

**PUSH Pilot Sites Design Workshop:  
 August 28-29, 2008**

***Designing Our Shared Space*  
 Executive Summary**



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# PUSH



*Promoting dialogue and cultural Understanding of our Shared Heritage*

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# PUSH Design Workshop Agenda

Hosted by Bezalel Academy for Arts and Design, School of Architecture  
Bezalel Street 1, Jerusalem

## Thursday, August 28, 2008:

- 8:30: **Introduction of workshop objectives and participants**  
Harmonizing our Shared Heritage, Presented by Professor Michael Turner
- 9:30: **Presentation of Six Pilot Sites and Discussion**  
Presented by Arch. Osama Hamdam, Al Quds University,  
Dr. Mohammed Waheeb, Jordan Society for Sustainable Development and  
Arch. David Guggenheim, Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design
- 10:30: **Conceptual Planning:** Interdisciplinary workgroups explore the space  
between communities and sites
- 12:30: **Lunch**
- 13:30: **Conceptual Planning:** Interdisciplinary groups continue work
- 15:00: **Group Presentation I:** Preliminary summaries and plenary discussion
- 16:00: **Conceptual Planning:** Interdisciplinary groups continue work
- 20:00: **Dinner,** Angelica Italian Restaurant, Shatz Street (opposite Bezalel)

## Friday, August 29, 2008:

- 8:30: **Conceptual Planning:** Interdisciplinary workgroups prepare presentations
- 10:00: **Group Presentation II:** Intermediary summaries and plenary discussion
- 11:00: JSSD team members depart for Allenby Bridge (closed by 14:00)
- 11:15: **Conceptual Planning:** Integration plenary comments into final presentation
- 12:30: **Lunch**
- 13:30: **Final Group Presentations**
- 15:30: **End of Workshop**

## **Executive Summary:**

The PUSH Pilot Site Design Workshop aimed to propose practical design strategies for embedding the concept of *shared* cultural heritage at the six PUSH Pilot Sites. To this aim the PUSH project assembled a diverse group of professionals including Palestinian, Israeli and Jordanian architects, archeologists, site managers, historians, tourism planners and other experts in fields related to cultural heritage together in an intensive two-day workshop. Throughout the workshop the participants both engaged the sensitive question of how to present the concept of shared to the public through site interpretation strategies while putting the ideas down in draft design plans. The design plans initiated at the workshop will be included in the PUSH site manuals alongside other material to assist site managers and beneficiaries to put the concept of shared heritage to work at their sites.

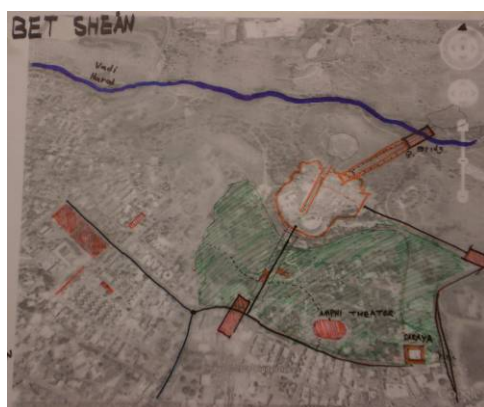
During the course of the workshop the participants broke out into three interdisciplinary cross-border workgroups each group working together to propose some new design elements for the six PUSH pilot sites. The following pages include the draft design plans produced by the three teams. Each draft plan is accompanied by a short explanatory text highlighting the major elements of the plan.

## Beit She'an

The archaeological site of Beth Shean is a well developed site under the supervision of the Israel Nature and National Parks. In a previous meeting between PUSH team and Mr. Nisim Badus, the site's manager, he raised the claim that there are almost no connections between the inhabitants of Beit She'an and the archaeological site. The Israel Nature and National Parks operates today a "Site-Community" program that trains volunteers from the local community to lead tours in the site.

Building on the success of the "Site-Community" program, the PUSH team proposed a few ways to further encourage linkages between site and community.

1. **The area between the archaeological site and the modern city**- today there is a kind of a buffer zone between the historical site and the city. Part of this area is a green park but most of it is not very well defined. It is suggested to think how to treat this area and how to maybe re-define it. It is suggested to use this area as a connecting area that will join the site to the city. One of the suggestions is to enlarge the park and make it more useful for both the visitors and the locals.
2. **Entrances to the site:** it is suggested to develop additional entrance points to the historical site. Today there is only one entrance point to the site and there is a need to further develop this area. Additional entrance points will make the connection between the national park and other area attractions stronger.
3. **The city, the site and the historical background.**
  - a. It is suggested to excavate additional sections of the historical city, outside of the current site. Excavations in the area of the modern city could possible lessen the existing division between the site and the city.
  - b. It is also suggested to further expand the axis of the ancient streets towards the modern city and in this way create a continuation between past and present.
  - c. Additional ways to connect the day-to-day lives of the people of Beit She'an to the site.
  - d. The water motif: connect to modern and ancient cities together with the re-building of the old aqueducts that supplied water to the city during antiquity.
4. **A gateway to the adjoining areas** – the historical site should be developed as a gateway to the Jezrael and Beit She'an Valleys.
5. **The entrances to the city.** It is suggested to create a thematic connection between the four different entrances to the city by using the historical site.



## Gesher

The site of Gesher is stretched over a considerable area. This fact has both advantages and disadvantages from a design/ development perspective. On the one hand the site is a unique and interesting tourist site which provides visits with an exceptional experience. On the other hand, the site suffers from a lack of order in both theme and design. This is due to a long process of development, with multiple bodies initiating the different sub-sites. Since there is no master plan for Gesher, the site is built out of different touristic sections that were developed separately. The outcome of this process is that the site is blessed with abundance of narratives and sub-sites but suffers from a lack of unifying frame. The PUSH team believes that an architectural and design intervention might solve many of the thematic and design challenges present at the site today.

### **1. Characterization of the Site's needs:**

- a. There is a need to define more clearly the sites borders.
- b. Likewise, the site's entrance point doesn't connect to all of the site's sub-sites and focal points.
- c. Access: the intersection between the main road and the site is problematic. A sign directs visitors to Old Gesher but the fact that the site cannot be seen from the main road is problematic. How can we attract those who ride route 90 to visit Kibbutz Gesher?
- d. Theme: The site contains a wealth of historical narrative, testimony to the area's central position as a historical crossing over the Jordan River. As such the site encompasses the ancient bridges, a Mamluk Khan, the Ottoman period customs house, a British Mandate police building, the old bunker, the former site of Kibbutz Gesher and the "Gesher Experience" among others. Each of these sub-sites plays a unique and important part of the Gesher narrative. A unifying narrative that would make a theoretical and physical connection between these different sub-sites would be beneficial to guide visitors through the site.
- e. Management: Several different bodies have played a role in managing the site's development and management. Today the site is operated and managed by Kibbutz Gesher. Other contributing bodies include the Society for Preservation of Israel Heritage Sites and the Israel Antiquity Authority, who is in charge of excavations and preservation at the site.
- f. The Jordan River: The Jordan River and the historical bridges that gave the area its great historical value are the central shared themes at the site. Furthermore as one of only a few sites where visitors can reach the Jordan River south of the Sea of Galilee the role of the Jordan River in the Gesher narrative should be fortified. This connection is important to the physical and thematic development of the site.

### **2. PUSH Team Suggestions.**

During the process numerous existing focal points were identified.

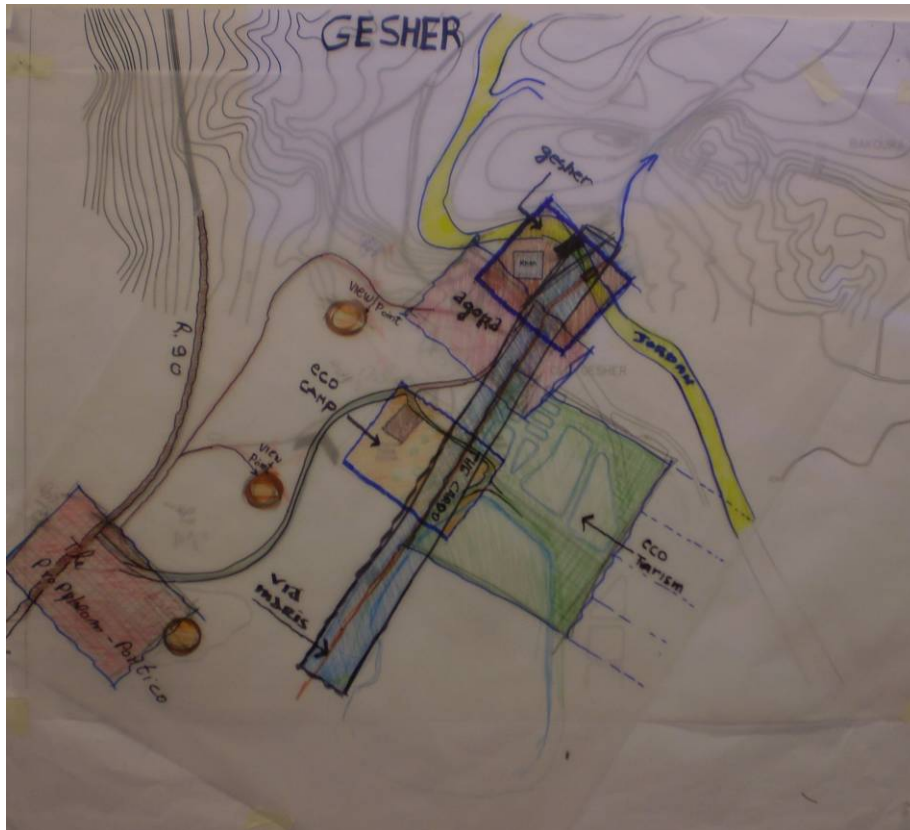
- a. The Roman-Mamluk Bridge, the most ancient historical component in the site, served the people using the Roman road that crossed the river at this point and connected Scythopolis with the rest of the Decapolis cities like Pella and Gadara.
- b. Gesher's position on the Jordan River serves as one of the area's strongest motives. There are only few places along the river where tourists can reach the

- c. The Mamluk Khan (caravanserai) served the people using the main road during the Late Muslim period.
  - d. The Hejaz railway and the railroad bridge over the River Jordan served the area from the Late Ottoman period. The bridge one of the most unique illustration of the region's important railway system and can be further emphasized. In Gesher, a connection can be made between the story of the Hijaz Railway system and the more local story of the train that crossed Jezrael valley and connected Haifa to Jordan.
  - e. The British Bridge that was built during the Mandate period to accommodate road traffic replacing the older bridge.
  - f. Pinkas Rotenberg's hydroelectric power plant, located at the neighboring site of Nahariyim is both geographically and thematically connected to the site of Gesher. The power station provided electricity to communities on both sides of the Jordan River from 1932-1948.
  - g. The original settlement site of Kibbutz Gesher.
  - h. Migratory Flyways: The site of Gesher, like Bakoura, lies along one of the most important migratory flyways in the world – the Jordan River Valley. As such it provides a crucial resting point for migratory birds and could potentially be developed to attract bird watchers.
  - i. Agriculture. The site is located at the heart of a rich agricultural site, with many dates plants, fish ponds, etc.
  - j. Routes and trails
- 3. PUSH team suggests forming three routes, each of them emphasizes different narrative and themes. Visit can be done by using a car, or by riding bicycles or walking.**
- a. The Roman Road Trail: This route connects the railway station, the Khan and the Bridges and leads towards the Jordan River. It is hoped that in the future it will be also an entrance point to the Jordan River Peace Park (see Bakoura text for more details).
  - b. Nature, Man and Environment/ The Ecology and Agriculture Trail: This route will highlight the abundance of water in the area and will be connected to bird-watching and fishing. This trail will cross the date plant and the fish ponds and will reach the promenade along the river. Here, it is also expected that a future connection will enable bird-watchers and others to cross the river to the other side.
  - c. Settlement and Industry Trail: This route will connect the modern Kibbutz with the site of the historical kibbutz together with the site of the British police building and the old railway.
- 4. Focal points that should be treated.** PUSH team suggests acting in the following directions:
- a. Create "Teasing Zones" along route 90 that will enable people to watch the site of Gesher from the highway.
  - b. Define more clearly the entrance point from the main road and form an entrance where the visitors will get some information about what has the site to offer.
  - c. There is a need to emphasize the importance of the bridges in the history of the site.
  - d. The Mamluk Khan is being used even today in cultural events and this activity could be broadened.

e. It is suggested that the British Police building will be developed as a hotel.

**5. Focal activity points.**

- a. Entrance point to the site.
- b. The Roman road
- c. Eco-tourism
- d. Visitor overnight accommodation: Kibbutz Gesher, the British police building or a camp site.
- e. The Agora of the site in the area of the old Khan
- f. The river and the historical crossing points



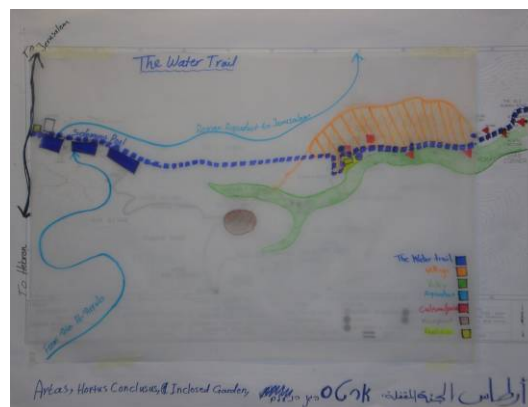
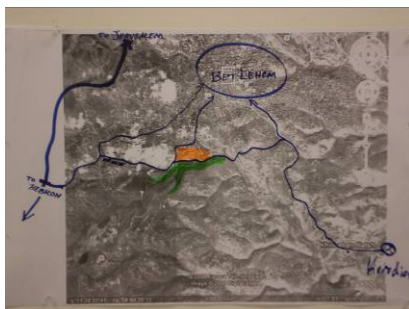


## Irtas

The PUSH team found the theme of water to be the central unifying narrative at the site. The system of connecting pools and aqueducts in Irtas, which supplied Jerusalem with fresh water from the Roman period to the beginning of the twentieth century, provides both a natural and a historical narrative for visitors to the site. The theme of water at Irtas creates a natural connection to other important sites throughout the area including Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Herodion. During the Roman period, an impressive series of open reservoirs were built in Irtas. The collected water was directed via aqueducts to Jerusalem and Herodion, including the palace, fort and new city built by Herod during the first century BCE. Building on these natural and historical linkages the PUSH team proposed to develop the water theme through the establishment of the "The Water Trail", a foot path connecting Irtas's "Solomon's Pools" to Herodion via the aqueducts.

The team stressed the importance of developing several focal points at the site to direct visitor circulation including:

1. A clear entrance to the historical site at Irtas.
  - a. An entrance area to include parking space, restaurants and toilets. This area will also serve as a departure point to the Water Trail.
  - b. The Water Trail could have several branches including a circular trail and a longer trail.
2. There will be a defined place where tourists will start their visit and another location where they will be picked up by buses.
3. An observation point could be established at Hirbet Huch
4. Linkages will be encouraged between the area's other attractions including:
  - a. The village square with the spring.
  - b. The folklore museum
  - c. The historical Madafe
  - d. A Mamluk water mill
  - e. The British council gate
  - f. Sections of the historical water channel to the site of Herodion.
5. Agriculture (terraces)
  - a. Different crops such as lettuce, cabbage, tomatoes etc.
  - b. Organic food.
  - c. Lettuce festival
6. Visitor circulation can be further expanded to create linkages and between Irtas, Herodion and Bethlehem.



## Sabastia:

The team discussed the relationship between the roman city, the mediaeval village and the present-day community. The area within the Roman walls should remain essentially as an archaeological park, while the medieval village could be rehabilitated and used for providing services to the site and community. The pressures for development should be focused to the east, while preserving the area around the archaeological park as a cultural landscape encouraging its use with traditional agricultural activities.

The team identified the route for the narrative and recommended six sites for detailed design and action:

1. Cathedral and Mosque
2. Forum
3. Theatre and Hellenistic tower
4. Temple of Augusta
5. The colonnade street
6. The Roman gate and walls

Based on this route the visitors would be encouraged to use the mediaeval village area for starting or ending their visit. To fully integrate the site with the community and identify actions which will have short-term effect. Three critical areas of activity were considered.

A. The rehabilitation of the mediaeval village. An interpretation centre could be established within one of the existing building together with restaurant and other facilities.

B. On-going archaeological excavations and conservation to highlight the elements of the city plan and its architecture, especially those that are comparable with Bet Shean and Pella

C. Develop a village policy for the preservation of the cultural landscape and the encouragement of the traditional agricultural activities including olives and orchards in the terraced terrain.



## Pella

The historical site of Pella is a partially excavated, undeveloped site. This state can serve as an advantage in framing the narrative and interpretation of the site while at the same time calls for considerable investment.

The PUSH team raised several central points that can serve as a basis for further development at the site.

### **1. The main questions – the basis for the program.**

- a. What is the main theme behind the site? What is the most suitable and prominent narrative at Pella? What narrative will bring visitors to the site, which today suffers from various physical and planning problem?
- b. What are the site's main components and archaeological finds?
- c. What are the best observation points to see the entire site and its different sections?
- d. What is the best location for the entrance point to the site? Where will the gate be located?
- e. Where should the rest of the site's facilities be positioned – visitor's center, restaurant, etc.?

### **2. Pella's sub-sites and the different narratives.**

- a. The most ancient part of the site is located on a steep hill, in the northern part of the site and is connected to the Bronze Age.
- b. The Necropolis of Pella, the area where the city's inhabitants were buried throughout history.
- c. The site of the Roman and Byzantine city. This area, located in the center of the site, is today the most visible. This is currently the only place where visitors can make a physical connection to the history of Pella as a Decapolis city. This area could also serve to illustrate the place where the ancient Christian community that fled Jerusalem possibly lived.
- d. An area with the remains of the city from the Early Muslim Period. This is one of the two only sites in Jordan, where remains from the Abbasid periods were found. The site's uniqueness is also connected to the fact that this was the place where one of the most important battles between the Byzantines and the Muslims during the 7th century took place. The battle was headed by Shurachbeel and the site is considered sacred by the Muslims. PUSH team found this narrative to be one of the most promising one, a sub-site that is capable to generate an Arab based heritage tourism to the site.
- e. The area of Modern Pella, located to the west of the ancient site.

### **3. The planning proposition**

- a. The entrance to the site, together with the rest of the site's facilities will be located near the existing road that divides between the Roman site and the Abbasid site. Today, there is only an un-official entrance point in this location and there is a need to plan the site.
- b. Parking: The parking lot will be located near the entrance point and the existing paved road should be broadened
- c. Different trails should be developed, highlighting the different narratives in the history of the site.

- Trail 1 – from the entrance point, through the observation point atop the Roman city to the Roman and Byzantine remains.
- Trail 2 – from the Roman city, one can chose two options: 1. Visit to the Necropolis 2. From the Roman street towards Modern Pella. This trail passes through the green valley that is being cultivated today by local residents.
- Trail 3 – this trail starts in the parking lot and heads towards the Abbasid site. Here a question was raised about how to treat a site where an important battle took place with no remains to be seen.
- Trail 4 – this trail is suitable only for capable walkers. The trail starts in the inn, located to the east of the site. From here the trail descends steeply towards to Roman City. The trail will pass along the "sea level" point where a sign will mark it. From there the trail will continue towards the Roman city and will be connected to the Necropolis trail.

#### 4. Rest Areas.

- A picnic area will be developed in the green valley.
- A shaded area will be developed in the area of the Abbasid city, next to the sign and the monument marking the place where the battle took place.

#### 5. Local trade and Parking facilities.

- Option A: the bus parking lot will be located at the end of the trail, where the groups of tourists will be picked up. It is suggested that his area will be developed also into a place where local merchants will sell food, souvenirs, etc.
- Option B: A commercial zone will be developed closer to modern Pella.



## Bakoura at the Jordan river

The natural landscape of Bakoura lies along one of the most important migratory flyways in the world – the Jordan River Valley. As such Bakoura provides a crucial resting point for migratory birds. The Bakoura area is included in the proposed trans-boundary Jordan River Peace Park, a project being advanced by the tri-lateral environmental peacemaking organization Friends of the Earth Middle East (FoEME). A master plan for the area was proposed by FoEME together with Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, Yale University and other architects and planners from Palestine and Jordan. The area of Bakoura, as envisioned in the FoEME master plan, focuses on developing the area to support bird watchers and enable them to stay overnight in the area. Subsequent phases of the proposed master plan include the adaptive reuse of the former Rotenberg hydroelectric power station which provided electricity to communities on both sides of the Jordan River from 1932-1948.

Building on the Jordan River Peace Park master plan, the PUSH team focused its efforts on the question of how to encourage linkages through design between the Bakoura natural area and the neighboring communities of North Shuna and Bakoura village. To that aim, the PUSH team proposed that visits to the Bakoura area begin in the adjoining village of North Shuna. In the village, local and foreign tourists have the opportunity to visit local sites outside of the boundaries of the Jordan River Peace Park such as the hot springs and thermal baths as well as the ancient tell. Bi-lingual interpretation signs should be designed and installed at the tell to explain its history and importance and along the route to other local sites. Visitor circulation could be further expanded eastward to the Wadi Al Arab wetland dam, with an observation point overlooking the Jordan River and the entire area.

Furthermore, the PUSH team suggested that a regular transportation line of mini-buses and/or private taxis could be established between the city centre of North Shuna, the village of Bakoura and the Bakoura natural area. This transportation line will shuttle visitors to and from the Bakoura natural area while at the same time encouraging visitors to explore North Shuna. At the entrance to the Bakoura natural area, the PUSH pilot site billboard should be installed. An observation point should be developed which would allow visitors to look out over the area including towards Gesher. Ultimately a path should be developed to enable visitors to go down to the Jordan River.





**Pilot Site Design Workshop: August 28-29, 2008**  
**Participants in Alphabetical Order**

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