

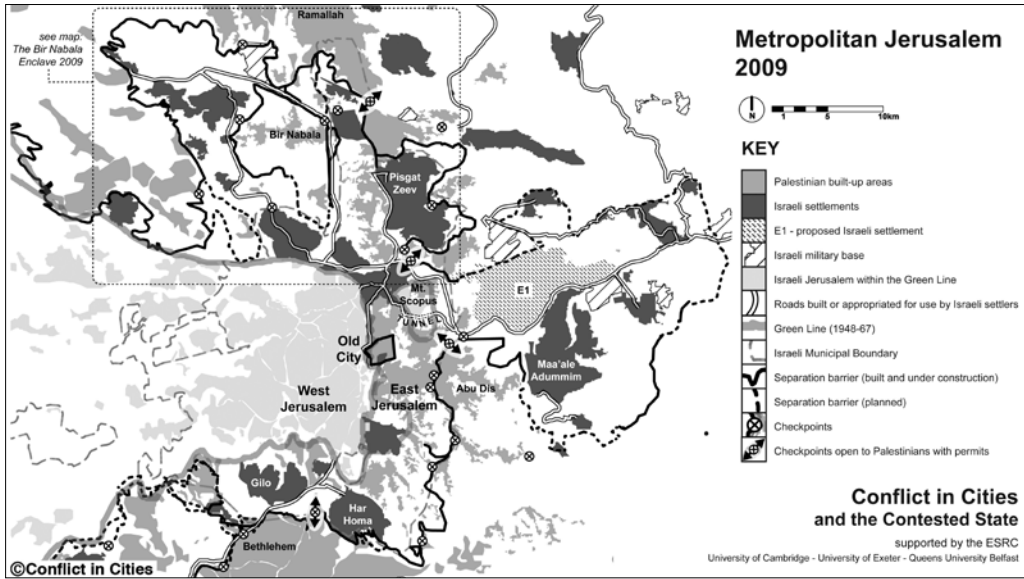


## The Space of Contested Jerusalem

Wendy Pullan

Entrance to the tunnel under the Hebrew University, Mount Scopus. *Source: Conflict in Cities.*

Jerusalem is regarded as one of the classic divided cities,<sup>1</sup> contested by two peoples, separated by ethnicity, nationality, language and religion, with concrete and visible fissures embedded in the urban fabric. The terminology is widely used, by the *Conflict in Cities* research team as much as anyone else; nonetheless, the complexity of a city like Jerusalem increasingly calls to question the term ‘divided’, with its implied sense of clearly separated sections or two halves roughly equal to each other.<sup>2</sup> With respect to Jerusalem, what do we really mean by divided? And if it is a divided city, what form does this take today, for clearly Jerusalem is not the same city that it was in 1967. Over forty years of occupation have produced a situation where the Israelis and Palestinians do not have equal rights and opportunities, and confusion and shifting policies underlie the way the city has changed over time. This murky situation is particularly evident, although not always made explicit or addressed, in the



Map of Metropolitan Jerusalem showing settlements, villages and separation barrier. *Source: Conflict in Cities.*

spatial qualities that characterise and differentiate the Palestinian and Israeli sectors. Significant historical residues are still in play in Jerusalem today, yet, much of what is understood as the city's current urban space has been shaped by the conflict, and conversely, also impacts upon it. It would be fair to say that today the spaces which Israelis and Palestinians inhabit in Jerusalem are radically different from each other, although the divisions between them are not always simple or obvious.

## Jerusalem: Divisions and Fragmentation

Division of the city is rooted in the 1948-67 period, when the ceasefire line between Israel and Jordan became an international border running north-south through the centre of the city; during this time, the two countries each had their own institutions and jurisdiction over their own half of the city. Then, it was possible to speak of two halves of the city; effectively, Jerusalem was two truncated but autonomous urban centres with UN supervision of the border and crossings closed to Arabs and Israelis. The border areas became derelict, and as might be expected, the two halves of the city shrank away from each other; one side was oriented westward to Israel whilst the other focused east on Jordan. This changed with the 1967 war. After capturing Jordanian Jerusalem, Israel annexed it just ten days later. It was a bold move, one not recognised by any other state or international body, and today the large majority of Palestinians remain opposed to any sort of unification under Israeli rule. But what sort of city is it that Israel has so desired to unify and the Palestinians have resisted?

First of all, it is worth remembering that traditionally Jerusalem, as is typical in

the Middle East, has been a city of quarters. In the Old City, today's division into four quarters (Muslim, Christian, Jewish and Armenian, plus the Haram al-Sharif), is an oversimplified and modern interpretation of the city that does not properly reflect the many smaller quarters and neighbourhoods that existed within each area of the city; historically, rigid separations were rare, and instead, customary landmarks were recognised by the residents as marking different precincts. Various ethnic and religious groups often lived in close proximity, sometimes separated by only a residential wall or an alley, or else different communities were defined by streets with market stalls, coffeehouses, baths, bakeries and workshops. Despite their overly simple divisions, today's quarters continue to be separated primarily by commercial and semi-public functions rather than borders. Even with large areas given over to present-day tourist functions, this traditional manner of defining space is still visible and viable; the boundaries between quarters are 'soft', mostly made up of market streets that provide places for both mixing and separation. By simply catering to the needs of everyday life, the activities on the market streets structure and nuance urban differentiation.

From 1918, British planning continued to develop Jerusalem neighbourhood by neighbourhood; but unlike the older quarters, these were regarded as autonomous communities, primarily oriented to their road systems, for modern efficiency, and separated by green space, employing a modern planning practice based on buffer zones.<sup>3</sup> These new neighbourhoods were planned as distinct and autonomous enclaves rather than quarters, with no means for creating transitions or structuring difference between one neighbourhood and the next; rather than streets with their markets, workshops and coffee houses, picturesque valleys devoid of people and urban activities separated them. Israeli planning between 1948 and 67, and especially after 1967 followed in this direction,<sup>4</sup> and many of the new suburbs continued to be designed as individual enclaves, accessed and structured by primary road systems and separated by open landscape. It would be wrong to see British planning apart from colonial interests where much of it was initiated to Westernise the city. But after 1967, this sort of modern enclave planning was used once again to serve a new purpose, this time nationalistic. Extensive and large suburban settlements, growing to populations of 40,000 – 50,000 and intended for Jewish residents only, were built on Palestinian land in East Jerusalem.<sup>5</sup> Like the enclaves planned by the British, physical autonomy was, at least superficially, a prime characteristic; however, in strategic planning terms, the new settlements were located according to their relationship to Palestinian habitation. The early settlements were configured as a 'security ring' around the Jewish city; it is a concept made quite clear after the initial wave of construction, in a 1982 document prepared for Mayor Teddy Kollek's international advisory council, the Jerusalem Committee, clearly stating that 'the ring of settlements will provide a necessary buffer in case of any political or military pressure.'<sup>6</sup> As the settlements around and through Jerusalem have increased in number and expanded in size, each was built adjacent to, or in some particular relationship with, one or more Palestinian village or neighbourhood.<sup>7</sup> While the security argument is still regularly used, it is possible to see that the growing Israeli settlements have been sited to block physically the



The valley and separation barrier between Pisgat Zeev and Hizma. *Source: Conflict in Cities.*

expansion of the Palestinian villages.<sup>8</sup> Today, many examples of tight borders exist, and a map of Jerusalem shows a close patchwork of settlements and villages across the city.

It is when the configurations of settlements and villages are viewed three-dimensionally that their true impact emerges. The settlements are located on high ground, fortress-style architecture with heavy stone walls, buttresses and towers, so that they look down on the lower Palestinian villages that traditionally cover the slopes rather than the peaks of the hills. In effect, each settlement shadows the Palestinian areas, and by doing so, their ‘superior’ presence is always felt. Due to the open valleys between them, Israeli settlements and Palestinian villages are always separated, but at the same time, each is visible to the other. With rare exceptions, direct physical links are absent and especially vehicular connecting roads do not exist. This odd combination of uninterrupted ocular intimacy with no physical access makes any sort of normal neighbourly relations impossible, and such an unremitting gaze can only render the ‘other side’ as mysterious and forbidden; eventually it may become vilified.

That this expansion into Palestinian Jerusalem was intended to maintain unity of the city under Israeli rule seems assured; again, the material prepared for the Jerusalem Committee makes clear:

The overriding, undisputed principle underlying Jerusalem's planning is the realization of her unity...[by] building up the city in such a way as to preclude the bi-polar emergence of two national communities and forestall any possibility of re-dividing it along such lines.<sup>9</sup>

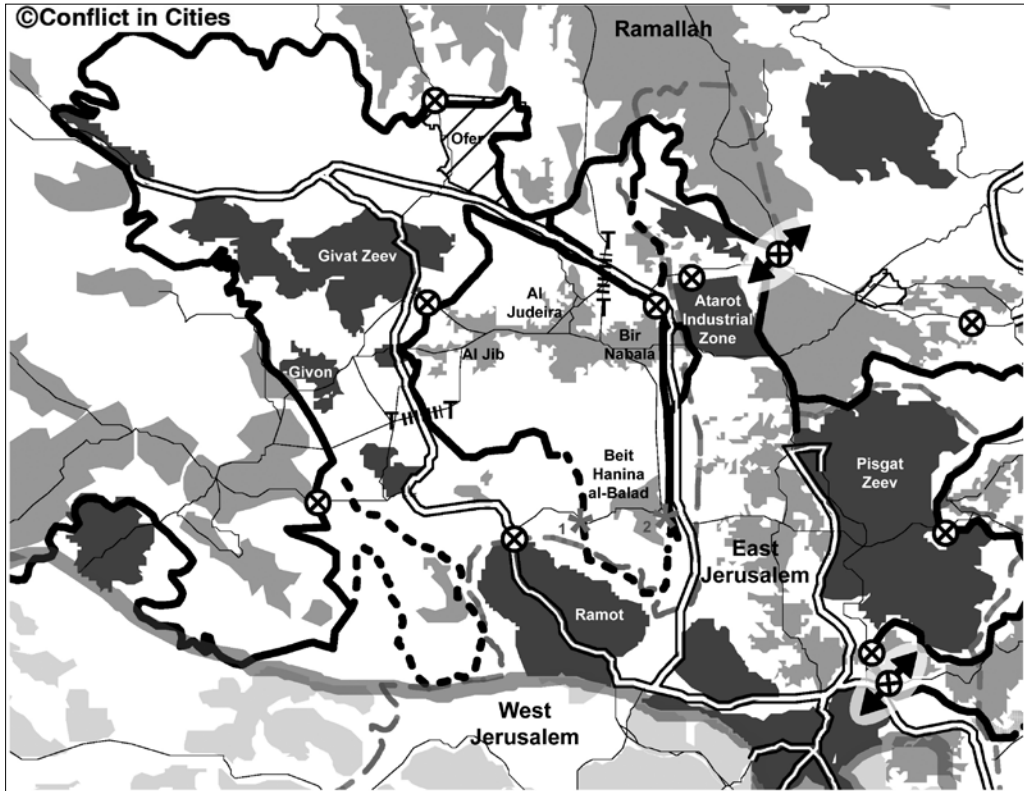
Such a vision seems to have been regarded by the Israeli authorities as an innovative means for asserting their hegemony; the document goes on to say:

In the last few years Jerusalem has been moulded into a greater Jerusalem that is altering the physical and political character of the region.<sup>10</sup>

Promoting not just segregated living for Israelis and Palestinians, this kind of planning established a radical form of frontier urbanism where residential areas with civilian populations are used to confront the 'other' in ways that, without any direct means of access or communication, can never be consummated or resolved. There is an inherent contentiousness in such planning and under Israeli stewardship it has spread throughout East Jerusalem's peripheral regions. Moreover, whilst the idea of bilateral partition between Israel and Palestine has lingered at least in abstract terms, the spatial configurations of post 1967 Jerusalem are now probably too complex for this possibility in any way that offers urban viability to both sides. This situation is now reflected in the contorted and inequitable path of the Israeli separation barrier or wall.

In many ways, surveillance cameras, barbed wire, and fortress-like architecture have produced introverted and bounded Israeli settlements around Jerusalem, creating a local form of gated communities determined by politics and manipulation of the topography. Yet, despite the autonomy of each of these neighbourhoods, the planning strategies have focused upon spatial contiguity between them. Reciprocal with this has been the truncating and isolation of Palestinian centres. Hence, for example, the addition in the 1980s of the Har Homa settlement to fill a gap in the initial ring of Israeli suburbs in southern Jerusalem also provided a huge block between Palestinian Bethlehem and Jerusalem. Particularly controversial today are plans for the E1 area east of the Israeli-imposed 1968 municipal border; with extensive infrastructure in place but above ground construction halted, this is a settlement in waiting.<sup>11</sup> Said to be the most controversial of all the Israeli incursions into the Occupied Territories because it lies in a position to sever the northern and southern sectors of the West Bank, if completed E1 would also link the huge settlement of Maale Adumim to Israeli Jerusalem, and in so doing, create a west-east Israeli corridor dividing Palestinian East Jerusalem and effectively doing away with it. Clearly, these huge planning moves intended to consolidate Israeli spatial contiguity and have the opposite effect on Palestinian space, causing severance, fragmentation and even obliteration.

So, to summarise: the legacy of forty years of Israeli planning is a series of physically autonomous Jewish residential enclaves connected and structured by arterial roads that are interspersed to shadow Palestinian villages and neighbourhoods in a way that is fragmented, oriented by the distant gaze, and allows no direct



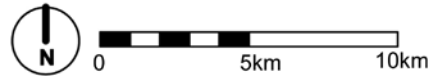
## The Bir Nabala Enclave 2009

### KEY

- Palestinian built-up areas
- Israeli settlements
- Israeli military base
- Israeli Jerusalem within the Green Line
- Roads built or appropriated for use by Israeli settlers
- Other main roads

1\* Barrier Gate closed under normal circumstances

2\* Road Gate closed under normal circumstances



- Green Line (1948-67)
- Israeli Municipal Boundary
- Separation barrier (built and under construction)
- Separation barrier (planned)
- Checkpoints
- Checkpoints open to Palestinians with permits
- Tunnel access to enclave

## Conflict in Cities and the Contested State

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Map of the Bir Nabala enclave and surrounding area. *Source: Conflict in Cities.*

contact. Spatial complexity is a primary feature of the occupation; the separation barrier has not caused this situation, rather it reflects it. Clearly a great chasm exists between Israelis and Palestinians and in the varieties of popular imagination there is the idea of two sides to Jerusalem; especially strong are cognitive borders which dictate where one believes that he or she can or cannot go. But proposals for bilateral division, that assume two sides, Israel and Palestine, do not reflect the complex spatial reality that can be seen in maps and that exists on the ground. Moreover, because of a highly controlled planning ideology and process, there is not just extreme urban fragmentation, but the quality of the space itself differs; as we shall see, this has become characterised by what can be described as boundedness and mobility determined by ethnicity and national identity.

### **Boundedness and Mobility: Palestine and Israel**

One of the major results of the Israeli separation barrier in the Jerusalem area has been the creation of artificial Palestinian enclaves, enclosed by the wall with guarded checkpoints. To the north of Jerusalem, the villages of al-Jib, Bir Nabala, al-Judeira, and Beit Hanina al-Balad have been looped together to form the so-called Bir Nabala enclave. Historically, these Palestinian centres were recognised as ‘Jerusalem villages’ in a system where familial connections, market outlets, religious sites and reciprocal courtesies and protection gave structure to the continuity of rural and urban space. In modern times, the villages continued to be linked symbiotically to Jerusalem enjoying economic outlets in the city for village agricultural and manufactured goods, and institutional support such as hospitals and the main al-Aqsa mosque; the villages supplied residential neighbourhoods for Jerusalemites wishing extra-urban housing. A recent study describes what had been the positive impact of these links, and the widespread social and economic deterioration of the villages since they have been severed from Jerusalem.<sup>12</sup> In forcing the villages into an enclave with a checkpoint to Ramallah and cutting the connection to Jerusalem, they have been unilaterally reoriented from one city to the other. The traditional correspondence of socio-economic factors with spatial settings no longer exists: the socially primed economic connections have gone dead, houses lie empty, the Ramallah hospitals cannot cope with the crowds, and villagers cannot get to al-Aqsa mosque.

The isolation and reorientation of the Bir Nabala enclave is dictated by the transportation system as much as by the separation barrier. Linked one to the other by a road with checkpoints only at either end, the villages are like beads on a string; a problem in one village -- any road block or stoppage -- means difficulties in all, resulting in an imposed and unnecessary system of dependencies. Beyond the enclave’s enclosing wall is a circle of other inhabited areas, this time the Israeli settlements of Ofer, Givat Zeev, Givon, Ramot and Atarot Industrial Zone; they are connected by their own transportation system, known as a bypass road, that encircles the Bir Nabala enclave and separates Israeli drivers from any bottle necks



The edge of Al-Quds University and the separation barrier, Abu Dis. *Source: Conflict in Cities.*



Two spatial realities: the entrance to Hadassah Hospital, Mount Scopus and the blocked entrance to Issawiya. *Source: Conflict in Cities.*



or checkpoints experienced by the Palestinians. Two transportation infrastructures, one wrapped around the other, have been carefully constructed to create discrepant and segregated spatial systems; the inner Palestinian route passes slowly through built areas, subject to controls and dependencies whereas the outer Israeli ring road has been built for speed and efficiency.

While the stated Israeli rationale for security regards severance primarily as separating Palestinians from Israelis, in actual fact Palestinians are just as often cut off from each other or their property. One of the most observed and reported breaches of Palestinian territory by the barrier is through Abu Dis, a village-become-town on the east side of Jerusalem. Here the main campus of the Palestinian Al-Quds (Jerusalem) University is separated from part of Abu Dis and severed from Jerusalem by the Wall.<sup>13</sup> What used to be a five minute trip across Abu Dis to the university, or a fifteen minute drive from Jerusalem, is now, for those with the proper permissions,<sup>14</sup> a journey of at least 45 minutes involving Israeli military checkpoints. The two lane route through Abu Dis, known as the old road from Jerusalem to Jericho, has been bisected by the wall and no longer links these two cities. Its opposite number is a bypass road that reflects Israeli needs, connecting West Jerusalem to Maale Adumim and other settlements east of Jerusalem. A major feature of the new four-lane divided carriageway is a tunnel built under the Hebrew University of Jerusalem at Mount Scopus to assure a speedy journey in and out of the city. It is an impressive route, where Israeli drivers enter the tunnel from a busy Jerusalem neighbourhood catching sight of the Hebrew University silhouetted on the hilltop above, and they emerge to be presented with a full panorama of the desert and the settlements beyond. Curiously, both these Jerusalem universities are defined, at least in part, by the spatial conditions produced by their roads, one severed from much of its hinterland by barriers and checkpoints and what has become the sheer struggle for access, and the other, its prominent position in the landscape enhanced as it towers above the tunnel and speeding cars that lay beneath.

For the residents of Maale Adumim and other settlements that are effectively bedroom suburbs of Jerusalem, the bypass road system is critical, providing a speedy motorway to connect them not just to the city, but to the centre of the country, and for that matter, to Ben Gurion Airport and the rest of the world. In Jerusalem itself, an extensive road system of inner city motorways, tunnels, bridges and causeways reflect a city dedicated to the automobile; a tram system is years behind schedule. Many of the huge construction projects are part of an inner city transport infrastructure built to connect the settlements to the city. Most importantly, these multi-laned, slip-road accessed motorways link point A to point B without local impedances on the way. Two points are worth making here: <sup>15</sup> firstly, for Israelis, these motorways are known as 'secure' roads; they are well lit at night, patrolled regularly, and the removal of roadside vegetation assures that hidden surprises do not lurk unexpectedly. Most importantly to those settlers who use them, the roads have been built to bypass the Palestinians. Few or no links to Palestinian villages or neighbourhoods exist and in many cases, like Bir Nabala, the road systems are segregated. Secondly, in a way that

anthropologist Marc Augé and others have shown,<sup>16</sup> roads like those of the Israeli bypass system focus primarily upon speed and detachment from place; space becomes abstract in a way that makes only time and distance meaningful. Israeli cars plunge into tunnels to be spewed out amid empowering desert panoramas and the rolling hills of the West Bank. Israeli drivers are waved through the checkpoints, and roadside advertisements to sell houses in the major settlements note that they are ‘almost in Tel Aviv’ or ‘next door to Jerusalem’. Generally, little has been invested in Palestinian roads since before 1967 and on them journeys are circumscribed by boundaries, in the form of barriers and checkpoints; but in the Augian rapidity of the Israeli journey, the distance becomes compressed and made comfortable, and in doing so, the political boundaries of the space recede.

The vision of fluid and efficient connections, at all levels, remains central to Israeli life, and their reliance on and enjoyment of speedy travel has kept excellent pace with the West. It is a feature that was cleverly exploited in a campaign by the internet political lobby group Avaaz to hammer home to Israelis the possible advantages of supporting the Saudi call for negotiations in 2007: a series of billboards in Israel advertised ‘a dream weekend in Saudi Arabia’ or ‘Shavuot [a Jewish holiday] in Syria’, if peace treaties would be forthcoming. For Israelis, Arab capitals may be forbidden and exotic; but New York, London, Mumbai or Johannesburg will inevitably be more familiar, and closer, than Ramallah, Bethlehem or Nablus.

## **Two Spatial Realities**

These brief observations indicate that two spatial systems are at work in Jerusalem, and at one and the same time, they are both separate and intertwined in ways that are widespread and complex. It is possible to describe the two spatial realities as boundedness and mobility, and they have become one further way of dividing Palestinian and Israeli camps. The inherent contradictions have dominated the long Israeli planning legacy, where even before the years of the separation barrier and bypass roads, unity of the city has been paramount but achieved by fragmentation and the estrangement of Palestinian and Israeli neighbourhoods. The separation barrier is one link in a harsh chain of settlements, boundaries, checkpoints and bypass roads; it is perhaps the most visible and dramatic evidence of such an overbearing system, but alone it is not the cause. Far from being neutral, space itself has become part of the process of political identification and control, and this is now characterising the city in particular ways to become not just a setting but a perpetrator of further forms of conflict.

The Palestinians are dominated by policy and spatial planning decisions over which they have no control and their lives are severely curtailed. The Israelis are also subject to planning measures that are intended to act in their favour, but in terms of a settlement policy which pits the two conflicting populations against each other in a fragmented city to form a frontier urbanism, the advantages may be debatable. Within

this one city radically different urban spaces are experienced according to one's national or ethnic identity, and Jerusalem has taken on the seemingly contradictory characteristics of being structured as a mixed city where any sort of contact between large segments of the population is intentionally made impossible or severely limited. Such in-built schizophrenia can only act detrimentally to urban life. One apparently positive feature is that the topography of Palestinian and Israeli neighbourhoods is so intermingled that some proper links could be facilitated quite easily by creating access roads between them. But this simple act would require the political will to dismantle the huge apparatus of separation barrier, checkpoints and segregated road system. Clearly the old green line division of the 1948-67 period has long disappeared, and to believe that it could be effortlessly reinstated goes against the grain of the spatial realities that have accumulated over the last forty years.

### Endnotes

- 1 Along with, for example, Belfast, Berlin, Nicosia, Beirut. On divided cities see: Scott Bollens, *On Narrow Ground. Urban Policy and Ethnic Conflict in Jerusalem and Belfast* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000); A C Hepburn, *Contested Cities in the Modern West* (London: Macmillan, 2004); Jon Calame and Esther Charlesworth, *Divided Cities. Belfast, Beirut, Jerusalem, Mostar and Nicosia*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).
- 2 In the Oxford English Dictionary, 'to divide' is to 'separate into parts, break up, split; distribute, deal, share, separate from one another'.
- 3 The Mandate plans were summarised in Henry Kendall, *Jerusalem. The City Plan: Preservation and Development during the British Mandate 1918-1948* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1948); on the planning of new neighbourhoods, see especially ch.7.
- 4 For a good example of Israeli attitudes in the post 1967 period, see: Arthur Kutcher, *The New Jerusalem. Planning and Politics* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), pp.50-55, *passim*. Other precedents than British colonial planning were also important, such as garden suburbs; but it is worth noting that these models were all Western and placed more value upon their autonomous form than on structuring traditional relationships with neighbouring areas.
- 5 The Israeli residential enclaves built in East Jerusalem are known to Israelis as 'new neighbourhoods' or 'satellites'; Palestinians refer to them as 'colonies'. The term used here will be 'settlements'. Over half of the Israeli settler population of the West Bank reside in the Jerusalem settlements on land confiscated from Palestinians and annexed by Israel. The Jerusalem settlements have evolved primarily from Israeli policy and planning decisions taken at national level and implemented by the Ministry of Housing along with the Jerusalem Municipality. There has been no Palestinian participation in any major planning decisions or procedures.
- 6 David Kroyanker, *Jerusalem Planning and Development 1979-82*, (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 1982) p.27; the chapter that proposes this is entitled 'The future of Jerusalem – For and Against the Satellite Security Belt Around the City'
- 7 Most of the areas of Palestinian habitation around the Old City of Jerusalem have developed as villages. Today their populations have expanded, however, only a few have the public and commercial institutions to be considered towns.
- 8 Israeli fear that Palestinian population growth will surpass their own dominates much of their planning policy. It has led to widespread discrimination of Palestinians and limits on the growth of their villages and neighbourhoods has been a prime method of doing so; see: Amir S Cheshin, Bill Hutman, Avi Melamed, *Separate and Unequal. The Inside Story of Israeli Rule in East Jerusalem* (Cambridge MA and London, Harvard University Press, 1999); Meir Margalit, *Discrimination in the Heart of the Holy City* (Jerusalem: International Peace and Cooperation Center, 2006); Eitan Felner, *A Policy of*

*Discrimination. Land Expropriation, Planning and Building in East Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: B'Tselem, 1995).

- 9 Kroyanker, 1982, p.3
- 10 Kroyanker, 1982, p. 27
- 11 Further development of E1 was frozen by the Bush administration. Today the land has been cleared, electricity pylons march off into the desert, and a four-lane divided carriageway runs up the hill side to a lone Israeli police station at the top.
- 12 Abdalla Owais, 'The Wall and the Enclaves: Case Studies in Disrupted Communities', in Robert D. Brooks, ed., *The Wall: Fragmenting the Palestinian Fabric in Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: International Peace and Cooperation Center, 2007), pp.122-36.
- 13 At one point, the path of the wall confiscated one-third of the university and cut it off from its own playing field, although this has now been revised; see: Al-Quds University Press Release, September 3, 2003. ([www.alquds.edu/wall/univpress/aqu\\_pr\\_sep\\_03\\_03.pdf](http://www.alquds.edu/wall/univpress/aqu_pr_sep_03_03.pdf); last accessed 4.6.09)
- 14 From Jerusalem to Al-Quds University requires a Jerusalem identity card; those with West Bank residency cannot pass.
- 15 For further discussion on this subject see: Wendy Pullan, 'Contested Mobilities and the Spatial Topography of Jerusalem' in *Contested Spaces: Cultural Representations and Histories of Conflict*, eds., Louise Purbrick, Jim Aulich and Graham Dawson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 49-73; Wendy Pullan, Philipp Misselwitz, Rami Nasrallah and Haim Yacobi, 'Jerusalem's Road 1: An Inner City Frontier?', *City*, 11.2 (2007), pp. 175-97.
- 16 Marc Augé, *Non-Places. Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (London and New York: Verso, 1995).