association in Kyoto 2019. The new definition proposed there, greatly expands the concept and updates it to the 21st century. This is the proposed redefinition:

"Museums are democratising, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures. Acknowledging and addressing the conflicts and challenges of the present, they hold artefacts and specimens in trust for society, safeguard diverse memories for future generations and guarantee equal rights and equal access to heritage for all people."

Try to re-read the definition and replace the word museum with the "Old City of Jerusalem" and you will see that when we read it that way, we will create a necessary affinity between the place and all its commitments to the past and present, to the people who inhabit it, with an emphasis of course on inclusive and committed policies to the cultural/human/ historical multi-voice, and here in Jerusalem, also the political and the controversial. There is no definition of high

¹ <https://icom.museum/en>

and low; it is possible to characterize more or less important but the emphasis is on the accessibility of the in-depth layers of information, the cultural accessibility of evolving and accumulating information. This is a concept of commitment to the wide mosaic without judgment, including disharmony.

In the definition there is also an emphasis on the time component, on the fact that the museum/place by this definition, is dynamic and changing and therefore the place and its objects, or its ceremonies worthy of preservation, can change and be updated both in their display and in the way through which we learn and experience the past, present and future. The modes of change and their extent depend on the context and long-term vision.

The second paragraph of the redefinition is: "Museums are non-profit institutions. They are collaborative and transparent, operating in the spirit of active partnership with and for diverse communities. To collect, preserve, research, interpret, present and expand our understanding of the world, in order to contribute to human dignity and social justice, equality for all human beings and the preservation of the planet."

The Old City of Jerusalem is not an institution; It has no management and a board of trustees, it does not have a collection and therefore all its experiential assets are actually public domain, even though they are privately owned or owned by various people and institutions, some of which have significant profit motives. Nor is it a democratic place, (it is doubtful whether a museum really is). The city does not operate in partnership as an incorporated institution of different bodies even if they have the same interests and they are certainly not free of accounts, passions and intense struggles. But the Jerusalem Municipality, the public and religious institutions in it, the Tower of David Museum, the Rockefeller Museum and mainly the communities living and operating in it, all collect, explore, interpret and expand our understanding of the place, and through it - the world. The emphasis I would like to adopt is the end-part of this definition, the purpose of the cultural action and the duty of the builder and maintainer of the property - in a museum - in the city, to contribute to human dignity and social justice, equality for all human beings and the preservation of the planet.

All of these have importance and value and therefore the Old City of Jerusalem should be defined as a museum. To present these goals and create an affinity between the public activity and the lives of its current residents, as opposed to private, business, religious and other activity. To take upon ourselves - designers and contractors, maintenance people, guides, residents and visitors - responsibility for the time and place entrusted to us now. The action of the curators of the place as a museum therefore requires a balance between these different values and needs which are well detailed in the first definition.

Vision

"Museums are not for profit. They are participatory and transparent, and work in active partnership with and for diverse communities to collect, preserve, research, interpret, exhibit, and enhance understandings of the world, aiming to contribute to human dignity and social justice, global equality and planetary wellbeing."

The uniqueness of a street museum is life. The sanctity of the place and the historical and archeological memory it has accumulated are here in the background and not at the center. The unique experience focuses on the present in view of the past. Walking along, the discovery of lifestyles from the past until today, are at

the center of the experience of this museum. This thinking actually expands the museum's field of action to places that were not previously exposed to visitors at all and are now the focus of the museum experience.

Characterization

The definition of the city as a museum refers to it as an open-air museum compared to an in-door institution managed independently and autonomously. This definition is a complex concept that according to the definition of Sten Rentzhog (2007)² deals mainly with self-knowledge – i.e. the reflection of the ways of life at the place to its visitors. This definition reflects what is done in many open-air museums around the world, thus for example: “Danish Village Museum” and the municipal Den Gamle By museum, in Aarhus, Denmark, about which Gabriel Horowitz³ tells, and many other open-air museums created and existing in Europe and the United States in areas abandoned for mainly economic reasons and with the transition to accelerated urbanization. All of these present this conception of preserving the past for the benefit of future generations. These sites also served as a model for the Hasmonean village of “Neot Kedumim”, the open-air museum at Ein Yael in Jerusalem, “Gan Adam Veolamo” at the Eretz Israel Museum in Tel Aviv and others. The locals, whether they are instructors or people whose daily occupation is - bakers, potters, blacksmiths and farmers in traditional methods, receive those who come to it and share with them various forms of familiarity and contact with the place's materials, working methods, tools, structures, lifestyle during the year seasons, its development over the periods, and the like. Sometimes the place does not have a museum definition and its guides do not have appropriate training regarding the “collection”, but their uniqueness lies in the authentic nature of the place, from which its definitions have been born, and it actually shapes this way its mediators and guides.

Various studies that redefine, as mentioned, the concept of the museum and the concept of anthropology point at the creation of the personal identity and empowerment of the locals, who grew up in it, returned to it or chose it, through their integration into the process itself and its components.⁴

We therefore define the Old City as a kind of open-air museum with different routes and guides (referring to people and systems alike), emphasizing those who are frequently there and the opportunity to share with them the experience of visiting the city. The components of the museum represent the different quarters, the different cultures, and the different lifestyles of Muslims, Christians, Armenians and Jews living, growing up and changing in the Old City of Jerusalem.

The museum will focus on places where there is an opportunity to unfold an in-depth story. In the selection of places, the curatorship process will locate places, that if they had not been set up, there is little chance that their story would have been revealed to the public. Their cumulative value deepens and makes the visit to the Old City of Jerusalem unique.

Curatorship

2 Sten Rentzhog, Open Air Museums – The History and Future of the Visionary Idea, Hamtli Förlag publisher, April 2007

3 Gabriel Horowitz, Scandinavia: Open-Air Museums, 'Masa Aher' [Different voyage] magazine online

4 Zvezdana Antos, Annette B. Fromm, Viv Golding editors, Museums and innovations, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017

The curatorship process of such a museum is not simple. Assuming that this is a long-term process that depends on budget and time, priorities are to be given to the museum's initial establishment and setting a broad and detailed action plan from which the work stages, schedules and areas of activity for establishing the overall array will be derived. Following are highlights for issues to consider in this complex and challenging process:

- The steering and work team will include a variety of professionals - curators in the fields of archeology, history, art, education, technology, construction, marketing, operation and more. The participation of representatives of the various quarters in the Old City is very important due to the existing crowding at the place, complexity and traffic options, management of routine and emergency life, ongoing garbage removal operations, commercial life management and more. There is great importance to defining the residents' privacy. The process will include finding a balance between the curiosity of visitors during the day and the night and maintaining a good routine.
- The possibility of the project's success depends on its acceptance by the locals and the degree of hospitality they want. One should keep in mind that the local bearing capacity is not infinite, and many examples from around the world are already known - Venice/Barcelona/Paris and more, where the locals are fed up with the disappearance of their familiar and well-liked lifestyle in favor of souvenir shops and 24/7 supermarkets and turning the city into Air B&B clusters. Care must be taken not to turn the local charm into an empty decor.
- The process will examine the possibility of public participation in guiding and providing an opportunity to get to know the residents and merchants, the possibility of receiving visitors to institutions, workshops, cafes and the like. In this context, a process of learning and drawing lessons from its accumulated experiences in Israel (Jaffa, Acre, Haifa) and around the world is extremely important, and it is proposed to operate with an expanded "pilot" approach and the option of replacement that prevents burnout of people and businesses, in hosting a wide and diversified audience.
- It must be decided whether the intention is to deepen the acquaintance with the place in certain contexts of lifestyle: archeology/history/present time, or whether the intention is to give a little of each subject hoping to arouse curiosity and develop different paths in the future.
- It is necessary to decide which population to turn to first, in the hope of making a rolling and gaining momentum event that benefits the local economy and the operation of the project. In this context, one can look at the model of turning the Mahane Yehuda Market in Jerusalem into a kind of open-air street museum, which is already on the verge of balancing between a real place where ordinary shoppers routinely mix with a live theater of spell sellers, boutique shops and restaurants.
- Although the museum can already be established on the basis of the existing infrastructure, it is proposed to provide a supportive framework for the project and treat the urban space well as a suitable preparation for the absorption of such activity. That means, ensuring the maintenance of the flooring, drainage infrastructure, placing handholds, shading, street furniture, ensuring regular cleaning, night lighting, inspection and guidance of emergency routes and the

like. We emphasize in this context that preparations for festivals such as the Festival of Light, which is crowded and short-termed, where the audience is channeled to walking routes, and the spreading of festival staff, which allows temporary and random connections of electricity, water, signage etc., does not conform to the spirit of the museum, which relies on the place routinely and over time, such that changes, is built and maintained in a sustainable manner and for the benefit of future generations.

- The establishment of the Open-Air Street Museum could become an economic lever. The Old City has unrealized potential of properties that have been evacuated from their residents and can be converted for more beneficial use, accommodation, catering and leisure for the millions of tourists who want to visit it for various tourism reasons: pilgrimage, archeology, history and culture.

Setting up the museum

In the Old City, about 10 corners will be located, 2-3 in each quarter. About ten such corners will allow at least a two-way route. In each curatorial process, points will be selected that rely on the important places that represent the Quarter - its daily lifestyle, the community members, typical foods, shops and the commercial life in it. They will also be chosen against the background and in the context of the special landmarks in it - archeology, history, religion, heritage, unique ceremonies - in different mixes and compositions.

Each corner will be designed as a unique stopping point. It will have shade, seating/standing place and furniture accordingly, an operating point for information - a local person who will volunteer for this activity and be trained for it, or another guide. Physical alternative for information and a digital option will be installed: hearing or an augmented reality (AR) position, in a technique chosen for operation - via a telephone or another device: glasses and the like. At some sites, an article or object will be selected, which allows for a real and authentic touch that represents and complements the digital information to a tangible experience. When thinking and locating the stopping points, emphasis will be placed on dispersing visitors throughout the space, with an emphasis on the margins. This way, it will be possible to increase the bearing capacity of the site, which is already at its capacity limit in peak events and is defined as extremely crowded even on a daily basis.

See several examples of such points:

This museum will be able to develop and grow over time and it allows visitors to the Old City to deepen their visit to the city, to go to corners they did not know, to renew and return to the familiar - historically and culturally.



Illustration 1: Lifestyle/population

An alley in the Armenian Quarter that has been renovated and made accessible and allows contact with the characteristics of the place - the facades of the houses, layers of construction. With the renovation process it is definitely inviting to planned or random encounters with those who live there.



Illustration 2: Lifestyle/population

An alley in the Muslim Quarter that has been renovated and made accessible and allows contact with the characteristics of the place - the facades of the houses, layers of construction. With the renovation process and the participation of the public it is inviting to planned or random encounters with the residents and merchants there.



Illustration 3: Institutions and Lifestyle
 The Latin Patriarchate Alley in the Christian Quarter and the religion institutions, mixed and varied functioning - hotels, education, religion and residence. An inviting starting point for encounters and entrance to typical courtyards, sitting in cafes, shops.



Illustration 4: Lifestyle/Trade
 Hagai Street/Damascus Gate section in the Muslim Quarter. The street has been renovated and made accessible and contains a variety of characteristics: shops, artisans, cafes and local food. Visiting it sharpens questions about the conflict in Jerusalem and the presence of national identity. The place allows for confrontation and presentation of the position of Muslims and Jews living and trading there, or just watching from a distance.



Illustration 5: Lifestyle/Institutions – and the City boundaries
 In the background are Mount of Olives and the At-Tur neighborhood, HaKaraim Street in the Jewish Quarter built after the Six Day War. The place allows for a discussion of modern conceptions of new construction versus the old one, observation of the Temple Mount, an understanding of routine and peak events at the Western Wall, and sharpens questions about the conflict. Invites planned or random encounters with Jews living, working and studying there.



Illustration 6: Jaffa Gate – Tourism.

The area has undergone renovation and accessibility from end to end and allows contact with the characteristics of the place from the past to the present. The development invites discussion of development issues in an archeological/historical environment (e.g. the Cardo / Decumanus excavation cover), asks about the ethics of planning intervention, and sharpens different approaches to solving design, transportation, and accessibility challenges. Invites planned or random encounters and connection to another activity - Wall tour, visit to the Tower of David Museum, churches and institutions in the circumference.



Illustration 7: Possibility of placing a picture of the Jaffa Gate - early 20th century. (Collection of the online photos of the U.S. Library of Congress, Edith and Eric Matson Collection) as a stopping point for elaborating on the historical range and changes that have taken place at the Jaffa Gate over at least the last hundred years.

**Illustration 8: Mashrabiya –
HaShalshelet Street**

Wood and iron in a variety of combinations, balcony/lattice / handhold and railing, taking a look at design details, needs and solutions then and today. See Figure 9 below for a “patented” Mashrabiya based on a visual trick that has no real plaiting, a shelf product that has been adopted to hide infrastructure cabinets, air conditioners and trash hiding.



Illustration 9: A new trash hiding



Illustrations 10, 11: Traffic and accessibility

Stairs/sloping passage/handhold and railing, voice guidance, compliance with accessibility standards, and the like. Taking a look at accessibility issues: what can or cannot be made accessible, maintenance needs, emergency and mobility as against the carrying capacity of natural stone, rules for preserving facades of buildings and the like, visitors' conduct and requirements adjusted for people with disabilities in an ancient space – what and how this is done is the interesting question for the audience, and this as well is in the essence of a museum concerned with lifestyle.



Operation

Given the complexity of this unique museum, there is a need for a point of departure for the visit, a visitors' center that will provide a background clarifying the nature of the street museum, the rules of conduct and the sensitivity of the different populations to the various visitors. The point of departure for the street museum is the entrance to the Tower of David Museum, where they will begin with a preparatory video of the street museum experience, which will place them culturally and historically. They will receive initial guidance on the manners of operation and contact people and a map of possible routes - on paper and in the app, the required accessories, and from there they will set out independently or with group/individual guidance provided in different languages and depending on the nature and length of the tour.

We must strive that all museum points will be accessible to people with disabilities, however a small number (up to 20% at the most) that are not accessible might be selected.

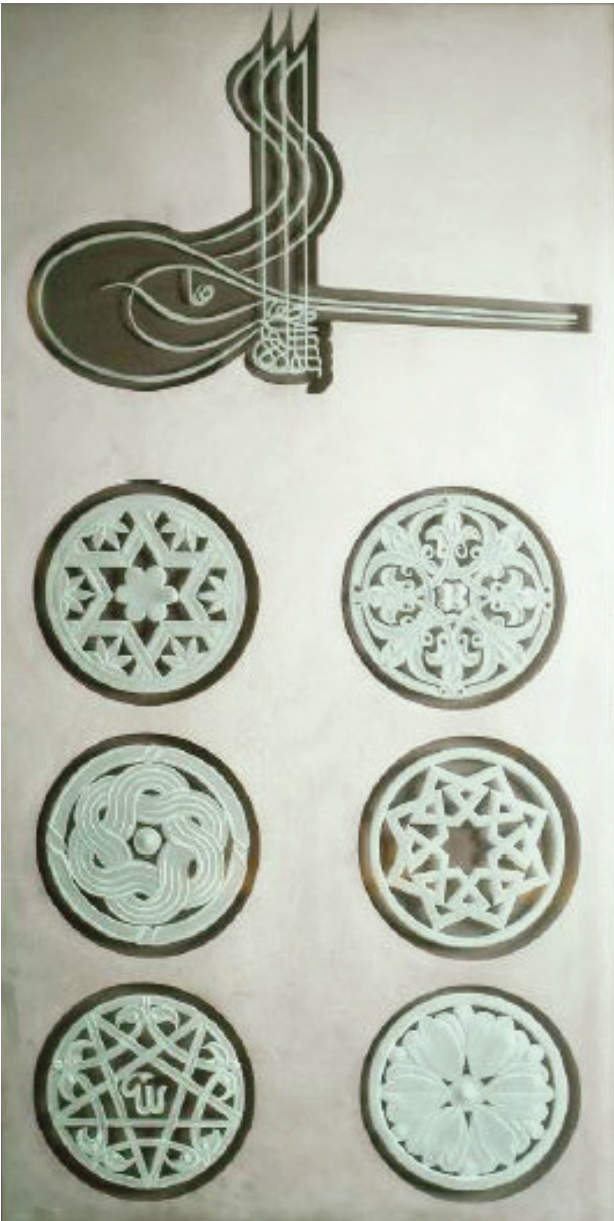


Illustration 12: Ottoman guilloches (Collection of the Tower of David Museum)

It is proposed to examine the establishment of an information center for daily life at the Tower of David Museum (proposed by Yael Danieli-Lahav). This refers to a research institution within the museum that will be able to collect and expand the street experience to unique topics - areas of practice, objects, costumes, raw materials and more. This center will also be able to operate separately and focus on other issues but the uniqueness of the proposed center is in the focus on lifestyle and not necessarily on the findings and objects that are part of the museum's collection. The importance of visiting and stopping at the center is as a preparation and elaboration for the activities and sights of the street. This preparation is not necessary for visitors and wanderers of the Old City, but because the experience offered at the museum is often not one that can be marked on a sign or listened to in the app, the context and background make the difference between a casual visit and the recognition that it is a cultural experience similar to a visit to a built museum and a quality collection.

See illustration 12 below: Identifying and discovering guilloches on the streets of the Old City, pillar capitals, decorations, new street furniture and design details inspired by the ancient - become clearer after a short study of the subject and understanding the identification options in the context and background of the street. See illustration 12 on page 112.

Summary

What has been written here stems from my many years of acquaintance with the Old City and my visits to it over the years, especially from my work there in the last decade while writing “Bezchut Haderech” - The Guide of The Old City Street Planning in Jerusalem”, a guide that is being updated these days and extends the city's responsibilities to the Old City Basin. This work has greatly sharpened the need to form a guiding, modest and correct design language for the place and its complexity. Writing the guide does not replace sharp-eyed and creative planners, but its purpose was to unify the rules of work in the space in order to highlight the characteristics of the museum, which has already been considered but has not yet been born.

The concept of the guide is of cultural accessibility, shifting the gaze to the important while clearing excess information born mainly from the transfer of the infrastructure of buildings that were built long ago and did not contain preparations for electricity, water and sewage, did not solve drainage questions, and did not comply with the accessibility rules and provisions of the law. Setting priorities and rules for development that will allow the main players we detailed above, and the Old City as a whole, to become readable and simple in all their splendor. The Old City is not “Disneyland” and needs no additions and decorations. Cultural accessibility believes in the place itself, which already dictates the rules of the space and guides its conduct. It does not regard it as an untouchable monument, but is very wary of excessive visual information, excessive lighting and materials that attract excess attention from the space and its lifestyle. The concept of the museum chooses human and digital means as primary mediators, inviting visitors to a multi-sensory in-depth experience.

This attitude of mine towards the place is personal and subjective but inevitably painted in the colors of the establishment and systems of government defined as an occupier on the streets of the Old City which are not Jewish. When forming ways to work on the guide we tried, without success, to hold large meetings open

to the public or to form focus groups in order to encourage different audiences to be a part of the process. On the other hand, random encounters that took place around the question of the stairs, or how to properly drain the street and where to put the garbage hidings, gave rise to fruitful discussions with specific street tenants, merchants and stakeholders. I found there attentive, experienced and responsible interlocutors from whom I learned a lot. The discussion of place and design details took place at eye level, a face-to-face dialogue. I believe that forming the character of the street museum and questions of choice, design and construction made with mutual respect, listening to values as well as to local hardships, have a chance. It is very important to manage it this way, while providing information and maintaining transparency that ensures developing trust, partnership, hope and fair involvement. I hope the process will materialize and hold on to the place, and if not tomorrow then the day after tomorrow.