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Cultural Heritage IN Postwar Recovery

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Cities that have been internally partitioned along ethnic lines serve as warnings for all cities where inter-communal tensions exist. The paper summarizes key findings from research into five partitioned cities, namely: Beirut, Belfast, Jerusalem, Mostar; and Nicosia. They suggest that the process towards physical partition tends to be a relatively slow one, but that the prejudices and conflicts that develop during the process create a legacy that is hard to eradicate. The costs of partition are high in economic, political and social terms, with the lack of collective security a fundamental one. Comparative analysis of the five cases suggests that the probability of eventual partition can to some extent be predicted, and a call is made to professionals to equip themselves better with the necessary skills to intervene in such situations.

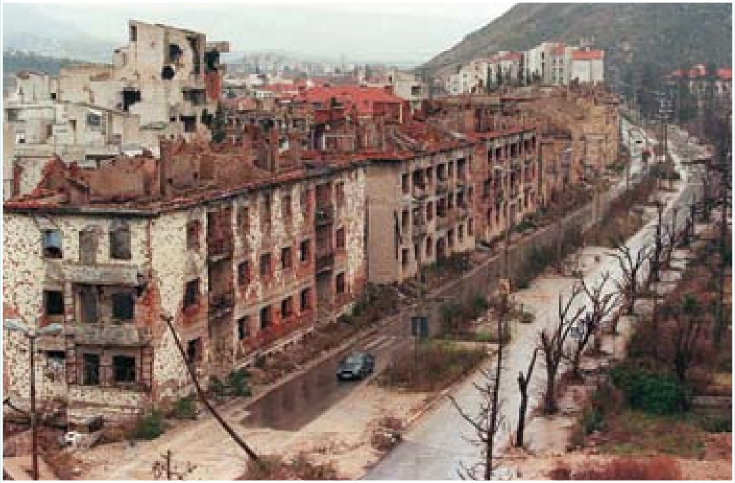
[JON CALAME]

Divided cities and ethnic conflict in the urban domain

THIS PAPER SUMMARIZES a few of the key findings from field-based investigations conducted between 1998 and 2003 in five internally partitioned cities: Belfast, where ‘peacelines’ have separated working-class Catholic and Protestant residents since The Troubles began in 1968; Beirut, where fifteen years of civil war made the city into a labyrinth of safe routes and scars are now healing slowly; Jerusalem, where Israeli and Jordanian militias patrolled the Green Line for nineteen years between 1948 and 1967; Mostar, where Croatian and Bosniak communities split the city into autonomous halves beginning in 1992; and Nicosia, where two walls and a buffer zone have segregated Turkish and Greek Cypriots since 1974.

The divided cities project began in 1994 with direct involvement in the postwar reconstruction process in Mostar. Multiple constraints upon the divided municipal administration in the city limited its capacity to address postwar crises. Prompted by this crisis, foreign professionals of all types arrived to provide humanitarian assistance. Due to its heavy symbolic significance, one prominent agenda for both local leaders and outsiders was the repair and reconstruction of the badly damaged historic core and its famous and iconic Ottoman bridge, the Stari Most (Figs. 18 and 19). Prioritizing the reconstruction of Mostar’s cultural heritage was seen by most external actors as an important secondary form of relief for the ethnically segregated residents following the provision of medical care, food, water, and basic amenities.

In hindsight, the contributions of specialized foreign academics, practitioners and non-governmental organizations in Mostar have been of mixed value. Many architects, planners and conservators visited the city during the years following the war, but few made a lasting contribution to the city. Most development professionals emphasized the need for political stability before progressive, ambitious plans for a revitalized city could be implemented. Many went further to suggest that professional involvement



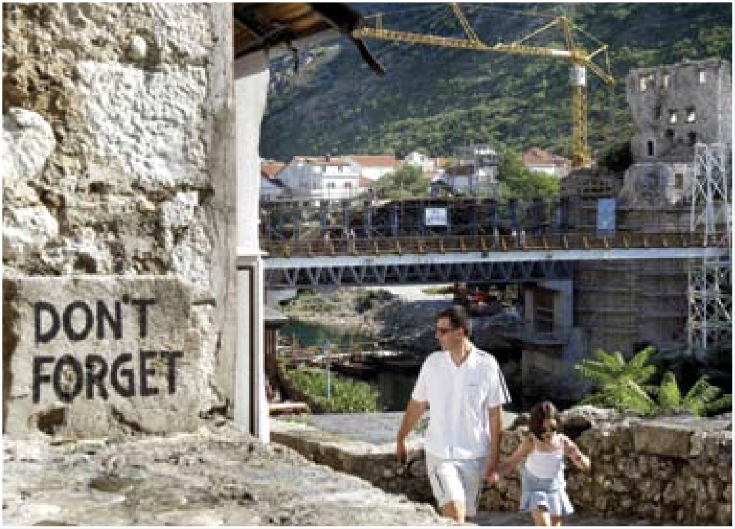


FIGURE 18 The main boulevard of Mostar forming the dividing-line between Bosnian and Croatian forces in 1993. (© AFP).

FIGURE 19 The old bridge under reconstruction (July 2003). The Stari Most (old bridge) at Mostar was destroyed by tank-fire during the 1992–5 war. It was reconstructed over a two-year period and reopened in July 2005 (photo July 2003, © AFP).

prior to unification would amount to the sanctioning of ethnic segregation. These excuses left most large-scale decisions about how the reconstruction would proceed to a small number of foreign donor agencies whose activities went largely unregulated and unquestioned.

Long treated as anomalies, divided cities are linked to each other by clear and coherent patterns. Urban partition results from concerns found in almost every city, such as ethnicity tied to political affiliation, institutional discrimination, physical security, fair policing, and shifting relations between majority and minority ethnic communities.

Our discussions with urban professionals, politicians, policy-makers, critics and residents in these five cities suggest that mistakes were made that might have been avoided. We learned that the symptoms of discord in the urban environment—most specifically, the physical partitions that encourage and tutor one ethnic community to disdain and violate another—constitute, in turn, a disease with its own pathology and symptoms, none of them especially desirable, nor totally unpredictable.

The heavy toll of living in a physically segregated environment calls for a concerted effort to understand the logic that governs divided cities. Divided city residents grapple with life under siege. Unlike soldiers, destined to leave the battlefield in one condition or another, the inhabitants of war-torn cities confront their terrors at home without means of retreat or escape. Even after politicians have secured a peace, the citizens struggle with losses that are beyond compensation and regret missed opportunities. A social contract is broken along the path to urban partition, and the costs of renegotiation tend to be high.

This study focused on the social impacts of partition with the assumption that urban space shapes collective behaviour and is shaped by it. More than simply the expression of inter-ethnic disturbance, partitions reinforce and encourage prejudicial thinking. Even after their removal, they endure as a psychological state, a temporal boundary, and a latent threat. For this reason, all agents—both passive and active—play a role in the shaping of a contested urban environment and bear an awful responsibility for the social impacts of division.

Yet urban planners, architects, historic preservationists, and other professionals have routinely shied away from intervention. In their effort to avoid complicity, they have lapsed in their responsibility to defend the public interest in ethnically segregated cities. In addition, many traditional urban planning tools prove inadequate in the face of protracted inter-ethnic, intra-urban disputes. Beyond examining evolutionary patterns linking divided cities, this paper will seek to explain this professional abdication and explore opportunities for future engagement.

Five Warning Beacons

Because its development is marked by institutionalized fear and suspicion, the partitioned city acts as a warning beacon for all cities where inter-communal rivalry plays a potentially prominent role in social interactions. They can dismantle themselves, split, and submit to almost limitless siege within their own boundaries; they construct interior borders, wrestle internal enemies, and convert natives into strangers.

Running contrary to conventional wisdom and gathering speed, old forms of fraternal violence are lodging themselves in cities where security can no longer be guaranteed. Jerusalem is increasingly divided, as the Israelis frantically forge a hermetic seal against threats from the Palestinian hinterland; Serbian and Albanian residents of Mitrovica have split themselves on either side of the Ibar River; riots between the Hausas and Yorubas of Nigeria have ravaged Lagos; Hindus and Muslims clash routinely in Ahmedabad; sovereignty in Kirkuk is contested by several ethnic groups in the wake of regime change; Cincinnati's racial fault lines were activated by police brutality; Singapore is nervous; even Brussels, capital of the European Union, may be sundered by a purely local racial separatism movement called the Vlaams Blok. The list is long and growing.

The five divided cities that have been examined in detail are commonly perceived as products of inscrutable internecine conflicts that are antithetical to normal urban culture. Contrary to such perceptions, this paper suggests that divided cities are neither aberrations nor anomalies; every city, no matter how sick or how healthy it is with respect to inter-ethnic relations, can be located along a continuum from integration to partition. Every city contains ethnic fault lines reinforced by volunteers. At the far end of this gradient, where the 'urban contract' is broken, we find the divided city. Evidence gleaned from the five cities examined here suggests that, given comparable circumstances and pressures, any city could undergo a comparable metamorphosis. It offers guidance to urban managers who seek to avoid the enormous costs of physical segregation.

A profile of the divided city

Comparative analysis of the five cities points to the following generalizations:

1. The activation of inter-ethnic boundaries in an urban domain is an incremental, slow, and predictable process in which the appearance of physical partitions constitutes a very late phase. In each city examined, initial episodes of intercommunal violence did not lead inexorably to widespread violence and mandatory segregation in cities that ultimately became physically partitioned. Frustration and bigotry were often promoted by sectarian political entrepreneurs, paramilitary organizers and foreign governments with much to gain from territorial redistribution. The tireless plotting of George Grivas and EOKA in Cyprus provides a good example. In Mostar, former Croatian and Serbian combatants brokered a secret deal to divide Bosnia in the second phase of hostilities. In Palestine, ardent Zionists and hawkish national politicians encouraged the acrimony between Jews and Arabs, while in Lebanon local warlords gladly seized authority when the central government abdicated.
2. The divided city diverges from a normal development track due not to an unusual predisposition to violence and bigotry but to the presence of certain catalysts, destabilizing circumstances, and interested third parties. For example, urban partition often accompanies a power vacuum at the regional or national level when now fallen governments had previously held nationalistic ambitions in check. In the case of Mostar, a vacuum of devastating proportions was created with the collapse of socialist Yugoslavia, followed by a hailstorm of ethno-nationalist propaganda reminding Bosnians of historic animosities that had long been dormant. In the case of Palestine, World War II and the Holocaust accelerated the development of an international consensus for the creation of an Israeli state in the Middle East, provoking feelings of insecurity that under normal circumstances might have been dissipated through a more incremental process of assimilation. Other major instances of a regional destabilization corresponding to divided cities are listed in the table on the following page.
3. Inter-ethnic violence in a divided city is sparked off by relative deprivation, rather than by conditions of hardship measured in objective or absolute terms. Legal restrictions on employment, housing and education that were imposed on disenfranchised ethnic minorities preceded and intensified ethnic tensions in Belfast, Beirut, and Jerusalem. A useful example is the exclusion of Catholic students from secondary schools in Belfast, a policy that automatically disqualified them from substantial political participation and white-collar jobs. Twenty-four years after the Education Act was finally passed in 1944, the first generation of university-educated Catholics in Northern Ireland initiated a campaign of protest, leading directly to government backlash and the outbreak of The Troubles. Unfair allocation of resources, combined with a new awareness of the scope of the injustice, contributed to a series of violent recriminations.
4. Divided cities result from territorial disputes between one community claiming indigenous status and another comprising newcomers or

TABLE 1 **Proximal events and partition in five divided cities.**

CITY	PROXIMAL CATASTROPHIC EVENTS	PARTITION
Belfast	World War I; 1920 Irish independence; Education Act of 1944; 1963 advent of O'Neill's liberal administration; 1960s civil rights revolutions worldwide.	1965
Beirut	1948 Israel state formation/Arab war; expectation of United Nations settlement; influx of Palestinian refugees from Israel/West Bank; 1982 Israeli invasion.	1975
Jerusalem	1938–45 World War II holocaust; 1948 abrupt abandonment of British Mandate.	1948
Mostar	1989 end of Cold War with the dissolution of USSR; 1990 advent of Yugoslav disintegration; 1992 Bosnian referendum in favour of secession; breakdown of designated United Nations 'safe areas' and mass shifts of displaced persons.	1992
Nicosia	1955 British face EOKA, with inter-ethnic loyalty split; 1960 Cyprus independence; 1974 Athens-backed coup d'état of Makarios/Enosis; breakdown of U.S. regional strategy due to the 1979 Iranian revolution, new alliance with Turkey.	1963

settlers. This pattern is easily demonstrated, with the rapid influx of new urban residents from rural areas generally prompting feelings of insecurity and bigotry in native residents. Rural immigrants are usually of a single ethnic identity, retain strong provincial loyalties to their villages, and have less exposure to formal education than their urban neighbours. Problems arise from this type of demographic shift when it is accompanied by poor assimilation. In Beirut, for example, residents of Palestinian refugee camps established in 1948 have yet to be functionally or formally incorporated into Beiruti society. These camps provided numerous recruitment opportunities for the Palestinian Liberation Organization when it settled in Beirut in the early 1970s, leading to a rapid escalation in paramilitary violence throughout the city.

5. The long-term impacts of urban partition are negative and continue to harm residents well beyond political reconciliation and physical unification, if these ever take place.

That urban partition along ethnic lines may be predicted is encouraging. The value of a predictive model is high because many cities in the world currently appear to be on trajectories similar to those followed by Mostar, Nicosia, Belfast, Beirut and Jerusalem. As more urban managers and residents cope with the challenge of physical segregation, a firm grasp of the logic of the divided city appears increasingly relevant.

Ethnicity, politics, and violence

Divided cities are often located at the epicentre of violent contests concerning national identity and sovereignty. They are often the product of a zero-sum game played between neighbouring communities seeking security and refusing compromise with each other. They are a beachhead for sovereignty struggles grounded in irredentism and ultra-nationalism.

Why do some mixed cities resort to physical partition while others do not? One important factor may be the degree to which ethnicity predicts political affiliation: 'in some places, identity politics came to define the logic of the political game, and in other places, it did not. In those places where it did, the odds of violence were higher…The incentives and constraints offered by political institutions, and the strength of those institutions to follow through, largely determined those odds' (Crawford and Lipschutz 1998: 3).

Our research indicates that the ethnic rivalries governing urban partitions often obscure more fundamental social tensions, like those felt between the professional and working classes, indigenes and settlers, or powerful minorities and marginalized majorities. Some scholars have even suggested that ethnically motivated discrimination and violence are provoked by 'sectarian political entrepreneurs' whose political fortunes rely on intergroup competition and antagonism. On this important theme the work of Crawford and Lipschutz (1998) is indispensable. Ethnic conflict may appear intractable, but more because it is artificial than because it is endemic.

As they emerge in the popular consciousness, chronic insecurities and a willingness to consider desperate remedies are often harnessed by politicians pledging reform through resistance and segregation. The frameworks that they advocate generally ensure that political affiliation is bound to heredity so that ethnic identity becomes 'the principle of incorporation into the political community' since 'ethnicity is based on a myth of collective ancestry, which usually carries with it traits believed to be innate' (Horowitz 1985: 52). This exploitative dynamic between marginalized minority ethnic groups and racist politicians has direct implications on core issues such as resource allocation and participation in municipal decision-making. It emerges frequently in the late stages of a divided city's evolution.

One reason why municipal governments are hesitant to address the subject of partition is that the barricades are a measure of their own failure to fulfil a basic mandate. Another reason is that the walls, whether illicit, scandalous, or ugly, tend to curb intercommunal violence more cheaply and effectively in the short term than does police surveillance. They solve a profound, longstanding problem in a superficial, temporary way.

If such partitions worked over the long term, urban dividing walls could be considered an unfortunate but effective response to ethnic conflict. However, as passive security devices they are a failure for the municipal government, and this is just one of many reasons why their construction should be questioned. In many cases, these partitions also postpone or even preclude a negotiated settlement between ethnic antagonists because they create a climate of dampened violence, sustained distrust and low-grade hostility. Urban partitions seem to reduce violent confrontation while justifying fear and paranoia. If there were no actual danger, this logic suggests, the walls would no longer be standing. In this way, the partition becomes the emblem of threat as much as a bulwark against it.

In reply to such lapses in traditional urban peacekeeping, urban communities resort to riot, revolt, and threats of secession, and to activating paramilitary organizations and spreading uninflected paranoia. New walls between rival ethnic groups are constantly emerging, while old scars are stubborn in healing. The causes for rivalry, along with an awareness of forsaken alternatives, generally go unrecognized.

Politicians—both those embroiled in the ethnic conflicts and those who attempt to intercede on behalf of the international community—often become mired in short-term policy fixes that are designed in response to a crisis. Official advocacy of urban partition as a reply to ethnic conflict was once shunned, but is now common. Physical segregation has emerged over the last fifty years as one of the most popular and most myopic solutions to intergroup violence in the urban environment.

The cost of partition

The negative impacts of urban division are legion. Even where political advantages accrue to rival communities seeking isolation, voluntary and involuntary partitions have brought death, suffering, disorientation, loss, and social anaemia wherever they appear. Composite estimates for loss of life in relation to inter-ethnic violence are varied and difficult to confirm, while figures tied to specific cities are even less common. The most explicit statistics have been generated for Belfast, where most studies cite around 1,500 Troubles-related deaths there, out of a total of 3,500 in Northern Ireland during the years 1969–2001. In Cyprus a total of approximately 6,300 deaths has been unofficially linked to civil unrest during the years 1955–85. In Lebanon, where war deaths were largely concentrated in Beirut, most estimates hover around a hundred and fifty thousand dead during the years 1975–90. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, civil war estimates of total military and civilian dead range between sixty thousand and two hundred and fifty thousand during the years 1992–5. In Israel and the Palestinian territories, the total deaths from the first and second *intifadas* are estimated at around 2,700 during the years 2000–3.

Walls at an urban scale are expensive to build, maintain and monitor. In some cases, elaborate no-man's lands must be constructed and patrolled, while in others checkpoints and transit stations track movements at each crossing. New physical and institutional infrastructure must be built on both sides of an urban partition to replace what was left behind, and whole bureaucracies blossom in order to address problems of jurisdiction, compensation, and encroachment. Rather than investing in the growth or prosperity of an urban community, partition-era administrations must spend lavishly to resist the back-sweeping tide of intercommunal violence.

Constrained by this system, the lives of urban residents are disfigured along with the fabric of the city. Family members and friends are often wounded or killed. Property is lost, social networks are shattered, and opportunities are forfeited. Physical safety is constantly open to question, and psychological well-being is universally undermined. Most regret the loss of places where their memories once held sway.

While political struggles determine the behaviour of the city as a whole, residents with little stake in the negotiations pay a high price for long-term destabilization and violence. Psychological trauma is often suffered by those who have least to do with partition: the student, the mother, the pensioner, the soldier, etc.

Individual or household deprivation can be correlated with its proximity to sectarian interfaces in divided cities. Without exception, property values and the quality of life go down along the boundaries of contested areas regardless of, and often due to, the presence of walls. Those who live along these interfaces typically either lack better options or choose to be there in order to assert a political agenda.

There is no easy way to grasp the losses and deprivation that accompany urban partition. In relation to the full spectrum of injuries bound up with the divided city, these voices address only logistical concerns. They reflect the outlook of normal residents with little stake in the political struggles that left their hometown broken. Long after war and partitions fade, as they have in Beirut, countless individuals still find their sense of belonging shaken and their prospects dimmed. For many divided city residents, partition corresponds with a sense of lost time and opportunity that may never be regained.

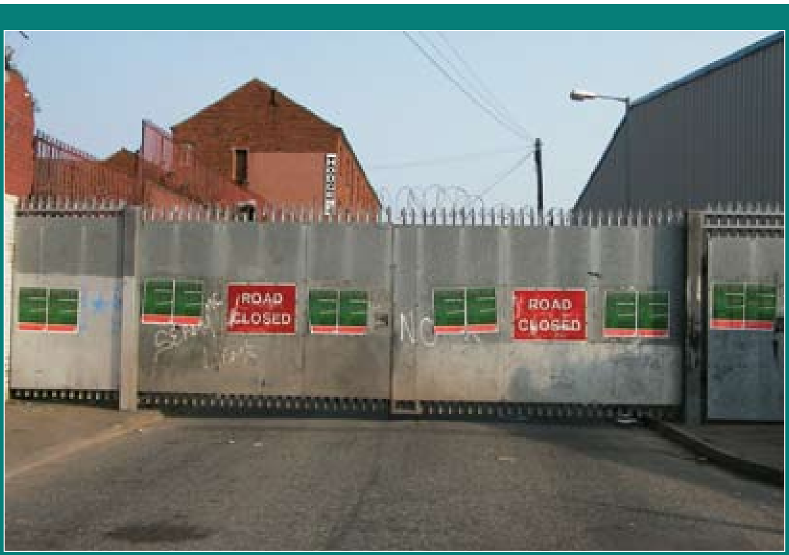
Breakdown of the urban contract

The walls of a city have always been the outward sign and guarantee of a special kind of social contract between the city and its citizens, meant to provide a stable, passive security infrastructure. This infrastructure is a prerequisite for sustained economic and cultural development. Citizens provide their services in a dense, expensive environment in return for the provision of reliable infrastructure, social opportunities and passive security from urban managers. In its most basic form, this might be understood as the urban contract.

When this contract is threatened or broken, the fabric of the city is sometimes tailored until baseline security needs are met, resulting in physical partitions where distinct ethnic groups which are vying for sovereignty live in close proximity. The urban wall has always been the result of an ongoing, sometimes highly volatile, process of negotiation between the city and its enemies, its allies, its elites, and its marginalized residents. Minimizing real and perceived group vulnerability is a primary force shaping city-making and partitioning. Urban apartheid schemes generally signal a failure of governance and diplomacy because they rely on avoidance and intimidation—and not on elements of social cohesion.

Decision-makers who look on as the cities under their jurisdiction slide towards ethnic apartheid are quick to point out that their hands were tied by external powers, or that the violence was imminent, or that their failed attempts at rapprochement were in earnest. The result observed in Belfast (Figs. 20 and 21) is nearly identical to those in the other divided cities under examination here: 'sustained violent conflict has infused decision-makers in a range of policy sectors with a sense of hopelessness that has allowed them to draw limits on the impact of their brief' (Neill et al. 1995: 210).

In response, urban residents whose best interests are routinely disregarded sometimes choose to abandon the systems that no longer serve them. They typically replace their faith in the police with their own sectional paramilitaries and their allegiance to political representation with the decision to take direct action.



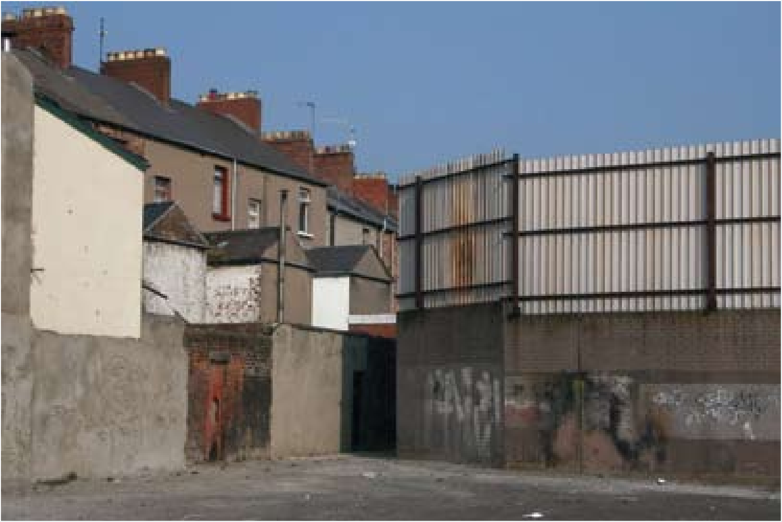


FIGURE 20 One of the main gates on the peaceline in west Belfast. This particular gate is used to seal a road that runs between the Catholic Falls Road area and the Protestant Shankill district (image courtesy of and copyright CAIN (cain.ulst.ac.uk)).

FIGURE 21 Cupar Street in the Falls area of Belfast. At the rear of the houses is the tall brick wall topped with a sheet metal partition that forms the peace line (image courtesy of and copyright CAIN (cain.ulst.ac.uk)).

Under extreme circumstances, one of the first projects of such a group is to erect barricades between themselves and their immediate enemies. Citing threats to their physical well-being, both real and presumed, these communities call the bluff of politicians who defend failed systems of social control or claim impartiality with respect to the rights of minority groups. From this first moment of abandonment, all other episodes of urban division follow according to a rational sequence. It remains only to isolate and understand the steps that lead up to this initial break in order to characterize the process of urban partition in general terms.

The relationship between urban partitioning and failed local government was clarified by a Belfast politician:

> Unless you move to manage your society, any area of conflict or potential conflict will end up exactly the same way as us. The reaction to fear—it's the same the world over…Once you have a population that believes that it's not safe to live among the other side, then they begin to look for other ways to live…they don't take the risk. Why take the risk? Can I afford to give up my peace of mind? Is that not a human thing, rather than a Belfast thing or a Beirut thing or a Mostar thing? It's a human thing.
>
> (D. ERVINE, PERSONAL COMMUNICATION 2001)

Physical partitions indicate a failure to provide security at the municipal scale. They are best viewed, not as the by-product of endemic internecine rivalry, but as symptoms of a broken contract between vulnerable ethnic communities and the city managers. Physical partitions strongly suggest that the need for collective security, especially for minority groups that are already marginalized, can overshadow many conventional social and practical concerns. When considering the problems generated by the divided city condition, the most important questions centre upon how and why the ability erodes of urban managers to meet the security and development needs of resident communities. Walls often postpone the answer, as observed by a community worker in Belfast: 'We find that peacelines address a symptom, but not the problem. If my windows are being broken every night, putting a twenty-foot fence in front of my windows can stop them from being broken. It doesn't do anything to address what it is that makes that person want to break my windows' (C. O'Halloran, personal communication 2001).

Physical partition can be understood as a minority community's reaction to urban expansion beyond the point where group identity is threatened. In such a scenario, division acts as a tool for the decomposition of the urban whole into defensible social formations composed of integrated, manageable ethnic clusters. The desire to hem in an ethnically distinct community against the forces of assimilation is a defensive impulse and a form of conserving one's cultural heritage. The enclaves that result provide a sanctuary when interaction with the dominant majority group becomes especially stressful, hazardous or competitive. Urban residents, as consumers of policies generated by urban managers, take the measure of their overall security and prosperity and seek to adjust the terms of their urban contract accordingly. They are the ones for whom passive physical security matters most.

When urban residents find that their vulnerability has reached intolerable levels in the urban environment, a core component of the conventional urban contract is missing. Some form of compensation must then be identified. A common cycle was described by a Belfast interface resident in straightforward terms:

> It is frustrating. You have no where to go on it. Petrol bombs thrown into the street…reports about who started it…police saying that the Catholics put scorch marks on the ground to have an excuse for fighting. What would I do? Go to complain at the police station? They would tell me to get lost. If there was a problem, the police wouldn't come out. The police come and put their spotlights on us. Never arrest any of the Protestants…I think that's where the problem is. I think if you said, "Look, we're going to start taking walls down around here", people would say, "Hmm. Who's going to protect us?" Because nobody trusts the police to protect us. Not that police force anyway.
>
> (P. MCATAMNEY, PERSONAL COMMUNICATION 2001)

Urban managers are obliged to provide positive conditions for personal and commercial prosperity at a cost that does not burden the public budget. Seeking to construct and maintain an efficient social mechanism, they aim to promote the highest levels of prosperity at the lowest social costs in terms of poverty and discord. In most cities, this equilibrium is achieved without disrupting the physical and functional unity of the whole entity.

The ethnic violence that generally characterizes divided cities presents urban managers with an equation that is difficult to balance. They must try to preserve favourable conditions for the majority of urban residents without leading the city into bankruptcy. In this context, the economic value of dividing lines in relation to limited municipal budgets can be seen to contribute to their popularity as a short-term solution to security crises.

> It was necessary. The alternative would have been to flood the area with police: the walls serve the same function. There is very little else you can do as a quick fix. You always hope they will no longer be required. It gets down to security at the end the day…In Belfast, the government pays the insurance cost, so they put in the walls. But they do frustrate dialogue, there's no doubt about that.
>
> (J. MAIRS, PERSONAL COMMUNICATION 2000)

Where intercommunal violence is rife, partitions are sometimes used as policing tools by local governments that lack the resources to support continuous police surveillance or lack political motivation to devise less socially disruptive solutions.

Likewise, beleaguered residents prefer the stark reassurance of a wall despite its many inconveniences and demoralizing effects. For them, taking the long view is in many ways impractical: 'Some people want a wall up and some people don't. I prefer a wall up, but that's only because I have a young family. I'd be happy in a minute if they just put a wall up and just blocked it up completely. Because there's nothing that's going to happen between us and them up there…I prefer a wall' (P. McAtamney, personal communication 2001). Some observers have noted that violently alienated and dichotomized ethnic groups 'strive to concretize the dichotomy by creating a dual physical and social environment' (Benvenisti 1982: 4).

When breaches or compromises with respect to this security take place, urban residents are forced to accommodate the resulting violence or trauma directly. The urban wall clearly assists with this process of accommodation. This fact is central to a discussion of why urban walls, which are in some ways so dysfunctional, have proven so durable. It points to a pragmatic logic that goes a long way towards explaining the tendency of urban managers to subsidize ethnic partition and can be considered separate from broader questions of causation and responsibility. Urban walls have been utilized repeatedly, as the products of careful deliberation, by many urban managers seeking to shore up chronic injury ethnic violence in their jurisdiction.

Proximal catastrophe

One common characteristic of all five divided cities is a precipitous and unexpected downturn in regional economic prospects during the years prior to the imposition of coercive internal segregation. In some cases, as in Jerusalem and Beirut, local security concerns were rapidly eclipsed by regional power struggles that disrupted a social equilibrium and created power vacuums that were ultimately filled by ultranationalist political entrepreneurs.

Space becomes territory to be defended for its own sake when it has been politicized and converted into a symbolic commodity. In this way political legitimacy is often conflated with urban territory. The infusion of urban space with special meanings is a conscious process that tends to mask or obscure the larger, more essential elements of a social crisis.

In Belfast and Mostar, political instability was compounded by industrial downturns that had severe effects on employment and morale among working-class urban residents. Collective feelings of alienation, humiliation, and deprivation prompted many underprivileged ethnic minority communities to question the benefits that they could expect from the urban contract. In some instances, the terms of the contract had shifted with political events; in others, the contract remained intact while new circumstances shed light on longstanding iniquities.

Many ethnic rivalries stem, directly or indirectly, from broad-based class conflict. The pre-conflict histories of Beirut, Mostar, Nicosia, and Jerusalem show that social tensions were as much a product of economic strife as sectarian rivalry, yet the class conflicts were more successfully forestalled.

This important theme was explored at some length by scholars of early Irish history, one of whom notes regarding Belfast during the mid-1920s:

> Working-class leaders sought to advance the political and economic interests of their class by uniting Protestant and Catholic workers in trade unions and challenging the absolute power of the industrialists and gentry. The Tory elite sought to preserve its prerogatives by fostering sectarian strife among its opponents…The Orange Lodge, financed by Belfast industrialists and dedicated to the preservation of Protestant supremacy, had become the dominant institution of the Protestant working class. Fearing the imagined horrors of Catholic power (Home Rule equals Rome rule) and jealous of

> their marginal advantages over Catholics, Protestant workers ignored their real economic interests and gave their support to the Unionist party.
>
> (HENDERSON *ET AL.* 1974: 209)

Another useful example is found in Cyprus, where Communist organizers on both sides of the island attempted to forge lines of communication and cooperation as tensions grew in the 1950s. An anthropologist in Nicosia described this attempt to create cross-cutting linkages based on shared economic interests in detail:

> Another very serious rift is the conflict between the left and the right. The left had created very important bicommunal structures of cooperation in the past, through labour organizing and trade unions. But as the two sides were drifting apart—with Enosis versus Taksim—those who tried to cooperate were deemed traitors by both sides because they were supposed to be the enemies. This is why many leftists were killed by people on their own side, on both sides of the island, and this is why now the two left-wing parties are still in very close solidarity.
>
> (Y. PAPADAKIS,
> PERSONAL COMMUNICATION 2002)

As in Northern Ireland, early attempts to avoid interethnic conflict failed in large part due to competing political forces, leaving the economic foundation of much social upheaval largely unexamined.

The annals of divided cities are full of similar instances in which promising avenues of negotiation and cooperation were blocked while policy-makers accepted the view that intraclass, intergroup conflicts were intractable. Such shortsighted interpretations consolidate habits of discrimination and encourage the institutionalization of difference within municipal government. Ethnic partition sometimes follows, appearing to affirm a self-fulfilling prophecy of violence, distrust and endemic conflict.

The challenge of professional intervention

Effective and just professional responses to urban partition are rare. For experts trained to solve problems in the built environment—urban planners, architects, and conservators—the divided city presents a nightmare scenario for which sure-fire remedies do not exist. Split, suffocating cities do not frequently appear in textbooks, and the complications of ethnic violence are generally assumed to be the concern of other disciplines. Academic training for planners and architects usually serves these polarized circumstances poorly, since segregation is typically lumped together with other forms of urban blight without considering the specific economic pressures and social weaknesses that divided cities reveal.

In the realm of ethnically divided cities, the absent professional is everywhere in evidence; violence, partition, and recovery proceed without the benefit of coordinated design, planning, or conservation strategies:

Nicosia remains shattered, its buffer zone only surveyed in 2005 after thirty-one years of total abandonment and neglect. Paid little attention by foreign professionals, frozen in place by third-party interventions, monitored by two armies and the United Nations, scarred by blighting and dereliction on both sides of the interface, the capital of Cyprus remains crippled both physically and functionally.

In Jerusalem, deprivation in the eastern neighbourhoods contrasts ever more sharply with suburbanization in the west. Scars of the former Armistice Line remain visible, while landscaping projects along the skirt of the walled city have not succeeded in erasing the memory of partition. New lines—in the form of roads, trenches, and checkpoint—are etched every day between Israelis and Palestinians in the occupied West Bank.

Likewise, peaceline construction continues at a brisk pace in Belfast, where communities still petition for new barricades in addition to horizontal and vertical extensions to existing walls. No city-wide physical security planning complements these micro-engineered remedies, and no peaceline has yet been removed.

Beirut has left postwar reconstruction in the hands of private developers, whose attentions focus solely on the elite financial district.

Mostar continues to stumble through its tenth year of piecemeal rehabilitation as the local economy withers.

Built-environment professionals are easily lost in the gap that separates anticipated problems from actual ones in the context of a divided city. They often lack vital skills, such as being able to negotiate diplomatically among rival groups, and to perform social needs assessments in the absence of a stable central government; the ability to decipher and interpret territorial markers, and to accommodate irrational security concerns into planning strategies; and the acceptance of bigotry as a baseline condition for planning. The effectiveness of design professionals in the context of a divided city is limited by the extent to which their training and original assumptions bar them from operating under social conditions that they perceive to be distasteful and dysfunctional. Until the dilemmas that result from this are addressed by reforming their professional education and providing them with wider consultation, wasted potential and disillusionment among planning professionals are likely to predominate.

Despite all the disadvantages stacked against them, however, built-environment professionals still retain a significant and mostly unrealized potential to shape policy and assist in the broader process of coping with the negative impacts of urban partition. It seems probable that their lack of on-site training and preparation constrains their effective involvement more than any other single factor. The field of urban planning has been slow to acknowledge post-conflict scenarios as part of its repertoire, leaving that domain in the meantime undertheorized and lacking a professional literature to support the development and critique of strategic approaches to ethnic division.

Some experts attempt to rise above the fray, like the sewage engineer in Nicosia who cleared paths through the political minefield in which he works:

> Both sides are working for the benefits of human beings. We are not working for the Turkish, or for the Greeks, or for the Muslims, or for Christians. We are working for the human beings. If you say, 'Hey I am Turkish' or 'I am English,' there is no chance to work. You say, 'I am a human being. And I am an engineer, and I have to work for the benefit of human beings.'
>
> (N. ÖZNEL, PERSONAL COMMUNICATION 2001)

But in most divided cities the notion of public welfare, an anchoring concept for most urban planning strategies, is called into question. Once this moral compass is demagnetized, even veteran practitioners feel the vertigo. For some, the common good becomes difficult to define:

> In divided cities it's waste, it's ugly, it's cruel, it's unfair, it's disharmony. The whole thing can be defined as a disharmonious situation. You come to a place, and you say: 'Okay, so what am I going to do to rectify the situation, to ameliorate the situation, to do something positive?' And people look at you and say: 'What do you mean by positive? Positive for whom?' And you say: 'What do you mean for whom? For the good of humankind.' They say: 'Humankind? You mean Jewish, or Arab?' And then you say, for instance: 'There is a common good!' And they say: 'Oh…you are a philosopher!'
>
> (M. BENVENISTI, PERSONAL COMMUNICATION 2003)

Because professional engagement with divided cities is fraught, most experts avoid it or continue to work from within discredited political mechanisms, as if conditions were normal. In choosing their course, a dilemma is unavoidable: to participate is inevitably perceived as being partisan, while inaction squanders opportunities to assist traumatized communities. Neither option presents clear prospects for satisfaction and success.

The neutrality and objectivity that are so much part of the professional's ordinary mindset cannot be sustained. Professionals attempting to avoid taking sides often find that a political affiliation has been assigned to them, since noncommittal behaviour can be viewed by both rivals and critics of the state as a tacit affirmation of the status quo or as 'instrumental in the exercise of state repression and coercion' (Bollens 2000: 14). In highly dichotomized circumstances, indifference to sectarian concerns is often equated with callousness and complicity in the minds of local antagonists. The lack of reliable and satisfactory political patronage eliminates a major prerequisite for co-ordinated professional involvement.

The majority of built-environment professionals choose to wait for political solutions and the return of working conditions with which they are familiar: 'Thinking about that and talking with colleagues who have been working in the area of urban planning for twenty, thirty years, I must say that I am disappointed. I am disappointed by those colleagues' way of thinking and their vision of the city' (T. Rozic, personal communication 2000).

Local professionals become marginalized as whole sections of their cities are destroyed and partitions offend many of the basic principles underlying progressive urban development. This approach leaves the divided city without expert assistance at junctures characterized by extreme vulnerability and volatility. It is exactly at these moments—when the traditional patrons of design and urban planning are weakened, and when faith in public institutions is at a low ebb—that thoughtful and balanced physical interventions are most needed. Without such interventions, politicians are left to manage the physical segregation of cities alone, without the practical or theoretical tools required to do the job well. Bad decisions and hasty solutions create walls that generate new sets of problems and antagonisms, even while they extinguish some immediate and localized brushfires.

There is thus a lack of a systematic response to the dilemma of partition among built-environment professionals. They are typically absent from the political discourse regarding physical segregation as a solution to inter-ethnic disputes. Given the enormous costs of urban partition, the consequences of this kind of professional acquiescence can be grave. New roles need to be carved out by built-environment professionals in order to improve their effectiveness under conditions of abnormal stress, violence, and discord in a segregated urban environment.

How can built-environment professionals, and conservators in particular, find a more meaningful role in these cycles where their skills are so urgently needed? How can they overcome the obstacles inherent in their training and institutional culture to participate in a constructive, appropriate way? Meron Benvenisti may provide a clue when he notes that the efforts of most professionals in the arena of inter-ethnic conflict are 'ineffective because of the complex relationship between real and perceived environments' and complains that they all seek conflict resolution: 'the partisan seeks to eliminate conflict by winning it; the professional, by improving real environment; and the resolver, by a compromise. The endemic and organic nature of the conflict render all their efforts futile, because communal conflicts have no ultimate solution' (Benvenisti 1982) If this assertion is correct, it illuminates a possible path forward where success is measured in incremental improvements to psychological well-being rather than in the restitution of contested symbols.

Reflections

The problems of divided cities generally appear somewhat exotic; it is difficult to be sure of their relevance since until now so few cities have slipped over the edge. The discussions and presentations made during the ICCROM Forum, however, suggest that the divided city phenomenon is simply part of a much larger one: the urban landscape politically segregated into racially homogeneous sectors. Other contributors to this volume show how this process has scarred the residential quarters of the West Bank (Amiry and Bshara), several towns and cities in western sub-Saharan Africa (Diamitani), ancient sites in southern Mexico (Magar) and a landmark shrine in Sri Lanka (Wijesuriya). It seems that there might be a vocabulary, grammar and syntax that governs the process of involuntary, violent spatial separation and splitting. With further discussion, collaboration, and research, these governing principles may be brought further into the light. This may yield unexpected insights and advantages for the innocent inhabitants who always pay the highest price at the local level.

Biography

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Note

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