

# EPILOGUE

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The four-year study reaffirmed the magic of Jerusalem. Many barriers came down; separate departments within the Graduate School of Design — architects, landscape architects, urban designers — known for their lack of communication with each other, were drawn together and enthusiastically collaborated. Faculty members with assumed positions of theoretical disagreement discovered much common ground. Somehow Jerusalem brought things back to their essence; dubious constructs collapsed and preconceptions were rethought.

The greater lessons of the undertaking were sometimes obvious, sometimes surprising. Some truisms were reaffirmed: in planning an expanding city, even while acknowledging the economic and political forces, there is enormous latitude on the question of quality. We tend to think in terms of a grand vision, the great concept, but it is also true that as one travels Jerusalem's new neighborhoods, where roads too wide cut ruthlessly into the landscape, where projects set back from each other form a new kind of no-man's-land, one has a sense that attention to detail, careful reexamination of methods and standards, and plain common sense can go a long way toward making a better city.

Time and time again simple proposals made by the students were very effective: trees planted along the Bethlehem road to shield industrial development to the east; roads rerouted to respond to the topography; apartment buildings realigned, densities slightly reduced — all small gestures, with great potential impact.

To assess these studios, we must return to the questions and objectives raised five years earlier. When we embarked on the studios, we questioned whether contemporary development could be harmonious with a city of rich architectural heritage. That question was confronted in all the studios, from the project for the restoration and reconstruction of historic monuments in the Old City to the design of new communities in the suburban outskirts. Those students who considered reconstruction within the Old City walls tended to evolve an architecture close to the indigenous architecture of the city. Invariably they adopted stone construction, alluded to a load-bearing masonry structural system, and responded to the context by making the new almost indistinguishable from the old.

In the summer of 1985 a seminar to assess the studios was held in Jerusalem with the faculty and several guests from around the world. Many of the participants were critical of the students' reluctance to explore a contemporary syntax and to use contemporary technology and construction modes in the historic city. Oreal Bohigas spoke of the "courage to demolish when it is appropriate" and of the need to resist subjugating the new to the old. In contrast, some of the Jerusalem participants accepted the students' conservatism.

The question became more complex as the studies extended to the periphery of the Old City — the places where the Old City meets the new, where zones of vehicular traffic collide with pedestrian precincts. Here the students' proposals for Damascus Gate and the Russian compound were more diverse. In some schemes biblical landscapes would camouflage buildings; others proposed intensely developed mixed-use megabuildings. But determining whether what they proposed as new development is compatible with the old is considerably more complex than with reconstruction and preservation. It becomes clear that in searching for a mode of development that accords with the spirit of Jerusalem, the students resorted to measures that tended to contradict prevailing development patterns and market forces.

**8.28** *View of Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives. In the background the Judean Desert.*

For example, they invariably proposed extensive underground parking to both meet demand and avoid an urban setting dominated by the storage of automobiles. They proposed major investment in infrastructure to accommodate bus terminals and service depots, in response to the needs of the pedestrian precincts of the Old City and to preserve the atmosphere and scale of the Old City and its bazaar. They assumed a central development authority for assembling large parcels of land in their attempts to achieve a cohesive development and overcome the prevailing piecemeal development. They often proposed developments of relatively low land utilization, devoting a major portion of available land to open spaces, parks and gardens, and non-income-producing institutions. They proposed projects with great urban spaces, like piazzas and arcades, requiring a high level of architectural control over major sections of the city.

Each of these strategies contradicted prevailing patterns: in Jerusalem development patterns and market forces have tended to follow the line of least resistance. Thus parking needs are *in reality* resolved by unsightly parking areas in the Mamilla, Dung, Damascus, and St. Stephen's gate areas. Automobiles increasingly penetrate the Old City. Buses, trucking, and services are accommodated in open areas with minimal shelters and sheds. Everywhere one can see the reluctance to invest in infrastructure, due to the shortage of funds and other priorities. Similarly, projects requiring comprehensive planning and controls give way to endless public debates, an absence of consensus, and the lack of an authority prepared to proceed in the face of public opposition by the central government (with the one exception of the politically motivated new neighborhoods in the outskirts). Projects calling for a lower density and the appropriation of public land for open space are opposed by the land authority, which demands and fights for high-density utilization of its land with a vigor equal to the most aggressive of New York developers.

Thus the answer to the question "Is it possible to create a modern development compatible with the old in Jerusalem?" is clear. If one gives in to prevailing development patterns, public policies, market forces, the answer is *negative*. The development will necessarily be incompatible and discordant. Prevailing patterns must be changed if the objectives of harmony and continuity are to be achieved. The land authority must be prepared to zone down its land. Greater investment in infrastructure by the municipal and government authorities is required. There must be a higher level of urban design, and an implementing authority capable of dealing effectively with a public-participation process is essential. Without such changes almost every one of the proposals made by the students would remain a paper dream. Similarly, the possible solutions offered in verbal descriptions by faculty and guests would remain unattainable. Pursuit of the line of least resistance will not achieve a modern city harmonious with the old.

The problem becomes even more complex on the scale of the metropolitan region. Invariably the students' proposals echo the conventional wisdom. Proposals for new sectors at the outskirts recall the approach taken by architects developing virgin land into new neighborhoods. Many of the proposals adopt traditional urban patterns. In the theoretical work in the field of urban design this approach is exemplified in proposals by Leon and Robert Krier. The traditional street and square are the basis for the shaping of urban space, formed by the traditional three- and four-story apartment block built to the street line and with internal courtyards. The pre-automobile, nineteenth-century urban patterns are reproduced with little acknowledgment of contemporary conditions. The student proposals in this mode would create humane and charming environments that might be neither feasible nor workable under the conditions of contemporary life they must sustain.

A second group of proposals radically departed from the traditional patterns. These

tended to resemble what was actually built in the new neighborhoods of Jerusalem. The new forms abandon the traditional square and street in favor of large-scale structures, separation of vehicular and pedestrian traffic, and large parking solutions. The results are often unsatisfactory, as in the case of the new neighborhoods, and lack the cohesiveness that we associate with “neighborhood.” The issues of territoriality, orientation, linkage, and mixed uses are dealt with less satisfactorily than in the traditional neighborhoods, while the proposals more effectively respond to the requirements of efficient traffic, parking, and services. What can be said of such proposals is that they are not compatible with traditional Jerusalem.

Assembling the numerous proposals for the various parts of the city into a master plan or an overall strategy for the city’s development was never our intention. But the mere fact that the proposals covered almost the entire region does raise questions about the methodology and validity of the “grand plan.” For what the student studies indicate is that attention to detail, care, and careful study can improve the mode of development. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the manner in which roads are constructed and development sites defined in Jerusalem’s complex topography. Carelessly done, the results are often devastating cuts and fills in the landscape, great dams of earth embankments, deep cuts into the bedrock, buildings raised high above retaining walls or sunk deep into excavated pits. With three-dimensional modeling, cut-and-fill sections, and testing against real models, most of these shortcomings can be overcome.

While it is clear that devising better methods would result in immense improvements in the quality of the new neighborhoods, it is equally clear that that is not enough. Care and attention to detail will improve the micro-scale but will not deal with the questions of the macro-scale, the image structure, and organization of the entire metropolitan region. For assembling of all the students’ projects into a single document — a total regional plan — would still result in an essentially structureless mosaic. The regional studies did result in some proposals for green belts, an edge to the city, and a network of open spaces and parks penetrating the urbanized areas. But beyond that, they failed to come forward with a strategy that would make the whole more cohesive and effectively connected. The mosaic of all the plans, in fact, raises the question as to whether, at the regional scale, assembling many separate planning interventions is the appropriate mode of development for a pluralistic society.

It is, however, both appropriate and possible to superimpose a greater scale, the grand plan. That such visions historically resulted in some of the most spectacular cities is a matter of record. Whether such methodology is either desirable or feasible today remains the open question. No studio during the five-year studies was asked to address this issue directly, and none of the participating faculty took a position on the question either. Some, by intuition, shied away from the notion of the grand gesture, reflecting intuitively the almost certain impossibility of implementation given the social and political realities. But they did not adopt this attitude with conviction, judging it the optimal and appropriate strategy. On this question the studies remain totally inconclusive, demonstrating neither the effectiveness of a grand plan nor the validity or superiority of the strategy of planning by small-scale, decentralized, and local decisions.

In Jerusalem two grand planners operate: the highway planners, who align their expressways on hilltops and valleys, and the political planners, who scatter neighborhoods in the landscape with the ease of placing pins on a map. Neither has given the city the vision and order appropriate for a city for half a million people.

Nowhere is this deficiency more obvious than in the question of a divided versus united city. All in Jerusalem, certainly on the Israeli side, proclaim the desire for a perpetually united

city. Every policy and strategy is conceived with this objective in mind. Yet analysis of these policies in the studio revealed that the notion of the united city was in fact not a positive, affirmative objective but a negative, defensive vision, a preventive strategy to keep the city from being divided. There is a world of a difference between a strategy aimed at preventing division and one aimed at achieving unity. The subtle but fundamental difference has escaped many, even within the municipal government itself: a united city, while it might be made up of many homogeneous and heterogeneous neighborhoods, functions as one — sharing its great institutions, transportation networks, and great meeting, business, and market places — while the indivisible city can remain the assemblage of separate cities that cannot practically be divided by political borders. If the studios did not come up with a comprehensive strategy for a unified city, they certainly succeeded in exposing the differences between the negative and positive aspects of planning for a united city.

They also reopen the basic questions. What do the people of Jerusalem mean when they speak of the “united city”? What do they mean when they speak of its indivisibility? Do they mean political control? Do they mean co-existence? Do they mean truly *living together*? Do they want two transportation systems, one for Arab, one for Jew? two business districts? separate road systems, all jumbled up in a way that no border could traverse? Or, alternately, do they want to move toward a city that serves all its residents, where Arabs and Jews shop in the same places, use the same buses, play in the same parks, and even, in some places, live in the same neighborhoods? Is the prevention of a divided city to be a *physical constraint* or a *social and economic reality*? Often we found ourselves thinking of a new kind of life, new partnerships, only to face skeptical reactions from both Arabs and Israelis.

This brings us full circle to the issue of the old and the new and the relationship between them. Underlying the assumption that the new and the old are destined to conflict and contrast, that the new destroys the old, erases memory and heritage, is the prevailing *laissez-faire* attitude that we are not masters of the greater forces that shape our lives, that we cannot but accept the social, cultural, and economic forces as they act upon society at the moment at which we join the process. The opposite attitude, one that permits speculation on other ways and other values, other arrangements and relationships, one immersed in the old-fashioned utopian vision of a better world, does not lead to greater contrast and discord with the past, but suggests an integration, a harmony, a continuity, a sense that past and future belong together in the present.