



MAS in collective housing
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Final Works

THE ARCHITECTURE OF OCCUPATION AND LIMITATION

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Sara Hammad
2015



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**Architecture and the built environment are a kind of slow violence.
The occupation is an environment that slowly was conceived to
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an environment that would be unlivable for the people there.**

EYAL WEIZMAN



THESIS: THE ARCHITECTURE OF OCCUPATION AND LIMITATION

Architecture is not apolitical. To be precise it is not the result of politics, but its medium. And in the case of Israeli occupation of the Palestinian land – a medium used by the Israeli government to enforce its interests. I am going to outline how decisive a role architecture plays in Israel and the Palestinian territories in acts of repression, military decisions, and security policy. Through the military strategy of Ariel Sharon, the construction of checkpoints, to the architecture of Jewish settlements?. Through architecture, an ideology becomes a reality. And this reality facilitates land settlement and expropriation. "The destruction of Palestinian refugee camps and cities and the building of settlements are complementary implementations of politics in a spatial context"¹.

Within the boundaries of the city of Jerusalem, a process of spatial segregation between the various populations inhabiting the city has occurred and continues to occur. In a multicultural city such as Jerusalem, the city's spatial segregation of the various population groups is a real advantage. Every group has its own cultural space and can live its lifestyle. The segregation limits the potential sources of conflict between and among the various populations. Therefore, it is appropriate to direct a planning policy that encourages the continuation of spatial segregation with a substantial amount of tolerance and consideration.

Architecture and the built environment are a kind of slow violence. The occupation is an environment that slowly was conceived to strangle Palestinian communities, villages, and towns, to create an environment that would be unlivable for the people there (Eyal Weizman). The crime was done on the drawing board itself, the settlements which in the blue color blue have been built like wedges not only to serve the colonies themselves (Figure 1), but consciously to create material damage cutting apart the very sort of fragile Palestinian built fabric.

Architecture is used by architect as a weapon, the weapons, and ammunitions of it a very simple **elements** such as trees, terraces, houses, cladding, or barriers⁴.

Everything in this panorama is a tactical tool within the architecture of occupation just need to know how to decode it.

Gilo is one of the settlements neighborhood, after the war 1967 Israeli occupation and Nexus a large part of the west bank and East Jerusalem and immediately starts building remote neighborhood sphere. These neighborhoods are called the **living wall** around the city (Figure 1). Immediately after the occupation all of the sudden we see that buildings that make us feel like we are in the center of Jerusalem, in fact we are miles away, for example: the corner of the buildings, as an architects we know that the corner of the building indicate the construction technique, but we see here it's a concrete building and that the stone is merely a veneer of one and half cm or **2 cm thick**, Which is so different of the old city ones.

So, the Israeli occupation government wanted to tell the people living there that they are living in part of the holy city of Jerusalem, and it was left for architecture to tell that story.

The architectural principal of the Israeli occupation is way of maintaining separation and exercising control over the Palestinian land, for example the tunnel road built in 1996, now it called the apartheid road (Figure 2), because it is a road that simply serve the Jewish communities, the Jewish colonies, and the settlements.

In the south of Jerusalem, we have a whole Jewish neighborhood overhead and the other part is a Palestinian neighborhoods and valley. Settlements are built on **hilltops** overlooking the Palestinian inner valley between them (Figure 3), And the main reason to build on **hilltops** is for self-protection, and for them to dominate the surrounding. So, although Israeli occupation built a thousand of structures in the west bank, the number of typologies is very limited, they all variation on the single or double family house with red roof very suburban typology in fact is something is mandated by law (Figure 4), because this is allowing the military to navigate the landscape for them to understand, what's ours, what's there, what's friends. While usually the Palestinian houses have the flat roofs (Figure 5). Workflow where you can bomb and where you are not?. Also, in the settlements housing you would enter the house through the inner circuit and move through the house you totally open towards the outside **view** (Figure 6), which mean here the house itself is like an optical instrument, and when it is laid in rings around the hilltops it is like a suburban scale optical device that can survey the entire territory around it.

When I think about the borders, or when I see even the **separation wall** (Figure 7), I imagine a single instrument that separate Palestinians and Israelis on two sides of a map. In the Israel-Palestine frontier the border had splintered into various border devices there are fences around the settlements, there are blockades around Palestinian cities their highways at operators borders their checkpoints in sterile areas, and sort of other body devices that shrink and expand the terrain at will.

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To control space, you need to create differentiation in speed movement, when you put Israeli colonies on **highways** you accelerate the movement through the space. In the same way on every twist and turn of the terrain Palestinians would encounter a border a checkpoint offense a valley that they cannot cross. Sometimes you can read politics on a most mundane of an architectural element.

Turnstiles (Figure 8) they used them as the most important instrument in **checkpoints**, they have reduced the arm of the turnstile for it to press against the **human body** in case there is anything a person carries, and that create a horrific situation when people who are little bit larger would catch up with in that urn style so cruel and degrading and reduces Palestinian to nothing more than **bodies** in their standard scale.

Me as a Palestinian architect, I remember the land without the wall and the settlements, now I am blocked, because opening a door into the wall not possible “it’s a fence” and the only way to open it is the demolishing, into the wall there are many **towers** (Figure 9) are designed to hide the presence of the army soldiers, so you would always assume there is somebody looking at you. And that show a real apartheid action here.

When conflict erupts the slow violence of the environment is begin put into immediate use Israeli soldiers move down into Palestinians towns and villages from the settlements themselves the checkpoint hardened, and nobody can move through the border complete around them and entire territory springs into use.

In 2002 Sharon (Israeli vice prime minister), ordered the Israeli army to occupy the entirety of the west bank as a part of operation defensive shield as they said, they have no problem with open areas, but invading cities will somehow the most difficult part.

I’m studying the city of **Nablus** as one of the biggest laboratories in 2002 (Figure 10), for the development of a new type of urban warfare, Israelis army were studying not only the city, but how the city operated, they understood the houses structures, the inner roads, and the infrastructure in order to occupy the city, they only need to invent and move in a city in a different manner, here are some tactics, which I thought they are very architectural: they are actually doming a turning the private and public space upside down, the private space becomes a space of circulation and movement, and the public space the space of the street is where the resistance fighter are being caught or killed, then signs on a wall or door with a different color each color have a meaning, the Israeli soldiers have used it in order to indicate to the other soldiers which way you should go, or what action must be done.

When I looked at the landscape, I see this kind of slow killing, I would have to practice my architecture free of the constraints and violence of the Israeli occupation, but I think that to be an architect is not only to build or contribute to this destruction of the place that I love most, but to use architecture to both interpret protest and resist.

Jerusalem is an ancient city holy to Muslims, Christians, and Jews. West Jerusalem has been Israeli territory since the year of “Nakba” 1948 with Jews in the majority. East Jerusalem, which houses the Old City of Jerusalem including the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, is Palestinian majority and was under the Jordanian administration and then occupied by Israel in 1967. Then claiming that “Jerusalem, complete and united, is the capital of Israel”, in violation of international law, which states that the city should be administered by the UN for its importance to the three Abrahamic religions., the realities for those who live there cannot be more different. More than 140,000 Palestinian residents of Jerusalem have been physically separated from the city by a 700km concrete wall, which Israel started building in 2002.

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To understand the complexity of Palestine's housing crisis, in my opinion there are six issues related to housing access, specifically within East Jerusalem (As one of the biggest witnesses at the moment). They are as follows: number of units, land ownership, permits, cost, demolitions, and illegal Israeli settlements. However, these issues are not unique to East Jerusalem as all the occupied Palestinian territories are facing these very same issues. Much like post-apartheid South Africa's lack of response to the needs of their urban poor people, segregation was mandated by law, very little housing was built for Africans by the apartheid regime. As a result, when the government came to power there was only 1 formal brick house for every 43 Africans compared to one for every 3.5 whites **who lack affordable and satisfactory housing**². Israel's lack of ambition and action over the Palestinian housing crisis emphasizes that its racism-ridden history and its incompetence of elected officials have failed the Palestinians once again. Aside from the discriminatory planning policies that the Israeli government enforces within the occupied Palestinian land, Palestinians find themselves financially unable to pay for the extremely costly fines and taxes inflicted on them and their land or structures. Houses and other structures that are built without the proper permits given by the Israeli government are subject to demolition, as they are deemed unplanned and informal. However, Palestinian housing that is built without the proper permits are not the only houses that are subject to demolition by the Israeli military. On numerous occasions, the Israeli military forces have demolished the homes of Palestinians, per the orders of the Israeli occupation government, under the pretext of security concerns. In November 2014, the Israeli government issued orders to demolish a home in East Jerusalem belonging to a Palestinian man who was joined a resistance group party, while in November same year, the Israeli Supreme Court issued demolitions orders for the houses of three Palestinian men who were involved in a shooting. Palestinians also face delays in obtaining building permits due to a lack of proper land registration. When Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem cannot show verification that they own the land, or when the owners are found living outside of Palestine such as a grandparent or parent, Israel usually takes ownership of the land under the Absentees' Property Law³ prohibiting the building permit and taking away the land from the Palestinian residents. The policies and laws create the realities of the six housing issues within East Jerusalem.

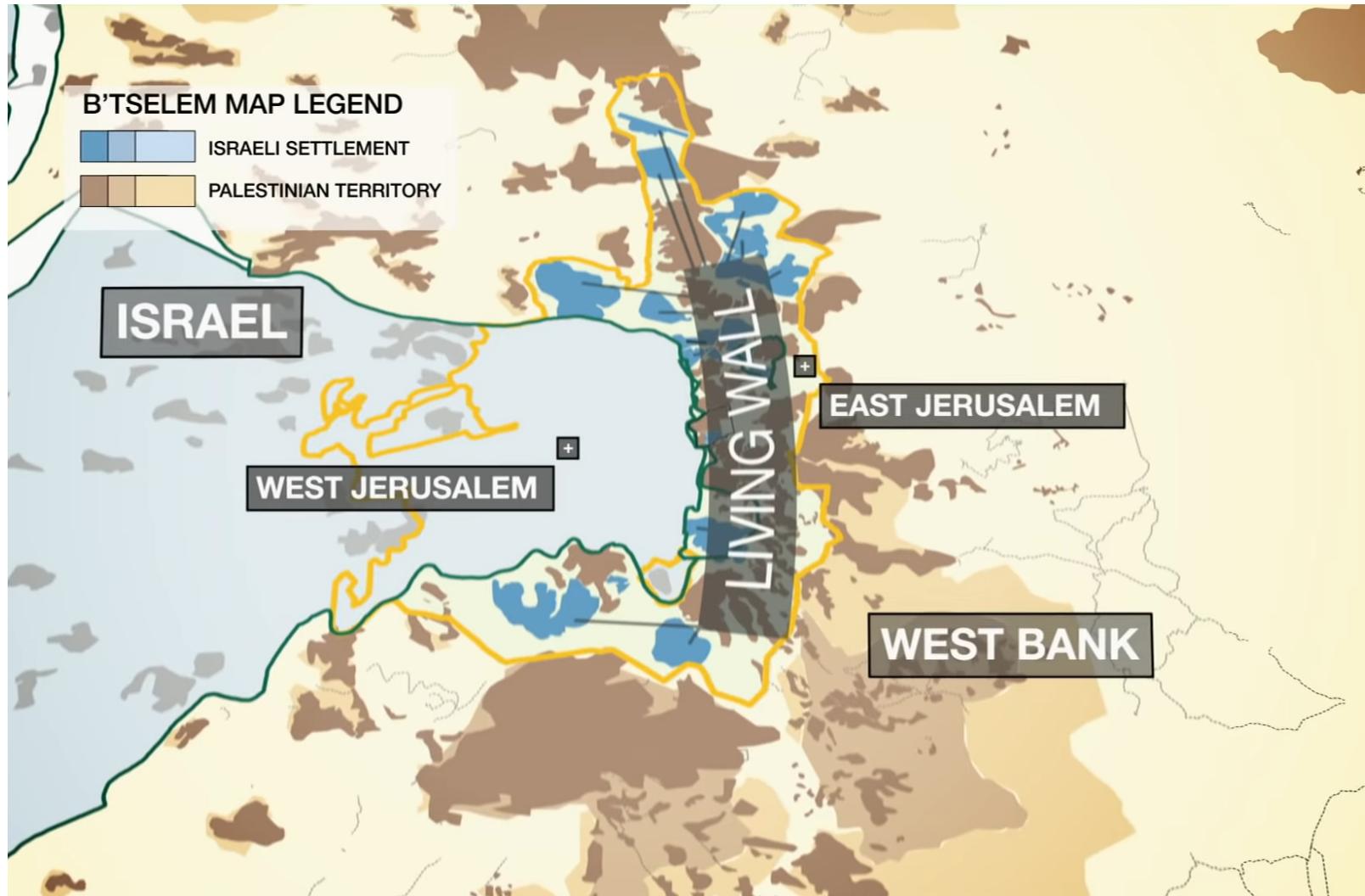
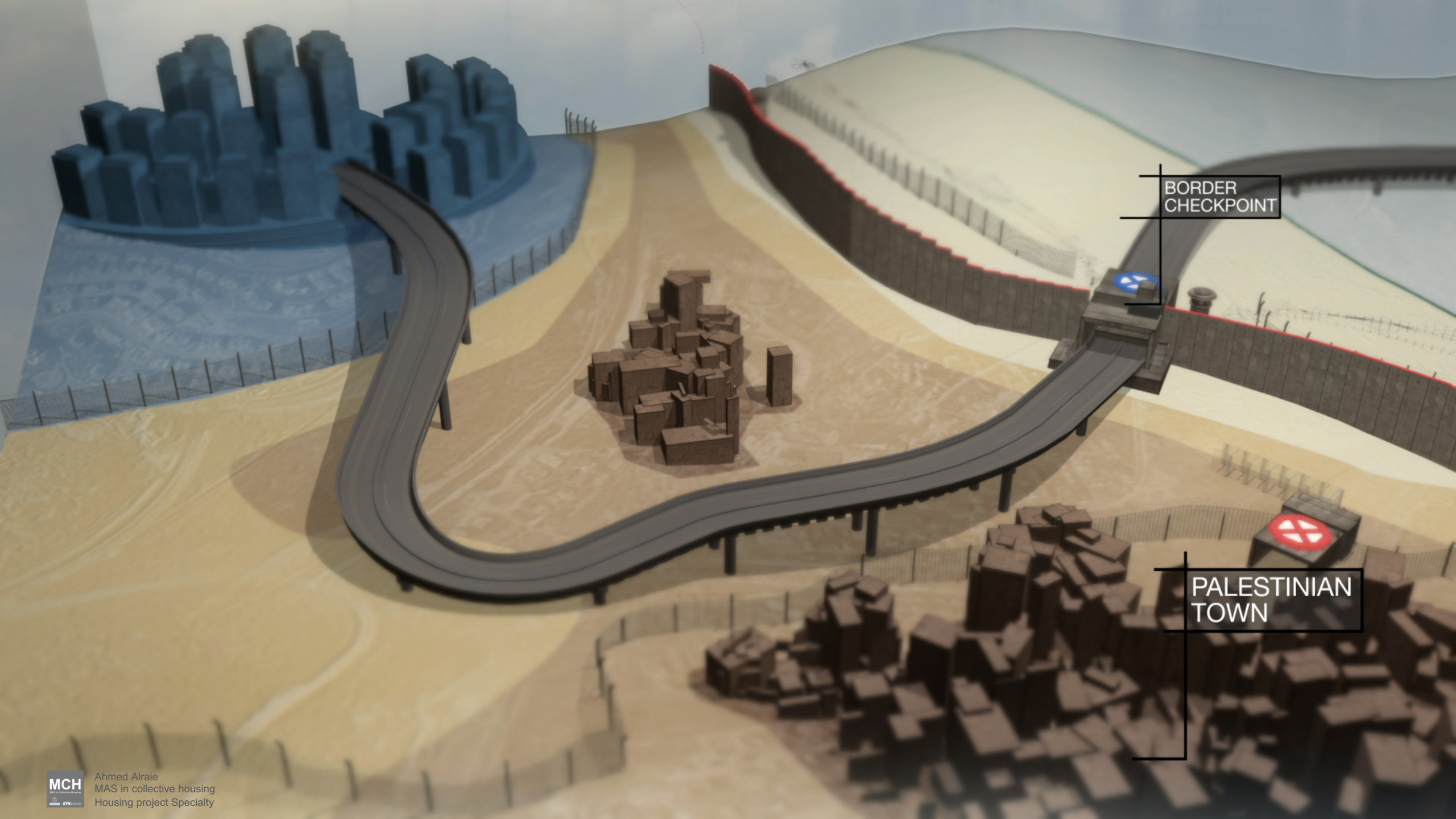
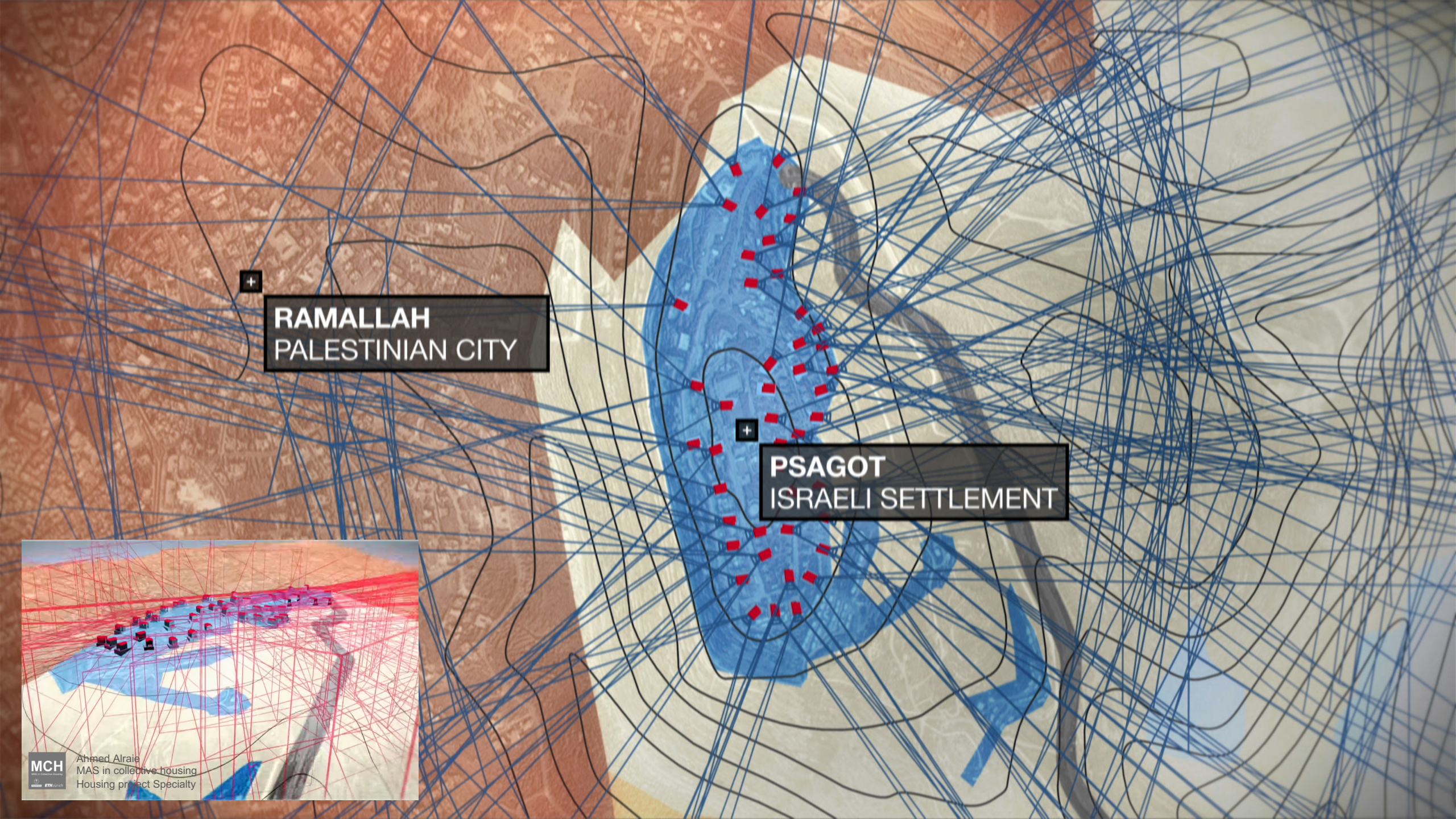


Figure 1: Map detailing the complexity of Jerusalem, including the route of the separation wall, illegal Israeli settlements in EastJerusalem, and the city's boundaries as defined by Israel. (Source: Joe Burgess, The New York Times, 2010)



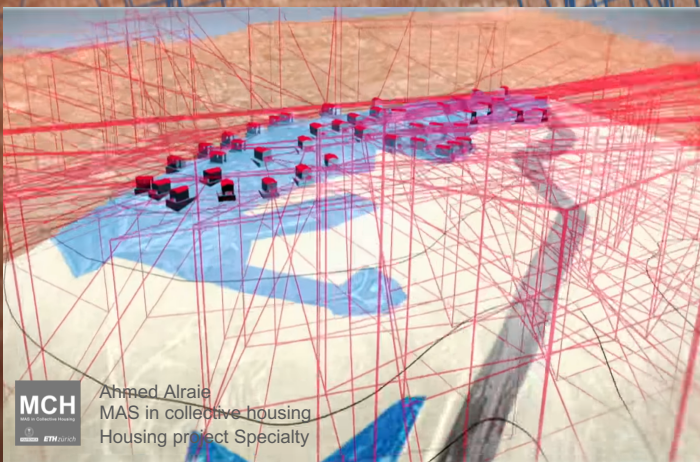
BORDER
CHECKPOINT

PALESTINIAN
TOWN

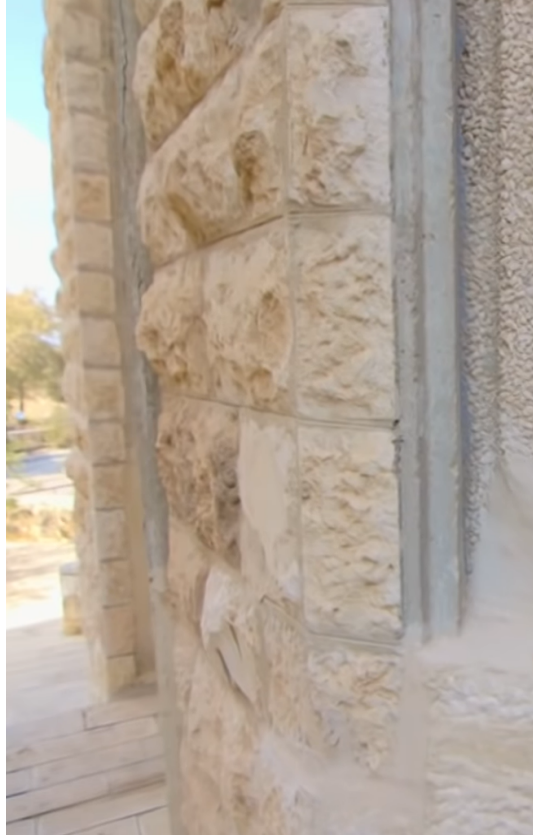


RAMALLAH
PALESTINIAN CITY

PSAGOT
ISRAELI SETTLEMENT







Conclusion

In my opinion, housing in Palestine cannot be discussed or remedied without addressing Palestinians' life. The illegal Israeli occupation has made it nearly impossible for Palestinians to live, as it has severe implications and impacts on all aspects of life and not just simply housing or urban planning. There must be both immediate and long-term actions put in place by the Israeli occupation government, in conjunction with Palestinians, for Palestine to prosper in all realms of life. First and foremost, the Israeli government needs to end its illegal occupation of all Palestinian territories, including but not limited to the removal of the separation barriers, all Israeli military forces, and all illegal Israeli settlers. While this seems like an ambitious goal, only when the occupation ends can Palestinians truly take hold of their planning and their future.

In the meantime, the municipality of Jerusalem must actively work to alleviate the housing crisis currently facing the Palestinian residents. This can be done through various measures such as allowing for easier access to building permits (quicker and cheaper), an immediate end of demolition orders, and developing the basic infrastructure of East Jerusalem.

