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Dwelling on the Green Line

Concealed within the walls of settlements along the Green-Line, the border between Israel and the occupied West-Bank, is a complex history of territoriality, privatisation and multifaceted class dynamics. Since the late 1970s, the state aimed to expand the heavily populated coastal area eastwards into the occupied Palestinian territories, granting favoured groups of individuals, developers and entrepreneurs the ability to influence the formation of built space as a means to continuously develop and settle national frontiers. As these settlements developed, they became a physical manifestation of the relationship between the political interest to control space and the ability to form it. Telling a socio-political and economic story from an architectural and urban history perspective, Gabriel Schwake demonstrates how this production of space can be seen not only a cultural phenomenon, but also as one that is deeply entangled with geopolitical agendas.

GABRIEL SCHWAKE is an architect, urban designer and researcher. He is a Lecturer at the Sheffield School of Architecture, at the University of Sheffield, and co-director of Studio Sabra. Gabriel's work focuses on the issues of identities, conflicts, and neoliberalism, as well as the influences of nation-building and privatisation on the process of spatial production.

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Dwelling on the Green Line

Privatize and Rule in Israel/Palestine

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It is possible to understand the Greeks without mentioning their economic relations; the Romans, on the other hand, can only be understood through these.

Oswald Spengler, The Decline of the West

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Preface

For several years, I drove along the Trans-Israel Highway every other weekend while traveling to visit my parents in Nazareth. Leaving behind the modern Jewish Tel Aviv and returning to the Arab city where I grew up, I was glad that the new fast motorway enabled me to complete my biweekly trip in less than two hours. Yet when driving near the Palestinian city of Qalqilya, I always noticed the thick row of trees on my right side, which hides the eight-meter high concrete walls of the West Bank Separation Barrier, the military patrol road, and the guarding posts along it. This multifaceted scene emphasized to me the dissonance between the modern fast motorway, which I enjoyed using, and the violent act of territoriality which it was obviously part of.

Driving back to Tel Aviv, I put the highway and the Separation Barrier behind me, and I was ready to continue developing my architectural career. I was convinced that I would be spending the next years designing new affordable, livable, and people-oriented residential projects. However, I soon understood that I was basically designing the façades of buildings that were already dictated by the speculative interests of the different entrepreneurs that hired our services. Losing interest in the "architecture of 20 cm," as a colleague referred to the work we were doing, indicating the width of the exterior walls we were designing, I chose to move to urban planning. I was hoping that with the capacity to influence urban policy I would contribute to the development of better, more socially oriented and socially just residential environments. Working on a new neighborhood in southern Israel, I was asked by the client, the Ministry of Construction and Housing, to plan an outline scheme for 1,500 units that would blend with the natural landscape of the desert. During a work meeting, the project manager from the ministry mentioned that the plan we proposed was perhaps "nice," but far from being "marketable," and thus suggested replicating another

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outline from a neighboring town in order to appeal to a larger number of private developers.

Curious to understand how marketability became the main leading value behind the development of the local built environment, I decided to start a PhD focusing on this issue. Initially, I did not think that Israel's territorial aspirations were relevant to my study. However, during one of my recurrent trips along the Trans-Israel Highway, I noticed a new housing project that resembled the marketable layout I had been asked to implement. Remembering the trees near Qalqilya, I could not avoid linking the marketable new housing project to the state's territorial project. Consequently, I began to comprehend the area along the Trans-Israel Highway as the meeting point between the state's geopolitical interests in appropriating additional lands and the entrepreneurial considerations of growth. I understood that these seemingly contradictory interests are quite inseparable, coupled in a reciprocal relationship of national, individual, and corporate development. This book is the outcome of my doctoral research, which analyzed this relationship by focusing on the new settlements constructed along the Trans-Israel Highway, on both sides of the borderline with the occupied West Bank.

This book would not have been completed without the help of my family, friends, colleagues, supervisors, and many other Good Samaritans along the way. First, I would like to thank my supervisors, Professor Carola Hein and Dr Herman van Bergeijk, for their noncompromising standards, patience, and guidance. I would like to express my gratitude to all my colleagues and friends at TU Delft – Phoebus Panigyrakis, John Hanna, Maria Novas Ferradas (and her partner Martin), Armina Pilav, Mo Sedighi, Aleksandar Staničić, Amy Thomas, Elmira Jafari, Michiel Smits, Penglin Zhu, Fatma Tanis, Kaiyi Zhu, Rose Sarkhosh, Marc Schonderbeek, Grazia Tona, Nama'a Qudah, Stefan Hauser, Gül Aktürk, and those whose names I forgot to mention, for their feedback, cooperation, and, of course, friendship.

During my research, I received significant aid and support from various individuals who were willing to dedicate their time, knowledge, and documents. These include the many interviewees, residents, architects, planners, policymakers, and workers at all the archives I visited.

Moreover, I am more than thankful to all those who provided me with external feedback that enabled me to continue developing my

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Last, and surely not least, I would like to thank my family – my parents Dalia and Norbert, my brothers Michael and Daniel, and especially my life partner and best friend, Rotem Shenitzer-Schwake, for her everlasting support, endless proofreading, and companionship, through good reviews and bad. Rotem, this book is dedicated to you.

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