

EDITORIAL

Jerusalem's Paths Not Taken

This issue of the *Jerusalem Quarterly* brings into sharper focus, and elaborates on, a familiar theme in writings on Palestine and on the condition of Palestinians in Jerusalem and elsewhere: a theme of lost opportunities, miscalculations, lack of vision, and unrealized plans. Inevitably, the responsibility for such failures and unfulfilled projects has been placed on the various powers that have colonized or ruled Palestine, as well as on Palestinian ruling circles and interests. In much of this kind of writing, the agency of ordinary Palestinians, whether individually or collectively, has not been given much prominence.

Guest editor Falestin Naïli frames the issue differently, starting out with this observation: "Focusing on unimplemented projects entails the application of a type of historical analysis and historiographical method which has thus far not been largely employed in the study of Palestine." She goes on to single out the concept of the horizon of expectation, designated as "that which is not yet but is expected." What this means to Naïli is "seizing elements of history – plans, projects, programs – and saving them from oblivion, so that new generations might base their understanding of their history on a more complete panorama of the past than that created by the victors."

We leave it to our readers to imagine what this means as they contemplate the turbulent history of Jerusalem in the twentieth century. What elements in the unfulfilled plans and projects examined in this issue, if rescued from oblivion, would be potential sources for writing a more inclusive history? How can the

agency of ordinary Palestinians, whether individually or collectively, figure here, especially since much of the material historians use was produced by the victors?

Another challenge facing historians is overcoming the inevitable elite bias in archives. How can we identify potentialities that were unrecorded or unrecognized? Is the history of Jerusalem only available through the writings or records left behind by Palestinians with a voice, either as religious leaders, educationalists, intellectuals, planners, or entrepreneurs? How do we begin to effect a shift in the “balance between the victors and the vanquished,” as Naïli puts it?

The educational scene in Jerusalem, examined in this issue, is an example. What do we know of the imprint of educational experiences at second- and third-tier educational institutions on the lives of graduates who did not become professionals or intellectuals? We note schools such as Bishop Gobat’s “Sahyun” school and the Schneller vocational school and orphanage, both of which were instrumental in providing education to the children of less privileged Palestinians in Jerusalem and surrounding areas.

Keeping these challenges in mind is necessary as we revisit Jerusalem’s “past futures” – the ways in which the city was at various points imagined as a future hub of Palestinian economic growth, educational opportunity, representative government, and human connection. It can be tempting to feel nostalgic about the paths not taken, to yearn for a time when other futures seemed likely. We must keep in mind that all of the plans examined here were also embedded in structures of inequality; none was the panacea that would have cured or staved off Palestinians’ past or present ills. Yet, returning to the ways in which Jerusalem’s future was variously imagined at different times in the past can also help correct against an analysis of past events that is overdetermined by the present – a point raised by Roger Heacock in his review of the Jerusalem Story website. Not only were different futures believed to be possible, but the outcomes of decisions, whether to continue or abandon certain plans or projects, were never fully known in advance.

As *JQ* 92 goes to press, Palestine is witnessing yet another wave of resistance and repression, this time with new Palestinian faces and forces. This most recent surge has given attention once again to the incomplete nature of the Zionist project in Palestine: Palestinian resistance continues to evolve and transform itself, and the inability of the Palestinian “self-rule” authorities to realize a state or even to provide basic safety and security is ever more starkly demonstrated. Some are beginning to interpret the upswell of resistance in class terms. The host of a local radio talk show said recently, “These are the children of the oppressed, the downtrodden.” And there is much discussion of the supporting role of families and neighborhoods in refugee camps and poor areas of urban centers, including in Jerusalem’s Shu‘fat camp and ‘Anata. The idea of an enabling and protective social and popular base (*hadina sha ‘biyya ijtima ‘iyya*) is back on the agenda. Under what conditions are potential social bases reactivated? How might the echoes of past struggles – seemingly abandoned or incomplete – return in new forms and with new actors to mobilize Palestinians in the present and the future?