

# Willful Blindness: Reflections on the "Israel 2020" Master Plan

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ABSTRACT

The essay offers an analysis of significant 'blind spots' in the national master plan "Israel 2020". The '2020' project created a quantum leap for Israeli planning during the 1990s, by assembling an unprecedented group of academic and professional experts to arrive at a long-term planning vision for the country. The impressive project used cutting edge research, collaboration with civil society and close association with key policy makers. However, despite these advantages, the plan left a series of significant 'black holes' which caused long term damage in the reshaping of the country's space and social relations. The essay highlights three: (a) overlooking the impact of the 'growth above all' scenario on social relations and disparities; (b) overlooking the impact of an exaggerated discourse of land scarcity and rapid densification on the right to housing; (c) systematically ignoring Palestinian space, its characteristics and needs. The blind spots have willfully overlooked well developed critical scholarship on these issues which was already available at the time. The three blind spots reflect well the constellation of power that positions Israeli spatial planning at the forefront of a colonial Judaization process which marginalized Palestinians into second and third-class citizens, alongside the diversion the extracted development value to powerful developers, investors and established ethno-classes. A significant part of the multiple crises engulfing Israelis and Palestinians today can be traced back to the national vision expressed in 'Israeli 2020' and its 'willful blindness'.

Keywords: land depletion ;social gaps; spatial Judaization; Palestinian space; national planning

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