

## My way to the roof (and how I found a modest chair on top of the world)

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I try to remember now when was the first time I started to think about the idea that took me to the Jerusalem new spirit challenge. I try to make the work of reconstruction in my mind in an attempt to answer the main Herox Q regarding the path and the journey behind an innovation that was submitted to an incentive challenge.

My proposal is already made, done, written and submitted, so surely you can reread it whenever you might be interested, but what was the very start you may rightly ask?

When I try to think about it I get three answers that are more like first insights;

1 Whenever I had a friendly talk with someone and we had reached the conclusion the situation is kind of difficult (which often happens lately in the Holy City due to constant terror and general problematic unsolved political situation), I somehow used to say; ok, fine, I start to climb now to the roof...

Oh no, please, don't do that, wait, we know you face some difficulties, but still love you... my friend would say, hoping I am not about to hang up and just jump holding them accountable for such a drastic step.

But I would laugh insisting on this roof climb, as if it was some journey to the Himalaya. The reason for that is simple; I live in a shared building which is nothing special architecturally, it has 24 standard apartments, 6 floors, one elevator and neighbors that often might forget to say hallo.

However the rather amazing thing about this building is its location — near the bell garden and the wind mill of Jerusalem, overlooking the Mt. of Zion and the historical old city of east Jerusalem. The only way to appreciate the location is to climb the roof, to visit the birds and the clouds, to feel sky limits and to get the uplift of the high.

That's why whenever simple mundane reality starts to get on my nervous, which might unfortunately happen, I would climb the roof and feel relieved. I started to do this years ago with a simple walkman playing Bob Marley 'lion from Zion' and it was so inspiring that I was carried away to conduct a one man's Reggae party — dancing alone on the empty roof.

My neighbor from the sixth fl. didn't like it at all, He is a distinguished historian who writes books about the holocaust and the war of independence and he likes to feel the upper floor is his private kingdom. He didn't like to feel someone is jumping above his head — even though I am not so heavy and I kept to the earphones so there was no external volume at all.



Anyway due to his unfriendly reaction, I took a sun bathing garden chair, put it on the roof and started to do my yoga and mediation above the historian head, hoping to inspire him thus.

Then, as I was engaged in this highly recommended activity, the additional bright idea came to my mind; it's so much more beautiful here than the regular apartments that are so claustrophobic and introverted. It is shared by the birds and the clouds, the sky and the stars who don't seem to mind my presence there (they let me be, they were more friendly than the historian), and has such an amazing view. Why can't we reinvent it as a recreation space for rest and reading, for unjumpy dance and contemplation, for yoga, meditation, art, quiet parties, every possible hobby, organic gardening, country club, fitness, coffee, cakes, and tea place too. Why can't we enjoy it all and make it into our little garden of Eden and nirvanic heaven.

2 The second source of inspiration was an old Beatles song – 'the fool on the heal'; whenever I sat there — I felt like the wise fool on the roof. But then suddenly I had realized it's the best place in the building: it's a real

palace with the most amazing view, it is so relaxing and inspiring, has lots of sun and air, beautiful landscape and its free. Once you are there you don't need windows and balconies, fancy penthouse and private swimming pool. I felt so uplifted, didn't feel at all like jumping anymore, but more like flying.



That's how I started to reinvent the roof and the readymade holy sky as the lost garden of Eden that has to be rediscovered by all of us - not just in the holy city, as it is such a resource of inspiration and fun and could even bring unexpected income to all who share it and in a way own it.

3 The third formative experience happened when my own flat was invaded and attacked by a dynamic herd of ants who took over the kitchen. I looked for some ecological defense program that would be friendly, but still protect my lost privacy and found some solution based on mysterious oranges and other natural ingredients, but still I had to evacuate my kingdom for the night, at least until the smell would go off. But where would I go? Around my building there is no lack of 4 star hotels, only they are terribly expensive and I never fancied sleeping on a golden bed for absurd sums of money — just few meters from my own home from which I was exiled by the most active tribe of ants.

Thus the idea was born: just take the sleeping bag, some candles, hot tea, 90% pure coca bitter chocolate, and spend a night on your private hidden chair, which was well kept secretly from the pedantic historian.

The night I spent there was not fit for a sun bath, but rather most fit for a pure moon bath; it was so relaxing and inspiring that I fell in love anew with my own poetry. The next morning I had experienced a wonderful sunrise and found I had somehow written a new booklet of poetry that included some crystals of moon poems.(The silver light dictated them, I was just the pen). That was the very start of another exciting Herox project which was submitted under the esoteric title 'Revelations of reminiscences of the twilights of my lost Lesser light' and won the first literary prize in the Lunar contest.



At first when I submitted my Garden of Eden roof proposal, I was into Making a Difference in the Holy City.

I thought that The Jerusalem Challenge could revitalize the ancient city of Jerusalem, and answer the call of grassroots NGO New Spirit (*Ruach*

*Hadasha* in Hebrew) for ideas on how to improve the city so that young, modern Israelis would be encouraged to stay.

The 'Rooftop Eden Program' was offering to redeem the city's many rooftop spaces. The wasted neglected spaces could be turned into places for intensive community interaction, with vegetable and herb gardens, studios for yoga and sunbathing, cultural events, sports and every possible creative artistic, healing, fun, sport activity one could think of.

Here is a resource that is asking for creativity right at the best locations of the city; it is the empty architectural space in which one can play with all potentialities of recreation for free. It looked like an unexpected present hidden and rediscovered — waiting for daring implementations.

It is not expensive as the infrastructure is already there, it has lots of open free space + fine air and it can answer the serious problem of lack of public space in a highly populated urbane metropolises which is rather expensive in terms of real-estate.

Jerusalem has a population density greater than that of major metropolises like Tokyo and as such living space is naturally expensive. The rooftops could answer the urgent need for free and open space for fun, personal development, communal activity and green areas that could be used for organic gardening and fresh air. Here was a resource that could really improve the quality of living of the residents and at the same time upgrade the general appearance of the buildings and neighborhoods. Instead of old satellite dishes, the new roofs could add some color and activity creating a new skyline for the city. Rooftops could be the new startup for a smarter holy city, as here was the potential for countless communal clubs — offering wide spectrum of activities — such as agriculture and cultural, as the roofs could be turned into the temples of arts and hobbies for all to enjoy, In a way it seemed like a newly discovered studio waiting for lay artists from all walks of life to experiment with and fly to limitless skies of inspiration.

In the time that passed *New spirit org* had started to experiment with appropriate spaces for a pilot Rooftop Eden Program, that could be implemented on communal neighborhood basis. In fact not far from the picturesque market place of Jerusalem, there is already a parallel project on top of a huge office and commercial building, where under the title 'the balcony' one can find now new community center based on



sustainability and residential activity which include organic cooperative and projects of city renewal.

As for myself, I am still waiting patiently for an invitation from the mayor for an important meeting in which I would like to explain the endless potentialities of the Rooftop Eden Program for the city of Jerusalem. It seems to me he is still unaware how far it might reach when stated that sky is the limit. I would give just two examples for future possibilities;

1 The most urgent social problem facing Israel is the expensive cost of real-estate which is extremely difficult for young couples, new immigrants and low income sectors. The meaning of the roof solution is that in every shared building one has already the basic infrastructure and space — ready to be used by at least one more floor of new apartments - ready to be built in a much more advanced architectural level regarding sustainability and ecology.

2 The most urgent and really critical political challenge — threatening the wellbeing of the holy city, and as a matter of fact world peace in general, has to do with the old city of Jerusalem and to be more specific with the Temple Mt. Once the Eden roof principle is taken into consideration and implemented wisely — it would be possible to find sacred 'room' for all rival monotheistic religions (including Judaism, Islam and Christianity) who find themselves at present in dangerous conflict over limited holy territory centered on top of the Temple Mt.

The simplest principle behind the Garden of Eden on rooftops is applicable universally in any global urban center, as the problem of lack of real estate space and expensive prices – is surely not limited to Jerusalem. Empty neglected roofs with readymade infrastructure are to be found any place.

Lately I was formulating project ideas based on the same principle for two challenges; the first put by the Herox Autism contest in which I participated and the second sent to European organizations who face now the highly urgent challenge of the new waves of Syrian refugees.

Thus what started as an adventurous odyssey into some remote territories in a shared residential building, and later developed into a local project, might have the potential to solve some major global challenges.

