JERUSALEM

The Spatial Politics of a Divided Metropolis

Anne B. Shlay and Gillad Rosen

Jerusalem

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Over this period, three children were born (Rosen) and one graduated from high school and college (Shlay), with all providing endless richness and insanity in our lives. Our hope is for this book to be used as a vehicle to preserve Jerusalem for our children and for those across the globe, not just one group or another. Somehow Jerusalem survives, and we want it to continue.

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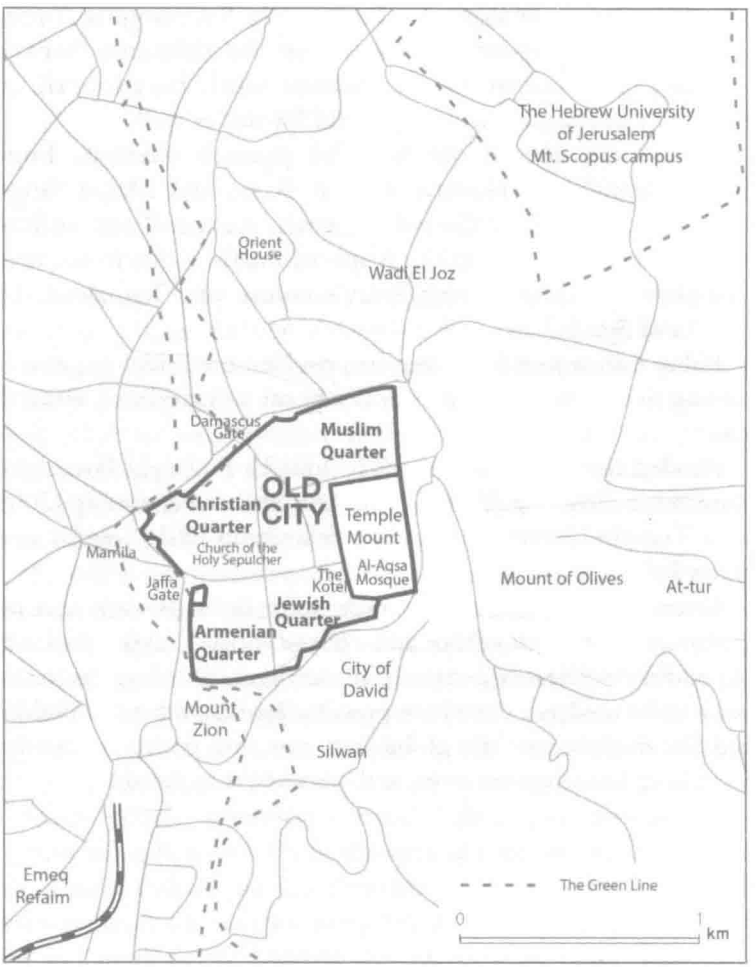
Map of Central Jerusalem



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1
Introduction: The Politics of Space

The most dominant global trend today is the dramatic growth of cities. From the mega-cities of the third world to the sprawling hubs that define US cities, urban development has become rapid, irreversible, and endless. The question is not whether cities will grow but how will they grow and what form(s) they will take. Will city development practices embrace density, mass transit, and smart growth or will they hang on to the large, low-density homes that produce urban sprawl? The reigning definition of urban form in the twenty-first century is up for grabs.

The growing city is an increasingly unequal one. Escalating neoliberal urbanization has brought with it growing economic disparities and the heightened polarization of rich and poor. Gentrification has become a global force. The forces that transform urban areas into havens for the rich also create neighborhoods of concentrated poverty. Mirroring global trends, the city's rich are getting more affluent and the poor more destitute.

The growing city is more and more a contested one. Cities used to serve as spatial vehicles for upward mobility and assimilation. Now, increased immigration along with urban growth has not homogenized ethnic and racial identities but strengthened them.

Urban life is characterized by social and economic differences – differences that are both spatially visible and often polarizing.

The ultimate contested city is Jerusalem (Bollens, 2000; Nasrallah, 2003). Jerusalem is at the center of the geopolitical conflict between Palestinians and Israelis, who both consider the city to be their capital and integral to their respective national identities (see Figure 1.1). It is home for large numbers of ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) Jews – the Haredim, who battle for neighborhood dominance with secular Jerusalemites. Jerusalem is also a poor city in which its poverty is largely out of sight from its wealthy residents and the endless parade of tourists. It is an unusual place whose many divisions by religion, nationality, and class appear to define it as a place and community. Conflict over and within Jerusalem is its most prominent feature (Kliot and Mansfeld, 1999; Calame and Charlesworth, 2009).

At the apex of modern-day Jerusalem is its Old City – a place encased by thick walls of stone. The Old City is less than half a square mile in area but from the outside it appears much larger.

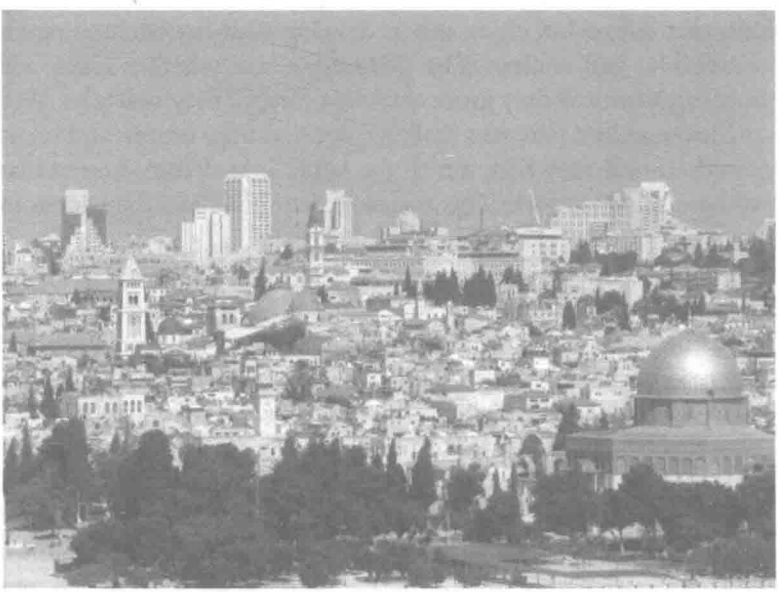

Figure 1.1 Jerusalem's Old City and its downtown (© Gillad Rosen)

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Some people mistake it for a museum because it houses some of the most precious holy places for Muslims, Jews, and Christians. Although chronologically ancient, the Old City is very much alive, brimming with vital institutions for heathens and faithful alike and a place for tourists as well as local residents. It is a site for special occasions like Bar Mitzvahs but is also where everyday activities occur. Many people live in the Old City. Within its ancient walls a host of commercial activities take place. One can buy a wedding ring or cake, find a lawyer, buy shoes or a new dress, or have a festive meal. The Old City may be old, but it is still kicking.

On any given day, young children grace its walkways with their rambunctious energy as they go to and from the schools housed within its walls. Men of all ages rush to prayers. Young kids ride their bikes fast and furiously, almost hitting someone or something every few seconds. Old City rhythms keep time with the various calls to prayers, the bells of the cathedrals, and the setting of the sun. Sometimes the walkways appear dangerously crowded.

The Old City is formally divided into four quarters – Muslim, Jewish, Christian, and Armenian – each with its own sacred traditions. This is not some kind of Epcot Disney creation with imported authentic actors; it is the real deal. Shopkeepers routinely report that their business longevity encompasses two, three, and sometimes four or more generations of family commercial activity.

The Old City is a microcosm of and reference point for the Palestinian–Israeli conflict. With no resolution in sight, it is politically in the hands of Israel, which has absolutely no intention of giving up, dividing, or sharing it. Although political ownership of the Old City is theoretically up for negotiation, all wagers are on Israel to work to maintain its sovereignty and control. But good money is also on the Palestinians to effectively challenge Israeli sovereignty with their own political and religious claims.

Located on a hill, the Old City is bounded on its west side by the stone-encased Mamilla shopping mall, a collection of upscale chain stores and restaurants that provide panoramic views of the western part of Jerusalem. This view showcases the city's splendor, affluence, and beauty as a world-class locale for visitors and residents alike.

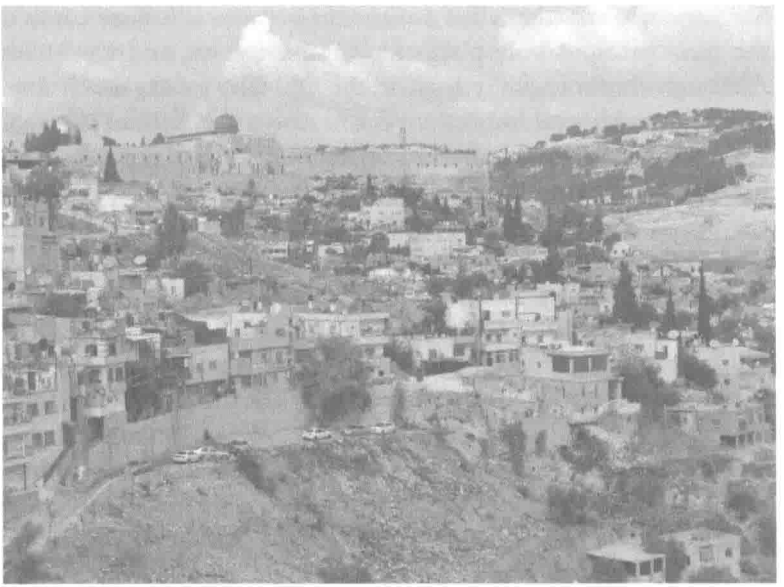

Figure 1.2 Silwan, the City of David, and the Old City (© Anne Shlay)

On the other side of the Old City is a very large community of densely packed homes that appear to be built into the very hills on which they reside. This is the Palestinian village of Silwan, a long-established community of over fifty-five thousand people. Israel annexed Silwan to Jerusalem after the 1967 war, an illegal move according to international law. Silwan's proximity to the Old City, its militancy against the Israelis, and its location along a political faultline should Jerusalem ever be divided has propelled the village into the public eye (Pullan and Gwiazda, 2009; Mizrachi, 2012). This view of Jerusalem is one of many visible landscapes of the conflict between Jews and Palestinians (see Figure 1.2).

Immediately to the south is the City of David (in Hebrew: Ir David), a rich archaeological site that has produced evidence of the existence of a biblical Jewish city from many centuries ago (Reich et al. 2007). This place, according to biblical history, was captured for the Israelites from the Jebusites by King David (McKenzie,

2002). The conquest of Jerusalem by David is believed to have paved the way for his son, the future King Solomon, to build the First Temple.

The City of David has been designated a national park with the expressed intent to protect land outside the Old City walls. This park is officially known as the Jerusalem Walls National Park. The City of David also lies within the boundaries of Silwan, so parts of the village fall within the national park itself (Mizrachi, 2012).

Although the Israeli government is the legal administrator of national parks, for all practical purposes the City of David is run by a private entity, the Ir David Foundation, or, as it is called in Israel, El'ad. El'ad finances and controls City of David archaeological excavations and operates a center for educational tourism around the site. Over four hundred thousand people visit the City of David site on an annual basis. But in addition to the archaeology and tourist components of El'ad, it finances a residential program. El'ad purchases housing within Silwan and rents these homes to Israeli Jews (Pullan and Gwiazda, 2009).

The City of David nestled within the contours of Silwan provides another panoramic view of Jerusalem. This landscape is more complicated than the others. Closest to the Old City walls is the City of David visitors' center, a glitzy entrance to what is billed as the birthplace of Jerusalem's Jewish heritage. The glitz then gives way to the densely packed Palestinian homes of Silwan that are lined up along narrow streets. Dotted among the Palestinian houses are glimpses of Israeli flags that designate the presence of Jewish residents. This is contested space – a place of conflict between Palestinians and Jews; one managed by the Israeli government through its steward, El'ad (Greenberg, 2009). Here the public and private forces associated with money and power appear to gradually make their way down to the valley of Silwan, the location of the proposed King David's Garden, intended to be a Jewish-historical tourist site. For Israel, these developments are building up its tourism capacity by offering up access to the biblical heritage of the Jewish people. For Palestinians, they are nothing more than the Judaization of space – the process of conquering land, housing, neighborhoods, and communities through the in-migration of

Israeli Jews (Bartal, 2012). Many speak of this as Israel creating "facts on the ground" (Zertal and Eldar, 2007): the physical development of infrastructure, buildings, and people to create the "fact" of Jewish control of place (Abu El-Haj, 2001).

Jerusalem is best known as the spiritual center for the three largest monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Yet other-worldly transcendence is far from its day-to-day reality. Jerusalem is a city bombarded by conflict. These disputes are largely about the city itself – about the land on which it is built, its roads and transit systems, its neighborhoods and homes, its places of worship, the social and ethnic origins of its residents, who may live with whom, who gets what and when, as well as any other permutation that speaks to issues of land, space, and power. Visible struggles take place when the Israeli government swoops into Silwan and demolishes the homes of the Palestinian families living there on grounds of illegal developments. Jerusalemites witness conflict when Palestinians protest the Israeli government's refusal to permit the residents of Silwan to build on their land or modify the physical dimensions of their housing. Jerusalem is filled with protests and demonstrations by everyone, about everything.

Yet some of the most important conflicts are latent or behind the scenes: for example, when the Israeli government transfers control over land and development to moneyed interests in the City of David. Some aspects of conflict are not manifested as battles at all, such as when people claim that an individual person (e.g. King David or the Prophet Muhammad) built a city or seized control of a place over three thousand years ago. Though no real proof of the activities of individual people can be obtained through archaeology, people accept false or nearly false claims and adopt them as true. The activities of the organizations around the City of David are able to manage conflict precisely through their ability to tell a compelling story about Jewish history – a story that mobilizes political acquiescence to the dominant point of view. In other words, Israeli Jews believe that Israeli domination of and destruction of the Palestinian village of Silwan is justifiable because Silwan sits in the way of Jewish access to their heritage.

The mobilization of public opinion is most powerful when it minimizes overt visible conflict and mimics consensus. The absence of overt conflict in situations of Israeli dominance over Palestinian development is precisely when the power equation is so one-sided that any explicit control is invisible. The flow of money from El'ad to ensure that archaeological efforts proceed unimpeded is one example of how global forces can work quietly and out of sight to move the conflict one way or another.

Jerusalem is the poster child for the divided city. It is divided over religion and religiosity as well as by race, ethnicity, and class. The battle over who owns and controls Jerusalem is the focus of national, regional, and international attention. Its fate in the world above may be the stuff of prophecy, but its destiny on earth is a fight that appears to have no limits. The struggle over who controls Jerusalem seems to be almost eternal. For those routinely engaged in this battle, there is little room for negotiation or conciliation. The struggle for Jerusalem is viewed as a zero-sum game, in which there are only winners and losers. Jerusalem is not a realm where compromise goes down easy, if at all.

Jerusalem is in the news internationally on an almost weekly if not daily basis. Sometimes it is because an American politician is visiting, usually a Secretary of State or someone else who is of importance. Sometimes there are complaints that the government is building housing in places deemed off limits by international law. The news focuses on Jerusalem because it is frequently the locale for violence, killing, battles, and war. Death and destruction do not get every country on the nightly news, but when Jerusalem is involved, its place in the media is virtually guaranteed.

Yet Israel as a country is an abstraction even to American Jews who are effectively initiated into the tribe of Israel from their moment of birth. People are citizens of countries but they live and love in cities. According to the old song by Roger Miller, "England swings like a pendulum do," but everyone knows that it is in the global city of London that the swings are swung. The United States is a melting pot but American blending happens in places like New York, Los Angeles, or Miami. Political demands for democracy occur in countries but the ground zero for fighting

for these rights happens in cities like Moscow, Beijing, Kiev, and Cairo. Citizens pledge allegiance to nation states, but their experience of homeland occurs closer to the earth in large urban centers. Amalgams of memories call up the particulars of the places in which people reside. People may die for countries, but living takes place in cities.

There is substantial disagreement about the basic facts of Jerusalem and there are a large number of claims and counterclaims. Located in the middle of Israel, Jerusalem is claimed as the nation's capital. Yet the rest of the world does not recognize Jerusalem's political status as the sovereign center of the country. Land adjacent to Jerusalem has been politically annexed and developed by Israel while others testify that the land was occupied and then stolen by Israel and is really part of some other country. Jews maintain that it has a historical affiliation with Jerusalem dating back three thousand years and that Jerusalem was the site of the First and Second Jewish Temples, which were themselves in place for over three hundred years. Others, however, deny the importance of Jerusalem to Judaism, suggesting that Jewish duration in the city was brief and casting doubt on the existence of the First and Second Temples. People even claim that the Western Wall in the Old City was not part of the Jewish Second Temple but instead belongs to Islam (Reiter, 2008).

The statuses of particular places within Jerusalem are intensely disputed. Virtually every idea about the city's history generates a group or campaign that denies its legitimacy. Places deemed sacred by some are rendered profane by others, and vice versa. What some people might consider to be compelling ideas or simply facts about Jerusalem are treated as ideology and lies by others. There are virtually no truisms that hold about Jerusalem because anything that someone says is true about the city is immediately contradicted by someone else.

The most basic questions are political. Answers to fundamental questions that would seem politically neutral are not so easy to answer. For example, how big is Jerusalem? The answer depends on how one defines it. Whose definition of Jerusalem do you use? What parts do you include or exclude? Should settlements

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