

Calame
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DIVIDED CITIES



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**Belfast, Beirut, Jerusalem,
Mostar, and Nicosia**

Jon Calame and Esther Charlesworth

Foreword by Lebbeus Woods

Divided Cities: Belfast, Beirut, Jerusalem, Mostar, and Nicosia

By Jon Calame and Esther Charlesworth. Foreword by Lebbeus Woods

“In divided cities it’s waste, it’s ugly, it’s cruel, it’s unfair, it’s disharmony. . . And then you say: ‘There is a common good!’ And they say: ‘Oh, you are a philosopher!’”

– Meron Benvenisti, former Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem

In Jerusalem, Israeli and Jordanian militias patrolled a fortified, impassable Green Line from 1948 until 1967. In Nicosia, two walls and a buffer zone have segregated Turkish and Greek Cypriots since 1963. In Belfast, “peaceline” barricades have separated working-class Catholics and Protestants since 1969. In Beirut, civil war from 1974 until 1990 turned a cosmopolitan city into a lethal patchwork of ethnic enclaves. In Mostar, Croatian and Bosniak communities have occupied two autonomous sectors since 1993. These cities were not destined for partition by their social or political histories. They were partitioned by politicians, citizens, and engineers according to limited information, short-range plans, and often dubious motives. How did it happen? How can it be avoided?

Divided Cities explores the logic of violent urban partition along ethnic lines – when it occurs, who supports it, what it costs, and why seemingly healthy cities succumb to it. Planning and conservation experts Jon Calame and Esther Charlesworth offer a warning beacon to a growing class of cities torn apart by ethnic rivals. Field-based investigations in Beirut, Belfast, Jerusalem, Mostar and Nicosia are coupled with scholarly research to illuminate the history of urban dividing lines, the social impacts of physical partition, and the assorted professional responses to “self-imposed apartheid.”

Through interviews with people on both sides of a divide — residents, politicians, taxi drivers, built environment professionals, cultural critics, and journalists — they compare the evolution of each urban partition along with its social impacts. The patterns that emerge support an assertion that division is a gradual, predictable and avoidable occurrence that ultimately impedes intercommunal cooperation. With the voices of divided city residents, updated partition maps, and previously unpublished photographs, *Divided Cities* illuminates the enormous costs of physical segregation and its aftermath.

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Foreword

Lebbeus Woods

The five cities under study in this book are vitally important to an understanding of the contemporary world. Each is different, in that each emerges from a unique historical background, belonging to a quite particular and localized set of cultural conditions. Yet, each shares with the others a common set of existential factors, belonging to what we might call an emerging global condition. Prominent among these is sectarianism—a confrontation of differing, though not necessarily opposed, religious beliefs, leading to widespread violence—and a stopgap solution focused on the physical separation of conflicting parties and communities. The other feature shared by the cities under study is that the stopgap solution of separation, intended as an emergency measure to prevent bloodshed and disorder, turns into more or less persistent, if not permanent, division. No one intends to create divided cities as a long-term solution to sectarian violence; rather, such cities emerge from the seeming intractability of the conflicts and their causes.

The story of the present is increasingly being written in terms of religious conflicts. The secularism of the West is exposed through globalization to the sectarian quarrels that bedevil many regions of the world. Western institutions of government and commerce, which operate according to democratic processes or market-savvy principles, are no match in single-minded determination for those elsewhere driven by religious fervor. On the defensive, they have hardened their own positions accordingly. At the same time, Western politicians are not above exploiting religious differences to disguise neocolonial ambitions.

Going against two centuries of growing liberalism in the West, there are many new walls—physical, legal, psychological—being hastily thrown up in the interests of “security” to separate “us” from “them.” This goes beyond realities of gated communities for the rich, and restrictive, ethnically biased immigration laws, extending to attempts to seal entire national

borders. If the perceived threat of religious warfare increases dramatically, it is conceivable that, not only in the West, ghettos and internment camps may be deemed necessary. Looking to the future, this is the worst-case scenario. Can things possibly get that bad, in this information-enlightened age?

To insure they will not, it is necessary to understand not only the tragic mistakes of the past, but also the dynamics of the present in terms of the polarization of peoples and their communities. Critical aspects of these dynamics are revealed in this book, for in the physical divisions of Beirut, Nicosia, Belfast, Mostar, and Jerusalem the means by which fear and misunderstanding are given physical form are revealed in all their dimensions. Once in place, the barriers separating disputing groups become the mechanisms for sustaining the urban pathology of communities at war with themselves. The right thing, as this book inspires us to imagine, is to remove the barriers and replace them with new openings for dialogue and exchange. The best thing, however, is never to build the barriers at all. It is to that distant, but attainable, goal that I believe this book is dedicated.