Jerusalem and Belfast: Envisioning Media Arts for Cultural Identity and Urban Renewal in Divided Cities

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Palestinian boys in Shu'fat refugee camp, East Jerusalem. *Photo courtesy of Anne Paq / Activestills 2008.*

Introduction

Lamees picks up her digital camera and tries again to capture a shot of the cascading homes in Shu'fat refugee camp, oblivious to the trucks rushing past her in the dusty road behind. The ten year old shows her photo to Anne, who asks Lamees what story she wants to tell with her new shot. Anne is an avid photographer who regularly teaches youth in the camp to find new ways of looking at everyday life thorough the lens, exploring their neighborhoods with an aesthetic eye. Lamees remembers the rule of thirds and frames the shot with two boys peering over the concrete wall, abutting the modern homes in the Pisgat Ze'ev settlement bordering the camp. She clicks just as the boys fix their gaze and rushes back to Anne to share her latest pinhole narrative, the metallic camera dangling from her little hands.

Eleven year old Hassan is walking

though the Old City past the coffee shops in the cobble-stone streets of Qattanen market, using his tape-recorder to capture the sounds of the bustle. He's anxiously looking for his older brother Saif who is conducting an interview with an elderly African-Palestinian shopkeeper about his unusual antiques from Morocco and Tunisia. Hassan finally sees Saif, kneeling with a notebook in one hand and a microphone in the other, and calls him out from a distance. Saif's production crew consists of three intensely-focused twelve and fourteen-year old girls, holding a boom microphone and a bulky video camera while wrapped in twisted cables. They hastily gesture Hassan to be quiet to avoid distracting their subject. Unbothered, the old man continues speaking about his forefathers who migrated to the Old City from Sudan in the 1930's. As the old man takes a moment to sip his dark-roasted coffee from a cracked ceramic cup, the little boy cries out from behind "Cut"!

Both of these are snapshots of rare but precious moments taking place in present-day Jerusalem. The city is not only a mosaic of multiple historical identities but also changing territorial divisions fragmenting and isolating its Palestinian residents in East Jerusalem and its environs, now under Israeli occupation for over forty years. In the scenes above, the youth in Shu'fat camp and the Old City are both exploring their own neighborhoods of Jerusalem, mapping memorable moments and narratives using the medium of photography, sound and video in a series of digital storytelling workshops. These workshops were conducted as part of a program called *Youth Visions of Jerusalem* in July 2009 by *Voices Beyond Walls*[1], a participatory youth media initiative co-founded by the authors since 2006. The program in Jerusalem was jointly hosted by the *Al-Ma'mal Foundation for Contemporary Art*[2] and the *African Community Youth Center* in the Old City, as well as the Woman and Child Centers in Shu'fat refugee camp. However, not all the youth and trainers from both neighborhoods of Jerusalem could travel to meet each other. Many of the Palestinian trainers from Shu'fat camp, without Jerusalem identity cards, had to stay back behind the military checkpoints, while the younger boys and girls took the bus to the Old City.

Shu'fat camp, like many other Palestinian neighborhoods, is officially within the municipal borders of Metropolitan Jerusalem. However, it is increasingly being detached from the city through relentless checkpoints and imposing concrete walls or separation barriers (as they are often referred to by the Israeli authorities), in addition to the fact that there are hardly any municipal services provided to its residents. The physical divisions and lack of mobility into the city not only affect access to education, healthcare services, and employment opportunities for the Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem, they also serve to cut them off from their deep social, cultural and religious ties to the city. Retaining these socio-cultural ties and physical mobility are crucial for Palestinians who identify themselves first as "Jerusalemites" and then with their nationalistic aspirations and religious or ethnic identities. This situation is particularly dire for Palestinian youth with diminishing opportunities to visit or reside in Jerusalem, while their families seek to retain their inter-generational ties and cultural identity to the city.

In this article, we will probe the value of artistic programs and urban interventions

in reconnecting Jerusalem, both physically and symbolically, with its disenfranchised neighborhoods and their Palestinian residents, particularly youth. In this regard we introduce a case study of Belfast in Northern Ireland, a formerly contested city divided by sectarian and colonial conflict for over three decades. We consider potential community arts interventions and neighborhood regeneration strategies successfully undertaken in Belfast. We are aware that drawing any parallels between Belfast and Jerusalem has both analytical and political pitfalls – not the least that Jerusalem is the site of an on-going and highly contested colonial conflict – but we nonetheless wish to probe what can be learned from Belfast's recent cultural and urban renewal efforts in a post-conflict condition.

We describe initiatives such as the Youth Visions of Jerusalem program and the *Jerusalem Show* as complementary examples of participatory arts interventions in the city of Jerusalem. We then propose *Media Barrios*, as a conceptual framework of urban arts programs and facilities that may create new opportunities for civic engagement and cultural expression, reconnecting not only the disenfranchised Jerusalemites in the "border zones" but all Palestinians, despite the ever-increasing isolation of the Jerusalem from its own neighborhoods and the West Bank.

Diminishing Arts Education for Palestinian Youth in East Jerusalem

Jerusalem has in recent years seen some revival in well-funded arts festivals and cultural events, while Tel Aviv and Ramallah generally retain a greater stature as a cultural hubs in the region; however in Jerusalem this resurgence has mainly been associated with the dominant Jewish sector of the population, mostly in the modern suburbs of West Jerusalem and in the newly created settlements. On the other hand, cultural activity among the Palestinian residents (roughly a third of the city's population of 750,000) particularly in East Jerusalem has greatly suffered, let alone in outlying Palestinian neighborhoods disenfranchised by the construction of the Wall, with the severe lack of municipal services provided to these residents by the city.

Even a decade ago, Rania Elias described the diminishing role of Jerusalem as a Palestinian cultural center[3]. "Not too long ago, East Jerusalem was a bustling center for all Palestinians. Since the closure imposed on the West Bank and Gaza (1993), cutting East Jerusalem from its Palestinian hinterland, the city has started to gradually lose its status as an economic, educational and cultural center for Palestinians. By night, its streets are deserted and its cultural life has all but vanished. Jerusalem's Palestinian inhabitants are either seeking better opportunities elsewhere or looking for entertainment and cultural activities in other towns in Palestine or on the booming Israeli western side."

The problem is exacerbated by a stark dearth of investment or provision of facilities, resources and programs to support arts education in the schools primarily attended by Palestinian residents of Jerusalem. According to the *Palestinian Human Rights Monitor*, the conditions for arts education in predominantly Palestinian schools

The landscape of the Shu'fat refugee camp in East Jerusalem, with its cascading homes on the hillside, concrete Wall separating it from the nearby settlements, and youth in the narrow streets of the camp. *Photos courtesy of Anne Paq and Raed Yacoub, 2008.*

in East Jerusalem are quite dismal[4]. "As many as 21 schools, 60 percent, report having absolutely no facilities for the arts. Hence, 62.6 percent of the student population receives no art, music, or drama instruction at all. Only 43 percent of the schools have libraries, and only 31 percent have computer laboratories. Of all the other facilities listed, no more than 9 schools, or 25.7 percent of all schools, have any of them (e.g. music, fine arts, etc)."

A recent report published in 2009 by the Israeli organization *Ir Amim* and the *Association for Civil Rights in Israel* describes a shortage of over 1,350 classrooms in East Jerusalem[5]; furthermore of the nearly 94,000 school-age Palestinian children living there, fewer than half were enrolled in municipal public schools, with the rest having to enroll in expensive private or unofficial schools operated by religious or UN groups. The report goes on to say that many of the existing classrooms were "small, crowded, unventilated and lacking support classes or playgrounds." Overall expenditure on education in West Jerusalem is 2-4 times higher than in East Jerusalem, according to the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, though the municipality is reportedly seeking to close the gap.

The situation is even worse in the refugee camps in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. One example is the Shu'fat Refugee Camp (RC), which is unique for its geo-political character in Jerusalem – an "extraterritorial Palestinian island" whose residents defy Israeli control while retaining legal residence in the city. Shu'fat RC was the last Palestinian refugee camp established

in the West Bank in 1965-1966, and the only one located inside the municipal borders of Jerusalem. Today the camp finds itself surrounded on nearly three sides by Israeli settlements and bordered on the east by the Palestinian neighborhood of Shu'fat, which is now being separated from the camp by the construction of the Wall.

The increasingly poor yet growing demographic of the camp is described in a report by Ir Amim[6]. "Originally established to house around 1500 refugees, Shu'fat RC today is home to more than 20,000 people, of which around 50-60% are registered refugees. The remaining population consists of Palestinians who moved to the camp for economic reasons. As a result, the camp is home to the poorest segment of Jerusalem's Palestinian population." While the camp is located inside Jerusalem, virtually all services including schools and healthcare are provided by the *United Nations Relief and Works Agency* (UNRWA), rather than the Israeli authorities.

These ever-increasing gaps in educational infrastructure and cultural support for Palestinians in East Jerusalem are being addressed to a limited extent by civil society institutions through private schooling, summer and after-school programs. In 2009, Jerusalem has been designated as the *Arab Cultural Capital* and several initiatives by the Palestinian Authority and local arts organizations have been undertaken to support cultural programs and events in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, despite the uncooperative actions of Israeli authorities. However, for sustained engagement of Palestinian communities a broader long-term vision is necessary.

Leveraging a range of well-devised public arts initiatives at a neighborhood and city-wide level may support a form of civic engagement and urban renewal, particularly in the more disenfranchised areas of the city. In the following sections we survey such urban renewal approaches undertaken in "barrios" and disenfranchised neighborhoods in other global settings, and consider some lessons in the context of the complex realities of Jerusalem.

Rethinking Barrios and the Role of the Arts in Urban Renewal

Barrio is the Spanish word for a district or neighborhood. "In its formal usage, *barrios* are generally considered cohesive places, sharing, for example, a church and traditions such as feast days. In Puerto Rico and Spain, the term barrio is also used to denote a subdivision of a *municipio* (or municipality)."[7] In Barcelona, barrios like the El Born have emerged as trendy settings offering culture, restaurants and historic buildings close to the city center. Such barrios often become the areas of the city where blue-collar workers and artists move, initially attracted by lower rents and later in some instances helping transform them into popular neighborhoods through emerging economic and cultural activity. While most barrios may not lead to positive socio-economic conditions for all residents, careful urban design and planning may reposition such neighborhoods to better leverage its collective strengths, traditions and identity towards cohesive interconnected activities that support longer-turn socio-economic gains.

Careful reconstruction of barrios to support schools, clinics and public spaces in places like Caracas in Venezuela have integrated communities and promoted socio-economic exchange[8], while urban renewal of impoverished areas also emerges from cultural factors. Another form of barrios are "cultural quarters" that have shown to be effective in often fueling urban regeneration. A study led by Charles Landry in the UK in 1996, profiled the ways in which artists and cultural organizations have contributed to revitalizing impoverished areas in modern cities[9]. "In the United States, since the late 1960s, they have shown how they can contribute to urban renewal, often through the creation of studios and 'cultural quarters' in run-down central districts. In the aftermath of recession in 1981, British cities began to look around for solutions to their economic problems, and some hit upon these American and parallel European experiences. The use of cultural activity to fuel urban regeneration was principally economic in conception and purpose."

The study cites examples of how arts have been powerfully used by communities to explore and affirm their identities, whether it is the impoverished, disabled or minority residents. The study notes that the "artist's ability to see problems from a different perspective and offer previously unheard-of solutions is vital to urban regeneration… Artists like Angie Hiesl in Köln, or Christo in Berlin, have created work which has challenged residents' ideas of their cities. Helsinki's Night of the Arts … has been so popular that it has become the norm, changing the way residents enjoy and perceive their city." Many other examples show the unusual range of public and private sector activity emerging from arts initiatives where entrepreneurs and local businesses are provided incentives to work closely with grant-funded individuals and organizations.

We now examine a case study of Belfast, a contested city divided by conflict for over three decades. As the conflict subsided in the late 1990s, Belfast began to undergo a process of urban renewal through civic, private and municipal partnerships in the arts and neighborhood regeneration. While this is a decidedly "post-conflict" situation, recent hostilities suggest a delicate peace. A comprehensive comparative analysis of ethnic conflict and urban policy in Belfast and Jerusalem was conducted by Scott Bollens[10], however little has been written to consider the role of the arts in urban renewal. Examining such approaches undertaken in Belfast may point to some useful "early-stage" development strategies in the context of Jerusalem.

Belfast: Seeking Cohesion in Contested Spaces

Belfast is the capital city of Northern Ireland with a population of over 275,000 residents. Historically Belfast has been a centre for the Irish linen industry, tobacco production, rope making and shipbuilding. Today Belfast has emerged as a center for high-tech industry, arts, education and a growing service sector with a fast-paced economy. This is in sharp contrast to nearly three decades of sectarian and colonial conflict in the city from 1969 to the late 1990's that cost more than 3000 lives and lead to high unemployment, peaking at nearly 17% in 1986.

A mural on a wall by the Irish Republican Army (1970's) in the Falls Area of Belfast reads "I have always believed we have a legitimate right to take up arms".

The conflict arose as a result of discrimination against the Roman Catholic minority by the Protestant majority, and a struggle to end British rule in Northern Ireland. The violence in the civil conflict peaked in the 1970's through rival paramilitary groups, the Republicans and Loyalists, associated with the Catholic and Protestant populations in Belfast. It was not until the IRA ceasefire in 1994 and the signing of the Good Friday peace agreement in 1998 that created the conditions of calm and confidence among investors to initiate a period of sustained economic growth and redevelopment in Belfast.

Northern Ireland's peace dividend has led to huge foreign investment, a surge in property prices, job creation and tourism in Belfast. Key factors included a highly skilled workforce and competitive cost structure relative to the fast growing cities of Dublin and London, participation of a well-connected and entrepreneurial diaspora seeking to return to Northern Ireland with the end of the conflict, and the development of broadband telecommunication links, corporate incentives and modern infrastructure to support high-technology firms. These factors helped position the city as an attractive gateway and launching pad for international companies seeking to access markets in continental Europe.

Today the neighborhoods of Belfast are bustling with activity; hotels, clubs and restaurants are springing up everywhere, a riverside promenade has been revived with commercial and residential development, and the vibrancy of the arts and music scene in Belfast is on par with many much larger cities in Europe. The Cathedral Quarter, considered a slum during the conflict is now the "epicenter of Belfast's cultural and architectural renaissance", as described by Joshua Hammer in a recent article in the New York Times[11]. The city center is increasingly perceived to be a "neutral space" that belongs to both Protestants and Catholics; the redevelopment of the center has lead to a shared sense of civic pride, security and consumer confidence among both communities.

Scott Bollens in his comparative study of Belfast and Jerusalem notes the difference in geographic scale and degree of ethnic segregation in both cities, which present different sets of challenges and opportunities for policymakers. While "Belfast's scale is one of tight quarters and proximity" with fine-grained territoriality and segregation, Jerusalem's large urban system consists of "sprawling suburbs that encircle the core, physical buffer zones, and a metropolitan mosaic of Israeli and Palestinian growth nodes and corridors" with larger segregated neighborhoods.

Subsequently city divisions are more manageable and urban policies more equitable or neutral in Belfast, whereas the municipality in Jerusalem takes a pro-active planning role to continue marginalizing Palestinian neighborhoods. Hence, in Jerusalem any artistic interventions must contend with a greater set of segregated and isolated urban settings, except for the concentrated diversity of the Old City.

While the Belfast city center is thriving, urban development and integration has been slow to take hold in the fringes of the city center, particularly in the residential neighborhoods of the inner north and east side. Pauline Hadaway, the director of Belfast Exposed - an arts organization, described this situation in 2001[12]: "As a consequence of a massive programme of inner-city, public sector building during the '70s and '80s, segregated housing estates … exist in close proximity to the centre. During these troubled decades the ragged fringes of these areas became ruined, dangerous spaces, locked behind gates and checkpoints or overlooked by police barracks of fortress dimensions. Many still project a threatening, desolate atmosphere: part of the city but not yet fully integrated, symbolic of Belfast's unhappy history of economic and social collapse."

Pauline Hadaway goes on to note that many of these fringe areas are now being redeveloped through systematic urban planning efforts, indicating a pattern for future integration in the city. For example, Northern Belfast, the original city center, is being redeveloped as a cultural quarter, despite its segregated character, by reclaiming Victorian commercial lots and supporting the arts. "Given that the citizens of the north inhabit a patchwork of segregated areas, where city gateways become seasonal flashpoints, it is hoped that the provision of low-rent workspaces for community arts organisations may encourage people into the city to share creative activities in a safe environment."

Not unlike Jerusalem today, social mobility in Belfast has been constrained by the politics of national identity and colonial control, which have historically determined the nature of planning, integration and cohesion in the city. Hence, urban planners must continually overcome these deep-rooted divisions to accommodate changing socio-economic realities in their redevelopment efforts, particularly in the more segregated and under-developed fringes of the city.

The *Belfast City Council* has encouraged partnerships with coalitions of public and private sector groups to support neighborhood regeneration activities, as described in a recent report[13]; these include a focus on the role of public arts and use of shared public spaces to promote social cohesion. In particular, they have jointly advocated for the community arts programs and festivals as well as development of "creative clusters" as part of an integrated cultural strategy for the city.

Community arts initiatives have begun to spur some form of social cohesion among divided communities, through the use of theatre and arts workshops. Charles Landry noted in his 1996 report that the community theater movement in Belfast, involving both Catholics and Protestants, emerged with plays dealing with key preoccupations of both traditions across the city. At the Belfast Festival in 1999, a bold and novel play, *The Wedding*, brought a story of cross-community marriage to audiences and was

performed by members of both Catholic and Protestant community theater groups. In a surprising twist, the play was performed in the real homes of families from both communities (with prior links to paramilitary groups) in the mixed working class neighborhood of Protestant East Belfast, with audiences brought to both homes for the unusual performance.

Clearly in Jerusalem community arts initiatives will be substantially different, given the obvious power-imbalance among the dominant Israeli and embattled Palestinian communities. Using arts and performance to provide greater awareness of the Palestinian narrative, highlighting issues such as home demolitions of Palestinian residents in East Jerusalem or youth perspectives of their cultural identity in the city, may be more crucial in the current political context.

The city of Belfast sought to "re-imagine" derelict alleyways by supporting mural painting workshops with youth from different backgrounds in the community. For example, a professional artist worked with the youth in the Upper Springfield neighborhood to produce a vivid mural recreating an ancient battle scene; this mural was previously seen on a gable wall in the neighborhood over twenty years ago but was lost due to housing redevelopment. Subsequently the mural has become a major tourist attraction and perceived as having brightened up the area.

The installation of such murals not only support a form of creative regeneration of the neighborhood, but the process of having disaffected local youth work with professional artists to jointly create such work promotes both a distinct identity and cohesion within the community. Roisín McDonough, chief executive of the Belfast Arts Council, said in a recent article[14] that art played "a key role to play in promoting community cohesion. Re-imaging is not always an easy process given the particular issues facing some communities."

It would be naïve to suggest that Jerusalem's deeply-rooted political divisions and the ongoing drive by Israeli authorities and Jewish settler groups to weaken its Palestinian residents, can be ameliorated simply by community arts programs and urban renewal efforts such as the ones in Belfast. These began mostly with the end of hostilities and the onset of peace agreements in Northern Ireland, leading to a sustained calm and establishment of municipal governance in Belfast sensitive to the needs of both its distinct communities.

The Belfast case does point to some helpful approaches that can be adapted in part by civil society groups working in cooperation with neighborhood groups and private partners in Jerusalem (despite a less than cooperative municipal agency) to devise both near-term programs and long-term strategies that support cultural identity and urban renewal efforts for its disenfranchised Palestinian community. These efforts cannot replace the ongoing struggle for civil rights and political resolution for the status of Palestinians in Jerusalem and for the occupied city itself; however we believe they can be developed alongside those initiatives with greater public participation and advocacy of rights, to reassert cultural identity in the city and improve neighborhood regeneration. We now consider a conceptual framework that draws on key lessons learned in the context of Jerusalem.

Lessons for Urban Renewal through the Arts for Divided Cities

As part of our proposal for a future vision of Jerusalem in 2050, a research project[15] at the *Massachusetts Institute of Technology*, we examined a range of community arts and urban renewal programs. Sustaining and maximizing the impact of such arts initiatives for all residents requires a neighborhood and district-wide approach, rather than simply focusing on community centers or cultural events. Our assessment of urban renewal through the arts in impoverished and divided neighborhoods of Berlin[16] and Belfast yields several key lessons for Jerusalem:

1. A district-level and long-term planning approach should be established with the participation of community actors and Palestinian institutions to provide the adequate infrastructure, resources and funding opportunities for arts-based urban renewal, while supporting local community organizations and independent grassroots arts initiatives.

2. Physical redevelopment projects designed to revitalize impoverished or divided neighborhoods should be coupled with: 1) well devised economic incentives to attract new businesses and job opportunities, and 2) meaningful arts and cultural initiatives that can improve the sense of identity, pride and social cohesion among residents.

3. Development of new "cultural quarters" and "creative clusters" with the provision of low-rent workspaces for community arts organizations and creative enterprises have the potential to revitalize neighborhoods and attract a vibrant community of artists, businesses, and visitors. These projects must be planned carefully in conjunction with the interests of residents to reduce the risk of greater disaffection or segregation among mixed-income communities in the neighborhood.

4. Greater participation and cooperative development is needed among Palestinian institutions, local businesses, community organizations, arts associations and independent artists in creating effective public arts programs in the neighborhood, such as festivals, public arts projects, community theater, workshops, and arts-based enterprise.

5. Sustaining active engagement, social inclusion and integration in such arts initiatives is clearly not easy to achieve; it requires a localized and participatory approach to make the programs both accessible and meaningful to all residents. Specialized programs can be tailored to the interests of young and old residents; the goal should be to promote increased participation across the community while giving them greater ownership in shaping the outcomes.

Jerusalem: Creative Empowerment
## of Youth through Media Arts Interventions

We began this article with the stories of Lamees and Hassan as they tried to capture memorable moments of their own neighborhoods. They were both participating in the Youth Visions of Jerusalem program of youth media workshops conducted by Voices Beyond Walls in conjunction with community centers in the Old City and Shu'fat refugee camp in July 2009. A similar program has been conducted with many other youth centers in refugee camps in the West Bank since 2006. This program is one example of a participatory arts initiative that provides creative opportunities for youth to reflect on their cultural identity and connection to the city, while disseminating their emerging narratives in public venues throughout the city. It serves as a case study that could be extended to support greater media arts interventions in Jerusalem.

Lamees and Hassan began the workshops with an exercise of "spatial mapping", whereby the group of 20-25 youth and facilitators from each center visited each other's neighborhoods in Jerusalem and worked in smaller teams to create new media narratives. They had been previously trained to use digital cameras and learned visual aesthetics in the workshop. As each team of 3-5 youth paired together from the Old City and Shu'fat walked around their neighborhoods, they spoke to local residents, photographed everyday scenes, and wrote down key moments they experienced.

They subsequently drew visual maps of their routes, incorporating many of the photos they had taken earlier. They also edited their digital photos into a video montage with a spoken narrative, both real and imagined. They presented and discussed these visual maps and digital narratives with each other in group settings, surprising many of the adult trainers and staff from the youth centers with their insights about the city.

These unique perspectives of Jerusalem by the youth were shaped both by their own experiences of growing up in the neighborhoods and the reflective process of seeing, capturing and discussing memorable moments with other local youth in their walks through the city. The visual maps and photos provide a fascinating window into the perception of the youth about significant aspects of the city, from key monuments to hidden corners, places to play, and views of everyday people and objects on the streets, like the inanimate fire hydrants, re-imagined as characters in their fictional narratives.

The youth in their individual workshops went on to develop more sophisticated narratives about their city as scripts and storyboards, some with fictional themes while other seeking to document cultural traditions or experiences from elders in the city. The youth worked in small teams with their facilitators to act out their narratives, shoot video or conduct interviews in the city, often engaging other residents (young and old) to participate in the making of their films. For brief moments throughout the span of 2 weeks, the youth would take over a street or neighborhood block capturing their creative visions in the backdrop of a bustling city. While it is challenging to have
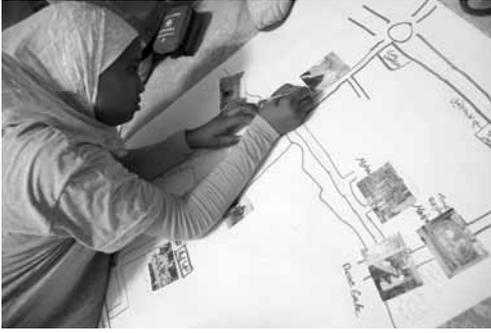
Youth create visual maps of the Old City and Shu'fat refugee camp after visiting the neighborhoods, and present them to the group (top and middle). Youth acting and shooting their films in the Old City (bottom). *Photos courtesy of Anne Paq, 2009*.

youth produce their films in a public setting (outdoor shooting is always difficult, but a good learning experience), it implicitly engages them in seeking out locations and developing narratives that incorporate key elements of the city.

The short films were edited with the help of program facilitators in each center, with recorded voices, music and subtitles added by the youth to finalize their films for presentation. With the lack of resources and facilities available, the youth borrowed equipment like laptops, PCs, digital and video cameras, while moving from place to place using computer labs or theater spaces available for limited periods each day, to complete their projects under tight time constraints. This clearly points to a critical need for developing adequate media and performance facilities in the neighborhoods for both youth and residents, if such arts and cultural programs can be sustained.

Despite the odds, the youth in these workshops completed six short films on Jerusalem in the span of just two weeks, and subsequently screened them at local community centers in the Old City and Shu'fat refugee camp in the last week of July 2009. Hundreds of residents attended the indoor and outdoor screenings, some projected on buildings in the neighborhood. A selection of photography, hand-drawn maps and storyboards created by the youth during the workshops are being exhibited at the Al-Ma'mal Foundation for Contemporary Art in the Old City, the Franco-German Cultural Center in Ramallah, and the Bethlehem Peace Center from August-October 2009. There are plans to have

Video projections in the Old City during the Jerusalem Show in 2007. The image on the top depicts "Landscapes in Palestine" by Anne-Marie Filaire and the one below called "Long Long Way" by Surekha.

the exhibit and screenings travel to various sites in the West Bank and Gaza as well as festivals abroad during the year.

These public arts events serve to engage residents about their city through youth narratives, particularly at a time when Jerusalem has been designated as the Arab Cultural Capital in 2009. The Youth Visions of Jerusalem program demonstrates how young Palestinians can re-conceptualize Jerusalem and imaginatively "take over" their city and environment, even for the span of a few weeks; however a broad-based cultural initiative is needed for such efforts to be expanded and sustained.

The youth work emerging from this program will also be showcased as part of the *Jerusalem Show*, a month-long arts festival held in the Old City in October 2009, curated by the Al-Ma'mal Foundation of Contemporary Art. This annual festival invites site-specific work relating to the city of Jerusalem by both local and international artists. In the words of Jack Persekian, the founding director of Al-Ma'mal, "The Jerusalem Show presents works, performances, and interventions throughout the Old City as unique actions that promote a re-reading of the city in a creatively open, accessible, and interactive manner." [17]

The Jerusalem Show provides new opportunities that can be leveraged by artists working collaboratively with local residents to engage in creative interventions about the city. The mere existence of the Show creates a unique condition and environment within which such artistic perspectives can be exposed to a wider audience, who may experience the city in unexpected ways, as Jack Persekian describes: "The audience participants were taken on guided tours into the city, through its narrow streets and alleys, up onto rooftops and into community centres and clubs, stopping for a coffee break at Haj Ahmad Al-A'raj's coffee shop, after passing through Hamam Al-Ain to see the works of the artists as they negotiate their way in this overwhelming city." Hence, The Jerusalem Show in itself creates a collective arts intervention on the city, within which narratives, identities and visions maybe constructed or re-imagined.

Youth Visions: Jerusalem, Way-Station to Mars

The wind whistles through the empty and eerie alleys of a deserted Shu'fat refugee camp. Slowly, a strange car with a gleaming silver wheel, the result of carefully applied aluminum wrap, pulls up. Two young girls, Baraa and Dana, come to attend the opening of the new Museum of Refugee Life, commemorating life in the camp before all the refugees returned home.

It is the year 2161 and the short film, "After the Return: Year 2161," made by teenagers from the camp participating in the "Youth Visions of Jerusalem" workshop, unrolls before the captivated eyes of a Ramallah audience at the Al-Kasaba Theatre. In this year's workshop, Dana and Baraa, both 12 and 14 year-old residents of the camp envisioned the narrow alleys of their neighborhood in a distant future through the lens of the camera.

In their film, after a rather cursory examination of refugee life, the real fun begins. "Let me give you a lift," says Baraa. "I'm going to Lydda, but I can pass by Jerusalem. Unfortunately, my car doesn't fly today, I forgot to charge it." A joy ride – in the full sense – commences as we enjoy unfettered travel. Once in the Old City, the girls pause before an impressive machine. "Oh look," says Dana, "a flight to Mars." The girls proceed to book their travel with transparent cards. "No more colored identity cards," one exclaims. The girls continue in their flight of fancy: no blue cards, no orange cards, and Baraa affirms: no cards at all. Imagination reigns with a life of free movement and no restrictions – well except in the fine print: "United States citizens are required to have a visa for travel to Mars."

Penny Johnson

Media Barrios: A Framework
for Sustaining Participatory Arts Interventions

While the Youth Visions of Jerusalem program demonstrates the feasibility of developing participatory arts programs with disenfranchised youth in the city, it also points to the challenges for conducting, presenting, and sustaining such work to have a greater impact on its residents. The Jerusalem Show provides an example of overlaying arts interventions on the City for local audiences; however it is limited in its territorial scope (within the Old City) and the level of community participation involved in the artworks exhibited. We propose *Media Barrios* as a conceptual framework of participatory media arts programs and activities, complemented by physical and virtual facilities for production, education and performance, spanning the critical neighborhoods and diverse residents of Jerusalem.

In an ideal setting, Media Barrios could emerge through a gradual process of engagement among municipal, community, and private entities seeking a sustained and cooperative partnership to support urban renewal, social inclusion and economic revitalization by leveraging the arts and new media technologies on a neighborhood or district-wide scale. Clearly this is quite challenging in Jerusalem, given the political stakes of actors involved, however it remains a framework to engage key partnerships over time supporting mutually-shared goals. While the municipality may be less cooperative in early stages, getting private foundations and community centers to develop small pilots and longer-term partnerships around a shared vision may be feasible.

Media Barrios should serve as both symbolic and physical "creative clusters" unifying a range of interconnected cultural and socio-economic activities in neighborhoods over time. Media Barrios would thus seek to transpose new "virtual maps of arts and cultural activities" on top of existing neighborhoods intended to both unify and spurn greater opportunities for education, production, performance and arts-based commercial enterprise. This is not unlike some of the activities of organizations like Al-Ma'mal Foundation for Contemporary Art in the Old City, though we propose encompassing many of the disenfranchised neighborhoods like Shu'fat, Kalandia, Anata and Kufr Aqab in a broader vision with a network of programs and facilities initiated in each neighborhood and connected through shared resources and activities.

This framework can be adopted by the neighborhoods to develop a unique set of context-specific arts interventions or programs in conjunction with neighborhood redevelopment efforts through well planned and participatory partnerships with communities, arts organization and creative industry. Hence, these Media Barrios would seek to leverage media arts programs to develop *new spaces for civic engagement* in the neighborhoods of the city, including:

***Physical* space** created by establishing venues for media arts production and training such as theater and digital media studios in new or renovated facilities. These may be

conducted through production firms, after-school programs and community centers. The Media Barrios may provide artist-in-residence quarters, commercial spaces, and resources to attract emerging talent and regional businesses to the area with economic incentives. A cluster of such complementary spaces and enterprises may support a broad and diverse program of media and technology skills in the neighborhoods with new opportunities for learning, creating and employment.

A model to consider is the *Cambridge Community Television*[18] (CCTV), a nonprofit entity in Cambridge, Massachusetts, which provides a successful and indispensable service to its residents (especially youth), with media courses, programming as well as usage of production and broadcast facilities. It is part of a network of Community TV organizations throughout the region, supported both by the state funding and a portion of commercial cable television revenue.

Virtual **space** created via interactive websites and online networks to share, develop and co-produce digital media works, particularly among communities that may not be co-located. Specially developed collaborative media websites maybe created to serve youth in various inner-city neighborhoods and support cross-cultural interchange. These virtual spaces for co-production and dissemination emerge from physically-anchored activities in the Media Barrios, yet help to expand their scope and engagement with communities that physical spaces may not afford, partly due to geographic constraints imposed by checkpoints, closures, and denial of access to Palestinian residents.

Discursive **space** created by the dissemination and engagement with audiences via screenings, exhibits, festivals, and performances. A directed program of civic engagement would support local community events as well as an annual public arts festival in Jerusalem, seeking to bring together a diverse mix of residents, artists, educators and audiences across the city. This may be developed in conjunction with the Al-Ma'mal Foundation for Contemporary Art, building on the success of the Jerusalem Show to encompassing outlying neighborhoods of the city and greater participatory arts involving local residents through ongoing workshops and programs.

While the focus of arts interventions would begin with the Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem, there should be an attempt to provide greater awareness and understanding of these perspectives to other Israeli residents of the city. An example may include constructing a series of public media arts installations as projections or digital billboards (funded in part by advertising) along a well traversed route in the city of Jerusalem from Shu'fat camp to the Old City and neighborhoods of West Jerusalem. These would regularly showcase a collection of invited works by artists working with local residents in the Media Barrios, along novel themes each year.

As independent Media Barrios in different neighborhoods of Jerusalem are established, there is an opportunity for them to leverage the lessons learned and share resources. These Media Barrios would each have their own individual focus on creative arts programs and perhaps a distinct socio-cultural identity, while cooperating

on public arts initiatives to support broader engagement with residents throughout Jerusalem.

A *regional network of Media Barrios* emerging over time across different cities in Israel, West Bank, Gaza, Jordan and Lebanon, would together seek to reconnect Palestinian voices and establish stronger cultural identity and advocacy through the media arts. While this is an ambitious and idealistic vision, it is precisely what we were tasked to develop conceptually as part of the "Jerusalem 2050" project. While projecting any vision about the city of Jerusalem in forty years seems nearly impossible, Baraa and Dana, the young filmmakers in Shu'fat refugee camp, dared to go much further with their short film, "After the Return: Year 2161".

Lamees and Hassan may not be old enough to prevent the demolitions of homes and the growing walls dividing their neighborhoods in Jerusalem, but their imaginative photos and cinematic narratives momentarily construct new possibilities in the city that only future generations will come to know.

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