

until, five hours later, they reached the third floor kitchen where the remaining inhabitants were sitting with their arms locked together.

Evictions of autonomous spaces—the eradication of resistant territories and their collectives—confront us with the nihilism of capital accumulation and the accompanying state repression of radical grassroots alternatives in urban living. When the life and production of these spaces cannot be captured and integrated into the capitalist market, the spaces are instead destroyed. War machines are dislocated, while the practices and knowledges that form and grow out of projects such as Liebig 14 are dissolved until they can be reconcentrated again at opportune moments. In a context where “for too long we have been losing, perhaps to the extent that we have forgotten what it would mean to win,”¹⁰ it becomes necessary to rescue from situations of seeming defeat our senses of political agency and collective empowerment, to deepen our determination and strengthen our practices.

Endnotes

- 1 G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Mille Plateaux: Capitalisme et schizophrénie* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1980).
- 2 A. Holm and A. Kuhn, “Squatting and Urban Renewal: The Interaction of Squatter Movements and Strategies of Urban Restructuring in Berlin,” in *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 35 (2011), 644–658, here 650.
- 3 G. Kasaslićs, *The Subversion of Politics: European Autonomous Social Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life* (1997; 2nd edn., Edinburgh: AK Press, 2006), 154.
- 4 Post-Wall, the WBF took ownership of awoned building in the East of the city. The WBF is now merged with the *Wohnungsgesellschaft Mitte* (WGBM).
- 5 The door had been built to prevent the landlord from entering the building as well as to separate the ground floor event area from the living area of the house. For a full history of Liebig 14 see <http://liebig14.blogspot.de/das-haus/chronik/> (in German).
- 6 Although it is legally required to send an eviction notice informing the tenants of an eviction date, this is not always the case. In 2009, another Berlin *Hausprojekte* at Brunnenstrasse 183 was evicted without notice.
- 7 A. M. Simone, *For the City Yet to Come: Changing African Life in Four Cities* (London: Duke University Press, 2004), 4.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 5.
- 9 Protests and solidarity actions in support of Liebig 14 took place in Denmark, Japan, Peru, the UK, Moldova, France, and the United States.
- 10 Escalate Collective, “Marching for Whose Alternative?” <http://escalatecollective.net> (2011)

A ROUGH AND CHARMLESS PLACE: OTHER SPACES OF HISTORY IN TEL AVIV

Noam Leshem



1 Salama Mosque, view from the north (2009). Source: Photo by Noam Leshem.

By the time Jewish armed forces entered the Arab village of Salama on the outskirts of Tel Aviv in late April 1948, all of its inhabitants had fled. The following day, when Israel's first prime minister David Ben-Gurion visited the village, he encountered "only one old blind woman."¹ Despite its depopulation, most of Salama's houses stood unharmed. Two weeks later, Israeli authorities began settling Jewish immigrants and war refugees in the village, partly to alleviate the severe housing shortage of the time and to physically block the return of Palestinian Arab refugees to their homes. In 1949, Salama was incorporated into Tel Aviv's municipal boundaries, and three years later the Israeli Government Names Committee assigned it a new, Hebrew name—Kefar Shalem.

Prevailing historiographical conventions view such extreme transformation as a watershed moment, marking the abrupt end of an Arab village and the beginning of the Jewish-Israeli neighbourhood. "Erasure" or "spatial annihilation" are common tropes in the critical corpus analysing the radical transformation of the Arab landscape in Israel, spaces that were subjected to policies of physical ruination as well as historical and cultural "de-signification."² Widespread destruction, depopulation, and cultural chauvinism are crucial to the understanding of Israel's spatial history, but do they simply wipe the spatial slate clean? What other histories continue to claim their place in the Israeli space?

On the night of 9 October 2000, shortly after the violence of the second Palestinian uprising (*Intifada*) engulfed Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip, a little known incident took place in Kefar Shalem. Armed with metal bars and hammers, hundreds of Jewish residents began tearing down one of the walls of the derelict Salama Mosque. A squad of twenty police officers armed with clubs was sent to surround the structure to shield it from the crowd.

What could trigger such a severe onslaught against a building that had not been used for Muslim religious purposes since 1948 and sealed shut since the early 1980s? The attack on the mosque suggests that despite being fenced off, locked, and isolated, Salama Mosque was not empty. For those who set out to bring the building down, the Arab village of Salama was neither erased nor forgotten. While the building may have stood abandoned and disused, the time that passed did not erode its identification as a container of symbolic meaning: in the eyes of the Jewish protesters there was no doubt that the building was "Arab" or "Muslim," and as such, a worthy target of anger, aggression, and fear. The unsettled presence of a vacant building that attracts such fierce and violent emotions illustrates the deceptive nature of seemingly empty spaces and challenges some of the conventions that govern spatial and historical research: what are the criteria according to which we select and categorise phenomena and observations, deeming some worthy and other irrelevant? How do we measure degrees of presence and absence that direct our attention to certain objects but not others?

Israeli authorities have sought numerous "ways of forgetting"³ the Arab past of Palestine, and the alteration of spaces played a key role in this regard, both through planned demoli-

tion and through the creation of a new symbolic geography of Hebrew names and Jewish historical narratives. But while maps can be redrawn and names replaced, former Arab spaces in Israel are not merely mute traces, devoid of context or contemporary consequence. For example, Salama Mosque was turned into a youth club in 1949, catering to the region's socio-economically disadvantaged population for over three decades, but this significant change of function did not blur the historical meaning of the place. Archival material shows that the building's identification as "the mosque" continues to appear decades after it ceased serving this purpose. These traces in the archive may be prosaic, anecdotal examples. They do not constitute an official acknowledgement of the Arab past of Salama or commemoration of the loss suffered in 1948. Yet official practices of commemoration are not the only sources through which "empty space" becomes historically intelligible.

Greater attention to the complex historical, political, and social processes lodged in so-called empty spaces highlights facets of "situated knowledge of colonial practice and power relations"⁴ that are embedded in, rather than marginalised by processes of emptying and ruination. Even in extreme spaces of ruination, it is possible to identify creative expressions of defiant memory, as in the case of Yalo, Amwas, and Beit Nuba, three villages that were demolished in the 1967 War. After the war, a national park was planted over the ruins, a practice often cited as part of the Israeli authorities' efforts to obscure Arab presence. Various signs placed around the park mention the area's rich history—from Roman and early Jewish periods, to Ottoman rule—yet remain silent about the Palestinian history of the site. But destruction did not mean that the villages simply vanish from sight and memory. On weekends, whole families of former Arab residents arrive in the park for seemingly innocuous picnics, but ones that nonetheless express a structure of feeling between people and place, an intimate relationship that has otherwise been severed. Although these are powerful spatial practices and social instruments that maintain a community's relation to its past, they are easily overlooked. Yet these are precisely the forms of "haunting" that highlight the social and cultural meaning of ruins, explicating "how that which appears not to be there is often a seething presence, acting on and often meddling with taken-for-granted realities."⁵ The analytical effort to "repopulate the emptiness" requires attention to seemingly mundane, even banal, places and practices. "What we have to do with banal facts," Michel Foucault reminds us, "is to discover—or try to discover—which specific and perhaps original problems are connected with them."⁶ Ordinary places like Salama/Kefar Shalem, a working-class neighbourhood on the edge of the metropolis, provide insights into the actual negotiations that take place between people and the spaces in which they live, work, seek leisure, or simply pass by. Such places are rarely monumental or extreme in their appearance: they are old and decrepit, hidden in the peripheral neighbourhoods; they are encrypted in the contradictions and ambiguity of official documents and texts; they aggravate officials seeking urban "order," and frustrate planning authorities. The ambiguity of empty space, the recurring sense that it is never wholly devoid of "things" that continue to carry an unsettling

meaning, suggests that the rich archive of emptiness, as it were, bears evidence to more than just the brute force of ethno-national chauvinism. At times, it emerges in the subtle form of mundane picnics, while at others it bluntly reappears in a violent attack against a mosque after sixty years of disuse.

Endnotes

- 1 David Ben-Gurion, *The War Diary. The War of Independence, 1947–1948 [Dvora ha-Milhamah: Milhemet ha-ismia, 708–709]*, Vol. II, ed. Gershon Rivlin and Elhanan Oren (Tel Aviv: David Ben-Gurion Heritage Centre; Israel Ministry of Defence Press, 1982), 377.
- 2 See for example, Ghazi Falah, "The 1948 Israeli-Palestinian War and Its Aftermath: The Transformation and De-Signification of Palestine's Cultural Landscape," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 86/2 (June 1996): 256–285; Meron Benvenisti, *Sacred Landscapes: The Buried History of the Holy Land since 1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
- 3 Uri Ram, "Ways of Forgetting: Israel and the Obliterated Memory of the Palestinian Nakba," in *Journal of Historical Sociology* 22/3 (September, 2009), 366–395.
- 4 Cole Harris, "How Did Colonialism Dispossess? Comments from an Edge of Empire," in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 94/1 (March 2004), 166.
- 5 Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 8.
- 6 Michel Foucault, ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977–1984* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 58–59.

"A FOOTPRINT AMONG THE RUINS"1

Karen E. Trill

"The community's stories were a substantive part of the architecture of the neighbourhood's memory. A form of resistance in the face of oblivion, a potential footprint among the ruins." 2

Rolf Abderhalden Cortés, *Mapa Teatro Laboratorio de Artistas*

December 2003 and 2004. Project Prometeo: Acts I & II. An outdoor 'stage' in downtown Bogotá.

A clown becomes a magician. From the torch held by his assistant, he lights a paper and performs his interpretation of Heiner Müller's *The Liberation of Prometheus*: tapping his empty magic box with a wand, he pulls two white doves out of nowhere. It is night. Along with hundreds of candles in the surrounding open-air fields, two large screens, three to six storeys high, illuminate his actions and simultaneously project live images of his performance and previously recorded footage of the elderly man's personal story. We learn that he joined the circus at the age of nine and we watch images of him and his grandson dressing up as clowns. They are in temporary housing and a pale green wall of their single room is adorned with their belongings carefully organised according to their function: a frying pan, a pair of scissors, a material bag, a framed picture. In other clips, we see them looking out of the windows of a city bus across fields in which buildings are under different phases of demolition. Upon these razed fields, we the audience, now sit. The magician throws the flapping doves up to the night sky. They are free. Amidst our applause, with bolero music beginning to play, the magician invites us, the audience, to come join him and the other performers on stage and dance atop the ruins of the Santa Inés-El Carrucho neighbourhood, their former homes.