Abstract

Sustainable urban growth is the new pervasive orthodoxy extolled among urban planners in their quest for a utopian community all over the world. It is touted as a strategic framework for helping today's communities achieve a better, more equitable and more harmonious urban built environment. Generally speaking, notions of sustainability in urban planning literature defines a broad agenda of policies to use land more efficiently, curb urban sprawl and to promote better planning through the virtue of compact design, and walkable community, with multiple public transportation choices. Unfortunately, it is not so far a highly visible or tangible concept in the local urban planning debates across the Palestinian territory. Therefore, this thesis is an excretion of efforts to investigate the feasibility and possible potentials of promoting the concept of sustainable urban growth, within the Palestinian context, in lieu with the current volatile geo-political environment that create layers of complexities and challenges to the development of present Palestinian cities.

The thesis follows a case study approach, where the urban area of Bethlehem Governorate is micro-examined, as a tool to provide a practical framework for further future investigations on other Palestinian cities. The thesis strategically ends with a conceptual identification of the suitable areas for future urban growth using a designated spatial Geographic Information System, along with a decentralized and flexible structural model for Bethlehem Governorate that would ensure a harmonized urban-rural growth. Furthermore, the thesis holistically presents a set of general policies and key recommendations for the efficient adoption of sustainable urban growth agenda, based on a consultation process with local experts in the field of interest and within the scope of intervention that pay a premium to the physical discipline of urban planning.

Keywords: Sustainable Urban Growth, Urban Sprawl, Urban Suitability Analysis, Bethlehem Area.