

Dani Karavan (07.12.1930-29.05.2021)

German architect Peter Busmann on his friendship and collaboration with the Israeli artist

My first encounter with Dani Karavan was not with him personally, but with a work of his at the Documenta in Kassel in 1977. His name was not yet familiar to me, but the sculpture he created in the Kassel floodplain captivated me, as it does when you meet a special personality, and I felt that it was probably unique and created only for this place - two upright step elements made of the finest concrete, symmetrical, divided by a slit, which in turn was connected to a canal made of the same material, in whose water the landscape and sky were reflected.

Manfred Schneckenburger, who was appointed curator for Documenta for the second time, had seen works by Dani Karavan in public space in Israel and brought him to Kassel. Dani Karavan would not have come to Germany of his own volition. As he told me later, German soldiers had shot his grandmother in the street like a dog, and his wife Hava's family had all become victims of the Holocaust.

After visiting the Documenta, I memorised the name Dani Karavan and told my colleagues and friends about him. It was the time when Godfrid Haberer and I, after winning the competition (1976), worked with the whole office and many experts on the design for the large project between the cathedral and the Rhine. I had previously been able to convince the clients of the Konrad-Adenauer-Gymnasium in Bonn Bad-Godesberg and the Musikhochschule in Cologne to commission the Hungarian universal artist Barna von Sartory already during the planning phase in the sense of an artistic design integrated into the architecture - a counter-model to the so-called art in building, a "risk" for the client, because the result of the artistic work would only be recognisable at the end of a long planning and building process. Godfrid and I were happy that Cologne agreed to give Barna an independent commission in this sense for the large project at the cathedral, and he subsequently came regularly from Berlin to visit us in Cologne. Barna died in Berlin in the summer of 2000.

In the Middle Ages, the church Maria ad Gradus had stood to the east of the cathedral choir, so called because there were steps on both sides to the north and south, which were walked on by countless pilgrims over the course of time. Gradus means steps, and it was the theme of "steps" that Barna and we soon discovered as the tenor for the entire design, from the smallest detail, for example the gradation of the terrain supports, to the stepped landscape of the later philharmonic hall, whose position in the overall concept had inevitably resulted from the large open space conceived above it. This, in turn, had been the real key to the overall idea, because Godfrid and I absolutely wanted to preserve the view of the cathedral as the arriving pilgrims and subsequently the many people moving along the banks of the Rhine had experienced it from there in the past.

Through our persistent insistence and above all through the fact that the WDR agreed to take over the costs necessary for the transformation from a multi-purpose hall into a proper concert hall, our dream took on a tangible form, altogether the result of a fortunate constellation, which also included the fact that, apart from personalities from the radio and the Cologne music world, above all the great head of culture Kurt Hackenberg had always seen the need for a significant concert hall for Cologne.

The strict laws, which include above all the acoustic requirements of a concert hall, led to the special shape of the ceiling, which in turn had the effect that the space above the great hall, which had previously sloped slightly towards the Rhine, became defacto an urban square under our hands. Compared to the large and many tasks we had to deal with during the planning, the design of this square seemed a manageable

problem at first. But all the concepts that we and also the landscape architect Hans Luz commissioned by the city developed met with neither our own approval nor that of the building director Franz Lammers who accompanied us.

It was during this time that I suddenly found on my desk the catalogue of an exhibition that Dani Karavan had organised that summer (1978) in Italy, simultaneously in the cities of Florence and Prato. It was the only copy available in the Walther König bookshop and had been discovered by our project manager Ulrich Kuhn. Remembering my enthusiastic descriptions of the encounter with Dani's step sculpture in Kassel, he had borrowed it in order to show me. Looking at the "Terminus" on the Fort Belvedere in Florence and the courtyard of the Castello Frederico II in Prato, I was electrified and immediately had the idea that this was the language that could be coherent in the square above the Philharmonie.

In retrospect, I can't interpret it any other way than that this idea must have occupied me even unconsciously from then on. How else could it be that after completing a hike with my friend Urs Hilfiker and our eldest daughter Gesa (then 19 years old) in Switzerland, I unplannedly and spontaneously decided to buy a ticket for a sleeping car to Florence in Lucerne to see the splendour I had absorbed while looking through Dani Karavan's catalogue.

The train stations, mostly built in Italy in the 1930s, are not only architecturally sophisticated but also well organised inside. So after arriving on the morning of the following day, I was able to shower and freshen up extensively and, clad in my hiking gear and beloved yellow backpack, moved into the city that was familiar to me from several visits in my student days and after. The first route naturally took me to the central square of the Signoria with the David and Loggia, leaving the Uffizi on my left and heading for the Duomo, whose unique architectural history, combined with Brunelleschi's biography, continues to fascinate to this day. After a look at the bronze doors by Ghiberti at the Baptistery, however, I went straight to the Arno and up to the Belvedere.

What happened there I can only describe as my "miracle of Florence": at the top I met a group of interesting-looking people, men and women - and in their midst - Dani Karavan, whose appearance I was aware of from pictures. I took heart, went straight up to him and introduced myself. He interrupted me, introduced me to his wife Hava and friends close to him, and immediately began to talk with many gestures. I no longer remember what he said in detail, but the liveliness of his figure and especially of his eyes was overwhelming. Dani himself later began his description of Ma'alot's career above the Philharmonie in Cologne with the words: "And then Peter Busmann came to Florence with his backpack."

That's how it all began; this time too, as so often in my life, it was "friendship at first sight". I had experienced something comparable 15 years earlier, when the magnificent head of Barna von Sartory appeared in the doorway of my small study at St. Katharinen behind the back of his gallery owner Hajo Schütze and his radiant eyes smiled at me. Barna later gave me the novel "The Embers", in which the Hungarian author Sándor Márai sings the high song of friendship, which he places even before love. I wouldn't go that far, love and friendship are each unique in their own way, incomparable and cannot be set off against each other.

It was friendships that inspired the planning of the great work on the cathedral, but a strong feeling of love motivated us to take part in the competition 10 days before the deadline, against all reason, to approach the task playfully, without letting ourselves be overwhelmed by the awe of the cathedral. It must have been this playful element that aroused Dani's curiosity to take a look at the situation in Cologne and meet with us.

In keeping with his communicative nature, he immediately took the opportunity to meet with Manfred Schneckeburger, the curator of Documenta, who lives in Cologne, and even made contact with Karl Ruhrberg, the founding director of the

Museum Ludwig, probably in the instinctive foresight that we would need his goodwill as well as that of many other Cologne personalities if we were to be commissioned to work above the Philharmonie and in general in the large area between the cathedral and the Rheingarten, which was still being planned at the time. I admired Dani for not being discouraged by the fact that the council and administration left us in the dark about a commission for a long time.

Although in Israel Tel Aviv was his centre of life, Dani had made a habit of always taking up residence with his family where he had the biggest assignment and had to spend the most time. This was the case in Florence and then for decades in Paris, after he received the commission for the so-called L'Axe Majeur, the artistic design of the entire landscape between Cergy-Pontoise and the immediate banlieue in the west of Paris. I see this as a brilliant move by the town and landscape planners, who in this way prevented the historically significant valley of the Oise (here, painters such as Renoir and Pizarro painted their magnificent pictures outdoors, which then became known as Impressionism) from continuing to be built in the style in which the rigorous architect Ricardo Boffil had started there. A leaning tower on a square built by Boffil, which Dani had persuaded him to build, still stands today at the beginning of the L'Axe Majeur, which is now almost completed and more than 15 km long.

In the early 1980s, when work on the piece began, Dani moved with Hava and their three daughters Noah, Tamer and Yael into a furnished flat near the Pont Mirabeau right on the Seine. Something very special was the studio the artist was given by the city of Paris right next to the newly built Centre Pompidou, which overflowed with many models he was working on at the same time.

Before Dani moved to the artists' colony at No. 8 rue De Ridder, he had a studio directly opposite the then-built Centre Pompidou. When I visited him there, he had already built the Cologne situation to scale with plasticine and the work could begin - right after my heart: three-dimensionally vivid on the model. In my memory, I can see myself lying in the window and extensively observing life on the square in front of the new museum and feeling the wish that we might succeed in doing something similar in Cologne. In the years that followed, I was in Paris countless times, but Dani was in Cologne at least as often, often abruptly and at precisely the moment when his presence was important. And typical for him: when I picked him up at the airport, he would tell me the latest news from Cologne society.

Until now, I have never met anyone who was as communicative and at the same time with such sparkling chutzpah as Dani Karavan. We met when there were no mobile phones yet, but I don't think I'm exaggerating when I say that wherever there was a telephone, it didn't take long for him to pick up the receiver and start talking to his partner at the other end of the line in his own language, in Hebrew, but also in English, French and Italian, just never - even in direct personal conversation - in German. We understood that and Dani and Hava did not have to explain it to us. On the occasion of the inauguration of Rabin Square at the UNESCO building in Paris, Vreneli and I were guests in her flat, and we were amazed to hear how many European languages the guests spoke to each other in, for a while even the majority in Hungarian, where we ourselves, however, could no longer join in.

The contract that the City of Cologne finally concluded with the artist stipulated that the entire so-called "site-specific environment" would also allow the integration of works by other artists. This initially referred to the then-discussed option of the Museum Ludwig to acquire the last possible cast of the bronze sculpture "Broken Obelisk" by Barnett Newman. A model photo from that time shows how we had placed it at the highest point of the passage running through the museum.

Dani surprised us with the idea of having a long railway track embedded in the pavement running towards the impressive sculpture. For the material of the paving, he took up our idea to design the wall surfaces of the museum that were not covered with zinc with burnt bricks according to the Roman model. However - this also

according to the Roman model - in combination with durable light-coloured natural stone.

The Museum Ludwig, more precisely the treasurer of the city of Cologne, refused to acquire the bronze cast of the "Broken Obelisk" because Barnett Newman's widow demanded 1 million dollars for it. Before they went in search of an alternative work of art, I encouraged Dani to conceive a sculpture of his own on the square as part of the commission for the Gesamtkunstwerk (which he later named MA'ALOT). At the very next meeting he appeared with a model of a 6 x 1.80 m = 10.80 m high sculpture consisting of 6 elements, alternating between granite and cast iron.

The structural engineer of the Philharmonie's ceiling construction, Gerhard Horz, calculated the not inconsiderable weight and weighed his head apprehensively. As we got on very well together, he responded to my plea to exhaust all possibilities that the construction allowed, for example, to include the specified "travelling loads", which could be as heavy as a tonne, in the calculation, with the result that he was able to agree.

In order to check the aesthetic effect of the stepped sculpture not only for the square but in the entire urban environment, we had a carpenter from the construction company build a model on a scale of 1:1, which was unconventional.

I was able to do this unconventionally because I promised this man and his helpers a bottle of "Schabau" (Cologne word for schnapps) each. In order to avoid possible interventions, we had the construction dismantled after 24 hours. Before that, however, Dani and I hurriedly examined the effect from all conceivable directions, even from the opposite bank of the Rhine in Deutz and from the view of the then still planned Rheingarten at the foot of the grand staircase of our project. We were and are grateful to the planners of the Rheingarten, the still living landscape planner Georg Penker and the already deceased colleague Erich Schneider-Wessling, that they designed a small avenue with low-zoned trees in such a way that it runs directly towards the step sculpture.

Later, the director of the Museum Ludwig Kasper König took advantage of the contractual possibility to place sculptures by other artists on the MA'ALOT square to place the "David" by the artist Hans-Peter Feldmann, a flesh-coloured parody of Michelangelo's work in approximately the same size, directly next to the step sculpture by Dani Karavan, without consulting the latter and the other authors (apart from Dani Karavan, the architects Busmann + Haberer and the landscape architect Luz from Stuttgart are considered to be the authors). Quite a few people were offended by this initiative and even described the David as "kitsch". This may have been a reason for Kasper König to call the entire MA'ALOT work "kitsch" and "tokenism" (see the catalogue "Wir nennen es Ludwigs").

Nevertheless, I would like to state that there is still the legal possibility of temporarily exhibiting works of art there. One of these is the idea of creating a labyrinth, for which there are countless historical examples in garden art, with the help of low "plant containers" that are constantly drip-fed, as is customary in garden centres. I had discussed this idea with Christoph Luz, the son of the late landscape architect Hans Luz, about 10 years ago in Stuttgart and also presented it to Dani Karavan during my next visit to Tel Aviv, which he initially acknowledged with an "I don't know" - typical of him in such situations. So the idea initially came to nothing, and the artist's death put an end to all further discussions with him.

I myself still consider the idea interesting and worth pursuing in view of the increasing ecological awareness, also in the city of Cologne. I also think of Dani's origins, whose father began his career in Israel as a gardener and then designed virtually all of Tel Aviv's urban green spaces in their origins. Both parents came to the country as young men in the 1920s, long before the current state of Israel was founded. In "A Story of Love and Darkness", the writer Amos Oz, who was a friend of Dani and

Hava, described the sometimes horrific confusion to which Dani was also exposed in his childhood.

But back to Cologne: Unfortunately, it has to be said that the MA'ALOT square, which was highly praised when it opened in autumn 1986 (among other things, it received the Carara Award), had become increasingly neglected over the years, and the city and - *horribile dictu* - the curators had failed to prevent heavy vehicles from driving through the square - contrary to the explicit instructions - and smashing the artistically laid granite slabs and adjacent brick pavements in the process.

Dani's repeated bitter and drastic denunciations in the Cologne media, and even the pleas of us architects, could not make any difference. Until the wonderful Christiane Härlin, in her unpretentious and above all non-polemical way, founded an initiative that soon called itself "Citizens for MA'ALOT". She began her work by ensuring that the dead and stunted lavender plants along the serpentine path leading from the square to the Rheingarten were replaced and then tended.

The actions of this initiative and, last but not least, a large exhibition - initiated by Hans Mörtter and Klaus Schmidt - in the Luther Church in Cologne's Südstadt in honour of the artist, led to a new public appreciation of the overall work of art and to the fact that the long overdue renovation was tackled, which in an obituary of the artist in the *Kölner Stadtanzeiger* was the first work of the artist in Germany to be honoured in detail.

My two friends Hans Mörtter (pastor at the Luther Church and founder of the initiative "Südstadt Leben" with his wife Sonja) and Klaus Schmitt (a controversial theologian whom Vreneli and I knew from the time of the Political Night Prayer) were particularly impressed by Dani's political commitment.

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My two friends Hans Mörtter (pastor at the Luther Church and founder, with his wife Sonja, of the initiative "Südstadt Leben") and Klaus Schmitt (a controversial theologian whom Vreneli and I knew from the time of the Political Night Prayer) were particularly impressed by Dani's political commitment, especially how he fearlessly stood up for Palestinians in Israel - in the occupied territories, but also in Israel itself, where they are often treated as second-class people.

Dani was involved until the end in initiatives that, for example, oppose the demolition of Palestinians' homes and support them in their legal battle before Israeli courts, and he identified with the initiative of Israeli soldiers called "Breaking the silence". In retrospect, it must be said that the vicious attacks against them by those in power, to which he exposed himself, wore him down psychologically and physically. Dani experienced Martin Buber personally, and how he campaigned for a common state for all religions, but especially for Jews and Palestinians, and, as we know, failed. But his spirit has remained alive.

How often in appropriate situations I have heard Dani's exclamation: "I am peace-maker.", first in 1978, where we met in the exhibition he created together with the cities of Florence and Prato and told me that this was probably the first constructive cooperation between the two cities, which had been enemies since the Middle Ages. Dani also sometimes joined us when we met with the "Initiative Friedensarbeit Köln", once when we formed a large circle in front of Cologne Cathedral to demonstrate with placards against Pershing missiles with nuclear bomb warheads that were planned at the time. One woman loudly advocated nuclear weapons, saying that there were too many people in the world anyway. Dani walked up to her and

laughingly told her, "O.k. - kill yourself!" That was typical of him - I never saw him aggressive, but very often with his disarming, thought-provoking manner. Dani no longer wanted to identify with the Order Pour Le Mérite for Sciences and Arts when the chapter of the Order refused to condemn the de facto "colonisation" of the Palestinian "land", which he deplored. de facto colonisation of the Palestinian "West Bank" by the State of Israel. Embittered, he withdrew from what he called the "ivory tower". Shortly before his death, he passionately campaigned for the election of the black African architect Francis Kéré (from Burkina Faso with his office in Berlin) to the Order.

Of Dani Karavan's many works all over the world, for which he received, among others, the Premium Imperiale, considered the Nobel Prize of the Arts, I would now like to describe in this remembrance of him those that would not have been created without our collaboration, namely the installation "Basic Law" at the Jakob Kaiser House in Berlin and the Memorial to the Murdered Sinti and Roma in the Tiergarten in front of the Reichstag building.

After the decision for Berlin as the federal capital, Busmann + Haberer had received the commission for the middle section of the so-called Dorotheen Blocks (later Jakob Kaiser House) in the course of a cooperation with three other large architectural firms, and I had already achieved in the very first stage of planning that we could work together with an artist of our choice in the sense of the so-called integrated artistic design that I had always striven for. Probably not least because of the significance of the work "Passages" in memory of Walter Benjamin in Portbou on the French-Spanish border, which had just been completed at the time, the then President of the Bundestag, Rita Süßmuth, prevailed upon Dani Karavan - as the only one of all the artists involved in the Jakob Kaiser House - to be commissioned to work with us without a previous competition.

I remembered one of Dani's favourite sayings, "I like problems", and confronted him with what I saw as a serious fundamental problem, namely an aesthetically satisfactory way of securing the outdoor space opening onto the Spree, i.e. without the usual grids and probably with barbed wire

An integral part of his installation, which develops from the inside of the building across the street to the Spree, was and is a long, almost seamless pane of thick bulletproof glass. He thought a text should be etched into this long front, and spontaneously I suggested: the Basic Law. And so it happened - in the 1949 version. Every time I pass by there, I am delighted to see people studying the text, sometimes it is shown to children by their parents. I was not involved in the conception of the memorial for the murdered Sinti and Roma, but I was involved in the fact that it was realised with the help of the Berlin successor office of Busmann + Haberer despite incredible resistance.

During his work in Cologne and in the years thereafter until the end of his life, Dani created wonderful works all over the world, all of which, without exception, respond to the respective local situation - site-specific environments. In part, I was able to follow their creation on the basis of the many models when I visited him in Paris, for example when he recreated to scale the Karthäusergasse in Nuremberg and in it the 27 pillars of the Street of Human Rights - each symbolising one of the rights with inscriptions in different languages. And - typical for Dani: as an additional pillar, there is a tree in the row, which symbolises the right to life without any special inscription. I spontaneously said that I could imagine an entrance with a gate-like element at the beginning of the row of columns - analogous to the historical city gate at its end. Now it stands there, with measured dimensions that refer to the measure and proportion of a human being. I was able to follow the creation of the Garden of Remembrance in Duisburg, which was initiated by our mutual friend Christoph Brockhaus, when I

visited Christoph at the Wilhelm Lehmbruck Museum, of which he had become director during the time he had been involved in the creation of MA'ALOT at the Museum Ludwig. I will never forget the inauguration in Duisburg, which was attended by many of Dani's friends from Israel, including the incomparable Menashe Kadishman, whom Vreneli and I had met in Tel Aviv in 1981 when we were invited by Dani to attend the opening of his exhibition at the Kunstmuseum.

The widow of the assassinated Yitzhak Rabin, Lea Rabin, gave a moving speech. There were only a few chairs for the guests, and I admired Yehudi Menuhin standing right next to me through the procedure of the inauguration speeches. And clearly remember my feeling for the aura of this man in my immediate physical proximity. His profile seemed to me to be carved out of white marble, like that of a dead man, and I clutched my heart two days later when I heard on the news that he had died during a concert in Berlin.

When I look at Dani's works in pictures all over the world, apart from those I have seen in Israel, Germany, France and Italy - for example in Spain, Denmark, Japan and Korea - I can imagine that what is unique in each case is the result of a working process similar to the one I experienced with him in Cologne. The Central Council of Sinti and Roma commissioned Dani to create a memorial for the murdered Sinti and Roma in the heart of Berlin, in the immediate vicinity of the Reichstag and the large Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. For a long time, however, it looked as if the project would have to fail.

In retrospect, it is clear that none of the participants on the part of the clients, planners and companies saw themselves as partners in the artistic process; on the contrary, all of the artists' efforts to establish contact and understanding came to nothing: one root of the problem lay in the separate responsibility for financing on the part of the federal government (responsible: the Commissioner for the Arts and Media at the Chancellor's headquarters) and implementation on the part of the planning authorities of the City of Berlin, which did not adequately involve the artists in the decisive phases of preparation and commissioning of planners and contractors. The correspondence practically only went through the Berlin lawyer Peter Raue, who, although well connected in Berlin, did not succeed in forging a consensus on the muddled situation.

At Christmas time of all times (I think it was in 2007), an extensive article appeared in Der Spiegel in which, apart from Dani Karavan, representatives of the Sinti and Roma were also defamed in a way that could only have come about through targeted "informati-ions" on the part of the Senate Administration. I immediately called Tel Aviv. When Dani indignantly said that he could not possibly continue to come to Germany after these public attacks, I immediately promised to do everything in my power to prevent this and to take care of the issue from now on, although this could only be possible if I received a mandate from him to do so.

Of course, I can't even begin to describe here how arduous and rocky the path was, which ultimately led to success. As a first step, I made sure that Bruno Vennes, a managing director of our successor office in Berlin, would be there if a new planning constellation could be established. After that, I repeatedly sought talks with the responsible ministerial director in the Federal Chancellery, who kept insisting on the fulfilment of the contract with the city of Berlin and the adherence to the budget, a position that was finally "softened" because I was able to win over co-players: Apart from the aforementioned Christoph Brockhaus and Peter Raue, Professor Christian Tomuschat, who had good connections to the Bundestag, and Danis and my friend Wim Wenders, whose commitment probably made an impression with regard to the expected reactions of the public, the actual reasons for the failure of the project were to become known.

The breakthrough came when a meeting for all those involved took place on site that had not been thought possible until then. Fortunately, the architects who had been active until then had withdrawn, so that now, as I had planned, the realisation of the memorial could be professionally organised by our office. At the inauguration, which was also attended by a very elderly Holocaust survivor, the Federal President and the Federal Chancellor thanked the artist with moving words for the impressive work, which, in my opinion, touches the hearts of the people above all because I was able to follow the creation of the Garden of Remembrance in Duisburg, initiated by our mutual friend Christoph Brockhaus, when I visited Christoph at the Wilhelm Lehbruck Museum, of which he had become director during the time he had been involved in the creation of MA'ALOT at the Museum Ludwig. I will never forget the inauguration in Duisburg, which was attended by many of Dani's friends from Israel, including the incomparable Menashe Kadishman, whom Vreneli and I had met in Tel Aviv in 1981 when we were invited by Dani to attend the opening of his exhibition at the Kunstmuseum.

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That Dani, apart from all his many gifts, was also highly musical, I was amazed to discover as we sat next to each other in the car on the drive to the brickyard where the bricks for MA'ALOT were to be produced, and he hummed the melodies of Edward Elgar's Cello Concerto to himself, almost completely and in pure intonation. On 29 May of this year (2021) Dani died in Tel Aviv, two days later his body was left to the earth - actually one should say the desert state - in the Kibuz Shuval near Beer Sheva. According to Israeli time, it was 5 pm. At the same time - 4 p.m. for us - after a call by Hans Mörtter, many people from Cologne, including all the staff of the Museum Ludwig, gathered in front of the step sculpture on MA'ALOT Square, each with a yellow rose in his or her hand, to say goodbye to the great artist and friend Dani Karavan.

Epilogue

"Koincidentia oppositorum": For me, this saying by Nikolaus Kusanus also applies to the personality, work and oeuvre of Dani Karavan. As a concrete example from our collaboration, I only mention his idea of using railway tracks as an essential element, as a sign of not only seeing the constant neighbouring railway traffic as noisy and annoying, but of integrating it as a historical given.

Whenever and wherever he could, Dani also took a political stand, was on the side of the religious philosopher Martin Buber in the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians from the very beginning, was one of the pioneers of the Oslo Accord and was increasingly appalled, even bitter, about the anti-peace policy of his own government. It was not long ago that he demanded that the large relief he had created in the Knesset in the face of the deputies, to which he had given the name PEACE, be put up, because the mere mention of this word in the plenum had become taboo.

Like almost all Israelis, Dani was not allowed to visit occupied Palestine (the so-called West Banks) beyond the Wall, if he did not want to risk losing his passport and being banned from his profession. Vreneli and I, as co-founders of the town twinning Bergisch Gladbach-Beit Jala, have often visited the small town between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, which is barely viable in the stranglehold of the separation wall, and

once I managed to outwit the Israeli military bureaucracy and bring Dani to Beit Jala. There is also a twinning arrangement between the city of Cologne and Bethlehem, which is in Palestine and not in Israel, and I succeeded in persuading the spokesman of this twinning arrangement, Frieder Wolf, to send a fictitious letter from the city to Dani Karavan inviting him to an artists' meeting in Bethlehem, which I had invented. There is a photo where I am looking at the document with Dani and the Palestinian architect Bassem Khoury, amused. Dani and Bassem look amazingly alike. Dani had greeted him with the words, "We are not only cousins - we are brothers."

Epilogue

"Koincidentia oppositorum": For me, this saying by Nicolaus Cusanus also applies to the personality, work and oeuvre of Dani Karavan. As a concrete example from our collaboration, I only mention his idea of using railway tracks as an essential element, as a sign of not only seeing the constant neighbouring railway traffic as noisy and annoying, but of integrating it as a historical given.

Whenever and wherever he could, Dani also took a political stand, was on the side of the religious philosopher Martin Buber in the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians from the very beginning, was one of the pioneers of the Oslo Accord and was increasingly appalled, even bitter, about the anti-peace policy of his own government. It was not long ago that he demanded that the large relief he had created in the Knesset in the face of the deputies, to which he had given the name PEACE, be put up, because the mere mention of this word in the plenum had become taboo.

Like almost all Israelis, Dani was not allowed to visit occupied Palestine (the so-called West Banks) beyond the Wall, if he did not want to risk losing his passport and being banned from his profession. Vreneli and I, as co-founders of the town twinning Bergisch Gladbach-Beit Jala, have often visited the small town between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, which is barely viable in the stranglehold of the separation wall, and once I managed to outwit the Israeli military bureaucracy and bring Dani to Beit Jala. Between the city of Cologne and Bethlehem, which is in Palestine and not in Israel, there is also a town twinning, and I managed to persuade the spokesman of this twinning, Frieder Wolf, to send a fictitious letter from the town to Dani Karavan inviting him to an artists' meeting in Bethlehem - which I had invented.

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