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DARCH

PALESTINE: URBAN TRAVEL LOG

Abstract

This book is a travel-guide of 12 days through refugee camps and Palestinian cities in the West Bank dedicated to intellectuals, academics and students for the understanding of the background and consequences of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict in the urban environment. This hybrid method of reading the city allows an efficient development of a new urban tools set that serve to rethink strategies for potential implementation in similar critical urban case studies in developing countries.

Introduction

The project examines the urban dynamics prevalent in the occupied Palestinian territories in the West Bank as a consequence of the political Israeli and Palestinian conflict, looking at conditions from 1948 until the present day. The resulting book and short films will focus on the concept of Palestinian identity and how it ties to the transformation of the urban environment. Using a variety of media (written text, photographs, video and audio recordings), the project investigates and documents its subject matter with historical analysis, critical mapping, interviews with various actors and the researchers' personal field notes.

The content has been collected from a 12-day investigative field trip and supported by independent research and source material from relevant authors. The project's hybrid methodology aims to foster an advanced form of urban literacy and novel urban design strategies in a diverse range of global environments.

Relevance

Palestine's recent admission into UNESCO and its controversial application for full membership to the United Nations has reshaped the conversation surrounding the Palestinian conflict. Renewed international attention has coalesced around the embodied issues of identity and heritage along with land tenure and building practice as a political means of land occupation and urban development.

The project investigates the history of origin-stories and identity transformations as shaped by urban contexts in a selection of displaced Palestinians communities. Through a set of pre-defined issues, the publication attempts to document the changes in the Palestinian national ethos as reflected by displaced West Bank inhabitants and refugees in neighbouring countries.

The publication offers educational value as a prototype for an inclusive investigative method. By combining field research techniques into a compendium shaped by a theoretical framework, it offers a unique and contemporary document for a broader reading public. The publication documents a scalable investigative method – applicable to a diverse scope of critical urban case studies.

Overview

The following set of topics and themes structure the investigation: *identity, temporariness and permanence, safety and exposure, control and subordination, formal and informal*.

The project explores the concept of Palestinian *Identity* (both conceived and perceived) by analyzing how the liberties and limitations of particular environments shape both individual and communal characteristics. The complex matrix of identity studies is honed on several specific contexts: Ramallah is facing rapid urban transformation, Hebron copes with its old city's closure at the hands of the IDF, Nablus's struggle to revitalize itself after the socio-economic devastation during and immediately after the second Intifada and Jerusalem grapples with its bifurcation along religious and political lines. Palestinian identity weaves together stories pertaining to how refugee camps grew, urbanized and fostered their citizens' active participation in the resistance movement.

The sets of restrictions resulting from the Oslo accord have shaped the spatial conditions experienced by Palestinians. Limitations of water supply, basic services and mobility impact the everyday lives of West Bank residents. Such issues are particularly evident in the lives of refugee camp inhabitants, who are confronted with opaque expectations regarding the *temporariness and permanence* of their living situations. Responses to this conflict manifest themselves in transformations to the built environment its relationship with the inhabitant's fear of losing their right of return. Adapting an environment becomes a political act informed by rights and expectations in which ownership and inheritance become central motivations of conflict.

The conflict's long-lasting power struggle of competing interests is commonly cast in terms of *control and subordination*. Dissecting the narratives surrounding power necessarily leads to inquiry regarding infrastructure development that propagates spatial control: the separation (security) wall, checkpoints, military watchtowers, and rampart settlements among others. The communication aiming to secure *formal* and legal status over these territories and thus an acknowledged form of nationhood accompanies the physical forms of control. Customized legislation serves to perpetuate balances of power and justify territorial dominion. The case of Al-Walajeh highlights how a web of Israeli legislation and enforcement overrides Palestinian formal ownership. This form of territorial control causes obvious imbalances between *safety and exposure*. Safety is reduced to a zero-sum proposition in which the increased safety of one party comes at the expense of the safety of another. The recently installed and heavily defended Israeli settlement in the heart of Hebron and the ensuing annexing of infrastructure and sites of shared religious value compounds increasing tensions of the region.

Structure

The content of the publication will be structured around the documentation of the 12-day research trip. The Daily entries will focus on the actors and background of a geographic context – a town or region. The themes uncovered during the interviews and personal experiences of the authors will be supported by material in the form of maps, diagrams, relevant media reports and associated published material.

The increasing content complexity over the course of the trip will be structured within the aforementioned set of issues. This allows the reader to contextualize universal conceptions with the daily anecdotes and associated material. The Publication thus offers a multi-faceted yet lucid reading on a persistent specific yet broad global issue.

Critical texts from invited authors will expand upon the impressions and themes and draw the content into broader spheres of critical journalism and academic bodies of knowledge.

An additional chapter has been added to the journey. The 13th day is a compilation of stories based on the Seminar Week organized by Prof. Philip Ursprung in October 2011. This chapter gives the opportunity to hear the insight from architecture students from ETH when describing their experience with people, architects, political activists, farmers, theoreticians, a leader from a Bedouin tribe, and an Israeli Army veteran in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Amin Linke and Michael Clegg along with their students from the Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design accompany Prof. Philip Ursprung and his students to this journey. This chapter adds value to the argument of the book being a tool for a new interpretative method of reading cities in conflict.

Originality

Media documentation in the form of audio and video podcasts will be accessible on a companion website as complimentary story-telling platform to the printed book. Such interactivity will add a deepening dimension to the subjects and analysis presented of the book.

Thus, the research with its hybrid investigation methodology will uncover a unique and personal reflection on the complex history and contemporary issues affecting the lives of Palestinians in the West Bank. It offers a reading of the urban environment through three different lenses – architecture and urbanism, architecture and politics, and urban sociology. These three readings are intertwined with a fourth voice in the form of open quotes from a diverse selection of interviewees. These perspectives shape the content with practical and material considerations and reveal the legal, physical and psychological constraints effecting the daily lives and changes in the Palestinian urban environments.

The combination of ‘objective’ tools of knowledge in the form of maps, photographic documentation and legislation reviews are tempered by the investigation into their human consequences. This angle is generally missing in the information offered by contemporary media channels in which the personal link between action and legislation is often obscure and remote.

A preview of such multimedia enrichment can be seen in <http://u-tt.arch.ethz.ch/palestine-research-project/> produced for the project’s introductory lecture as part of the U-TT Chair’s Urban Stories speaking series.

COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS

- A-Phoenix Association – Deheisha Camp, Bethlehem
- Arab Studies Association
- Badil - Resource center for Palestinian residency and Refugee Rights
- Bethlehem Municipality
- Breaking the Silence- Israeli soldiers talk about the Territories
- Chair for the History of Art and Architecture, ETH Zurich
- DAAR- Decolonizing Architecture
- Hebron Municipality
- ICAHD – Israeli Committee Against House Demolition
- Jaffa Co-operatives – Women in Hebron
- Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design
- Mission of Palestine to Geneva – United Nations
- New Israel Cinema
- Palestine Investment Fund
- Ramallah Municipality
- RIWAQ
- United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the near east
- Yafa Cultural Center – Balata Camp, Nablus
- Wadihilweh information center - Silwan

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Historic overview and timeline

Chapters

Contributing Authors

Ursula Biemann- X-Mission

Veronique Bontemps- Allenby Bridge: Border Crossing

Michel Clegg, Armin Linke and Tobias Wootton- Refugee Camps photo essay

Zvi Efrat- History of Zionist architecture in Israel

Wafa Hasan- Water issues in the West Bank: Coping strategies

Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti – Decolonizing Architecture

Craig Konyk- Ramallah is a Mirage

Valentina Napolitano: Yarmouk urban evolution: Palestinian refugee camp in Syria

Lucas Oesch- Urban planning in 'temporary' settings: Palestinian refugee camps in Amman

Tim Rienits – Conflicting urbanism in Jerusalem

Malkit Shoshan- Shifting boundaries

Wendy Pullan and Lefkos Kyriacou- Damascus Gate

Day 01- Tel Aviv - We will return

Tour in South Tel Aviv and Yafo with the architect Els Verbakel

Travel from Tel Aviv to Tiberias

Day 02- Amman, Jordan - Urban check-mates

Border crossing to Jordan from King Hussein Bridge

Visit to Marka Refugee Camp guided by UNRWA

Poem by Aysha El Shamayleh

Essay- Lucas Oesch

Day 03- Allenby Bridge border crossing Ramallah- Non-permeable territory

Experience in the border Crossing at Allenby Bridge

Travel from Jericho to Ramallah

Interview- Nura Alkallil - urban planner

Essay- Veronique Bontemps

Day 04- Village of Bilin - Liquid identity

Interview- Khaldun Bshara – Director RIWAQ- Palestinian Architectural Heritage

Visit to RIWAQ project – “Kamanjati” Music School

Case of the Village of Bilin

Essay- Craig Konyk

Day 05- Ramallah to Nablus- Permanent temporariness

Interviews –

Mahmoud Abdallah - Deputy Mayor of Ramallah

Osama Hamdeh- urban planner

Farhat Muhawi – Director of Planning and Development RIWAQ - Palestinian

Architectural Heritage

Travel from Ramallah to Nablus

Interview- Mahmoud Subbuh-Yafa Cultural Center- Balata Camp

Tour in Nablus Historic Center

Essay- Valentina Napolitano

Day 06- Balata Camp- Indelible martyrdom

Visit to one of the remaining soap factories, main targets during Second Intifada

Tour in Balata Refugee Camp with Mustafa Farah

Short stories –

Brother of a martyr

Shop owner

Interview – Fayez Arafat – Director Balata Camp

Essay – Ursula Biemann

Day 07- Nablus to Bethlehem- Refugees as political tools

Travel from Nablus to Bethlehem

Interview- Naji Owdah – Director Al-Phoenix Centre- Dheisha Camp

Tour- Aida Refugee Camp

Interview- Nidal -professor human rights Birzeit University, staff of BADIL and Lajee centre at Aida camp

Photo Essay- Michael Clegg, Armin Linke and Tobias Wootton

Day 08- Bethlehem, Al Wallajeh- Settlements and walls

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Case of the Village of Al Wallajeh

Story of Nakba survivor and the mind map

Case of the workers' commute through the wall from Bethlehem to Jerusalem

Interview- Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti – Decolonizing Architecture

Day 09- Hebron- The ABC of (dominion) and (enclosure)

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Tour in Hebron Souk

Tour in closure area of Hebron with Dana Gainy Palestinian in the Christian Peace Team –

Human Rights organization Night Patrol

Essay- Wafa Hasan

Day 10- Hebron to Jerusalem- Cooperating in chaos

Interview- Khaled Osaily – Mayor of Hebron

Story- Jaffa Cooperatives – Women in Hebron

Travel from Hebron to Jerusalem

Interview- Jawad Siyam – Director Wadi Hilweh Center in Silwan- activist

Essay- Tim Rienits

Day 11- Jerusalem- Shifting boundaries

Interview- Khalil Toufakji- Director Arab Studies Association

Tour in East Jerusalem, separation wall, E1 Project, and Sheikh Jarrah with Israeli Committee

Against House Demolition (ICAHD)

Essay- Malkit Shoshan

Day 12- Yaffo- Dislocating memories

Visit to Silwan neighborhood

Travel from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv

Tour in Ajami neighborhood in Yaffo with Frits de-wit Dutch filmmaker

Essay- Zvi Efrat

Extra - Chapter - CHAPTER BY THE Chair for the History of Art and Architecture, Prof. Philip Ursprung

Bedouins story in East Jerusalem

Battir Railway, Unesco

Parliament building Abu Dis, Decolonizing Architecture

Architectural studies, Israeli view. Zvi Efrat interview.

PUBLICATION FACTS & DETAILS

Type of Publication

This publication represents a unique combination of the formats of travelogue, investigative journal, field book, and compendium.

Content

The content for the publication has been created by the Chair of Architecture and Urban design at ETH Zurich and is clear of copyright restrictions.

Target groups

The publication addresses professionals involved in the fields of urban planning, design, political and social sciences, policy making.

Book

The publication will be a compendium of journal entries with accompanying interviews and supporting diagrams, maps and images and collected materials.

Soft cover, aprox. 256 pages, 165 x 238 mm vertical format
300 g/m2 Munken Lynx paper, 4/4 color scale

Language

English.

Schedule

Start: January 2011

Release date: December 2012.

Concept

Prof. Alfredo Brillembourg

Prof. Hubert Klumpner

Marielly Casanova

Interviewers / Authors

Marielly Casanova

Charlot Boonekamp

Daniel Schwartz

Editors

Marielly Casanova

Charlot Boonekamp

Media

Daniel Schwartz

FUNDING

This book is a unique non-profit publication arising from our academic context, and we are incredibly excited to share it with you. We, along with our publisher, Detail Magazine (<http://www.detail-online.com/>), plan to sell the book for €29 (35 CHF), making it accessible and affordable for a large audience ranging from professionals and academics, to activists, and students across a wide variety of disciplines. We hope that the book will speak to people who already engage in dialogue surrounding the subject matter, as well as to those who know little but are curious to learn more. However, in order to realize this ideal pricing, we must raise additional funding to complete the final stages of production.

In order to get this project off the ground, ETH Zürich provided an initial grant of 15,000 CHF. This capital enabled us to conduct our primary research, collect submissions from a wide variety of contributors, edit original content, and compose the book's layout, replete with original graphics. However, in order to bring the book to print and to ensure a suitable marketing budget, we must raise €20,000 (24,000 CHF) more. We hope to raise this money with generous contributions from interested individuals, organizations, firms and institutions. Such donations will go directly toward printing costs, distribution and strategic advertising. We hope to reach our fiscal goal by August 1st, 2012. This will ensure that the book goes to press and will be ready in the Fall of this year.

If we are able to raise a surplus of funds, we intend to organize a travelling educational exhibition with participation from some of the organizations we worked with in the West Bank. In the event that we are unable to raise the funds by our deadline, we intend to defer any received donations and reschedule our printing for later this year.

How to donate: you can transfer money directly into the Chair's ETH bank account, where it will enter a special fund dedicated to the project. Take care to deposit the funds with the specified reference number, to ensure that the donation reaches the correct fund. Should you choose to donate, we also ask that you notify us, so that we can confirm receipt of your contribution.

As a special incentive, we, along with Detail Magazine, would like to offer a complimentary copy of the book to all those who donate 50 CHF and higher, and special acknowledgment within the book itself for donors of 1000 CHF or more.

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Chair of Architecture and Urban Design,
Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich
Reference Number: 03882
Funds Number: 0-42529-10

Please contact us directly to notify us of your donation, and for confirmation of receipt:

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