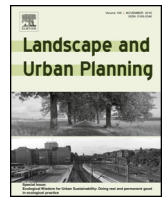




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Geddes resurrected: The legacy of Sir Patrick Geddes in contemporary urban planning in Tel Aviv

Nir Mualam

Faculty of Architecture and Town Planning, Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, Technion City, Haifa 32000, Israel

HIGHLIGHTS

- The 2015 plan is an adaptation of the original 1925 plan compiled by Sir Geddes.
- Although on a much larger scale, the new plan adopts similar design principles.
- The original Geddes plan still serves as a relevant commodity for city planners.
- 21st century planners turned to Geddes for inspiration.
- It remains questionable whether Geddes' civic principles were fully realized.

GRAPHICAL ABSTRACT



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ABSTRACT

The paper examines Sir Geddes' impact on contemporary city planning in Tel Aviv. In particular, whether and in what way previous work by Geddes has influenced 21st century planners in Tel Aviv. The paper reviews those issues by looking at one of the most ambitious plans the city of Tel Aviv has generated in recent years—the 2015 “Northwestern Plan”.

In the winter of 2015, the new plan was enacted. The plan aims to create a new residential quarter on one of the last remaining sand dunes. This represents an attempt to create a mixed-use extension of the 1925 Geddes Plan for Tel Aviv by establishing a new district filled with expansive boulevards, parks, and public spaces. While the municipal authorities regarded the recently enacted plan as a successful adaptation of Geddes' urban vision, antagonists perceived it as a publicity stunt, designed to brand the new district. The article explores these arguments, analyzes the social, economic and morphological principles embedded in the new plan, and compares them to those employed by Geddes 90 years ago. The analysis reveals that the original plan compiled by Geddes still serves as a relevant commodity for city planners, and as an inspirational source. 21st century planners involved in enacting the new plan turned to Geddes for inspiration however it remains questionable whether his ideology, civic principles, and conceptual approach to the city were fully realized in the new plan.

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E-mail address: nirmualam@hotmail.com

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1. Introduction

In this paper I examine Sir Geddes' impact on contemporary city planning in Tel Aviv. In particular, whether and in what way



Fig. 1. Southern parts of the elevated coastal sand dune where an urban park is to be located.

(Source: the author)

Geddes' previous work has influenced the work of 21st century planners in Tel Aviv. I examine these issues by looking at one of the most ambitious plans the city of Tel Aviv has produced in recent years.

In the winter of 2015, the District Planning Commission (DPC) of Tel Aviv enacted a new "Northwestern Plan" (also known as Plan No. 3700). The plan is for a new residential quarter on one of the last remaining sand dunes in Tel Aviv and it designs a walkable district filled with landscaped parks and boulevards, public spaces, and a hierarchical set of streets. Following a long process of consultations, the new plan has become one of Tel Aviv's most comprehensive master plans to date.

While media reports regard this plan as an innovation inspired by Sir Patrick Geddes' 1925 Plan of Tel Aviv, (Halperin, & Ganor, 2012; Kedmi, 2004), those claims have not been thoroughly investigated.

In order to fill this gap, the paper focuses on the principles embedded in the new so-called 'Geddesian' plan, and explores to what extent it is indeed inspired by the legacy of Sir Geddes in that it creates a mixed-use extension of the 1925 Geddes Plan. Notably, objectors to the plan argued that the reference to Geddes in the plan-making process was a superficial attempt to embody Geddes' principled work, and that the spirit of Geddes is not present in Plan 3700 (Regional Planning Committee, 2011).

The Tel Aviv Northwestern Plan presents a unique opportunity to study the relevance of Geddes' work and its evolution into a 21st century master plan for a contemporary city. The analysis focuses on Geddes' original 1925 plan for Tel Aviv as a possible commodity used by those developing the new plan. Thus the paper reinforces current literature which examines the re-discovery of Geddes by city planners.

1.1. The study area

The new 2015 plan covers an area of 1900 metric dunams (approximately 470 acres), in the northwest of Tel Aviv. The proposed area is situated in one of the last remaining sand dunes in the city, an area which is bordered by the Mediterranean in the West, and Namir Road in the East (Figs. 1 and 2).

Fig. 2 displays the study area located north to the Yarkon (Auja) River. Since the 1950s, the DPC made several local plans which extended Tel Aviv northwards. The resulting, relatively new, neighborhoods include homogenous suburbs as primary forms of urban development. In the process of development of these western parts of the city, the area covered by Plan 3700, remained relatively untouched.

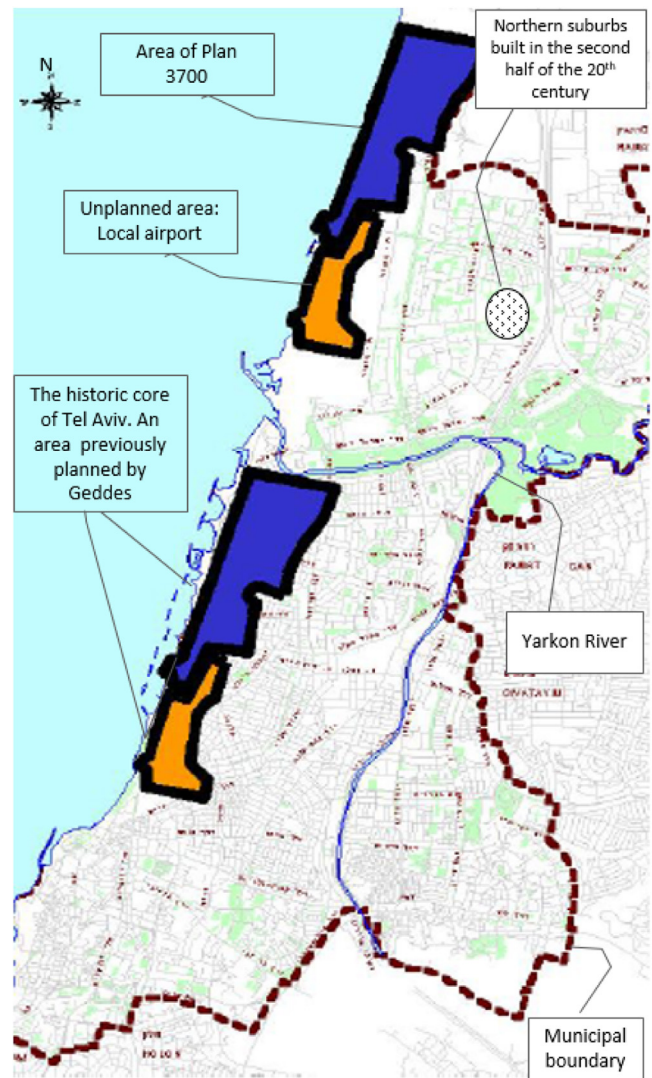


Fig. 2. The study area.

To its south, Plan 3700 borders with an area known as Sde-Dov—a local airport which is due to be cleared and replaced by future residential development (Tel Aviv Strategic Plan, 2005). However, despite plans to move the airport to another location, it is still active and therefore imposes height limitations on the surrounding built-up area. In fact, the area covered by the local airport is still unplanned, and acts as a barrier between the area of Plan 3700 and the city center (Fig. 2).

In order to compare the new plan with that of Geddes, I underline the key attributes of Geddes', 1925 plan for Tel Aviv, which covers most of what is known today as the city center. Fig. 2 compares the geographic area of Plan 3700 (1900 dunams) and its neighboring Sde-Dov airport (1100 dunams) with the existing city center, planned by Geddes. The comparison illustrates that the two sections of Tel Aviv (northwest and city center) are almost equal in size: the total area of the unplanned northwest is approximately 3000 dunams (741 acres), which is almost equal to the approximate area of 3030 dunams (based on GIS estimation) previously planned by Geddes.¹ The 'Geddesian' area of the city center is bor-

¹ Biger (1992) notes that originally, Geddes was commissioned to plan an area of 2640 dunams (Biger, 1992, p.5), an area which was later extended to 3269 dunams.

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