

Cities Exhibition 5 Gaza – Reconstruction

“We shall squeeze you empty, and then we shall fill you with ourselves.” George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four, 1949.

Naomi Klein argues in her book *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, 2007, that only crisis can produce real change, whereby wars and destruction leave persistently non-capitalist enclaves too helpless to resist impositions that may be introduced by foreign powers. Amidst a post-war population’s disorientation, domestic power struggles, and need for humanitarian aid, economic reconstruction frequently takes the shape of a radical transformation therapy, inflicted and imposed by outside forces. Reconstruction, Klein suggests, is frequently considered as the unique opportunity for the induction of possibly unpopular political and economic policies that seem to promise the exit from the tragedy of destruction and conflict into a modern capitalistic society characterized by free-market policies. With mass privatization and free trade, to the benefit of big corporations, a large segment of

society is transformed into luxurious, consumerist communities, yet leaving the rest of the population in decaying conditions.

The fifth edition of *Cities Exhibition (CE)*, curated by Yazid Anani, is an inquiry into the recurrent destruction and reconstruction of Gaza as a systematic attempt to modify a society and subjugate its local modes of resistance. *Gaza – Reconstruction*, questions whether the inevitable, internationally-implemented response of economic re-construction complements the perpetual Israeli military destruction of Gaza, in its course removing what is left of Gaza’s social sphere and resilient communities, only to replace them with a neo-corporate Gaza.

The exhibits correspond to an array of inquiries, namely: How can an inaccessible place be investigated? How can we read the mass-produced images of Gaza and the bulk of material

published after each Israeli assault? Are we confined to the implementation of fixed solutions, proposed in authoritarian fashion, for the reconstruction of Gaza? How can we escape framing and stereotyping, conundrums that Palestinian researchers face even when probing accessible locations in Palestine, e.g. camps, villages, Hebron, or Nablus?

This year’s edition falls into four chapters:

Chapter I – Research from Afar is a student-based research undertaken in specialized, experimental classes at both the International Academy of Art, Palestine (IAAP) and Birzeit University’s Department of Architecture (DA).

Chapter II – Extended Geography is a collaborative research by students from IAAP, DA, and Eltiqa Group into a collective work by Mohammad Jabali, Rabia Saffiti, and Rula Khoury. The chapter

investigates regions that lie outside Gaza’s confinement, covering Palestine 1948, the West Bank, and Jerusalem.

Chapter III – An Eye from Outside is a group exhibition showcasing the works of seven artists and collectives: DAAR & Studioazue, Gazi Barakat, Kahled Jarar, Mohamed Abusal, Nida Sinnokrot, Oraib Toukan, and Wafa Hourani.

A forum for film screenings, talks, and readings – curated by the two collectives Group28 and Ramallah Cinema Club – is programmed for the duration of the exhibition and aims to inspire a continuous conversation about Gaza that involves the audience, artworks, and the forum’s programme.

Chapter IV – Book of Re-Construction, edited by Tina Sherwell. *Gaza – Reconstruction* presents the research material and works produced in the exhibition in form of a book.