

Davis 100 Projects for Peace Final Report - Summer 2007

Title: Building a Peaceful Future: A Workshop for the Old City of Jerusalem

School: Middlebury College

Student Information: Daphne Lasky, United States, non-UWC

1. **Project Summary:** Describe location, timeframe, participants, other funding involved, scope of work, and goals intended.

The goals of my project, *Building a Peaceful Future: A Workshop for the Old City of Jerusalem*, are 1) to write case studies of the feasibility of the application of the 2003 Geneva Accord to the Jaffa and Damascus Gates and 2) to turn the case studies into a workshop curriculum that uses architecture and design as tools for helping participants reach a deeper understanding of the religious, historical, and political landscapes of Jerusalem.

I carried out the research for the case studies in Israel and the West Bank between June 1 and August 30 of this summer. I am currently editing the workshop curriculum, and am planning to hold the workshops at Middlebury College, Harvard University, and the University of Massachusetts Amherst this coming October and November.

My work this summer included research at the Laor Map Collection of Hebrew University, meetings and discussions with academics and activists who specialize in Jerusalem studies, travel in the West Bank in order to reach a deeper understanding of current security concerns, and a significant amount of time spent in the Old City, studying the urban fabric of the place itself. Over the course of the summer, I traveled and/or met with individuals from organizations such as Machsom Watch, Ir Amim, the Institute for Palestine Studies, and the Geneva Initiative.

In Jerusalem, I had the opportunity to attend the 2007 ROI Summit, a gathering of young Jewish innovators co-sponsored by the Charles and Lynne Schusterman Family Foundation, the Center for Leadership Initiatives, and Taglit Birthright Israel. ROI funded \$1250 of my flight to Israel. At this conference, I learned more about the current range of Israel education and interfaith dialogue programs on college campuses and was able to better understand how my workshop fits into the existing campus context. Both at ROI, and through Hebrew language classes, I met Israeli and American campus activists whom I look forward to working with in the future.

2. **Project Results:** Self-evaluate the project; your assessment should enumerate what goals were and were not accomplished.

1) Case Studies. Research for the case studies has been completed, and I am now editing and designing the final document. One strength of the studies is the way in which current conditions at Jaffa and Damascus Gate are placed within the historical context of a continuously changing and evolving Jerusalem. Descriptions, based upon

observation, of day-to-day life around the gates bring a human element to the architectural diagrams included in the studies.

As anticipated, gathering specific information about the families, businesses, and property ownership patterns around the two gates was very difficult. Such information, ordinarily readily available to architects, becomes extremely sensitive in the politically charged context of Jerusalem. Within a longer time frame, it would be possible to establish the relationships and trust necessary to obtain this information.

2) Workshops. Because the workshops are being scheduled for this coming October and November, I am unable to evaluate their success at this time. Student leaders have responded enthusiastically to the workshop proposal, and I look forward to seeing this goal carried through to completion.

3. **Implications:** What are the project's implications for peace? What are the future prospects for the project? What have you learned?

The enthusiastic response that this project received – from activists, student leaders, and Jerusalem experts in Israel, Palestine, and the United States – demonstrates that there is a desire on the part of many individuals to discuss the Israel-Palestinian conflict in pragmatic, human terms. Using architecture and design as tools for reaching a greater understanding of Jerusalem issues opens up a new set of vocabulary to use while exploring the conflict, and so expands the possibilities for engaging in meaningful dialogue.

Student leaders at several additional colleges have expressed interest in bringing the workshop program to their campuses. The curriculum that I am writing is designed to be self-contained, and so the program should be easily replicated at these schools. In addition, in the fall of 2008 I will begin a Master's program in architecture at the University of Virginia, where I plan to incorporate this summer's research in Jerusalem into my thesis.

Through my work this summer, I have developed a deeper appreciation for the ways in which cities grow and change over time. In Jerusalem's evolution from a small hilltop town to a sprawling metropolitan region, it is possible to read the effects of many generations of leader and thinkers. Knowledge of this past puts the actions of any contemporary architect into a broad historical context, and so both grants us the freedom to take creative risks and reminds us of our fundamental responsibility to those in our local, national, and global communities.

