

Social Blindness: Who Gained and Who Lost from the "Israel 2020" Plan and its Successors

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ABSTRACT

The essay analyzes the legacy of national master plan "Israel 2020" and its successors on the persistence absence of social and housing considerations in Israeli planning. "Israel 2020" dealt mainly with the imperatives of residential development and densification, due to scarcity of land and environmental sensitivities. The plan did not engage with the well-known social consequences of rapid development, such as uneven burden of development in densifying urban areas, while maintaining high living standard in suburban and non-urban areas. The plan did not link the recommended urban densification with the displacement of low-income groups from the areas where best services and employment are in close proximity. In ignoring these aspects, the plan demonstrated conspicuous social blindness which benefited strong socioeconomic groups, while deepening the segregation and marginalization of lower income groups. Notably, a socially oriented development alternative prepared for the plan by notable experts was overlooked in the final plan. We must learn from past failures and promote plans that will link national planning with land, housing and social welfare policies. We need policies that will seek social cohesion and equality, and not be driven only by profit making. In other words, we need spatial policies promoting the public's right to housing, social mobility and favorable urban settings for all.

Keywords: national planning; social housing; distributional justice; social sustainability; social mobility

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