

SIMONE RICCA

# REINVENTING JERUSALEM

ISRAEL'S RECONSTRUCTION OF THE  
JEWISH QUARTER AFTER 1967



I.B. TAURIS

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To Little Leila



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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

BSAJ	British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem
CDC	Centre for Development Consultancy
CDRJQ	Company for the Development and Reconstruction of the Jewish Quarter
DG	director-general
HRC	Hebron Rehabilitation Committee
ICCROM	International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
LWHD	List of World Heritage in Danger
NGO	non-governmental organization
PNA	Palestinian National Authority
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WA	Welfare Association
WHC	World Heritage Committee
WHL	World Heritage List

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Finally, I want to express my love and deepest gratitude to my wife Nada for her unconditional encouragement and insightful comments on this work. Without her this book would never have been published.

# Preface

The driving force that pushed me to step out of my professional career as a conservation architect and to write this book has been the feeling that the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem represented a violent fracture in the long history and evolution of the city. It was the artificiality of this new neighbourhood within the Ottoman city walls that struck me most on my daily visits to the site. But ‘artificial’ literally means ‘made with art’, with skill, made according to an idea, to a design; the very perception of the existence of such a plan seemed to call for its analysis.

The Jewish Quarter embodies the ‘artificiality’ of Israel as a whole – a dream realized, built anew over a short span of time, a utopia made of square, stone-faced houses, of clean well-paved streets, of Western rationality amid eastern ‘shapelessness’. The reconstructed neighbourhood’s rejection of the original built environment echoes the overall attitude of the new state to the existing Palestinian landscape; the renewed Jewish Quarter may be considered a condensed version of the entire Israeli experiment.

Built after 1967, following the Israeli conquest of the Old City, the new Jewish Quarter is intimately connected to the ideology that made the creation and development of Israel possible, and proved integral to the earlier state-making phase that had followed the 1948 war. In its formative period the new State of Israel had developed without – and partially in opposition to – the Old City. However, the Zionist call for a ‘return to the fatherland’ required the full appropriation of Jerusalem – as it represents the most important and powerful symbol of Judaism – and its subsequent transformation according to the plans put forth by the Israeli leadership. It appears then that the Jewish Quarter constitutes an essential and central element for the State of Israel, its special status being confirmed by the widespread support for its reconstruction coming from almost all Israeli political parties and personalities. Indeed,

the new Jewish Quarter is rarely associated with the other East Jerusalem settlements, or with those in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip.

Jerusalem's Jewish Quarter is often portrayed as the Jewish symbol *par excellence*, the proof of the 'historic right' to the land, the core of the Jewish religious faith and at the same time the heart of the secular state. Israelis saw its destruction under the Jordanians as proof of the need to create the Jewish state, and the city's rebirth as bearing witness to the achievements and possibilities of a modern and rational country. From within this positivist framework, most commentators – foreigner and Israeli alike – would regard it as almost blasphemous to consider it as yet another settlement. Still, the neighbourhood communicated to me essentially the sense of being an artificial island, an inwardly turned *enclave*. It looked to me like the very proof of the 'otherness' at the centre of the Zionist enterprise, just the opposite of the much sought after idea of continuity and rebirth, of a bridge between ancient Israelites and modern Israelis. Its contemporary shapes and conscious use of ancient heritage and archaeological ruins conveyed a message of simplification, of fabrication or, at least, of misplaced rationality. Its small size, and the dramatic contrast between the rebuilt neighbourhood and the rest of the Old City, seemed to affirm the futility of the whole idea, the impossibility of shaping a living and dense city according to an abstract ideological design.

To most visitors walking through its lanes, however, the reconstructed neighbourhood is self-evident proof of the effectiveness of the Zionist project. The rewriting of the ancient and recent history of the site and the complete erasure of the previous reality are not visible, so the new version conveyed by the reconstructed neighbourhood is willingly endorsed.

To the Israelis, the Jewish Quarter is a lively, charming and emotional site; to north-American tourists it is an 'authentic' ancient city and an extraordinary archaeological park connected to the biblical myths that shape their own country and national consciousness; to Jews from all over the world it has come to represent the core of their identity; and finally, and even more surprisingly, to many Palestinians it is seen to be a successful model of urban reconstruction, to be eventually copied and imitated.

Realizing that my feelings and perceptions were not unanimously shared, that, on the contrary, most visitors saw the renewed quarter as a

## PREFACE

happy island, a successful mix of modernity and tradition, as proof that modern Israel was not only made of concrete blocks and hilltop projects, but also of imposing stone buildings, forced me to question the whole concept of urban restoration and its inevitable and intimate connection with political ideologies.

This book confronts these contradicting perceptions and sets out to explain why and in what ways the Jewish Quarter reconstruction developed.



# Introduction

This is not just another neighbourhood. This is the Jewish Quarter.

Y. Tamir<sup>1</sup>

For Jews, Jerusalem is a national focus and a spiritual religious and historical symbol and vindication. It did not matter if alien conquerors, building evanescent empires, governed it intermittently.

The Jewish Quarter is the age-old testimony of that immemorial Jewish presence and purpose.

Tourist brochure<sup>2</sup>

We will never again look at a monument or exhibit without posing not only the 'Whose heritage is this?' question, but also the insistent 'Who is disinherited here and what are the consequences of such dispossession?'

J. E. Tunbridge and G. J. Ashworth<sup>3</sup>

In this book I address the interaction between heritage, national identity and the built fabric in the Old City of Jerusalem from the point of view of the impact of the Zionist reading of history on its townscape. By looking at the reconstruction plan for the Jewish Quarter I show that the aesthetic values embodied in the structures, patterns of land-ownership and changes in occupancy in what has become the Jewish Quarter are all the result of an exclusive ethno-nationalist ideology, and not the outcome of a simple urban restoration plan designed to conserve Jerusalem's unique heritage.

The reconstruction plan the Israelis carried out between 1967 and the mid-1980s is commonly described as having aimed to restore Jerusalem's urban fabric, which, it was argued, had been heavily damaged by wars and Jordanian rule. In this book I examine the urban transformations brought about by the June 1967 war. I focus on the role the new Jewish Quarter played in shaping the national and international image of the

Israeli nation, and highlight the intimate relationship between what has often been considered a purely technical enterprise and the overall campaign to legitimize Israeli rule over the city. By detailing the techniques applied in the reconstruction and their underlying theoretical framework, I aim to demonstrate the predominance of political over technical elements and the relevance of the Jewish Quarter reconstruction plan within the overall transformation of Jerusalem into the Jewish people's capital and national symbol.

In examining the development of the project and its role in Israeli society, it seems as if its identity-stressing and nation-making aspects constitute the actual rationale of the entire enterprise. This is apparent in the modern architectural features of the buildings designed to represent both the new state and the timeless Jewish presence in the land, in the symbolic and political use of archaeology<sup>4</sup> and in the ongoing financial and political support the plan has received from the highest echelons of the Israeli state throughout the 15 years in which it developed.

I began the research and fieldwork for this book in 1999 during a political phase still dominated by the Oslo framework when it looked as if the future of Jerusalem could be resolved by negotiation; during the years of the Second Intifada, however, discussing the fate of the city looked more like an empty and futile exercise. It is my hope that a deeper understanding of the complexities of the southwestern corner of the Old City might offer new insights into how to find a solution to the issue of the Old City that is acceptable to all parties.

The subject matter of this book touches on many different areas of science and research. It encompasses architecture, restoration, town planning and heritage studies, as well as international relations, politics, history and cartography. Discussing any city is by definition a multi-disciplinary task, even more so when discussing urban conservation, for all large-scale conservation plans call for a specific understanding of concepts such as 'national identity' and 'national heritage'. Although there is a rich literature on these issues both in general and in relation to Israel – with particular emphasis on the ideological use of archaeology – there is relatively little material relating more specifically to architecture and urban conservation.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, though it is likely that no other city has been studied as much as Jerusalem, and few cities can claim such a vast literature on every aspect of its life, history, past, present and even future, there is still little work devoted to its Old City from an

architectural and political perspective, and there is almost no published work on the subject of my research – the reconstruction of the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup> The Israeli and international architectural journals that covered the reconstruction invariably overlooked the political framework and concentrated only on design and technical matters; on the other hand, although the political use of planning has been meaningfully presented in many books and articles on Jerusalem,<sup>7</sup> these political analyses have failed to address either the architectural scale or the sensitive issue of conservation and urban renewal in the Jewish Quarter. Indeed, the classic texts on Jerusalem pay little attention to the reconstruction of the Jewish Quarter. Although in her *Jerusalem: One City, Three Faiths*, Karen Armstrong pays attention to the ‘consequence of ‘urban renewal’ – a renewal based on the dismantling of historic Arab Jerusalem – that would entirely transform the appearance and character of the city’,<sup>8</sup> in focusing on the new extended city borders on the one hand and the demolition of the Moroccan quarter on the other, she gives little consideration to the delicate issue of the Jewish quarter, the complete reconstruction of which is being defined as ‘restoration’. In a detailed study of post-1967 Jerusalem<sup>9</sup> Michael Dumper documents the evictions the reconstruction of the Jewish Quarter occasioned and discusses the plan’s physical limits and political implications. However, he falls short of recognizing the symbolic significance of the rebuilt neighbourhood and does not discuss its architecture. Israeli sources tend to portray the Jewish Quarter project as a successful example of urban restoration and a high achievement by the city’s Israeli administration,<sup>10</sup> but avoid spelling out the political dimension of the reconstruction plan.

Issues related to Jerusalem’s planning and conservation and their political implications have also been dealt with in a number of studies on UN and UNESCO policy. Most writings on UNESCO’s cultural policy towards the Jerusalem issue, however, have addressed the subject from a broader political perspective and have focused on the ‘politicization’ of the international organization. They refer to Jerusalem mainly in the context of the often tense Israeli–UN relationship,<sup>11</sup> and do not analyse from a scientific and conservation perspective the technical content of the UNESCO reports on Jerusalem and the Jewish Quarter reconstruction plan.<sup>12</sup>

However, even if most of the material presented in this study derives from primary research, this book has been greatly influenced by a

number of works that, though not detailing exactly the same subject, or discussing the same area, have actually addressed similar topics. Essential references include the many books and articles written by Meron Benvenisti,<sup>13</sup> who – probably better than anyone else – has been able to present both the physical city and its symbolic and political significance within Zionist and Israeli thought through a soul-searching attempt to analyse his own role in the complex Jerusalem context. The ideas he puts forward in *Sacred Landscape* constitute an important starting point for this book, even though he does not directly address the reconstruction of the Jewish Quarter. His cogent description of the creation of the new Zionist map for the land, in fact, can be usefully applied to the Jewish Quarter: a ‘townscape’ shaped by the Israeli leadership along the same lines.<sup>14</sup> The symbolic value attributed to this site, however, is even higher because the mythical version of the city portrayed in Israeli literature and schoolbooks represents the most important link between modern Israel and its national and religious heritage. The Jewish Israeli identity, a mix of religion and peoplehood so central to Zionist thought yet so elusive to define, finds Jerusalem at its very hub. To question the reconstruction of the Jewish Quarter, therefore, is to question the whole Zionist enterprise.

Nadia Abu El Haj’s research into the political use of archaeology in Israel and in the reconstructed Jewish Quarter relates closely to the subject of this book.<sup>15</sup> However, while her work focuses on archaeology and has an anthropological viewpoint, my research concentrates on the architecture of the reconstructed neighbourhood and on the relationship between heritage, restoration and architecture on the one hand and politics on the other.

‘Heritage’ scholars like Lowenthal, Tunbridge and Ashworth have also made an important contribution to the development of my research.<sup>16</sup> Their multidisciplinary approach and capacity to categorize abstract concepts that are often difficult even to define, have been a continual help. Indeed, their research questions actions that are generally taken for granted and considered politically neutral, and they challenge most of the choices made by practising architects involved in conservation projects. Recognizing the political significance of all restoration plans and conservation policies has actually been the starting point of this reflection, but the attempt to go beyond a first emotional reaction has greatly profited from the theories they have lucidly put forth. All the

features characterizing the reconstruction works in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem, in fact, from the role attributed to archaeology to the final architectural image of the reconstructed houses could, and should, be analysed from a heritage perspective, identifying the modern symbolic values and meanings that have been attributed to the site. Ashworth and Tunbridge's studies have also introduced another provocative idea, namely the possibility of creating heritage as an economic good of utility to the market. Around this revolutionary concept, which reverses the traditional view that there is a given, limited amount of original past 'products' available to be conserved and exhibited, has developed a new discipline they have dubbed 'heritage planning'. The idea that all 'heritage is a product of the present', has been continuously pondered while analysing the Israeli plans for the Jewish Quarter, and the title of this book suggests that the reconstructed Jewish Quarter might be considered a large-scale example of heritage-planning.

At a political level, various analysts of Jerusalem and of Israeli–Palestinian affairs have offered useful insights into Jerusalem's unique situation. Ian Lustick, for instance, provides a cultural and political framework for some of the arguments put forth in the research.<sup>17</sup> Michael Dumper's books and articles,<sup>18</sup> particularly *The Politics of Jerusalem after 1967*, have been both a source of essential data for this study and a methodological guide. The attention he pays to apparently minor details and his capacity to draw conclusions from extensive fieldwork more than from the body of the political literature are impressive. I, in fact, do not deal with abstract political frameworks and philosophic systems. On the contrary, I consciously focus on a limited subject from a technical and practical perspective on the assumption that, from such a plain and clear analysis, which corresponds more to my background and capacity, these same elements appear more lucid. Indeed, even though the subject dealt with is extremely limited in space and time, the questions it implicitly addresses lie at the core of Israeli contradictions.

Given that numerous ancient photographs of the Old City of Jerusalem, which focus especially on the Jewish community and its living quarters, have been published since 1967, images – including drawings, pictures and even films<sup>19</sup> – have provided useful backdrops to the arguments put forth here. These sources should not, however, be naïvely regarded as neutral, objective representations of reality; they too need to be analysed according to the criteria approved for historical

research.<sup>20</sup> The political use made of images is particularly evident in the case of the photographs portraying the Moroccan quarter before its destruction: in Israeli books, rare are the images depicting this quarter and the few reproduced focus on emphasizing its relative decay. In fact, the ideological portrayal of the neighbourhood as a dilapidated hovel contrasts sharply with previously unpublished images I have been able to access in Jerusalem. These images give a more balanced representation of this ancient, inhabited and alive (though partially ruined) quarter of the city before its complete demolition by the Israelis in June 1967. Similarly, an architecturally-focused reading of the many published photographs of the Jewish quarter before 1948<sup>21</sup> shows that its buildings were very similar to the ones of the rest of the city, and that some of the late nineteenth-century Jewish institutions, like parts of the *Batei Mahse* complex, were poorly built and roughly planned.

Images of the reconstruction works after 1967 likewise confirm my central assumption that the plan was not conceived as a restoration *per se*, but rather as a selective reconstruction meant to ‘create’ a mythical, ancient Jewish Jerusalem. Indeed, the photographs detailing the ongoing reconstruction works are particularly telling: they show heavy machinery at work, extremely hard consolidation techniques and large-scale demolitions; all these elements were confirmed by the many interviews carried out with the architects in charge of the work and by the detailed analyses of the case studies. My own professional background allows me to refute the common perception that all the demolished buildings were ruined and beyond repair. Indeed, neither the planners nor the written sources present scientific evidence of the decay of the original structures: there are no documentary records to show that static analyses were ever carried out, that attempts to analyse the existing deformations were completed and that vault consolidations or foundation underpinnings were considered. It appears that the definition of ‘ruin’ adopted was based on a personal assessment more than on scientific study, thus paving the way to the selective demolitions and large-scale reconstructions that characterize the new Jewish Quarter.<sup>22</sup> The political implication of these technical remarks is obvious: the reconstruction plan was carried out along the familiar pattern of modern construction, and was never conceived as a restoration.

The architectural features of the reconstructed houses might too be viewed as a political statement and not as a simple design solution. The

conscious choice to create a 'modern' and essentially 'rationalist' architecture in the rebuilt quarter reflects a precise political will of separation and denial of the 'eastern' features of the city and the desire to replace it with a new Jewish city. In particular, the three case studies presented in Chapter 4 highlight the predominance of political and ideological over technical and conservation factors. Apart from the obvious and deliberate erasure of the original urban fabric, represented by the demolition of the Moroccan quarter and the creation of the Wailing Wall esplanade in its stead, the large-scale Cardo reconstruction and the Hurva memorial also reflect the same driving principles directing the overall reconstruction: the creation of a dense and lively new Jewish settlement in the Old City; a settlement whose justification and *raison d'être* was to be looked for in an ancient and mythical past 'created' by the many archaeological excavations dotting the area and by a small number of selected architectural monuments that have been 'restored' and enhanced.

The interviews carried out on site with Jerusalem residents and Israeli officials were an essential source of primary data on the reconstruction plan. They provided both precise references to actual events and the essential hints permitting an appreciation of the unfurling of the reconstruction plan. Among the interviewees were Palestinian and Armenian residents of the Old City directly touched by the expropriation, and the Israeli planners and architects who drew up the reconstruction plan for the Jewish Quarter. The absence of interviews with the Israeli political leaders who initiated the plan reflects a conscious decision to focus on technical matters, privileging the neighbourhood architects' opinions over the often rhetorical speeches of retired and aged politicians.

Finally, the Israeli media have been a last but important source for this research. The newspapers have faithfully reflected the centrality of the reconstruction plan within Israeli society and the attention politicians and public opinion have paid to the Jewish Quarter. The impressive amount of newspaper articles on the reconstruction plan is a direct result of its political and symbolic relevance. All articles on the Jewish Quarter reconstruction published between June 1967 and 1983 (when most of the work was completed) in the English-language Israeli newspaper the *Jerusalem Post* have been scrutinized. These articles offer the reader a lively glimpse at Jerusalem's cultural and political life over this period and make an essential contribution to the research. The information they

provide has been crosschecked, whenever possible, with other written sources and with the interviewees.

The discussion of UNESCO policy in Jerusalem presented in Chapter 5 is based entirely on primary sources. Both UNESCO headquarter archives in Paris and the private archives of the late Raymond Lemaire (special representative of the UNESCO director-general for Jerusalem) in Leuven, Belgium, have been thoroughly examined.<sup>23</sup>

However, this is not and could not have been a study based solely on historic and archival research. It is instead a political analysis of a reconstruction plan based on existing heterogeneous data more than on the ‘discovery’ of previously unknown material. Indeed, most of the arguments I put forth in this book derive from a different reading of previously published documents. The continuous use of references and quotations in the text explicitly shows that many data were already available, but the specific angle from which they are considered, and their framing into an architectural and heritage perspective, actually transforms them, as the use of heritage and architectural categories and theories is relatively uncommon in political literature.

To situate the research in the wider regional context and to verify specificities and similarities between Jerusalem’s Jewish Quarter plan and other urban conservation plans, a comparative study has been conducted that focuses on the interactions between political and technical choices. An analysis of five other sites in mandatory Palestine has helped sharpen my interpretation of the Jerusalem Jewish Quarter plan, while substantiating the main assumption of the research. The discussion of the Palestinian heritage policy is based on my professional experience, while the presentation of the Israeli cities has profited both from the existing literature and from the site visits carried out in the period 1998–2000.

Urban studies is, by definition, a cross-border, complex discipline. In the book I try to cope with this complexity by constantly shifting from one field to another, from one theoretical framework to another. However, to root the research in its actual physical context and to avoid generalizations and over simplifications, I have consciously tried to limit the use of general theories.

The first part of the research was carried out during a prolonged stay in Jerusalem, so thus profited from continuous and direct contact with the site. Though archival material was unavailable, the actual fabric of the neighbourhood was observed intimately through daily contact.

### Structure of the book

The argument in this book develops over six chapters, moving from a rapid presentation of the interaction of heritage, history and nationalism with planning and the Jewish Quarter reconstruction, through a discussion of the legal and technical framework that created the new neighbourhood, and ending with a presentation of its actual construction, seen both at the general level and in specific case studies. In the last two chapters I extend the perspective from the local to the international by presenting UNESCO's position on the reconstruction plan and then considering Jerusalem's case in the wider context of urban conservation in the region. A historic *excursus*, presented in the second part of this introduction, briefly recalls the history of the Jewish presence in the city, and sets the context of the research.

In Chapter 1, 'Planning, Nationalism, Heritage and the Reconstruction of the Jewish Quarter', I introduce the cultural framework in which the reconstruction was made possible and briefly present the Zionist approach to the city in general and to Jerusalem in particular. I single out the continuous overlapping of the distinct concepts of history and heritage and discuss how the new symbolism of the reconstructed Jewish Quarter is utilized in the Zionist ethos. I focus on the Wailing Wall and its complete transformation after 1967, when archaeology, architecture and planning combined to reshape the physical environment to meet the new needs of the State of Israel. The significant discrepancies between the previous symbolisms connected with this site, and the new meanings the secular state wanted to stress, clearly demonstrate the strict and intimate relationship between politics and urban conservation.

In Chapter 2, 'Creating the Jewish Quarter', I examine the pre-requisites that made the plan possible. The legal system that granted the takeover and reshaping of much of the Old City is detailed and the technical background and cultural framework of the architects and archaeologists who worked on the reconstruction plan is discussed. A review of architecture and archaeology in the country (before and after 1948) situates the Jewish Quarter plan within the evolution of these two disciplines, while the last section contains a brief description of the archaeological excavations that preceded and accompanied the reconstruction.

In Chapter 3, 'Building the Jewish Quarter', I address the architectural plans for the new neighbourhood and present both their technical

specifications and economic and social significance. Through an analysis of the architectural plans and regulations, the connection between site work and political ideology is investigated. The physical reconstruction was decided on by Israel's political leadership to create an ancient mythical and eternal Jewish capital. The translation of this political plan into stones and mortar, streets and squares, was made possible through the hegemonic status of Zionism in Israeli society after the 1967 war. The absence of critical questioning and internal opposition, and the complete commitment and wholehearted passion animating the planners made this complex enterprise possible and produced interesting architectural and planning solutions. Though the subsequent fading of Zionism's hold on Israeli society and the first cracks in this previously monolithic structure began to appear in the mid-1970s, the technical soundness and comprehensiveness of the overall design allowed the reconstruction of the neighbourhood to develop along the original plan even within the new political environment created by the victory of the right in the 1977 Israeli elections.

In Chapter 4, 'Building the Jewish Quarter: Case Studies', I detail three specific areas within the Jewish Quarter in order to verify the assumptions made in the previous chapter. The sites of the Wailing Wall, of the Hurva synagogue and of the Cardo, are examined from both technical and heritage perspectives. The analysis of apparently neutral planning choices and the presentation of alternative possibilities, underline the political nature and symbolic significance of the Jewish Quarter plan.

In Chapter 5, 'UNESCO and Jerusalem', I widen the focus from the internal Israeli scene to the international context. The undefined international legal status of Jerusalem, and the State of Israel's ability to alter the international perception of the city's status according to its design, created a complex and unique situation. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization has been involved, since the outbreak of the Six-Day War, in safeguarding the cultural heritage of the city. In this chapter I discuss the capacity and role of UNESCO in monitoring the Old City of Jerusalem and the reconstruction plan. Through a careful reading of official UNESCO documents, interviews with planners in Jerusalem and access to the private archives of the personal representative of UNESCO's director-general for Jerusalem, a complete picture of the often strained international debate that

developed around Jerusalem's cultural heritage and the Jewish Quarter's reconstruction emerges.

In Chapter 6, 'Urban Restoration and Ideology in Israel and Palestine: A Comparative Approach', I shift the focus from the Old City of Jerusalem to other major historic centres of the Holy Land. Comparisons between the Israeli handling of the Jewish Quarter, the Israeli approach to other predominantly Arab heritage sites and the Palestinian National Authority's (PNA's) management of heritage sites, serve to distil the unique characteristics and complexities attendant on the reconstruction of Jerusalem's Jewish Quarter. Following a brief introduction in which I consider the fate of the emptied Jewish quarters in the Arab countries, I discuss the policy towards Arab heritage in Israel and the West Bank. In the first section I present Israeli plans for the ancient Arab urban centres – focusing on Jaffa, Safed and Acre – in both their technical and political dimensions; in the second section I discuss the role of Arab historic cities in the PNA's areas. A comparison between the different plans proposed and implemented in cities that originally presented a similar history and a comparable heritage enables one to verify the impact of political and ideological frameworks on the physical fabric of ancient urban centres.

### *Terminology*

The terminology used in this book requires a preliminary commentary and explanation. While discussing the Jewish Quarter reconstruction project, terms belonging to the discipline of architectural conservation are often used. In the introduction it seems important for the clarity of the argument to stress the difference between the often misused terms 'restoration' and 'reconstruction'. A restoration project aims to 'reviv[e] the original concept or legibility of the object. Restoration ... is based upon respect for original material, archaeological evidence, original design and authentic documents.'<sup>24</sup> A reconstruction project, on the contrary, entails creating entirely new buildings within historic centres, supposedly capable of better addressing modern living needs and standards. Jerusalem's Jewish Quarter plan, therefore, undoubtedly belongs to this second group. Consequently, the subtitle of the book reads *Reconstruction of the Jewish Quarter*, which refutes the frequently used expression 'restoration of the Jewish Quarter'. This preliminary statement, however, does not impinge on the analysis of its political

significance and value. It does not imply, in fact, a moral and personal *a priori* criticism, but simply a technical statement, a starting point for the scientific presentation of the transformation of this large sector of Jerusalem's Old City where the large majority of the ancient structures – both ruined and still sound – have been demolished as a preliminary step for the Jewish Quarter reconstruction. It seems meaningful to notice that it is the expression 'restoration of the Jewish Quarter' that actually carries strong political implications and has an ideological flavour, as it has been consciously used to describe instead the construction of a new built environment for a new group of residents, and to imply 'restoration of the Jewish sovereignty over the Jewish Quarter' according to a partial reading of the diverse history of a multiethnic city. Though it should be unambiguously stated that what took place in the Old City after 1967 – the very subject of this research – cannot be defined as a restoration project according to internationally recognized technical standards and terminology, it is the reconstruction plan and its political significance that constitutes the subject of this book. The subject is not the technical discussion of eventual scientific errors in the implementation of a restoration project, but instead the attempt to clarify the underlying significance of these 'errors'. Though it might be unfortunate that a number of ancient historic structures have disappeared following the Jewish Quarter reconstruction, what concerns us the most is why these buildings have not been deemed worthy of conservation, and why, and how, new buildings have taken their place.

Besides the technical terms, it is important also to discuss the precise significance of other, apparently self-evident and neutral expressions that risk concealing complex and sensitive issues and might lead to serious misunderstandings. The apparently anodyne expression *Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem* requires a preliminary discussion concerning both the word 'quarter' itself, and the term 'Jewish quarter'. A first, linguistic, remark concerns the meaning of the word 'quarter'. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*,<sup>25</sup> its first meaning is 'each of four equal or corresponding parts of something', while the urban meaning, 'district, part of a town', is listed only as its fourth signification. Though this meaning too, originally, referred to one of the four parts of the Roman military camps and cities formed by the *Cardo* and the *Decumanus* – the two main urban perpendicular axes of all Roman foundations – it has come to define an urban district without connection to its extension in relation to the

entire city. The actual ambiguity of the term in English,<sup>26</sup> however, creates the misleading impression that Jerusalem's 'Jewish Quarter' always roughly represented a quarter of the area of the Old City of Jerusalem.

A second preliminary remark concerns the use of the term in the scientific literature. The role and importance of 'quarters' in Middle Eastern cities has been the subject of a number of studies on the structure of what used to be defined as the 'Islamic city'.<sup>27</sup> According to this approach the subdivision of the city into separate 'quarters' – along with the irregular street network, the central courtyard houses and the *suqs* – was supposed to be one of the characteristics of the 'Islamic City'. This concept, rooted in the French orientalist tradition, has since been overcome by the researchers and the whole idea of an Islamic city as a defined, specific entity mainly refuted.<sup>28</sup> The evolution of the approach to Middle Eastern cities has led also to a revision of the actual definition of 'quarter', acknowledging the difficulties related to the precise delimitation of such urban areas.<sup>29</sup> Since the 1970s, new definitions have been put forth, like the one suggested by Ira Lapidus:

The[se] quarters were often homogeneous communities and their solidarity, in some cases, was based on religious identity. Some quarters specialized in certain types of weaving, tanning and other manufactures, but there is no evidence that distinctions of class or wealth were a basis of social cohesion. ... Basically they were whole communities made up of notables and commoners both, rich and poor.

... In short the quarters were small, integrated communities. Their close family ties, ethnic or religious homogeneity, economic and administrative unity, quasi-physical isolation and their mediating elites, made them villages or village-like communities within the larger cities.<sup>30</sup>

Such a definition, however, cannot easily be applied to Jerusalem's Jewish quarter where, unlike in most Ottoman cities, the majority of Jewish residents had neither an economic activity nor an established presence. While it could be used to describe the original nucleus of the Jewish community in Jerusalem, it does not seem to reflect the situation that developed during the second half of the nineteenth century when Jerusalem's ever-growing Jewish population overfilled its traditional