

Ralf Brand, University of Manchester, UK and Sara Fregonese, University of Birmingham, UK



‘For academics and practitioners alike concerned with the contemporary challenges of relentless urban conflict, polarization and cohesion, this fascinating and insightful book is a first of its kind. With originality and rigour it brings a new lens to the material analysis of both “divided” and peaceful cities, with case study examples made tangible through the use of full-colour production throughout.’

– Caroline Moser, Emeritus Professor, University of Manchester, UK

‘Understanding political behaviour and violence through the urban and the architectural is at the forefront of contemporary social science. This outstanding volume makes an extraordinarily sophisticated contribution to this developing field.’

– Stuart Croft, University of Warwick, UK

Bringing together comparative case studies from Belfast, Beirut, Amsterdam and Berlin, this book examines the role of the urban environment in social polarisation processes. In doing so, it provides a timely and refreshingly innovative voice in the confusing babble on

(counter-)terrorism, urban conflict and community cohesion. Despite their socio-political differences, these cities are telling cases of how the location and shape of very mundane objects such as rubbish bins, bridges, clothes' stores, shopping malls and cafés – in addition to the obvious fences, walls and barbed wire – are often subject to heated controversies and influence the way urban conflict is 'lived' and practised.

Contents: Introduction; The urban environment: mirror and mediator of radicalisation?; Polarisation as a socio-material phenomenon: a bibliographical review; The Belfast case; The Beirut case; The Berlin case; The Amsterdam case; Implications for planning practice and policy; Interviews: Scott Bollens, Wendy Pullan, Frank Gaffikin, John Calame, Epilogue: From polarisation to shared spaces: the influence of the built environment in contested societies; References; Index.

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