CITY OF COLLISION

Jerusalem and the Principles of Conflict Urbanism

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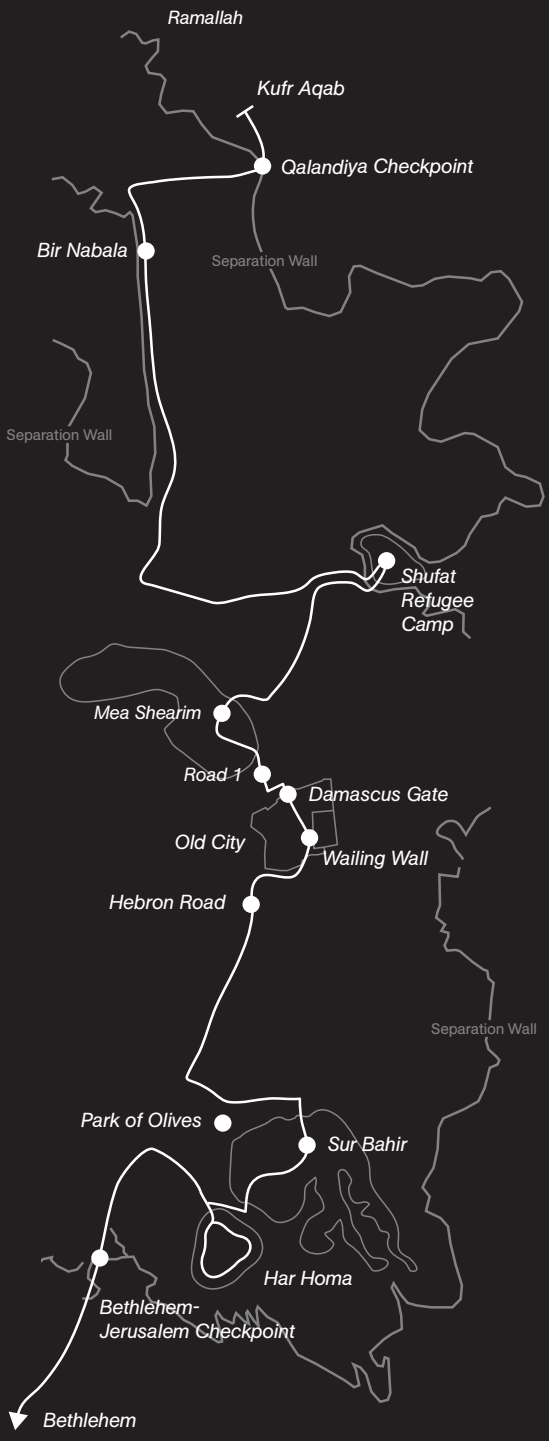

PREFACE

LEARNING FROM/FOR JERUSALEM

In 2003, we launched an open research process incorporating Palestinian, Israeli, and European participants. Our endeavor set out to understand the production of space in Jerusalem, in light of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the city inhabitants' parallel strategies of resistance, adaptation, and survival. These initial goals, however, were soon caught up in dramatic developments around the city. At the time of this publication, the construction of the Israeli Separation Wall in the Jerusalem area is in its final stages, with grave consequences for Palestinians inside and outside the city, and despite an admonitory ruling by the International Court of Justice in The Hague. Israeli occupation of the rest of the West Bank continues through settlement expansions, permanent restrictions on movement, and checkpoint regimes. In response, Jewish Jerusalemites have been exposed to a sustained series of deadly suicide attacks. Prospects for a renewed peace process seem more distant than ever.

Simultaneously, recent years have witnessed an increase in violent conflicts unfolding in urban environments. Political, religious, ethnic, or cultural conflicts have affected Baghdad, New York, London, Paris, and Istanbul and influence our perceptions about, and use of, space. Despite its peculiarities, Jerusalem must be considered against this global horizon. Cities are being transformed through government measures against the backdrop of a pervading fear of terror threats—be they real or imagined. In the end, urban diversity itself is perceived as a potential threat: attacks from within are anticipated in the form of disguised fundamentalists, extremists, assassins, and suicide bombers, fuelling suspicion of the unfamiliar. Security, control, and panic are all influencing contemporary urban spatial production; empty spaces, wastelands, parks, or roads can become new frontiers. Suburbs can be transformed into gated enclaves, and suburban shopping centers into fortresses. Jerusalem—once perceived as an isolated case, taken hostage as it were by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—seems to have become now to be an antecedent for other cities' transformation. We believe that a study of an urbanism so extreme, as that of Jerusalem, will benefit our common understanding of the relationship between political violence and the production of urban space. In Jerusalem, these aspects have intensified over decades and in extreme ways only latent or less pronounced in other urban contexts.

TRILATERALITY

When 30 Palestinian, Israeli, and European students of architecture met in Jerusalem for the very first time, the conditions surrounding their study appeared most unfavorable. At the height of the Second Intifada against the Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip, West Bank, and East Jerusalem, most Palestinian-Israeli contacts were frozen. The cycles of successive retaliation, targeted killings, and suicide attacks fueled a downward spiral towards greater polarization. Technically, meetings became nearly impossible: Israel had imposed "closure" policies on the occupied West Bank that made Palestinian access to Jerusalem almost impossible. Israeli travel to the West Bank was made illegal through military order, and even Israeli trips to the eastern part of Jerusalem were commonly undertaken under armed guard. Despite all odds, participants resolved to escape momentarily from the bounds of collective identity and suffering, risking accusations of "normalization" in their dealings with the "enemy," in order to engage as individuals in a process of joint research.

This assemblage was made possible by the project "Grenzgeografien – geographies of conflict," a joint initiative of the International Peace and Cooperation Center in East Jerusalem, The Bezalel Academy of Art and Design in West Jerusalem and the University of the Arts in Berlin, later joined by the Federal Technical University of Zurich. Our trilateral project investigated the production and use of urban space in the prototypical microcosm of the Palestinian Arab village of Sur Bahir and the Jewish settlement of Har Homa, which are situated as neighbors in Jerusalem's eastern periphery, next to the newly-built Separation Wall. Here competing interests and claims collide in full force, leaving deep imprints on the physical landscape and fabric of everyday life.

The unique trilateral composition of the teams allowed them to break everyday rules of urban segregation, moving transversally through ethnic barriers, buffer zones, and invisible walls. Momentarily, participants were able to bend stereotypical ethnic roles, thus gaining a new qualitative access to the city—access that has long been lost to Jerusalem's residents, including its professional and academic communities. Israelis and Palestinians entered spaces and were introduced to individuals, that were previously entirely inaccessible: Israeli students entered Palestinian neighborhoods (many for the first time), while many of the Palestinian students received for the first time Israeli access permits to the city and entered Jewish settlements. During the workshops that followed between 2003 and 2005, participants gathered unique material extracted from surveys, conversations with locals, and observations of everyday situations. Students negotiated and concluded their in-depth analysis by creating joint mapping projects, envisioning urban change under conditions of conflict, and assembling a unique atlas, which has now become part of this publication.

The results of these workshops encouraged us to open the project to a wider community of researchers and practitioners in a city where the conflict in all its manifestations has stymied bilateral engagement in professional discourse. Recognizing the limitations, not least of which was a lack of mandate, we were convinced of the productive possibilities for confronting difference and engaging in dialogue as professionals (rather than as politicians), including exposing and

recognizing each side's biases, as well as the power imbalance at work. Forty local and international experts in the fields of architecture, urban and cultural studies participated in the conference, "Cities of Collision," held at the Van Leer Institute Jerusalem in November 2004, creating a new platform from which to consider Jerusalem in the context of recent global processes of urban transformation and new patterns of conflict. Their contributions and discussions resulted in the essays published in this volume.

READING JERUSALEM

Through this anthology of essays, maps, and photographic documentary, we offer readers a spatial and cultural insight into the dynamism, ambivalence, and complexity of life in Jerusalem. The complex and rapidly changing condition of Jerusalem does not allow for a comprehensive overview—nor can this publication offer proposals for solving the deep-rooted conflict that has kept the city and its inhabitants hostage for almost eight decades. Instead, contributions to this publication will open up different perspectives and provide qualitative insights into the political, cultural, and socioeconomic forces operating in the city. It also reveals the inhabitants' strategies of everyday survival, which can only be understood from a multilateral perspective. Still other essays will consider Jerusalem in relation to global processes of urban change, thereby offering new perspectives on a city that is usually viewed in isolation from its history or against the selective backdrop of the Middle East conflict.

Division and segregation has become an increasingly dominant paradigm, not just in the Middle East. This book is a plea for crossing boundaries and for preserving and treasuring eroding areas of fluidity—and not only in Jerusalem. It is hoped that this book will equip us with new insights and analytical tools for reading contested urban spaces in Jerusalem and elsewhere.

We would like to thank the partners and participants whose unyielding support has made this project possible.

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